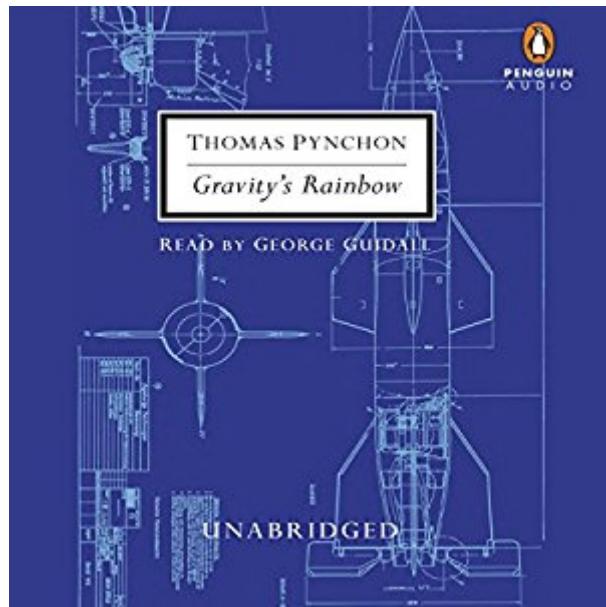


The book was found

Gravity's Rainbow



Synopsis

Winner of the 1973 National Book Award, Gravity's Rainbow is a postmodern epic, a work as exhaustively significant to the second half of the 20th century as Joyce's Ulysses was to the first. Its sprawling, encyclopedic narrative and penetrating analysis of the impact of technology on society make it an intellectual tour de force.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gravity's Rainbow is a book you either love or hate, and if you hate it it's probably because you couldn't finish the ... thing. Though by no means impenetrable, the novel is daunting enough to merit a list of tips for those wishing to tackle it for the first time. Below is my advice on how new readers can get over the hump. Trust me, it's a small hump, and the masterpiece that lies on the other side is worth the effort.

1. Read V first... Pynchon's V is shorter and more accessible than Gravity's Rainbow, but addresses the same themes in a similar style. If you enjoyed V, you will have built up a reserve of goodwill for Pynchon that will carry you through the initial rough patches of Gravity's Rainbow. This advice was given to me years ago, and I'm glad I took it.
2. Accept that you won't understand everything...Don't be concerned if you can't follow the many digressions or keep track of every minor character that pops up. As with other famously difficult novels, Gravity's Rainbow's real payoff comes in the rereading, so you shouldn't feel obliged to linger over each passage until it makes sense. Pynchon isn't trying to lord it over you by writing a book this dense; it's just his way of giving you your money's worth. Just follow what you can the first time through, which fortunately is a lot.
3. Accentuate the accessible...Gravity's Rainbow's unreadability is over-hyped. Yes, there are many jarring digressions, but threading through them is a fairly conventional detective story. Sure

there are lyrical passages that take off for the stratosphere, but they are grace notes in a melody of otherwise breezy narrative prose. So on your first time through, it's enough to follow the main plot (will Slothrop find the mysterious Rocket 00000?

There are a number of reasons one might write a review of a book. Most of these reasons aren't all that helpful when it comes to Gravity's Rainbow. One reason is to provide potential readers with a sense of the book (plot, structure, style, characterization). The best way to get a sense of Gravity's Rainbow is to read the first page. It basically goes on like that for another seven or eight hundred more. Another reason is to enlighten the world with your sparkling insight into the subtlties of symbolism and layers of meaning in the book. With regard to Gravity's Rainbow, you can save that stuff for your weekly book club. The symbolism and layered meaning in GR are about as subtle as a rocket attack on a movie theater. This is why GR is often compared to Finnegans Wake. If you've ever watched Joseph Campbell explain that novel, you realize that the search for deep intellectual insight is a conceit. These novels require your best effort just to understand the LITERAL stuff. Another reason to review a book is to provide your own subjective opinion about the overall quality of the experience. I've found that many such GR reviews fall into one of two camps: "I read 'X' pages and couldn't/didn't finish it" or "Thomas Pynchon is God". The problem with reviews like this is that they say more about the meta-experience (sorry, but that is the appropriate word) of reading the book than they do about the book itself. Those of us who finish it are subject to a kind of "Iron John" machismo which falls apart if we are forced to admit that the whole thing might be a colossal put-on. On the other hand, those who give up can't help feeling that perhaps they are missing the big IT and don't like feeling that they might be unable to appreciate genius.

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