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# Londoners: The Days And Nights Of London Now--As Told By Those Who Love It, Hate It, Live It, Left It, And Long For It



## Synopsis

In *Londoners*, acclaimed journalist Craig Taylor paints readers an epic portrait of today's London that is as rich and lively as the city itself. In the style of Studs Terkel (*Working*, *Hard Times*, *The Good War*) and Dave Isay (*Listening Is an Act of Love*), *Londoners* offers up the stories, the gripes, the memories, and the dreams of those in the great and vibrant British metropolis who "love it, hate it, live it, left it, and long for it," from a West End rickshaw driver to a Soldier of the Guard at Buckingham Palace to a recovering heroin addict seeing Big Ben for the very first time. Published just in time for the 2012 London Olympic Games, *Londoners* is a glorious literary celebration of one of the world's truly great cities.

## Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: Ecco; Reprint edition (February 5, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0062005863

ISBN-13: 978-0062005861

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars 73 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #90,105 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #64 in Books > Travel > Europe > Great Britain > General #103 in Books > History > Europe > Great Britain > England #213 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Human Geography

## Customer Reviews

"A rich and exuberant kaleidoscopic portrait of a great, messy, noisy, daunting, inspiring, maddening, entralling, constantly shifting Rorschach test of a place. . . . Delightful. . . . In Taylor's patient and sympathetic hands, regular people become poets, philosophers, orators." (New York Times Book Review) "Remarkable. . . . Essential. . . . Enlightening. . . . *Londoners* offers an impression of the city's people, a way to understand their motives and fears and the simmering rush. It captures the combination of quiet desperation and boundless optimism required to live [there]." (San Francisco Chronicle) "Whether or not you know London, whether or not you love it, this book is for you. . . . A polyphonic hymn to the Big Smoke." (Newsday) "Fascinating. . . . Makes you want to join Taylor in 'The London Chase.'" (Minneapolis Star Tribune) "Engaging. . . . A treasury

of compact vignettes from voices that are rarely heard but come closer to the truth of the city than any travel brochure or official document. (Pittsburgh Tribune-Review) "Impressive. . . . A scintillating oral history. (Newark Star Ledger) "From Brixton to Piccadilly Circus, a fascinating oral history of contemporary London. (Chicago Tribune) "A thrilling portrait of the city. . . . Enchanting. . . . I feel I almost learned more about Londoners from this book than from being a Londoner for more than four decades. . . . Too good to miss. (Oona King, *The Times* (London)) "The best book about London in at least a decade. . . . Masterful. . . . A cracking and insightful read [that] will still be widely enjoyed 50 years from now. Treat yourself . . . you really are investing in a classic. (Londonist.com) "Fans of Studs Terkel's insightful oral histories will be delighted to discover a successor in Taylor. . . . His book brings London to life as it is—ever changing, ever eternal, ever unforgettable. A delight! (Library Journal (starred review)) "Immensely enjoyable. . . . Reminded us of Studs Terkel's best books. (The Observer's Very Short List) "A remarkable new book that celebrates the city's endless diversity. . . . Five stars. (Time Out London) "Splendid. . . . A remarkable volume [of] countless funny, terrifying, epic stories. (Guardian (London)) "Highly engaging. . . . Bursts with charm, edification, and life. (Booklist) "Alternately poignant, uplifting, amusing and sad. . . . A nicely polished oral history—good reading. (Kirkus Reviews) "An epic portrait in eighty voices that shows the city to be just [as] Dickensian as it has ever been. (David Nicholls, bestselling author of *One Day*) "Londoners is a wonderful book—I wanted it to be twice as long. (Diana Athill, bestselling author of *Somewhere Towards the End*) "Samuel Johnson said, "When you are tired of London, you are tired of life." Craig Taylor is tired of neither London nor life, and this book is a gorgeous, utterly irresistible— even addictive—ode to both. (David Shields, bestselling author of *The Thing About Life Is That One Day You'll Be Dead and Reality Hunger*) "Ambitious [and] creative. . . . A book to deepen your relationship with London and make you fall in - or out - of love with it all over again. . . . I can't tell you how much I enjoyed it. (Lucy Worsley, author of *If Walls Could Talk*) "Craig Taylor is the real deal: a peerless journalist and a beautiful craftsman. He could be a household name already if he wasn't so modest. He will be one anyway in due course. (David Rakoff, bestselling author of *Fraud* and *Half Empty*)

Acclaimed writer and editor Craig Taylor spent years traversing every corner of London, getting to

know the most interesting of its residents—the voice of the London Underground, a West End rickshaw driver, an East End nightclub door attendant, a mounted soldier of the Queen's Life Guard. Now, in Londoners, this diverse cast of characters—rich and poor, young and old, native and immigrant, men and women (and even a Sarah who used to be a George)—shares indelible tales that capture the city as never before. With candor and humor, these voices paint a vivid, epic, and wholly original portrait of twenty-first-century London, scripting the autobiography of one of the world's greatest cities.

I have loved London from the moment I purchased my first order of fish and chips from a fish monger with bright orange hair in the East End. She wrapped my meal in newspaper, and sent me on my way. Now that one of my sons and his family live in the south of London, I have occasion to visit more often than in the past. Craig Taylor has done an excellent job in distilling into print two years worth of oral histories that he accumulated from individuals in all corners of the city.

"Londoners" gives a comprehensive and balanced view of life in one of the liveliest cities on earth. His interviews range from a squatter who has lived in a succession of abandoned buildings to people living the high life in Mayfair and Belgravia. There are those who embrace the city and its many quirks and who could not imagine living anywhere else. And there are those who have tasted life there and have returned to their roots in Poland or in Newcastle. We hear from those who run the Underground and those who fly the planes that take off from Heathrow and Gatwick. Crematory workers, fruit market vendors, sellers of antiques, taxi drivers, manicurists, currency traders, night club bouncers, social workers and policemen all weigh in to opine on what their corner of London looks like, feels like and smells like from day to day. The overall effect of reading this book is that it made me aware of corners of the city that I do not yet know, but am eager to explore. This book is an excellent read both for those who know London well as well as those who are looking to begin to understand this fascinating metropolis.

A collection of brief interviews with residents - current and former - of amazing, amazing London. You'll get viewpoints drawn from the pleasant and unpleasant experience of those who have made the valiant attempt to call the city their home. I enjoyed the fact the book was more of a collage than a strict travel-guide, giving real life perspectives of people who deal with the complications of living in a city this vast, this endlessly fascinating and, inevitably, this challenging. With topics ranging from a cab-driver's view of the city, the Underground, hitting (and avoiding) the 'big' tourist spots, making a living, finding your soulmate (even if just for a night), death and loss, running a megalopolis,

cleaning its streets, dropping a line in the Thames (!), where (not) to eat (sort of), ha-ha are you serious...buying a home, exploring your creative side, getting the f\*\*\* out because it's just too much, fitting in, the myriad professions that make the place work, student-life, and, unbelievably, more. This is, again, short stories, viewpoints, vignettes, about what the place is like. From my own experiences in this city I love but doubt that I could ever live in, the book is on the mark, and occasionally fascinating. There are stories of places/events that I know I will go back to check out. But those moments are too few, and "Londoners" just may be too much of a good thing, and as the book progresses the interviews start sounding a little repetitive. Yet, I'd take this over a run-of-the-mill tour book almost any day. Three stars, tells me, means that I think "it's okay". "Londoners" is more than "okay": the writing is good, the approach is logical, helpful, but the tone will bore some readers, and frustrate others expecting a more conventional guide.

This is an amazing book. I visited London for the first time last year and fell in love with it, which is why this book appealed to me. Author Craig Taylor spent many years interviewing hundreds of Londoners for this book. The result is this entertaining, readable, wonderful collection of short essays written in the voices of nearly 100 current and former London residents from all walks of life. The people in this book are from all across the board. There are cab drivers, government officials, real estate agents, chefs, airline pilots, sex addicts, immigrants, people who love London, people who despise London, and everyone in between. Taylor even interviewed the woman who is the voice of the London Tube. The essays range from a few paragraphs long to a dozen or so pages, and they each paint such vivid descriptions of these people's lives. "Londoners" is a long book (almost 400 pages!), and you can either read it straight through or pick it up every once in a while to read a few of the colorful essays. I loved everything about this book. Taylor is a great writer, and I enjoyed getting to know all these Londoners and learning more about this amazing city in the process. I highly recommend this book.

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