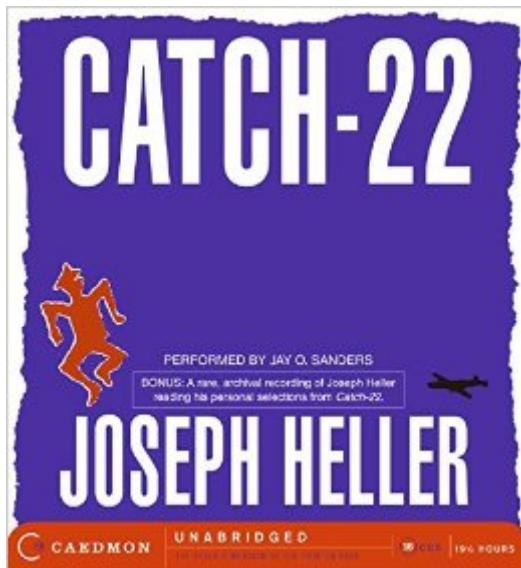


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Catch-22 CD



Synopsis

Catch-22 is like no other novel we have ever read. It has its own style, its own rationale, its own extraordinary character. It moves back and forth from hilarity to horror. It is outrageously funny and strangely affecting. It is totally original. It is set in the closing months of World War II, in an American bomber squadron on a small island off Italy. Its hero is a bombardier named Yossarian, who is frantic and furious because thousands of people he hasn't even met keep trying to kill him. (He has decided to live forever even if he has to die in the attempt.) Catch-22 is a microcosm of the twentieth-century world as it might look to someone dangerously sane. It is a novel that lives and moves and grows with astonishing power and vitality. It is, we believe, one of the strongest creations of the mid-century. Performed by Jay O. Sanders

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I would first like to inform other reviewers that I am a high school junior, read this as part of a choice novel project, and had no trouble grasping the ideas that Joseph Heller presented within his Catch-22. The sarcastic attitude of this novel is conspicuous, and all bonds with reality are dropped with the first character introductions. The humor that has previously been criticized I found to be easy to understand, not monotonous, and a unique aspect to illustrate WW2. This is not to say the humor is for all, because Heller uses many paradoxes (look up definition of "catch-22"), simple one line contradictions, and subtle word choices to draw a laugh-all which represent the personality of the novel. Yes, there are many characters, probably over fifty, yet grasping the names is not important at all times. Of course you quickly get associated with Yossarian and the other main

characters, and chapter do reintroduce people from the early parts of the book. This may be annoying, yet each character is distinct, and there is little chance of confusing Milo, and entrepreneur, with Havermeyer, the elite pilot. In truth, the novel lacks a linear time, but chooses, rather, to define the novel through numerous character sketches, focusing them loosely around Yossarian. By the later chapters of the novel, Heller subtly introduces the gruesome truths of the war, balancing the early humor with more realistic look. It is through this transition that the weight of the situation is elucidated, and by contrasting the final chapters with the first, Heller is able to attract our attention and force us to analyze the war. What is the novel about?

For so many of us growing up in the USA, our high school teachers assigned us Joseph Heller's "Catch-22" as required reading, and I was among those assignees. I'm not sure why the requirement, other than perhaps some Catch-22 type of logic that everyone else was assigning it, so there, must be great, must read. I don't particularly remember liking the novel then, perhaps with no more substantial of a reason than -- just not my style. Reading the novel now, in midlife, my opinion (or my literary style) has changed little, but today, I can attempt to add to "not my style" perhaps a few deeper insights. In this second read, I realize what so fails to appeal to me is Heller's slapstick, absurdist, repetitive and dizzyingly circular style of storytelling. At the same time, I fully realize this is also the appeal of the novel for many: it's absurdity. Indeed, time has tested Heller's topic of war having little logic or reason in the real world, mostly born of individual and governmental insanity, power plays and mere whim, male ego clashing and chest thumping. Few wars seem to have good reason for happening when one considers all the other possibilities of resolution. While leaders sit safely in secure offices on fortressed hilltops, the common soldier takes all the risks, offers up his/her body for battering, endures indescribable torments in battle, and often gives the ultimate sacrifice of life. Shall we debate the virtues of boxing rings for political leaders instead? Yes, war is absurd. And Heller captures this "crazy-making" truth in a crazy-making novel in which characters dance to illogical commands, spin in frustration, and dig themselves in ever deeper as they try harder and harder to dig themselves out. You know... as in war.

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