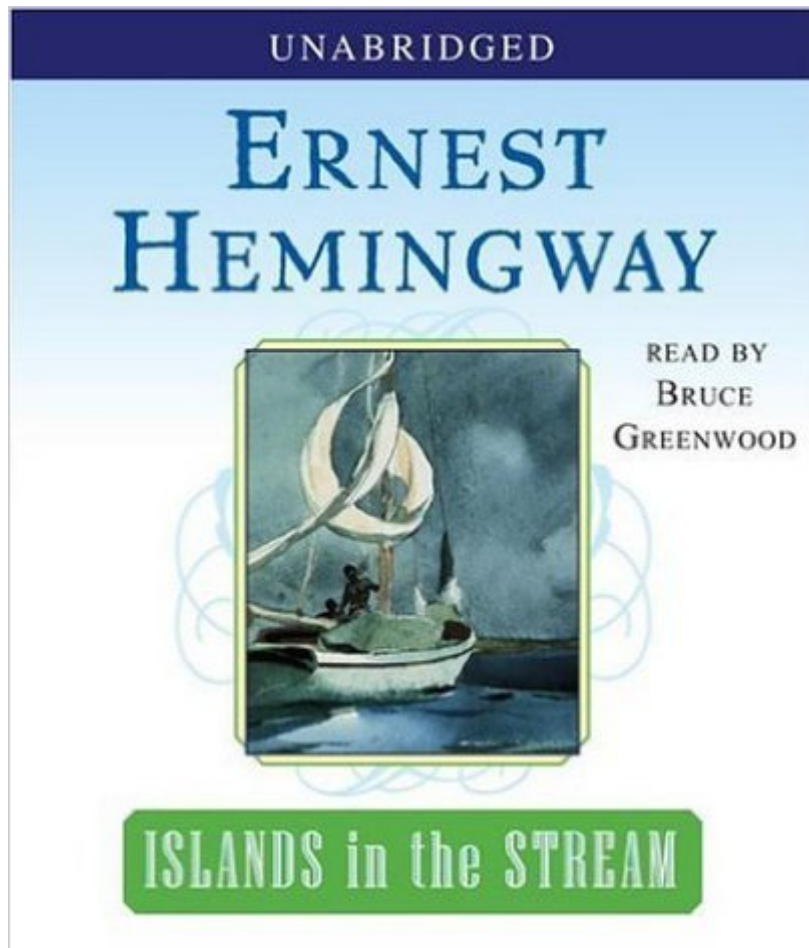


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# Islands In The Stream



## Synopsis

**A LATER CLASSIC FROM AMERICA'S PREMIER FICTION WRITER** First published in 1970, nine years after Hemingway's death, this is the story of an artist and adventurer -- a man much like Hemingway himself. Beginning in the 1930s, *Islands in the Stream* follows the fortunes of Thomas Hudson, from his experiences as a painter on the Gulf Stream island of Bimini through his antisubmarine activities off the coast of Cuba during World War II. Hemingway is at his mature best in this beguiling tale. Ernest Hemingway did more to change the style of English prose than any other writer in the twentieth century, and for his efforts he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954. Hemingway wrote in short, declarative sentences and was known for his tough, terse prose. Publication of *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* immediately established Ernest Hemingway as one of the greatest literary lights of the twentieth century. As part of the expatriate community in 1920s Paris, the former journalist and World War I ambulance driver began a career that led to international fame. Hemingway was an aficionado of bullfighting and big-game hunting, and his main protagonists were always men and women of courage and conviction, who suffered unseen scars, both physical and emotional. He covered the Spanish Civil War, portraying it in fiction in his brilliant novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and he subsequently covered World War II. His classic novella *The Old Man and the Sea* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1953. He died in 1961.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Of the Hemingway books I've read or tried to read, *Islands in the Stream* is my favorite thus far. All the great and not-so-great elements of his legendary style are here, from the deadpan prose to the

men who try too hard to be men, but they all fit together very well in this case. The exotic island setting is perfect for Hemingway's trademark everyday-life-is-an-adventure motif, which for once is wholly convincing. Thomas Hudson, a hard drinking, twice divorced, expatriate American artist, is an all too obvious self-portrait. But his low-key reactions to most of life's ups and downs, the inner demons he mostly keeps a lid on, and his begrudging love of life in spite of it all can surely appeal to the romantic adventurer in all of us. The three sections of the novel, bound only loosely together, follow Thomas from an average day in paradise to a tragicomic reunion with the lost love of his life to a Nazi-hunting adventure off the coast of Cuba. Along the way, there are tragic twists delivered without any sappiness whatsoever, as only Hemingway could do, not to mention a life-or-death fishing scene that rivals "The Old Man and the Sea." I can't imagine why this is being marketed as a love story, as that aspect of the novel is probably its weakest point, although his (very few) women characters are at least marginally more developed and convincing than usual. It's really more a story of escape and coping with the lack of love, and it's one of the best I've ever read of that subgenre. Yes, as others have pointed out, it's a bit uneven and the first section holds up better than the other two; and yes, the editing is imperfect and surely not exactly the way Hemingway would have wanted it. But the whole book is worth reading all the same. Given Hemingway's condition toward the end of his life, we're lucky to have it.

I wish would incorporate 1/2 stars but I guess that would make things even more complicated. This is one of my favorite Hemingway books and one of the few published posthumously that lives up to his legacy. The book, broken into three distinct sections, recounts chapters in the life of Thomas Hudson, a somewhat thinly veiled version of Hemingway. That's not to say that this is a story about Hemingway himself, but it's pretty clear there is a lot of Hemingway in Hudson. The first section, considered by many to be the best (and, as I recall, the focus of the film made of the book), takes place in Bimini, where Hudson is leading a fairly idyllic life. The second is centered in Cuba but has an entirely different tone from that of the first. Whereas the "Bimini" section is almost light-hearted and somewhat breezy, the tone of the Cuba section has changed dramatically. Hudson is now a depressed individual having lost a son in an accident. He has a reunion with his first wife, but even though she is the love of his life, he knows it won't end happily. The third part, "At Sea," recounts Hudson's efforts as a Nazi sub hunter. Hemingway is at his best throughout much of the book, his men are all striving to prove that they are, well, men, or at least the ideal of what a man should be in Hemingway's eyes. And naturally enough, no Hemingway man, in this case Hudson, would be complete without a little tragedy in his life. "At Sea," while powerfully told, seems somehow

incomplete, which may well be the case since I do not think Hemingway completed the book before his death. In fact, the ending seemed extremely abrupt and left me wondering, did Hudson survive his wounds? Still, this is some of Hemingway's best work. A must read. The only reason I did not give it five stars is because of the abrupt ending and a few other brief passages in the book that seem somehow incomplete and unfinished.

This is an uneven book. The first part, set in Bimini in the 1930's, and the third part, which describes the hunt for a U-Boat crew off the coast of Cuba, are quite good and contain many passages in the best Hemingway style. The middle section is too long and contains too many digressions in the bad Hemingway style. With all its faults, *Islands in the Stream* carries a powerful emotional charge. The reader feels that Thomas Hudson is the older Hemingway and that the book is a key to his inner preoccupations. As always, Hemingway excels in descriptions of the physical life. Small boat owners will appreciate his evocation of the glamour and perils of life at sea.

Ernest Hemingway's *Islands in the Stream* is my favorite book by Hemingway, and indeed, my favorite book. I feel that Hemingway is at his descriptive best in this book, so much so that the reader gets a genuine feel for the environment that the main character, Thomas Hudson, is in, and the emotions that he feels. The book is divided into three sections, each quite distinct, but working well together to show the difference in a person after particular events have taken place. The story has been referred to as Hemingway's greatest love story, but don't be mistaken; it's not your typical sap--there is much more to the story and to life than the love between a man and a woman, the story does consist of that specific type of love, but also consists of love for family, love for work, love for escape, love for life, love for home, love for self, love for friends, love for duty, and many, many more types of love. *Islands in the Stream* may come across as a book "not to read" simply because it does not have the happiest of endings. Although the ending is not "happy", it is satisfying, and most importantly, realistic. Too much writing, in books, television, and movies, is meant to make you feel better, instead of meant to give you an understanding of life. If you are looking for a book that will help you better understand yourself, people, life, and love in a realistic manner, or if you just love Hemingway's beautiful articulation, this book is for you.

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