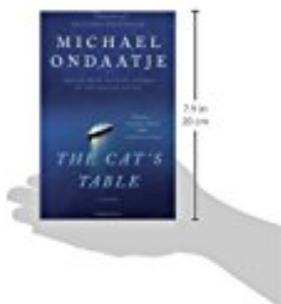


[PDF] The Cat's Table (Vintage International)

Michael Ondaatje - pdf download free book



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Description:

Michael Ondaatje's finely wrought new novel chronicles a young boy's passage from Sri Lanka to London onboard the Oronsay, both as it unfolds and in hindsight. Glancing off the author's own biography, the story follows 11-year-old Michael as he immerses himself in the hidden corners and relationships of a temporary floating world, overcoming its physical boundaries with the expanse of his imagination. The boy's companions at the so-called cat's table, where the ship's unconnected strays dine together, become his friends and teachers, each leading him closer to the key that unlocks the Oronsay's mystery decades later. Elegantly structured and completely absorbing, *The Cat's Table* is a quiet masterpiece by a writer at the height of his craft. --Mia Lipman

Guest Reviewer: Abraham Verghese on *The Cat's Table* by Michael Ondaatje

One means by which I have kept track of the passage of time is by the appearance of a new Michael Ondaatje book. I've loved his poetry (and I still know long passages from *Secular Love* by heart). I love the way his books of poetry or prose, fiction or nonfiction (and some of his books are hybrids that seem to be all those genres in one book) are so carefully crafted. I must have read *In the Skin of a Lion* 10 times, disassembling it to see how this magic alchemy came about.

You can imagine my excitement when *The Cat's Table*, Ondaatje's latest, arrived on my desk. I found myself reading aloud with a loved one, savoring, just a few pages a day that were carefully rationed. Reading aloud was a way to make every morsel last longer, have it linger on tongue and ear. I can't think of a book I've read where the sense of a journey—in this case, a ship going from Ceylon to England via the Suez Canal—is so carefully mirrored in the reader's experience. I had the sense of movement, of a big ship inching away from the shore, and of seeing one's former life recede. At the assigned dinner table (from which the title derives), one meets fellow travelers and the brief bios they present to the world. With each passing day, the narrator finds that these constructed selves give way to something deeper, something overstated, or something dark and ominous, or at other times they modestly conceal a being that is incredibly beautiful and heroic. As the journey progresses, the many characters and the flavors each adds begin to meld together, and I had a sense of the narrative soup thickening, the pace increasing. Indeed, by the last few pages it was as though we had arrived all too soon at the bottom of a most delicious cioppino or bouillabaisse. The fleshy items were dispensed with, the shells all removed, leaving only those last few spoonfuls, and in them a wise world, a complete world, a world distilled. When it was over, I had that sense one lives for as a reader: the feeling of having discovered a truth not just about the imagined world of the novelist, but also about oneself, a truth one can now carry forth into the world, into the rest of one's life....

Make haste to get this book, then do what I did: Fill up the tub, ration yourself to a few pages a day, read aloud, preferably to someone as crazy about Ondaatje as you are. Be disciplined. Don't exceed your ration. It is a long voyage but it will go by too soon. So relish. Enjoy!

Abraham Verghese is the author of the internationally best-selling novel *Cutting for Stone*, which has been translated into 23 languages and spent over a year on the *New York Times* best-seller list. He is also the author of *My Own Country*, a 1994 NBCC Finalist and a *Time* Best Book of the Year, and *The Tennis Partner*, a *New York Times* Notable Book. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, he has published essays and short stories in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Esquire*, *Granta*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and elsewhere. He is currently Professor and Senior Associate Chair for the Theory and Practice of Medicine at Stanford University and lives in Palo Alto, California.

--This text refers to the edition.

Review

"Wondrous. . . . A new form of literary magic." —*The San Francisco Chronicle*

"Mesmerizing. . . . As he did in his great novel, *The English Patient*, Ondaatje conjures images that pull strangers into the vivid rooms of his imagination, their detail illumined by his words." —*The New York Times Book Review*

"Lithe and quietly profound: a tale about the magic of adolescence and the passing strangers who help tip us into adulthood in ways we don't become aware of until much later." —*The Washington*

Post

“Enthralling and poignant. . . . A captivating reminder that it can take decades to comprehend the past, let alone to make amends with it.” —*The Seattle Times*

“To capture truly any moment of life is an achievement of art. To find captured, in a single work, such disparate experiences—of youth and age, of action and reflection, of innocence and experience—is a rare pleasure. If each of Ondaatje’s novels is like a new flower, then this one smells particularly sweet.” —Claire Messud, *The New York Review of Books*

“For my money, Michael Ondaatje is the greatest living writer in the English language. . . . The wide-eyed love of the world and its wonders, the kindness he offers to his characters and readers, the elegant lyricism of his sentences, the joy of storytelling—all that is great in his other books is fully present in *The Cat’s Table*. . . . Mr. Ondaatje restores belief in the beauty and power of literature and, by extension, of humanity. In this dark, terrible world, *The Cat’s Table* has healing powers.” —Aleksandar Hemon, WSJ.com

“Ondaatje teaches us that the most marvelous sights are those most often overlooked. It’s a lesson that turns this supple story, like the meals at the cat’s table, into a feast.” —*Los Angeles Times*

“A lovely, shimmering book. . . . Ondaatje succeeds so well in capturing the anticipation and inquisitiveness of boyhood.” —Janet Maslin, *The New York Times*

“A great master may have written his finest book in a long career of fine books.” —Alan Heathcock, *Salon*

“Ondaatje brings all his literary trademarks to *The Cat’s Table*, from luminous prose to an amazing sense of economy. He makes every character, image and line resonate like a tuning fork. . . . Elegant and elegiac, *The Cat’s Table* is the author’s most intimate work.” —*The Miami Herald*

“Michael Ondaatje has written some of the most inimitable works in the English language; *The Cat’s Table* yet again dignifies literature in every important way possible. This novel is a completely original orchestration of a coming-of-age story, memoir, maritime adventure as powerful as Conrad or Stevenson. The lyricism of the prose is astonishing.” —Howard Norman, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto)

“A gorgeous piece of writing. . . . Ondaatje has always been capable of conjuring up mesmerizing images to draw in a reader, but with *The Cat’s Table* he holds back just enough so the lyricism doesn’t overwhelm the story.” —*The Christian Science Monitor*

“A joy and a lark to read. . . . *The Cat’s Table* expertly strums the cords of autobiography without overdoing it. As a result [the book] vibrates with the borrowed intimacy of real life.” —*The Boston Globe*

“Masterful. . . . Haunting and seductive.” —*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Elegant and beautiful . . . As in *Anil’s Ghost*, *The Cat’s Table* employs a deceptively light touch, hiding a carefully constructed and tender hymn to the enigma of journey.” —*The Independent* (London)

“*The Cat’s Table* is just as skillfully wrought as Ondaatje’s magnum opus [*The English Patient*], but

its picaresque childhood adventure gives it a special power and intimacy. . . . He is a master at creating characters, whom he chooses to present, memorably, as individuals. This choice is of a piece with the freshness and originality that are the hallmarks of *The Cat's Table*." —*The Wall Street Journal*

"Impressive. . . . Wonderful. . . . The beauty of Ondaatje's writing is in its swift accuracy; it sings with the simple precision of the gaze. . . . Richly enjoyable, often very funny, and gleams like a really smart liner on a sunny day." —Philip Hensher, *The Daily Telegraph* (London)

"Ondaatje couldn't write a banal sentence if he tried. . . . On its surface, *The Cat's Table* may be a magically real reworking of a classic boy's adventure tale. Deep down, it has the poignancy of a life's summation." —Pico Iyer, *Time*

"Mr. Ondaatje's greatest talents lie in simply constructed, minimalist descriptions. His images are so meticulously created that the most obvious statements present themselves as sublime realizations. He doesn't disappoint." —*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

"Ondaatje is justly recognized as a master of literary craft. . . . The novel tells of a journey from childhood to the adult world, as well as a passage from the homeland to another country, something of a Dantean experience." —Annie Proulx, *The Guardian* (UK)

"Michael Ondaatje never writes the same book twice [though] what remains constant is precise, luminous language. . . . Ondaatje's vision, though dark, is unfailingly generous and humane." —*The Oregonian*

"Elegant, evocative. . . . Whatever its autobiographical roots, there's a strong sense that this story—one with echoes of Conrad and Kipling—is a tale Michael Ondaatje someday was destined to tell. It's a pleasure for us, his readers, to share in that telling." —Bookreporter.com

"[Ondaatje's] sentences have a sonorous capacity, a soft but urgent tone that coaxes rather than demands attention. Acrobatics are eschewed for a supple, precise flexibility. It's a gift shared by other English-language writers who spent significant time surrounded by diverse tongues: E.M. Forster, for example, and Graham Greene." —*The Denver Post*

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