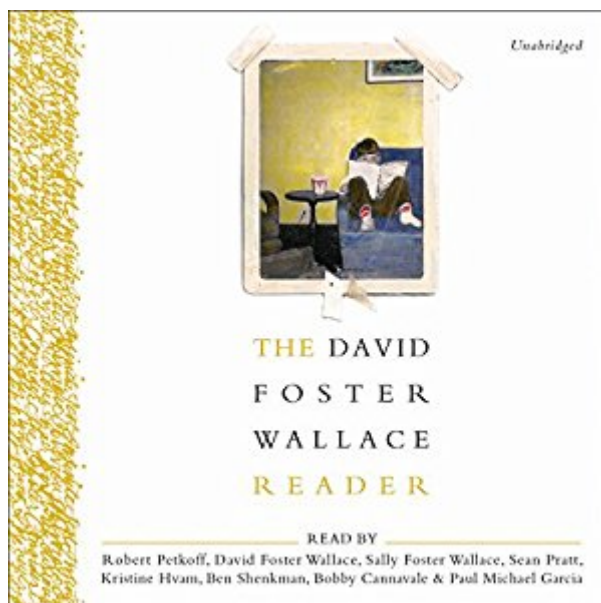


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# The David Foster Wallace Reader



## Synopsis

Where do you begin with a writer as original and brilliant as David Foster Wallace? Here - with a carefully considered selection of his extraordinary body of work, chosen by a range of great writers, critics, and those who worked with him most closely. This volume presents his most dazzling, funniest, and most heartbreaking work - essays like his famous cruise-ship piece, "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again," excerpts from his novels *The Broom of the System*, *Infinite Jest*, and *The Pale King*, and legendary stories like "The Depressed Person". Wallace's explorations of morality, self-consciousness, addiction, sports, love, and the many other subjects that occupied him are represented here in both fiction and nonfiction. Collected for the first time are Wallace's first published story, "The View from Planet Trillaphon as Seen In Relation to the Bad Thing" and a selection of his work as a writing instructor, including reading lists, grammar guides, and general guidelines for his students. A dozen writers and critics, including Hari Kunzru, Anne Fadiman, and Nam Le, add afterwords to favorite pieces, expanding our appreciation of the unique pleasures of Wallace's writing. The result is an astonishing volume that shows the breadth and range of "one of America's most daring and talented writers" (Los Angeles Times Book Review) whose work was full of humor, insight, and beauty.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 48 hours and 45 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Hachette Audio

Audible.com Release Date: November 11, 2014

Language: English

ASIN: B00P9W7ATS

Best Sellers Rank: #54 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Literary

Collections #140 in Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Anthologies

## Customer Reviews

This book is a rare edition of David Foster Wallace's oeuvre, a memorial or epitaph of his greatest works after he died a tragic suicidal death. One of the greatest American writers of all time, and a true genius, Wallace spent his years writing to speak for those who couldn't speak for themselves and devoting his life to the impoverished and disabused. He was born and raised in Illinois and

played on the tennis team in middle school. Attending college, he got a B.A. in philosophy and English and went on to get an M.F.A. In Creative Writing. He married Karen Green, his wife, in 2004. Wallace spent his life writing beautiful works of fiction and nonfiction, trying to analyze, observe, and reform the world around him whilst teaching and inspiring his students of literature (as he was a professor of literature at the University of Illinois) to become social reformers themselves. Known as the 'Grammar Nazi' by the U-Illinois student populace, Wallace's alias was a misnomer, bidding him injustice. He was actually devoted to changing society. With his quick wit and philosophical sagacity, Wallace changed the world with his writing, inspiring many writers and activists across the nation. Yet Wallace was depressed throughout his life, so he died a tragic death, committing suicide after finding no meaning, leaving his wife devastated. Yet, if Karen Green were to read this, she should know that her husband, a genius and a compassionate soul, did not die in vain, for he inspired many people, and I, a writer, happen to be one of the many. I take great joy and pleasure in reading Wallace's work. He has touched my heart, kindled my imagination, and inspired me to write well. His sacrifices have inspired me to pursue the same ambitions and motivations he sought after in the first place, and his work truly edifies the literary imagination and stimulates the ideals we hold true for social justice. Karen, if you are reading this, I want you to know that your husband was a great man. He died not in vain, but as a hero--a hero who will forever live in my heart. So despair not, for he loved you, as much as you loved him. A great man he was, and he will never be forgotten. Thank you for the great painting you created, by the way. It was absolutely beautiful. May you fare well in all you do. As for anyone else, this book is the perfect culmination of all of Wallace's masterful works: short stories, novel excerpts, essays, and even teaching materials. It is gold-plated with a cloth binding and has a fragment of the painting Ms. Green created for this beautiful anthology. A true memorial, this book is a piece to be kept forever and ever in one's library, past down from generation to generation as this amalgamation of Wallace's work captures the essence of his mind, heart, and soul. A true work of art, a beautiful folio, this book is a must-have for Wallace aficionados, for the illustrations it contains are immense as we read it with pleasure, for dear David will live in our hearts forevermore.

David Foster Wallace must have been one strange and wonderful cat. I don't know for sure since I did not know him or even follow his career and personal life till only recently, but my impression of him through his writing and interviews tell me I'm right. He was a writer who shared much of his personal life experience in essays yet he was an introvert (or perhaps rather, not an extrovert) at heart, literally sweating at times over how he would come across during speeches and interviews.

As a professor of English at a number of colleges, he was a real taskmaster, a grammar/usage Nazi of sorts, a peculiarity perhaps passed on through his mom's genes (Sally Foster Wallace is also a professor of English and has written reference books on usage. His father is the Professor Emeritus of Moral Philosophy at the University of Illinois. Those are some high quality genes, academically speaking). Wallace was an admitted Depressive, had been since a young age. His first published piece *The Planet Trillaphon As It Stands In Relation to The Bad Thing* (Amherst Review, 1984), relates the autobiographical tale of a youth on antidepressants (Tofranil which the narrator fittingly renames Trillaphon because the name sounds more like the sonic vibe it induces) which he likens to living on another planet. Sadly those very antidepressants, their inevitable ineffectiveness after twenty years of use, lead to Wallace's demise (suicide by hanging in 2008). I've been listening to the anthology entitled *The David Foster Wallace Reader* on my iPod and have been illuminated by his high beam brilliance. I regret to say I've avoided his influence until now, for some reason putting off reading *Infinite Jest* (his best known fiction work) and as a result just not realizing that there was so much more material to consume. The anthology is not perfect in that it could never be, since devotees of Wallace will always recall an especially favorite essay, chapter, short story, or speech that has not been included in this volume. For interested novices, however, the DFW reader is essential. But, hold on, before you fanatics start heckling this semi-bold statement, consider the fact that one can always re-read, for example, *Infinite Jest* in its entirety. I would also posit that the DFW reader exposes the novice to a wide variety of Wallace's material that one might miss otherwise, even if one was aware of most of his major stuff. For instance it includes the author's own teaching materials from various English courses he taught while at, I'm assuming, Pomona College in California. This affords a unique insight into Wallace's philosophy of discipline regarding all types of writing, usage, grammar, etc..., and though to some readers this level of ephemera may seem tedious, I believe it is if not essential, at least edifying if one presumes to really understand this guy. Wallace is as comfortable writing about how ubiquitous television viewing influences modern fiction as he is espousing the delights of Garner's *A Dictionary of Modern American Usage*, just as adept at fictionalizing Alec Trebek and the machinations of a Jeopardy grand champion as he is chronicling a week-long Caribbean cruise on a ship he dubs the Nadir. He rallies from an essay diagnosing his own tennis prowess (and loss thereof) as a top-ranked player on the Midwestern junior circuit to the deconstruction of Roger Federer's gracefully 'beautiful' play at Wimbledon. DFW's best work is infused with rampant passion. We learn of his personal doctrine of social discourse, which he argues should come across as more sincere and salutary. Later in his career he eschewed the kind of irony and cynicism which seemed to purvey post millennial

fiction. When I was nine years old, my parents thought it might be fun to treat their boy to the pastoral spectacle that was the Danbury Fair; about an hour away from our New Jersey digs up in Connecticut. I have a vague memory of the Midway and all the rich and sugary food, the midget car races and the some-sort-of-plastic or papier-mâché giant-sized statue of Paul Bunyan and his blue Ox (Babe). What I recall very clearly though, is having what I considered the singular pleasure, and at the same time the ignominy of watching my father drive a caboose harnessed to a large bird in an event known as the Ostrich Races. In his irascibly funny essay about the Illinois State Fair, *Getting Away from Already Pretty Much Being Away from It All*, Wallace brings the memories of county fair quirkiness all back home. By featuring his own brand of schismatic Midwesterner-turned-big-city-journalist sensibility, he self deprecates his way through cooking contests, vertiginous carnival rides, all sorts of stabled livestock displays. But Wallace digs much deeper into this annual bucolic splendor, revealing what he believes the underlying purpose for such portly pageantry and garish pomp. It turns out, rural types, isolated as they may be over the course of the year, yearn for that human connection, that fellowship, at least for one week out of fifty-two. By the same token, city dwellers have had their fill of other people invading personal space diurnally, so much so, they tend to get the urge to escape from it all for seven days or so per annum. Having lived in the land of David Foster Wallace for a few weeks, however, I can only hanker to remain there forever.

I love DFW!

This is a work of art - I enjoyed my first copy so much that I bought an additional 4 copies - I now own 2% of world's copies of this book. It will only go up in price and value. I may gift my additional copies at appropriate times over the coming years. For those of you who bought a copy - I hope you enjoy it as much as I do and have.

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