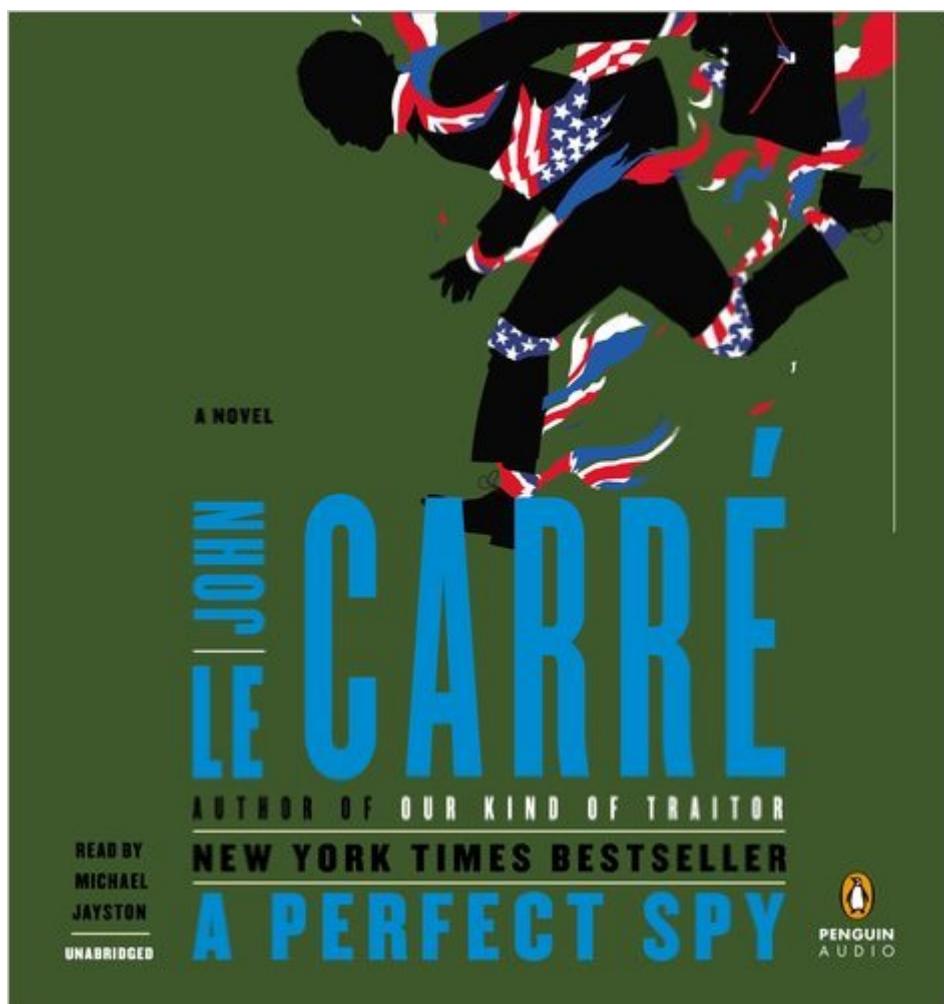


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# A Perfect Spy: A Novel



## Synopsis

John le Carré's classic novels deftly navigate readers through the intricate shadow worlds of international espionage with unsurpassed skill and knowledge, and have earned him unprecedented worldwide acclaim. Immersing readers in two parallel dramas -- one about the making of a spy, the other chronicling his seemingly imminent demise -- le Carré offers one of his richest and most morally resonant novels. Magnus Pym -- son of Rick, father of Tom, and a successful career officer of British Intelligence -- has vanished, to the dismay of his friends, enemies, and wife. Who is he? Who was he? Who owns him? Who trained him? Secrets of state are at risk. As the truth about Pym gradually emerges, the reader joins Pym's pursuers to explore the unsettling life and motives of a man who fought the wars he inherited with the only weapons he knew, and so became a perfect spy. --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (154 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,845,213 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > ( L ) > Le Carre, John #3328 in Books > Books on CD > Mystery & Thrillers #5152 in Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction > Unabridged

## Customer Reviews

It seems that nary a used book sale is complete without a copy of *A Perfect Spy* holding court on crowded shelves with works of obscure fiction. Having often come across it during my own browsing, I finally picked up a copy (for free) to see if I had been missing out. I intend no harm with the statement, but the book was worth the price. I now see a measure of reason behind the myriad discarded copies. One might call this work a genre-bender as it is less a work of fictive espionage than it is a psychological profile of the protagonist, Magnus Pym. It is, at its core, an extended work in character development. At the beginning of the novel, spy Pym takes up residence in a seaside home to write his memoirs, and his disappearance causes a flurry of panic within the American and

British intelligence communities. The grand majority of "the action" has already taken place, however, and is cryptically recounted in hindsight as Pym explores the influence of his father's business shenanigans upon his own character, chosen vocation, and penchant for deception. His style is so cryptic at times, and clarification from le Carre so wanting, that the reader can easily be left behind searching for clues as to time and context. It is a task to keep one's bearings as the narrative often shifts from past to present with little warning, while minor characters not seen for chapters surface suddenly with little hint as to where they were last seen. The name Wentworth, for example, surfaces within the first 100 pages then largely disappears for the rest of the novel until assuming a major role at the very end. There are some 150 to 160 major and minor characters in this book, some of which appear in both Pym's reminiscing and in the narrative present.

This book is not only the best of many fine efforts by LeCarre, but one of the best novels in our language in the latter half of the 20th century. It is as smoothly and perfectly made as LeCarre could have made it, but it is not "an easy read." For one thing, I do not know what a "read" is, except that it is a bizarre term that came into vogue about 20-25 years ago along with the "minimalist" school of American fiction, "micro stories," the decline of independent booksellers, the "nobody reads anymore" mantra, etc. Its use implies that a book ought to be something easy enough for time between planes, otherwise it's too difficult for attention. If the lack of ease or difficulty of a first reading of major literary fiction has become a factor, this is unfortunate for those plagued by it. Time was, the reader might be expected to put in some effort too, although this is doubtless a surprise to many who, by no fault of their own, had a bad generation of English teachers who, like their students, had their brain synapses deadened by visual media since babyhood. Having made the claim for this book's greatness, it is admittedly almost as difficult to defend this position straightforwardly as to locate the essential story in this dense and backward winding plot. The main constraint is this: I respect .com's guide rule about writing a review that does not give the plot away. And the primary rich experience for the reader here, on first reading, is digging out the essence of the plot and meaning as the narration of father and son winds forth and back. And the great meanings here do not become apparent until the end. Admittedly for us Americanos, there is some thick Brit slang to slog through here, too.

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