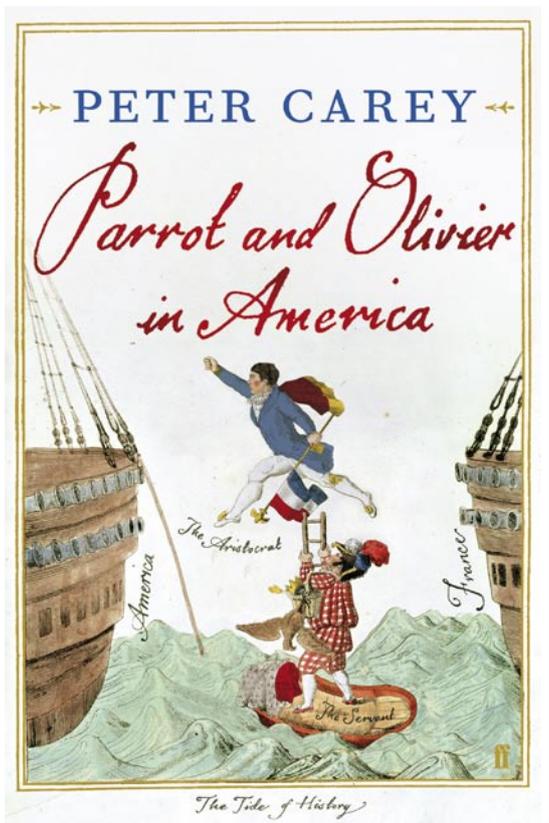




Reader's Guide



Other books by Peter Carey

Bliss (1981)
Illywhacker (1985)
Oscar and Lucinda (1988)
The Tax Inspector (1991)
The Unusual Life of Tristran Smith (1994)
The Big Bazoohley (1995)
Jack Maggs (1997)
True History of the Kelly Gang (2000)
My Life as a Fake (2003)
Collected Stories (2004)
Theft: A Love Story (2006)
His Illegal Self (2008)

Parrot and Olivier in America Peter Carey

Faber and Faber
Price £18.99

www.themanbookerprize.com

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Man



About the author

Peter Carey was born in Australia in May 1943 but has lived in New York for the past twenty years. He won the Booker Prize in 1988 for *Oscar and Lucinda* (which has since been made into a film starring Ralph Fiennes) and was shortlisted in 1985 with *Illywhacker*. His other novels include *The Unusual Life of Tristan Smith* and *Jack Maggs* (winner of the 1998 Commonwealth Writers Prize). He has also written a collection of short stories, *The Fat Man in History*, and a book for children, *The Big Bazoohey*. Peter Carey won The Man Booker Prize for the second time in 2001 with *True History of the Kelly Gang* and was nominated for the Man Booker International Prize in 2007 and 2009.

Parrot and Olivier in America

When my countrymen imagined America, they thought of savages and bears and presidents who would not wear wigs. Who among them could have conjured Miss Godefroy in all her beauty of form and elegance of mind, her wit, her delicacy, her slender ankles amid those mad red leaves?

An exploration of the great adventure of American democracy, *Parrot and Olivier in America* thrillingly brings to life two characters who, born on different sides of history, come together to share an extraordinary relationship. Olivier is a French aristocrat, sent to the New World ostensibly to study its prisons, but in reality to save his neck in a future revolution. Parrot is the son of an itinerant English printer, sent to spy and protect him. With the narrative shifting between the perspectives of master and servant, we see the adventure of American democracy, in theory and in practice, told with Carey's dazzling wit and inventiveness.

Discussion points

Half the story is narrated by Olivier and half by Parrot; why does Peter Carey choose to let them tell their own stories? What would be lost if the novel were told from a single perspective?

Do you agree with the review that said, "While enjoying Peter Carey's *Parrot and Olivier in America*, I found myself wondering from time to time what it was about. I finished it with unabated enjoyment, still wondering." Ursula K Le Guin, *The Guardian*

Parrot and Olivier in America has been described as 'a comic adventure'; what makes the writing so humorous?

How does the relationship between Parrot and Olivier change throughout the novel?

In what way is Peter Carey's portrayal of Parrot 'Dickensian'?

Themed reading

Alexis de Tocqueville *Democracy in America*
Charles Dickens *A Tale of Two Cities*
Hilary Mantel *A Place of Greater Safety*
Thomas Pynchon *Mason & Dixon*
Alexis De Tocqueville *Hugh Brogan*

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