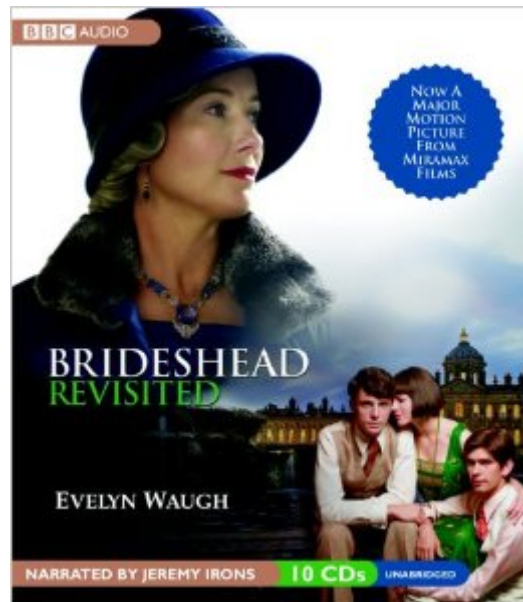


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Brideshead Revisited



Synopsis

Evelyn Waugh's classic novel retold, and now a major motion picture from Miramax. Academy Award and Tony Award Winner Jeremy Irons--who has starred in films such as *Lolita*, *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, and *Reversal of Fortune*--narrates, invoking memories of his performance in the television miniseries. Irons was nominated at that time for an Emmy Award and a Golden Globe for his role as Charles Ryder.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like most great novels, *BRIDESHEAD REVISITED* is about a great many things--not the least of which is the decline of English aristocracy. But at center, Evelyn Waugh's greatest novel (and one of his few non-satirical works) is about religious faith, and how that faith continues to operate in the lives of even those who seem to reject it, and how that faith supports even those who falter badly in it. The story is complex. It is told in the first person by narrator Charles Ryder, who develops a close and possibly homoerotic relationship with aristocrat Sebastian Flyte while the two are students at Oxford. Seduced by the glamor of Flyte's way of life and the beauty of his ancestral home at Brideshead, Ryder becomes deeply involved with Flyte's family as well--a Roman Catholic family in which the various members either use their religion to manipulate others or actively rebel against it. With the passage of time, Sebastian's drinking expands into alcoholism--which appears to be fueled by his guilt at rejecting the church, a rejection which may be based on his own uncertain sexuality. Ryder consequently transfers his affections to Sebastian's sister Julia--but again religion influences their relationship: Julia has made an unfortunate marriage, and although she is willing to engage in

an affair with Ryder, she may not be willing to divorce her husband, an act that will cast her completely outside the bounds of her faith. The characters involved in the story are often extremely charming, but they are not necessarily admirable, and the passage of time in the novel nibbles away at their charm in such a way as to expose their flaws; even the narrator, Charles Ryder, gradually emerges as a somewhat second-rate person of dubious integrity.

Published in 1945, this novel, which Waugh himself sometimes referred to as his "magnum opus," was originally entitled "Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder." The subtitle is important, as it casts light on the themes--the sacred grace and love from God, especially as interpreted by the Catholic church, vs. the secular or profane love as seen in sex and romantic relationships. The tension between these two views of love--and the concept of "sin"--underlie all the action which takes place during the twenty years of the novel and its flashbacks. When the novel opens at the end of World War II, Capt. Charles Ryder and his troops, looking for a billet, have just arrived at Brideshead, the now-dilapidated family castle belonging to Lord Marchmain, a place where Charles Ryder stayed for an extended period just after World War I, the home of his best friend from Oxford, Lord Sebastian Flyte. The story of his relationship with Sebastian, a man who has rejected the Catholicism imposed on him by his devout mother, occupies the first part of the book. Sebastian, an odd person who carries his teddy bear Aloysius everywhere he goes, tries to escape his upbringing and religious obligations through alcohol. Charles feels responsible for Sebastian's welfare, and though there is no mention of any homosexual relationship, Charles does say that it is this relationship which first teaches him about the depths of love. The second part begins when Charles separates from the Flytes and his own family and goes to Paris to study painting. An architectural painter, Charles marries and has a family over the next years.

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