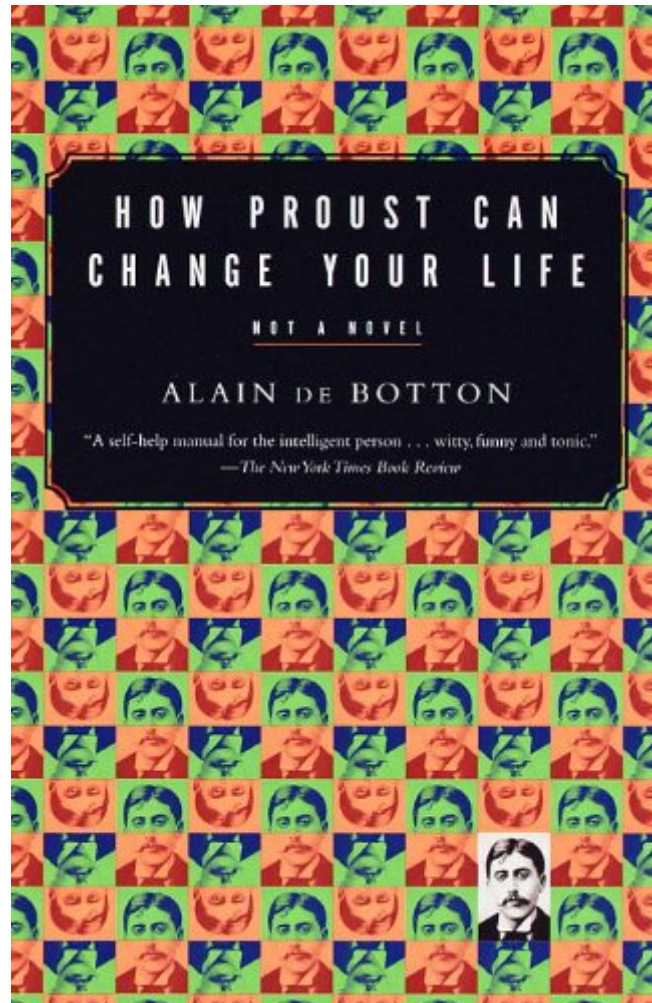


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# How Proust Can Change Your Life (Vintage International)



## Synopsis

Alain de Botton combines two unlikely genres--literary biography and self-help manual--in the hilarious and unexpectedly practical *How Proust Can Change Your Life*. Who would have thought that Marcel Proust, one of the most important writers of our century, could provide us with such a rich source of insight into how best to live life? Proust understood that the essence and value of life was the sum of its everyday parts. As relevant today as they were at the turn of the century, Proust's life and work are transformed here into a no-nonsense guide to, among other things, enjoying your vacation, reviving a relationship, achieving original and unclichéd articulation, being a good host, recognizing love, and understanding why you should never sleep with someone on a first date. It took de Botton to find the inspirational in Proust's essays, letters and fiction and, perhaps even more surprising, to draw out a vivid and clarifying portrait of the master from between the lines of his work. Here is Proust as we have never seen or read him before: witty, intelligent, pragmatic. He might well change your life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have tackled only "Swann's Way" from the seven volumes of Marcel Proust's "In Search of Lost

Time," formerly translated as "Remembrance of Things Past." You need not have read Proust to thoroughly enjoy this concise 197-page book in nine chapters. When you finish it, however, you will be seriously contemplating having a go at Proust's masterpiece in its entirety. Consider the chapter titles. The fourth is "How to Suffer Successfully." The seventh is "How to Open Your Eyes." The eighth is "How to be Happy in Love." The last, and my favorite, is "How to Put Books Down." The author draws on the ideas and characters found in Proust's masterpiece and renders Proust's response to these issues. All of this is very wittily done. The whole thing is leavened with fascinating biographical tidbits concerning this strange, brilliant man, Marcel Proust. In that last chapter Mr. de Botton (apparently a Brit) presents us with Proust's view of books and their proper place in life: "It is one of the great and wonderful characteristics of good books (which allows us to see the role at once essential yet limited that reading may play in our spiritual lives) that for the author they may be called "Conclusions" but for the reader "Incitements." We feel very strongly that our own wisdom begins where that of the author leaves off, and we would like him to provide us with answers when all he is able to do is provide us with desires . . . . That is the value of reading, and also its inadequacy. To make it into a discipline is to give too large a role to what is only an incitement. Reading is on the threshold of the spiritual life; it can introduce us to it: it does not constitute it.

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