



The Night Watch

By Sarah Waters

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Moving back through the 1940s, through air raids, blacked-out streets, illicit partying, and sexual adventure, to end with its beginning in 1941, *The Night Watch* tells the story of four Londoners—three women and a young man with a past—whose lives, and those of their friends and lovers, connect in tragedy, stunning surprise and exquisite turns, only to change irreversibly in the shadow of a grand historical event.

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The Night Watch By Sarah Waters Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Waters begins *Night Watch* at the end of her tale in 1947 and works her way backwards to 1941. Since she ensures that characters don't spoil the freshness of earlier events by leaking important information, the first part includes a series of conversations that coyly allude to the characters' pasts and make the narrative slightly difficult to comprehend. The feat of entering this tale aurally is compounded by having to follow three separate narrative lines, which Waters later connects with clever Dickensian precision. Juanita McMahon performs the work persuasively. What she lacks in vocal range, she makes up by endowing characters with accents and speech patterns to reflect distinctions of social class. She gives the character Kay's voice such deep Dietrich-like sexual innuendo that one wonders why her lovers abandon her. Recorded Books politely reminds listeners which disk they have started and repeats the last sentence of the previous. Both are welcome features. Despite the initial challenge, *Night Watch* is a skillfully written historical account of love of all persuasions trying to survive the dark prospects of London during the blitz.

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From [The New Yorker](#)

In the fall of 1947, an androgynous woman walks aimlessly through the scarred streets of London, adjusting her cufflinks. An ambulance driver during the Blitz, she now does nothing more dramatic than go to the cinema, arriving midway through a film and watching the second half first—"People's pasts, you know, being so much more interesting than their futures." Likewise, this historical novel begins at the end and moves backward, tracing the lives of its characters from peacetime Britain to the early years of the war. The centerpiece of the book is set in 1944, when the characters come fully alive, creeping through blackout London—an apocalyptic landscape of rubble and ash, searchlights and fires. Waters, acclaimed for her Victorian-era romps, has done meticulous research, and renders wartime scenes with unnerving authenticity.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Shaking off the reductive expectations of her self-described "lesbian Victorian romp[s]," *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith*, Sarah Waters proves she's no one-trick pony with *The Night Watch*. This doesn't come as a surprise to the critical colloquy, which paints Waters as a vigorous writer whose books wear their tireless research elegantly. *The Oregonian* goes so far to call *The Night Watch* "a writer's field guide to creating rich characters in fiction." Critics even applaud her transition to a third-person narrator. The only wobble is Waters' decision to tell the story in reverse. For a few critics the risky narrative device robs the book of its suspense, but in the final tally most writers agree that the view from the other end of the telescope is "an elegant and profound device" (*Guardian*).

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Linda Christopher:

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