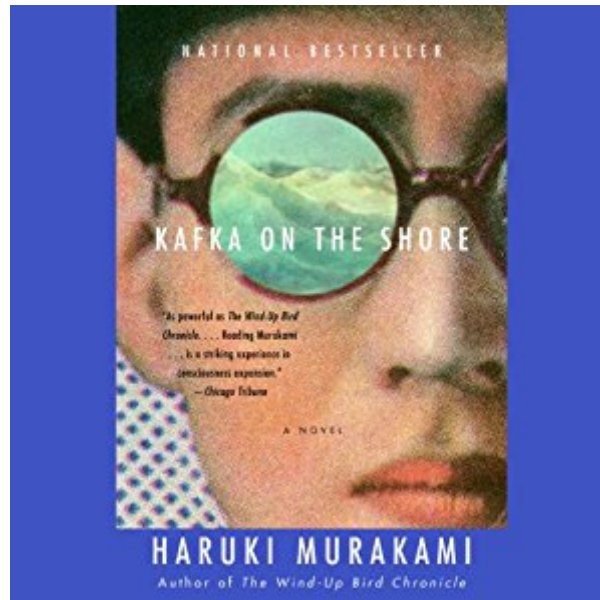


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Kafka On The Shore



Synopsis

With *Kafka on the Shore*, Haruki Murakami gives us a novel every bit as ambitious and expansive as *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, which has been acclaimed both here and around the world for its uncommon ambition and achievement, and whose still-growing popularity suggests that it will be read and admired for decades to come. This magnificent novel has a similarly extraordinary scope and the same capacity to amaze, entertain, and bewitch. A tour de force of metaphysical reality, it is powered by two remarkable characters: a teenage boy, Kafka Tamura, who runs away from home either to escape a gruesome oedipal prophecy or to search for his long-missing mother and sister; and an aging simpleton called Nakata, who never recovered from a wartime affliction and now is drawn toward Kafka for reasons that, like the most basic activities of daily life, he cannot fathom. Their odyssey, as mysterious to them as it is to us, is enriched throughout by vivid accomplices and mesmerizing events. Cats and people carry on conversations, a ghostlike pimp employs a Hegel-quoting prostitute, a forest harbors soldiers apparently unaged since World War II, and rainstorms of fish (and worse) fall from the sky. There is a brutal murder, with the identity of both victim and perpetrator a riddle - yet this, along with everything else, is eventually answered, just as the entwined destinies of Kafka and Nakata are gradually revealed, with one escaping his fate entirely and the other given a fresh start on his own. Extravagant in its accomplishment, *Kafka on the Shore* displays one of the world's truly great storytellers at the height of his powers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This absolutely one of my favorite books. The story takes you on a few twists but was very easy to connect to the main characters and their predicaments.

We are drawn to books that make us feel something, and this one delivers- conjuring up every available emotion from longing to hope to discomfort to wonder. I have not delved into a written world where the characters' thoughts and intentions were so deep and imaginative or the scenes descriptions strike such vivid sensory responses in a long time. Not such a light, fun, or quick read but more a mesmerizing, significant and memorable one.

Wow. If I was able to give this 10 stars, it is one of five books read in my lifetime that I would do so. It is part fantasy, part mystery, parts allegory, horror, ethics and metaphor. It's just truly great writing with profound subject matter neatly disguised by good story telling. Several different storylines converge to make a true symphony of the written word. I put off reading Murakami even though I have a passion for all things Asian, especially Japanese, because I erroneously thought he would be difficult, dry and out there. Not unlike James Joyce. A new Goodreader's friend, also passionate about Japan, told me this was her favorite book and encouraged me to give him a try. I am so glad I listened and moved him up on my list of things to read or it may have taken me more years to experience his greatness. I would like to say to anyone reading this review, please give this a try. It may not strike you as hard as it did me, but for anyone who likes a good story, I can't praise it enough for sheer entertainment (plus....a whole lot more.)

If you're looking for a nice, down to earth tale with a comfortable and predictable plot, you won't like this book. Murakami's style of writing is no holds-barred. He creates a dream-world where fish and leeches have unsettlingly started falling from the sky -- where sentient beings that take the likenesses of Johnnie Walker and Colonel Sanders (Yes, the KFC guy.) intertwine with a teenager, Kafka Tamura, who lived with his father, while his mother and sister had suddenly disappeared years earlier. To try and find his missing family members, or perhaps because of the oedipal prophecy his father had revealed, he runs away from home. His life connects with other characters, such as Nakata, a "not-so-bright," yet very polite individual who has the unusual ability to talk to cats, as well as a steel-witted transgender librarian named Oshima, who seems to understand that meeting Kafka was more than just a chance occurrence. This was my first time reading something from a foreign author, and I was pleasantly surprised. It is written in a very detailed manner which makes it easy to picture landscapes and empathize with the characters, which I liked; however, I felt

that all the detail was unnecessary with certain parts of the book, but Murakami leaves nothing unsaid -- even intricate and sometimes disturbing details. Regardless, I did enjoy the book and I believe I will read another of Murakami's books at some point.

The story is quite dreamy, in a sense. I'm still not sure what was the cause of all the strange events but it really doesn't matter. I feel as if Nakata and Kafka should have interacted; met each other; come to some resolution about Kafka's father's death; the story felt rushed towards the end as if the author wanted to conclude. Nonetheless, I feel the story has meaning; a metaphor for living. It is up to you to make of it what you wish. My metaphor is still unfolding. I invite you to share yours.

I'm an avid reader of Mr. Murakami's work, and I felt right at home with Kafka. While it might be structurally inferior to Windup Bird, I truly cared for the characters---particularly Kafka, Miss Saeki, and Oshima. The ending reminded me somewhat of Sputnik Sweetheart, though obviously different. All in all, it is probably best to read other Murakami books before this one. It seems like Murakami at a very extreme degree of metaphysical and emotional themes, and if you're not in love with Murakami's catalog, then some of Kafka's effect could be lost on you. I was torn between 4 and 5 stars because I try to reserve my 5 stars---which I know is silly because who really cares---but I try to save 5 stars for the very best works, but the amazingly charming cats, particularly Mimi, locks it into 5 stars. Kafka on the Shore is like reading the ghost of a book, and it left me with a sense of loss and understanding that I truly appreciate.

We choose this to read for our book club on the advice of my 23 year old niece. It was an interesting book- filled with metaphors and symbolism, my first reading of Japanese literature. Written by Haruki Murakami, some of the writing was truly beautiful and haunting. It involves a 15 year old runaway, whose story is tied to an old man named Nakata and his ponytailed, truck driver side kick Hoshino. It was rather a dense read and hard for many of my book club to get through and there is one particularly gory part involving cats, so if you have a weak stomach, it may not be for you. The story opens with an incident on a school outing during World War II, and what happened here is never exactly explained, which was a problem for some of the readers in our group. A lot of the loose ends are, however, tied up and I liked the ending. Overall, I would recommend this book because I found it interesting and different.

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