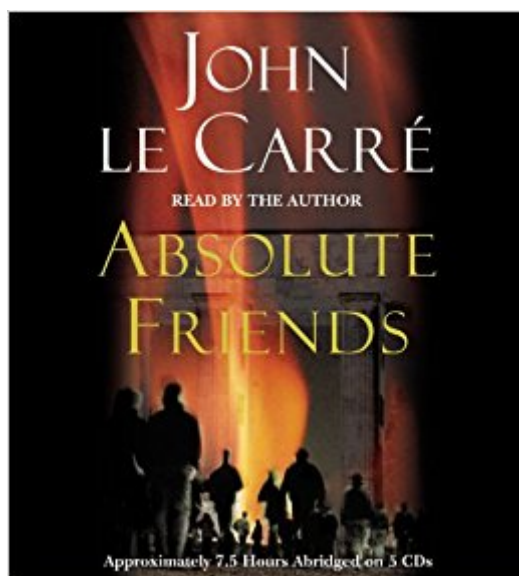


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Absolute Friends



Synopsis

ABSOLUTE FRIENDS is a superbly paced novel spanning fifty-six years, a theatrical masterstroke of tragi-comic writing, and a savage fable of our times, almost of our hours. The friends of the title are Ted Mundy, British soldier's son born 1947 in a shining new independent Pakistan, and Sasha, refugee son of an East German Lutheran pastor and his wife who have sought sanctuary in the West. The two men meet first as students in riot-torn West Berlin of the late Sixties, again in the grimy looking-glass of Cold War espionage and, most terribly, in today's unipolar world of terror, counter-terror and the war of lies. Deriving its scale from A PERFECT SPY and its passion from THE CONSTANT GARDENER. Le Carre's new novel presents us with magical writing, characters to delight, and a spellbinding story that enchants even as it challenges. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Le Carre's angry, ultimately heartbreaking novel focuses on Ted Mundy, a good-natured British expat in Germany who's eking out a mundane existence guiding tourists through Bavarian castles when his longlost friend Sasha, a diminutive German anarchist, appears to offer him financial and ideological salvation. A surprisingly long flashback takes listeners from Ted and Sasha's first meeting in West Berlin in 1969 through the Cold War and, consequently, their careers as spies, before returning to Sasha's present scheme to save the world from Western imperialism. The story melds the poignant personal tale of Mundy's unwavering altruism with the author's sardonic take on the perfidy of economic globalization. Both themes are well-preserved in this seamless

abridgement. No one reads Le Carre better than Le Carre. His nuances, accents and inflections are as brilliantly precise as his prose. For example, Le Carre lends Mundy's voice a note of optimistic naiveté; that eventually ages into a soft, measured fatalism, but for the ever-aggressive Sasha, his voice takes on a nervous intensity. Mood-appropriate music serves as a bridge between chapters-a Sousa-like march here, a vaguely Beatlesque riff there-adding to this well-produced audio package. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Starred Review There has been a linear evolution in the mind-set of le Carre's spies over the years--from agonizing over the moral ambiguity of the craft set against a firm belief in its necessity (the Smiley novels), through opting to place individual values over national ones (*A Perfect Spy* and *Russia House*), to recognizing that bureaucracy has poisoned the intelligence business from within (the post-cold war novels). Now, driven by recent world events, that evolution takes an even more radical step--to the realization that ideology is irrelevant, that powerful governments are an evil unto themselves, forever the enemy of individual life. It is a harrowing journey to that somber knowledge for Ted Mundy, expatriate son of a British army officer, and his "absolute friend," the crippled German radical Sasha, whose idealism finally engenders its own chaos and makes him easy prey for the powerful. Jumping backward and forward in time, le Carre reveals the history of a friendship in the context of a lifetime of commitment gone sour: student radicalism in Berlin during the '60s; active spying for the West during the waning years of the cold war; and, finally, a parting of the ways, with Sasha continuing to search for the revolution of his dreams while Teddy finds a separate peace. But Iraq and a reunion with his friend reignite Teddy's fervor, paving the way for the inevitable tragedy. Yes, le Carre uses Teddy as a mouthpiece for some strong political opinions (the U.S. is described as a "hyperpower that thinks it can treat the rest of the world as its allotment"), but the novel never becomes the author's soapbox. The human story remains paramount, even if the chilling message is that human stories don't stand much of a chance in the world as we find it. Bill OttCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Intriguing story about an initially ordinary English young man who unexpectedly becomes involved as a spy for England while at the same time ostensibly acting as an agent for Germany/Russia during the occupation of Germany after World War II. Another of le Carre's remarkable novels.

After several reads & rereads of Le Carré's Smiley novels, I chose this one as a branching out point to his more contemporary works, and was not disappointed. As a left-leaner myself, I found his perspective on the Iraq war insightful, especially as seen through Mundy's eyes. The writing style is just as detailed and rich as it is in Le Carré's other works -- The Honourable Schoolboy and its richly textured descriptions of Hong Kong come to mind. I would give this book five stars but I found the protagonist's "conversion" of a lesbian student an overused & offensive trope.

Yes, there is a bit of editorialising when the narration moves back into the present day, but those were (are) present problems and they never felt like they weren't Mundy's thoughts (as opposed to Le Carre's). But that's someone else's nitpicky slight and the worst reason to dismiss this great book. It's a man's life. There's so much feeling and travel there that, unlike most genre novels, it's the middle that I spend most of my time thinking about and revisiting.

interesting story.

What a pleasure to read an intelligent and thoughtful commentary among the generally mindless "spy novels" filling the electronic shelves.

Once again, LeCarré deftly flays the surface of contemporary events to shock us how easy it is to cloak an ambiguous and nuanced narrative in the bald and flagrant directives of ideology-speak which inevitably serve the narratives of State power

The book deserves five star rating, because it tells the tale of real terrorism threat versus a staged threat for political motives, and how one is subject to fabricated reality shows in today's media.

Le Carre takes American foreign policy to task in his analysis of the modern version of the military industrial complex and its destructive impact in the Middle East and elsewhere. Not to be missed

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