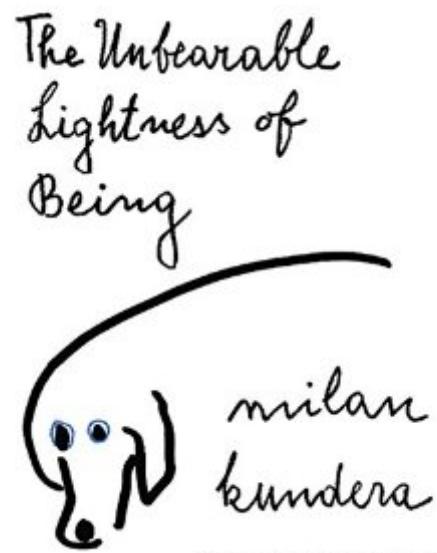


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The Unbearable Lightness Of Being: A Novel



Synopsis

A young woman is in love with a successful surgeon, a man torn between his love for her and his incorrigible womanizing. His mistress, a free-spirited artist, lives her life as a series of betrayals - while her other lover, earnest, faithful, and good, stands to lose everything because of his noble qualities. In a world where lives are shaped by irrevocable choices and fortuitous events, and everything occurs but once, existence seems to lose its substance, its weight. Hence we feel "the unbearable lightness of being." A major achievement from one of the world's truly great writers, Milan Kundera's magnificent novel of passion and politics, infidelity and ideas, encompasses the extremes of comedy and tragedy, illuminating all aspects of human existence.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is either a book of philosophy masquerading as a novel, or a novel about the lives of four or five characters with pretensions to be a book of philosophy. Either way, it's an amazing work. Since it is well-known and no doubt, well-reviewed, I might not be able to say anything new here. Kundera deals with his characters in a rather sketchy way, using them to pose a number of questions, rather than to go into great psychological depth. Yet, even there, the characters Tomas and Tereza do come through well. Their moods and motivations, even their dreams, hold a reader's attention. A couple of the others, Sabina and Franz, maybe Franz' wife, are very light indeed. Kundera is interested in sex and love, in the fact that they tie people down, in the fact that they are so fickle, so gossamer light, yet so important. In a time when ideology and/or political oppression create craziness or stupidity and the common sense of daily life is overthrown--as in post-1968 Czechoslovakia and maybe pre-Gulf War II America--love and sex are more or less what is left for

people to hang on to. Kundera also ponders the choices that people make, and the extremely haphazard way these choices come about, based perhaps on endless strings of coincidence. This is not a novel long on plot. Rather it is a vehicle for some very intelligent musings. When living under oppressive rulers "is it better to shout and thereby hasten the end, or to keep silent and gain thereby a slower death ?" What is the nature of love ? Have you ever read the philosophy of excrement or kitsch ? You can find them here. Man is a cow parasite, he tells us, (though he's probably talking about a certain percent of humanity only) and goes on to say that attitude towards animals is a fundamental moral test of Man. We've failed.

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