
The Listen List

Outstanding Audio Narration 2014

The Listen List: Outstanding Audiobook Narration Council

The Listen List: Outstanding Audiobook Narration Council members include Jen Baker, Reader Services Librarian, Seattle Public Library; Di Herald, Program & Outreach Manager, Delta County Libraries (CO); Joyce Saricks, chair, Readers' Advisory Consultant, Downers Grove, Illinois; Neal Wyatt, Virginia Commonwealth University; Renee Young, NovelList audiobook project team lead, Durham, North Carolina.

The Listen List highlights extraordinary narrators and audio experiences that merit special attention by general adult listeners and the librarians who work with them. Titles are selected because they are a pleasure to listen to and make one reluctant to stop listening. Titles are also named to the list because the narration of the book creates a new experience, offering listeners something they could not create by their own visual reading, and because the narrator achieves an outstanding performance in terms of voice, accents, pitch, tone, inflection, rhythm, and pace. This juried list, designed for avid listeners and those new to the joys of being read a story, includes fiction and nonfiction and features voices that enthrall, delight, and inspire.

THE 2014 WINNERS

Brown, Daniel James. *The Boys in the Boat*. Narrated by Edward Herrmann. Recorded Books/Penguin Audio. (ISBN: 9781470352509).

Herrmann's lively and emotionally connected reading captures the excitement and detail of this real-life Cinderella story of the US rowing team's journey to the 1936 Berlin Olympics. His masterful command of language and cadence, combined with his deft characterizations, makes this inspiring story a must-listen.

Listen-Alikes

- Lansing, Alfred. *Endurance: Shackleton's Incredible Voyage*. Narrated by Simon Prebble. Blackstone Audio.
- Hillenbrand, Laura. *Seabiscuit: An American Legend*. Narrated by George Newbern. Books on Tape.
- Pomerantz, Gary M. *Wilt, 1962*. Narrated by Stephen Hoye. Books on Tape.

Heyer, Georgette. *The Grand Sophy*. Narrated by Sarah Woodward. NAXOS AudioBooks. (ISBN: 9781843797555).

Recently arrived on the London social scene, the indomitable Sophy Stanton-Lacey wreaks her own brand of delightful havoc in this charming Regency romp. With a lively pace and deliciously upper crust accent, Woodward's mirthful tone emphasizes the story's comically formal dialogue and Austen-esque romantic chemistry.

Listen-Alikes

- Austen, Jane. *Emma*. Narrated by Juliet Stevenson. NAXOS AudioBooks.

FROM COMMITTEES OF RUSA

- Willig, Lauren. *The Mischief of the Mistletoe*. Narrated by Kate Reading. Recorded Books/Penguin Audio.
- Quinn, Julia. *What Happens in London*. Narrated by Rosalyn Landor. Books on Tape.

Ephron, Nora. *Heartburn*. Narrated by Meryl Streep. Books on Tape/Random House Audio. (ISBN: 9780385367301).

Streep narrates celebrity chef Rachel Samstat's account of her husband's betrayal with all the unflagging energy of a pregnant woman scorned, aggrieved, and bereft. Her superb performance, flavored by her wryly snarky and campy yet intimate narration, gives voice to Ephron's unique brand of smart humor and social commentary.

Listen-Alikes

- Tyler, Anne. *Back When We Were Grownups*. Narrated by Blair Brown. Books on Tape.
- Lipman, Elinor. *The Family Man*. Narrated by Jonathan Davis. Blackstone Audio.
- Weiner, Jennifer. *Good in Bed*. Narrated by Laura Hicks. BBC Audiobooks America.

Baker, Jo. *Longbourn*. Narrated by Emma Fielding. Books on Tape/Random House Audio. (ISBN: 9780804149426).

Fielding narrates Baker's extraordinary revisionist take on *Pride and Prejudice* with a quiet, shimmering assurance, as she exposes the upstairs-downstairs dynamics of the Bennet family. Her elegant delivery and mastery of pitch, rhythm, and emphasis turn each sentence into a seduction.

Listen-Alikes

- Fowles, John. *French Lieutenant's Woman*. Narrated by Paul Shelley. Chivers Audio Books.
- Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. Narrated by Juliet Stevenson. NAXOS AudioBooks.
- Klausmann, Liza. *Tigers in Red Weather*. Narrated by Katherine Kellgren. Recorded Books/Hachette Audio.

Gaiman, Neil. *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*. Narrated by Neil Gaiman. Harper Audio. (ISBN: 9780062263032).

Gaiman, as both author and narrator, immerses listeners in a modern fairy tale in which two stalwart children pit themselves against dark and relentless terrors. Through an exquisite management of pace and inflection, his voice becomes the story's doorway just as surely as any rabbit hole or wardrobe.

Listen-Alikes

- Connolly, John. *The Book of Lost Things*. Narrated by Steven Crossley. Recorded Books.
- Byatt, A. S. *Ragnarok*. Narrated by Harriet Walter. Brilliance Audio.
- Mosse, Kate. *The Winter Ghosts*. Narrated by Julian Rhind-Tutt. Recorded Books.

Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *Oleander Girl*. Narrated by

Sneha Mathan. Recorded Books/Simon & Schuster Audio. (ISBN: 9781470334420).

Upon the death of her grandfather, Korobi learns a shocking family secret and, postponing her wedding, journeys to America, searching for truths that must be discovered before her own life can really begin. Mathan voices an array of exquisite accents and entrancing cadences to imbue Korobi's quest with the spicy flavor of India.

Listen-Alikes

- Cisneros, Sandra. *Caramelo*. Narrated by Sandra Cisneros. AudioGo/Blackstone Audio.
- Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Unaccustomed Earth*. Narrated by Sarita Choudhury and Ajay Naidu. Random House/Books on Tape.
- Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. Narrated by Gwendoline Yeo. Phoenix Audio.

Kay, Guy Gavriel. *River of Stars*. Narrated by Simon Vance. Recorded Books. (ISBN: 9781470327521).

While barbarians attack the decadent government of Kitai, a fantasy world resembling ancient China, a young man emerges from the provinces to save the empire and becomes a legend. Vance manages the sweeping plot, including a large cast and action-rich details, while masterfully conveying the lyrical, elegiac tone that pervades the novel.

Listen-Alikes

- Pressfield, Steven. *Gates of Fire*. Narrated by George Guidall. Recorded Books.
- Iggulden, Conn. *Genghis: Birth of an Empire*. Narrated by Stefan Rudnicki. Blackstone Audio.
- Shaara, Michael. *Killer Angels*. Narrated by Stephen Hoye. Books on Tape.

Gilbert, Elizabeth. *The Signature of All Things*. Narrated by Juliet Stevenson. Penguin Audio/Blackstone Audio. (ISBN: 9781482927757).

Stevenson's sublimely melodious, richly inflected voice brings myriad characters, places, and even plants and animals to life in this story of a fictional 19th century botanist. Alma Whittaker's goal of finding a connection between all living things takes her on a solo quest to exotic places on this journey of serendipitous self-discovery.

Listen-Alikes

- Willis, Connie. *Bellwether*. Narrated by Kate Reading. Blackstone Audio.
- Grenville, Kate. *The Lieutenant*. Narrated by Nicholas Bell. Bolinda Audio/Brilliance Audio.
- Kingsolver, Barbara. *Prodigal Summer*. Narrated by Barbara Kingsolver. Recorded Books.

Meyer, Philipp. *The Son*. Narrated by Will Patton, Scott Shepherd, Kate Mulgrew, and Clifton Collins, Jr. Harper Audio. (ISBN: 9780062280954).

Through three interwoven story lines, this powerful, sprawling family saga maps the history of Texas from 1849 onward. A cast of expert narrators immerse listeners in time and place through their voices alone, exquisitely rendering characters and effectively dramatizing this captivating audio production.

Listen-Alikes

- Le May, Alan. *The Searchers*. Narrated by Tom Stechschulte, Richard Ferrone, and James Jenner. Recorded Books.
- Follett, Ken. *Fall of Giants*. Narrated by John Lee. Books on Tape.
- McCarthy, Cormac. *All the Pretty Horses*. Narrated by Frank Muller. Harper Audio/Recorded Books.

Russell, Karen. *Vampires in the Lemon Grove*. Narrated by Arthur Morey, Joy Osmanski, Kaleo Griffith, Jesse Bernstein, Mark Bramhall, Michael Bybee, Romy Rosemont, and Robbie Daymond. Books on Tape. (ISBN: 9780385367462).

Quirky, innovative, and brightly new, Russell's collection of short stories blurs the line between horror, fantasy, and myth. Her impressive scope is well matched by the diverse narrators voicing the collection—all of whom fully realize her eerie eclecticism in accent, mood, pace, and quiet terror.

Listen-Alikes

- Donoghue, Emma. *Astray*. Narrated by Kristine Hvam, James Langton, Robert Petkoff, Suzanne Toren, and Dion Graham. Hachette/Blackstone Audio.
- Du Maurier, Daphne. *Echoes from the Macabre*. Narrated by Valentine Dyll. Blackstone Audio.
- Egan, Jennifer. *A Visit from the Goon Squad*. Narrated by Roxana Ortega. Blackstone Audio.

Trollope, Anthony. *The Warden*. Narrated by David Shaw-Parker. NAXOS AudioBooks. (ISBN: 9781843796862).

Shaw-Parker inhabits the role of Trollope's amiable narrator in this social drama of English village life as he companionably guides readers through the often-amusing perils of ecclesiastical politics. With a splendid mix of gleeful pomposity and heartfelt sympathy, he portrays the whimsical cast and their stories just as Trollope must have imagined them.

Listen-Alikes

- Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Cranford*. Narrated by Nadia May. Blackstone Audio.
- Wodehouse, P. G. *My Man Jeeves*. Narrated by Jonathan Cecil. Blackstone Audio.
- Dickens, Charles. *Pickwick Papers*. Read by David Timson. Naxos AudioBooks.

Brooks, Max. *World War Z*. Narrated by a full cast. Books on Tape. (ISBN: 9780449807897).

Melancholy in tone and rich in social insights rather than action-packed disaster, this futuristic apocalyptic "mockumentary" of life after the zombie wars features vivid characterizations and smart, provocative commentary. The well-staged interviews performed by an all-star cast of 40 skilled narrators project a you-are-there feel.

Listen-Alikes

- Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Narrated by a full cast. Recorded Books.
- Card, Orson, Scott. *Earth Unaware*. Narrated by a full cast. Macmillan Audio.
- Whitehead, Colson. *Zone One*. Narrated by Beresford Bennett. Books on Tape.