

Welcome to the IRP study group on Proust's "Search for Lost Time".

Many have weighed in on the question of "how to read Proust for the first time". One NYU professor advises a quick passionate read, skipping over details and leaving what is not understood alone. Another says, no, no! Read slowly, carefully, basking in every nuance and reference. Savor the words poetically, but also reflect intellectually – that is, unpack the meaning, connect and associate the impressions. One translator, Lydia Davis, leans toward the latter, saying " ... it is best experienced, for most, in the way it was meant to be, in the full slow reading and rereading of every word ..."

Note that Davis says "re-reading." I couldn't agree more. For me, after a decade of living with Proust, I can say without qualification that the joy and understanding of the Search (short for "In Search of Lost Time") mounts and gathers with each re-reading.

Therefore, here's what I strongly, strongly recommend. Take advantage of the summer and read the whole volume. Take it to Europe. Take it to the beach. Take it to a coffee shop. Or, read as Proust himself reads - that is, in solitude, in your garden. For this first reading before we start in September, read in the manner of the NYU prof; - quickly and without pondering what is vague or impressionistic. Parts may seem tough. Just soldier on! Then, when our study group begins, in advance of each session, a la Davis, re-read slowly and carefully the sections that we'll be discussing for that day. Think about the questions (distributed to you by email.) In this way, my hope is that you will be rewarded with some of the special joys – poetic and intellectual – that the stratospheric reputation of Proust promises.

Consult the IRP zine for the description, syllabus and a preliminary question set which will expand as we go along.

NB. Please, please be sure to purchase only the edition that I've cited fully in the syllabus. And another please. Purchase it in hard copy! I adore my reading e-gizmo for travel and to always have with me in case I get stuck in a line at the market or in a snafu on the subway. But not for group discussion of Proust where page numbers vary. It's way too cumbersome to get us all onto the same page and, unfortunately, we can't take time to help the e-readers search for our hard copy page number. Sorry about that.

Best wishes for a happy summer – and joyful Proust reading.

Sharon