
The Listen List 2012

*The RUSA CODES
Listen List Council*

The Listen List: Outstanding Audiobook Narration Council

The Listen List: Outstanding Audiobook Narration Council contributing members: Jodi L. Israel, library technology expert and veteran audiobook reviewer, Birmingham, Alabama; Bonnie Kunzel, youth services and adolescent literacy consultant, Germantown, Tennessee; Joyce Saricks, Dominican University, River Forest, Illinois; Kaite Stover, readers' services manager, Kansas City (MO) Public Library; and Neal Wyatt, chair, Virginia Commonwealth University.

The Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) has announced its selection for the 2012 Listen List: Outstanding Audiobook Narration juried list.

Established in 2010 by the Collection Development and Evaluation Section (CODES) of RUSA, the council seeks to highlight extraordinary listening experiences that merit special attention by general adult listeners and the librarians who work with them. The Listen List recognizes and honors the narrators who create these experiences. Titles are selected because they are a pleasure to listen to and make one reluctant to stop listening; 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 inaugural juried list, designed for avid listeners and those new to the joys of being read a story, includes literary and genre fiction, memoir, and history and features voices that enthrall, delight, and inspire.

THE 2012 WINNERS

Willis, Connie. *All Clear*. Narrated by Katherine Kellgren. Brilliance Audio. (ISBN: 978-1-4418-7576-1).

This sequel to *Blackout*, a stellar science fiction adventure, follows the plight of a group of historians from 2060, trapped in WWII England during the Blitz. In a narrative tour de force, Kellgren brings to life a large cast of characters, including a pair of street-smart urchins who capture the hearts of characters and listeners alike.

Listen-Alikes

- Bloom, Amy. *Away*. Narrated by Barbara Rosenblat. High-Bridge.
- King, Laurie R. *Pirate King*. Narrated by Jenny Sterlin. Recorded Books.
- Brooks, Geraldine. *Year of Wonders*. Narrated by Josephine Bailey. Books on Tape.

Fey, Tina. *Bossypants*. Narrated by Tina Fey. Hachette Audio. (ISBN: 978-1-60941-969-1). AudioGO. (ISBN: 978-1-60941-719-2).

In a very funny memoir made decidedly funnier by its reader, Tina Fey relates sketches and memories of her time at Saturday Night Live and Second City as well as the difficulties of balancing career and motherhood. In a voice dripping

with wit, she acts out the book, adding extra aural elements that print simply cannot convey.

Listen-Alikes

- Sedaris, David. *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim*. Narrated by David Sedaris. Hachette Audio.
- Crosley, Sloane. *I Was Told There'd Be Cake*. Narrated by Sloane Crosley. Penguin Audio.
- Vowell, Sarah. *The Partly Cloudy Patriot*. Narrated by Sarah Vowell. Simon & Schuster Audio.

Mosley, Walter. *The Last Days of Ptolemy Grey*. Narrated by Dominic Hoffman. Penguin Audio. (ISBN: 978-0-1424-2856-6). Books on Tape. (ISBN: 978-0-3078-7583-9).

Dominic Hoffman reads this elegiac novel of memory and redemption with fierce grace, inhabiting Mosley's characters with voices perfectly crafted in pitch and rhythm. His rough, gravely narration manages the pace and mood of the book with astounding skill, brilliantly capturing the mental clarity and fog of ninety-one-year-old Ptolemy Grey's world.

Listen-Alikes

- O'Nan, Stewart. *Emily, Alone*. Narrated by Andrea Gallo. Recorded Books.
- Keyes, Daniel. *Flowers for Algernon*. Narrated by Jeff Woodman. Recorded Books.
- Tyler, Anne. *Noah's Compass*. Narrated by Arthur Morey. Random House Audio. Books on Tape.

Ebert, Roger. *Life Itself: A Memoir*. Narrated by Edward Herrmann. Hachette Audio. (ISBN: 978-1-6094-1035-3). AudioGO. (ISBN: 978-1-61113-792-7).

Ebert's clear-eyed account chronicles his life from his youth in Urbana, Illinois, to his fame as a world-renowned film critic in Chicago. Herrmann's engaging, affable reading mirrors the author's tone—honest, often humorous, sometimes bittersweet—as he unhurriedly ushers listeners through Ebert's moving reflections on a life well lived.

Listen-Alikes

- Martin, Steve. *Born Standing Up: A Comic's Life*. Narrated by Steve Martin. Simon & Schuster Audio. Recorded Books.
- Twain, Mark. *Chapters from My Autobiography*. Narrated by Bronson Pinchot. AudioGO.
- Richards, Keith and James Fox. *Life*. Narrated by Keith Richards, Johnny Depp, and Joe Hurley. Hachette Audio.

Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. Narrated by Juliet Stevenson. NAXOS. (ISBN: 978-1-8437-9439-4).

Juliet Stevenson brings crisp clarity, a witty sensibility, and a charming tonal quality to Eliot's masterpiece of provincial life. Through her deft management of pacing and tone, she

reveals character motivation and illuminates the many themes of the novel. But most of all she reclaims Eliot for listeners who thought they did not enjoy classics.

Listen-Alikes

- Wharton, Edith. *The Age of Innocence*. Narrated by Lorna Raver. Blackstone Audio.
- Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. Narrated by Nadia May. Blackstone Audio.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Narrated by Josephine Bailey. Tantor Media.

Willig, Lauren. *The Mischief of the Mistletoe*. Narrated by Kate Reading. Penguin Audio. (ISBN: 978-0-1424-2830-6).

In this Regency Christmas caper, a pudding, a spy, a hilarious school theatrical, and a memorable country house party lead to laughter, love, and an offer of marriage. Reading's lovely English accent and exuberance are a perfect fit for the wide range of characters, from young girls to male teachers to members of the aristocracy.

Listen-Alikes

- Laurens, Stephanie. The Black Cobra Quartet series. Narrated by Simon Prebble. Harper Audio. Blackstone Audio.
- Orczy, Emma. *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. Narrated by Ralph Cosham. Blackstone Audio.
- Heyer, Georgette. *The Talisman Ring*. Narrated by Phyllida Nash. AudioGO.

Fforde, Jasper. *One of Our Thursdays is Missing*. Narrated by Emily Gray. Recorded Books. (ISBN: 978-1-4498-4675-6).

In this genre-bending romp, the "written" Thursday must rescue the "real" Thursday from a nefarious Bookworld plot. Emily Gray wears Thursday like a second skin, as she does the robots, dodos, and space aliens running around. The story is paced such that every nuance of pun and word play is captured and rendered aurally.

Listen-Alikes

- Willis, Connie. *Blackout*. Narrated by Katherine Kellgren. Brilliance Audio.
- Fowler, Christopher. The Peculiar Crimes Unit Mysteries series. Narrated by Tim Goodman. Recorded Books/Clipper Audio.
- Benoit, Charles. *Relative Danger*. Narrated by Patrick Lawlor. Blackstone Audio.

Bradley, Alan. *A Red Herring Without Mustard*. Narrated by Jayne Entwistle. Random House Audio. (ISBN: 978-0-3075-7643-9). Books on Tape. (ISBN: 978-0-3077-0479-5).

Flavia de Luce, a terrifyingly proficient eleven-year-old amateur chemist and sleuth, investigates the beating of a gypsy and the death of a villager in this third outing. Entwistle's

FROM COMMITTEES OF RUSA

spot-on narration reveals the irrepressible, intrepid heroine's prowess and captures a delicious range of secondary characters in these whimsical mysteries set in 1950s rural England.

Listen-Alikes

- Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Narrated by Sissy Spacek. Harper Audio/Caedmon. Recorded Books.
- Pessi, Marisha. *Special Topics in Calamity Physics*. Narrated by Emily Janice Card. Penguin Audio. Books on Tape.
- Dallas, Sandra. *Tallgrass*. Narrated by Lorelei King. Macmillan Audio. BBC Audiobooks America.

Nesbø, Jo. *The Snowman*. Narrated by Robin Sachs. Random House Audio. (ISBN: 978-0-307-91750-8). Books on Tape. (ISBN: 978-0-307-91752-2).

The icy chill of the Norwegian countryside and a series of cold-blooded murders dominate this Harry Hole crime novel. Sachs contrasts Hole's world-weary professional attitude, his unquenchable thirst for justice, and his yearning for love and comfort, as he skillfully maintains a suspenseful pace and projects an overarching sense of doom.

Listen-Alikes

- Larsson, Stieg. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. Narrated by Simon Vance. Books on Tape.
- Johnson, Craig. *Hell is Empty*. Narrated by George Guidall. Recorded Books.
- Burke, James Lee. *Rain Gods*. Narrated by Tom Stechschulte. Recorded Books.

Dickens, Charles. *A Tale of Two Cities*. Narrated by Simon Prebble. Blackstone Audio. (ISBN: 978-1-4551-0867-1).

The tragedy and heroism of the French Revolution come alive through Prebble's distinctive and graceful narration. As the lives of Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton intersect, Prebble takes listeners deep into France and England, narrating terrifying descriptions and breathless acts of courage with a cadence that sweeps one away.

Listen-Alikes

- Hugo, Victor. *Les Misérables*. Narrated by George Guidall. Recorded Books.
- Cornwell, Bernard. *Sharpe's Fury*. Narrated by Steven Crossley. Recorded Books.
- Tolstoy, Leo. *War and Peace*. Narrated by Frederick Davidson. Blackstone Audio.

Obreht, Téa. *The Tiger's Wife*. Narrated by Susan Duerden and Robin Sachs. Random House Audio. (978-0-3078-7700-0). Books on Tape. (ISBN: 978-0-3078-7702-4).

In this imaginative novel, Balkan physician Natalia, on a mission of mercy, learns of her beloved grandfather's death. Duerden's mesmerizing voice leads listeners through the complexities of this rich novel with its intertwining stories, while Sachs memorably relates her grandfather's haunting tales in a gentle and gruff voice.

Listen-Alikes

- Patchett, Ann. *Bel Canto*. Narrated by Anna Fields. Harper Audio. Blackstone Audio.
- Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. Narrated by Jeff Woodman, Barbara Caruso, Richard Ferrone. Recorded Books.
- Simon, Scott. *Pretty Birds*. Narrated by Christina Moore. Recorded Books.

Philbrick, Nathaniel. *Why Read Moby-Dick?* Narrated by Nathaniel Philbrick. Penguin Audio. (ISBN: 978-1-61176-024-8). Books on Tape. (ISBN: 978-0-307-96967-5).

In what should be required reading before cracking the pages of *Moby-Dick*, Nathaniel Philbrick's homage to this great American novel compels the listener to experience Melville with an almost incandescent joy. His voice resonates with palpable enthusiasm and calls to mind a New England professor giving a fascinating lecture.

Listen-Alikes

- Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*. Narrated by Frank Muller. Recorded Books.
- Conroy, Pat. *My Reading Life*. Narrated by Pat Conroy. Random House Audio. Books on Tape.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Swerve*. Narrated by Edoardo Ballerini. Recorded Books.