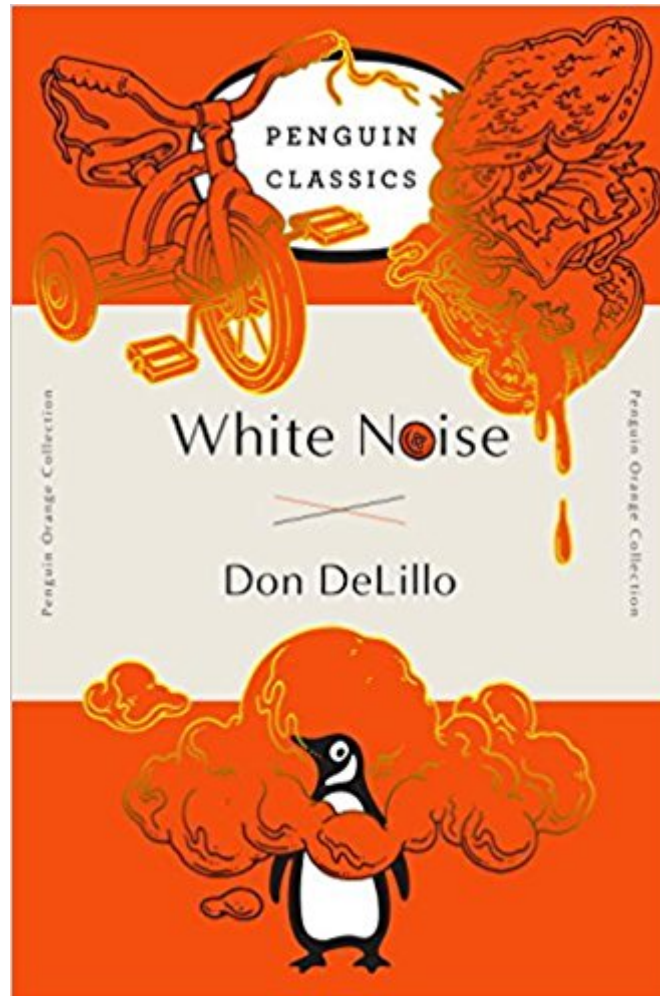




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# White Noise: (Penguin Orange Collection)



## Synopsis

Part of the Penguin Orange Collection, a limited-run series of twelve influential and beloved American classics in a bold series design offering a modern take on the iconic Penguin paperback. Winner of the 2016 AIGA + Design Observer 50 Books | 50 Covers competition. For the seventieth anniversary of Penguin Classics, the Penguin Orange Collection celebrates the heritage of Penguin's iconic book design with twelve influential American literary classics representing the breadth and diversity of the Penguin Classics library. These collectible editions are dressed in the iconic orange and white tri-band cover design, first created in 1935, while french flaps, high-quality paper, and striking cover illustrations provide the cutting-edge design treatment that is the signature of Penguin Classics Deluxe Editions today. Winner of the 1985 National Book Award, *White Noise* tells the story of Jack Gladney, his fourth wife, Babette, and four ultramodern offspring as they navigate the rocky passages of family life to the background babble of brand-name consumerism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Better than any book I can think of, *White Noise* captures the particular strangeness of life in a time where humankind has finally learned enough to kill itself. Naturally, it's a terribly funny book, and the prose is as beautiful as a sunset through a particulate-filled sky. Nice-guy narrator Jack Gladney teaches Hitler Studies at a small college. His wife may be taking a drug that removes fear, and one day a nearby chemical plant accidentally releases a cloud of gas that may be poisonous. Writing

before Bhopal and Prozac entered the popular lexicon, DeLillo produced a work so closely tuned into its time that it tells the future. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Chairman of the department of Hitler studies at a Midwestern college, Jack Gladney is accidentally exposed to a cloud of noxious chemicals, part of a world of the future that is doomed because of misused technology, artificial products and foods, and overpopulation. PW appreciated DeLillo's "bleak, ironic" vision, calling it "not so much a tragic view of history as a macabre one."

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An extraordinary book that tackles some big themes like fear of death, while also constantly uncovering subtext and wonder in the most ordinary things. The chapters are mostly short with beautiful form, often beginning simply: "Babette said to me in bed one night, 'Isn't it great having all these kids around?'" then ending in surprisingly poetic outbursts: "May the days be aimless. Let the seasons drift. Do not advance the action according to a plan. TVs and radios interrupt Jack's thoughts with the strangest, incongruous observations. The characters go grocery shopping a lot, and the supermarket is the stage for many important conversations and observations, like this haunting description of the white noise itself: "I realized the place was awash in noise. The toneless systems, the jangle and skid of carts, the loudspeaker and coffee-making machines, the cries of children. And over it all, or under it all, a dull and unlocatable roar, as of some form of swarming life just outside the range of human apprehension. Murray is one of the most interesting characters, a Visiting Lecturer who teaches classes on Elvis and car crash scenes in American movies. He is constantly expounding on the ordinary things around him and finding unexpected meaning. Often his ideas seem completely insane, but at other times he is acutely insightful which forces us to give his crazier ideas a chance. He sees car crashes in movies as celebratory, "a yearning for naivete. We want to be artless again. We want to reverse the flow of experience, of worldliness and its responsibilities. In the end, the book seems to be saying that white noise is all around us. It is made up of tabloid headlines, bright food packaging, our excessive consumerism, our obsession with tragic stories in the news, the speed and "hurtling consciousness of the highway. The white noise helps cover up our fear of dying. And maybe this isn't so bad because it frees us from an

incapacitating anxiety, and lets us live more comfortably. That's one argument the book puts forward and then largely subverts. The final answer seems to be that fear of death is unavoidable and painful but also necessary. "Doesn't it give a precious texture to life, a sense of definition? You have to ask yourself whether anything you do in this life would have beauty and meaning without the knowledge you carry of a final line, a border or limit."

First great book by the master American writer, Don DeLillo. This terrific work follows Jack Gladney, professor of "Hitler Studies," at an unnamed midwestern college, whose family encounters a "toxic air event" that hits the region. The characters, mostly Gladney's family (wife, Babette; son; Henrich; and three other children from previous marriages) are impressively drawn. Difficult to characterize DeLillo's narrative style. I haven't read a better American writer, or one with better control of the language. Every DeLillo novel after *White Noise* is excellent, as well. *Underworld* is his magnum opus, and a timeless work. *Libra*, *Mao II*, *The Body Artist*, *Cosmopolis*, and other works in DeLillo's canon are also well worth the read.

I wrote my thesis partly on *White Noise*, and absolutely love the book. It's a masterful weaving of humor and despair in consumerist culture (or really the Reagan era). I would note before reading it that this is really an extended tract on the fear of death. It's a lot more than that too, but if you're uncomfortable considering mortality, I would opt for another book. Realizing the efforts taken to obstruct this human condition inform most action, so it's not like one chapter or one section solely deals with the idea. Anyway, great writing, fantastic critique of the time period and culture, and an oddly warm and inviting sense that we'll all die someday.

A lot of ground covered in this book. From the current academic predisposition to deconstruct everything to the point of absurdity, to living with all the distractions of living in a consumerist world, to an exposition on death. The story line itself is good and fun to read. I gave it only four stars because I wanted there to be MORE.

Somehow I missed DeLillo along the way and discovered him through a review of his newest book "Zero K". DeLillo writes the kind of prose that frequently makes you stop reading the passage so that you can return to savor it again. The book is laugh-out-loud funny (Check out the family trip to the mall) but also profound and moving. I think I've found a new favorite author.

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