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Tristram Shandy



Synopsis

Laurence Sterne's most famous novel is a biting satire of literary conventions and contemporary 18th-century values. Renowned for its parody of established narrative techniques, Tristram Shandy is commonly regarded as the forerunner of avant-garde fiction. Tristram's characteristic digressions on a whole range of unlikely subjects (including battle strategy and noses!) are endlessly surprising and make this one of Britain's greatest comic achievements. A cast of strange characters populate this strangest of novels: gentle Uncle Toby, sarcastic Walter, and of course, the pompous, garrulous Tristram himself. This edition is read by Anton Lesser in a tour de force performance. Please note: In print, Tristram Shandy is filled with visual, typographical, and compositing jokes - pages that are completely blank, pages that are completely black, misplaced chapters or chapters consisting only of their title, squiggly lines to indicate waving a stick, and much more besides. This audiobook tries in a variety of ways to match Sterne's invention with aural equivalents.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Customer Reviews

Composed long before there were rules about what a novel is supposed to look like, "The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy" is a visionary piece of literature, a book so original in construction it almost defies genre. Conceived by an Anglican vicar who, under the comic influence of Rabelais and Swift and equally informed by Cervantes and Shakespeare, turned to writing fiction later in his life, it is an inadvertent masterpiece, the product of a writer who just wanted to have fun and entertain his readers and ultimately entertained generations. The book is not a fictitious

autobiography, although its narrator Tristram Shandy might have intended it to be; most of the story is concerned not with his life but with his idiosyncratic family and the circumstances surrounding his conception and birth, with many digressions on various related and unrelated subjects. His father Walter, whose conjugal duties coincide with his having to wind the clock the first Sunday of every month, compiles a compendium of information he calls the *Tristrapoedia* for the education of his newborn son. His uncle Toby, an expert in military architecture, rides a hobby-horse and occupies his time with the science of besieging fortresses. Other characters include Corporal Trim, a former soldier and now Toby's valet and factotum; Dr. Slop, a dwarfish physician who delivers the baby Tristram; and Yorick the parson, who naturally is descended from the infamous jester of the Danish royal court. There are two aspects to this book that distinguish Sterne's style.

This work is OLD but reads like the most innovative avant-garde novel of today. The book is about Tristram Shandy and his birth, his uncle and his war wound and his father with his love of names and noses. Seriously! This is the original story-with-no-story and the beauty of the book is in the way that it's written. In reality, Sterne talks about anything and everything. He makes digressions lasting 20 odd pages, rambles to the reader, apologises for rambling, then discusses how he plans to get the story finally under way. The book is out of order chronologically. One of the funniest things about the book is that it's meant to be an autobiography of the fictional Tristram. Half the book is spent telling the story of the day of his birth. Then, the author moves to another scene, mainly revolving around Tristram's uncle Toby and the novel finishes several years before Tristram's birth. Sterne's writing is chaotic resembling a stream of consciousness. Sentences run onto the other, there's heaps of dashes and asterisks being used for various purposes. Sterne adds scribbles to signify the mood of the character. When one character dies, to symbolise his end, Sterne has a black page to describe it. When introducing a beautiful female character, Sterne says he can't be bothered describing her so he leaves a blank page for the reader to draw his/her own rendition. The book - though technically not a satire - in the process of going nowhere and saying nothing makes fun of many religious, political and societal topics. Sterne was a minister but from the book it can be gleaned that he was a particularly irreverent one. The work is divided into 9 books, published serially. This is a work where you can just pick up a chapter and read it. Some are several pages. Others are two lines.

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