

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC  
FICTION**



Joseph  
Conrad

# Nostromo

Read by  
**Nigel Anthony**

NA687112D

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<b>1</b>	<b>Part First – The Silver of the Mine</b>	5:15
2	Early on the morning of that day...	7:30
3	All the morning Nostromo had kept his eye...	6:27
4	He had come on purpose to Sulaco...	5:26
5	The Minister of War then...	3:56
6	At that time Nostromo had been already...	5:48
7	Mrs. Gould knew the history of the San Tomé mine...	5:41
8	By the time he was twenty, Charles Gould...	5:32
9	The latest phase in the history of the mine...	3:43
10	During the last few days...	4:58
11	Thus the great personage had spoken...	5:42
12	Don Pepe, when 'down from the mountain'...	4:15
13	The waterfall existed no longer...	4:15
14	But that perhaps, could only be visible...	5:26
15	He sat down. During the respectful, appreciative buzz...	5:26
<b>16</b>	<b>Part Second – The Isabels</b>	5:43
17	Sulaco, pastoral and sleepy, with its opulent Campo...	7:04
18	When the business was concluded...	5:07
19	Perhaps it was in the exercise of his calling...	5:02
20	At that moment young Scarfe of the railway staff emerged...	5:53

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21	Meantime, Antonia had risen, and, crossing the room...	6:07
22	The horseman had passed below them.	6:12
23	The chief magistrate, an easy-going and popular official...	7:34
24	A profound stillness reigned in the Casa Gould.	6:13
25	Suddenly she seemed to divine Decoud's tremendous excitement...	5:36
26	Decoud finished his thought...	4:59
27	Martin Decoud's favourite sister...	4:42
28	He turned again to his pocket-book.	4:24
29	'Late at night we formed a small junta...'	5:36
30	'I am not running away, you understand...'	7:03
31	Nostromo slowly crossed the large kitchen.	7:11
32	Downstairs in the big kitchen...	5:03
33	The sea in the gulf was as black as the clouds above.	5:47
34	'Shall we rest, Capataz?' he proposed...	4:00
35	The light of the bit of candle...	4:56
36	These words were in strange contrast...	7:22
37	Sotillo, as Nostromo had surmised, was in command...	7:14
38	Hirsch, when ordered forward by Nostromo...	7:07
39	Nostromo ceased bailing...	5:28
40	<b>Part Third – The Lighthouse</b>	5:44

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41	It was not from any liking for the doctor...	6:05
42	Captain Mitchell, pacing the wharf...	6:21
43	Captain Mitchell had just the time to glance...	4:08
44	He gave orders for the prisoner to be unbound...	5:47
45	Directly they were alone...	7:05
46	Dr. Monygham slipped off the window-sill...	7:52
47	The doctor, arriving with his sharp, jerky walk...	7:11
48	The only thing that was not changed...	4:19
49	During the night the expectant populace...	4:18
50	The declining sun had shifted the shadows...	5:57
51	At about that time, in the Intendencia of Sulaco...	6:47
52	Nostromo woke up from a fourteen hours' sleep...	5:45
53	He flitted along the shore like a pursued shadow...	4:12
54	Dr. Monygham had received a shock.	4:47
55	Nostromo's heart seemed to force itself...	5:54
56	The Capataz had mastered the fury...	6:12
57	Distracted between doubts and hopes...	6:01
58	Hirsch, with his arms tied behind his back...	6:35
59	Below, the troops fell in silently...	5:37
60	Nostromo's prolonged silence made the doctor uneasy.	5:59

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61	Nostromo had paused then began again...	5:16
62	Nostromo approached the Albergo d'Italia Una.	6:03
63	The next day was quiet in the morning...	6:23
64	He took several puffs at his cigar...	7:42
65	Nostromo had, indeed, found the lighter's boat...	7:37
66	The end of Don Martin Decoud...	5:09
67	The sun was two hours above the horizon...	6:26
68	Sulaco outstripped Nostromo's prudence...	6:56
69	When uncle and niece had gone away...	6:14
70	'Thanks to Nostromo,' repeated Dr. Monygham.	6:38
71	Nostromo had been growing rich very slowly.	6:13
72	Directly his schooner was anchored...	6:52
73	He looked at her.	4:46
74	She nestled close to him.	4:23
75	On the day Mrs. Gould was going...	6:18
76	Linda had gone straight to the tower.	6:22
77	It was thus that, cloaked and monastically hooded...	7:30
78	From the moment he fired at the thief...	4:17

**Total time: 7:35:06**

Cover picture: Silver Mining in Peru, 1879 (unattributed engraving in La Nature 1879)  
Courtesy Mary Evans Picture Library

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# Joseph Conrad

## Nostromo

By the time he was nine, Joseph Conrad was an orphan, essentially stateless, and longing for a life that was not even associated with land. He wanted the sea. His intellectual and patriotic parents had been effectively killed by an occupying country, and after completing his education thanks to his fond and generous uncle, he was finally given the chance. For twenty years he worked in French and British merchant ships, during which time he saw that the grotesqueries of politics were not restricted to the overlordship of Russia and his native Poland. He witnessed the horrors of the Belgian Congo, was involved with gun-running and smuggling, attempted suicide because of gambling debts, became afflicted with illnesses and conditions that would affect him for the rest of his life, and in 1892 decided to become a professional writer. He had by this time also become a British national, adopting English (his third language after Polish and French) in which

to write, and living in Kent. His output was huge, including *Youth*, *Lord Jim*, *The Secret Agent*, *Under Western Eyes*, *Heart of Darkness*, non-fiction, short stories and more. The process of creation was never easy for him, partly because of his physical condition, partly because of his financial position; but largely because the moral, political and social world he was creating was implacable in its crushing effect on the human spirit, and his expression of this was so weighted, rich, complex and profound.

Such is the immediate resonance of his themes to contemporary readers, it is sometimes difficult to remember that Conrad (born Józef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski) was a man of the nineteenth century. Yet he was born in 1857 to parents who were of the gentry, and who encouraged him to read Hugo, Shakespeare and Dickens. When they died from tuberculosis, after being exiled

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to Northern Russia for promoting Polish nationalism, Conrad's education was continued by his uncle, who ensured that he was taught Greek, maths, Latin and geography by a private tutor. Given this background, his modernity is, at the very least, unpredictable. It may be unsurprising that he despaired of politics, after the treatment of his parents. But the world that is created by Conrad is not a window-dressed autobiography. It is born from a dark sense of the world as a useless whole, realised through works of fiction that are ground-breaking linguistically, stylistically and in terms of character. The bleakness of his philosophy, which rejected almost all human endeavour as brutal and fruitless, reached its beautiful and absorbing apogee in *Nostromo*.

*Nostromo* was published in 1904. It is based around the silver mine in San Tomé and the port of Sulaco, in the fictional South American country of Costaguana. It is an adventure, but it is also a moral fable – a novel of symbols and implications, where however detailed the reality, there is always a more general point at play. (A small but telling indicator

of how Conrad saw the country he had invented and its implications is given by the fact that 'guano' means 'manure' (to put it politely). This is a euphemism similar to that which Dickens employed with his 'dust-heaps' in *Our Mutual Friend*, and which would be taken up by Dylan Thomas in a more light-hearted fashion by naming the town in *Under Milk Wood* 'LLareggub'.) The San Tomé mine becomes a fulcrum for any number of national and international players whose lives are reflected in and affected by their involvement with it. It is crucial to European trade in Costaguana, and indeed the whole continent. It is owned by an Englishman, Charles Gould, who becomes so bound up with the mine that he loses touch with himself and his wife. It is part-financed by an American (Holroyd) who wants to convert the Catholic country to his evangelical Protestantism. There are profound 'material interests', in South America and beyond, that need the mine's wealth to develop the country's infrastructure for their own gain. The mine is of such importance that it becomes an obsession

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for most people associated with it and the focal point for the almost farcically violent shifts in the politics of the country. As a result, there are revolutions, counter-revolutions and attempts at democracy; nationalism, secession, freedom-fighters, riots, torture and popular heroes, all bound by the silver of the mine and what they believe it can do for them.

Many of the characters and situations of volatile South American politics have become familiar to the point of cliché since Conrad first drew them so clearly. But his portrayal, however perceptive and detailed, and however much it excites the imagination as an adventure story, is also about politics in a much broader sense. He had no faith that politicians could do anything to save their people – rather the opposite – and the machinations in *Nostromo* show power and wealth corrupting rather than improving, even when the initial intention may have been honourable. And on a purely personal level, for the people of the story, there is no redemption, no uplifting sense of achievement; only tragedy, defeat and despair.

The story is told in three parts, but also in several different ways: the standard, all-knowing narrator, telling the tale in the past tense; sudden jumps forward in time to tell it from a different perspective; in one long sequence, from a particular character explaining events from his point of view; and an occasional first-person narrator, talking as if in the historical present, and in a manner suggesting that everything about the place is true. A history of this fictional country, written by one of the fictional characters, is quoted as a reference work for the events described. This formally self-referential aspect of the book shows Conrad's development away from the traditional novel form and into something recognisably modern, which influenced almost every major writer of English thereafter, from Woolf to Greene to Lawrence and beyond.

But the principal reason for *Nostromo*'s influence is in its characters and in its tone. The language is not easy – sentences are often long and convoluted, and there are rather dated moral and rhetorical abstract generalisations. But the descriptions are lush, comprehensive, poetic and allusive,

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often using a series of slightly altered repetitions to build up a powerful image. All the writing has a huge rolling flow to it, like the sea itself, that resonates long beyond the words themselves. Into this richly complex and scenically exotic world, explored so fully by the language used to describe it, Conrad places people with such psychological truth and complexity that they could all be drawn from intimate biographies. All are created with a depth of personality and credible potential for individual choice based on their character. The range and depth is astonishing, and made all the more remarkable by their symbolic power as well, whether of European colonialism, American financial imperialism or political opportunism; or aspects of humanity such as cynicism, *froideur*, malice or deeply constrained affection. At the same time, all the choices the characters make are entirely in keeping with the personality and history of that characters. For all that they serve Conrad's larger, remorseless purpose, these are detailed and layered human personalities, who – facing a range of moral and personal dilemmas – are changed gradually, subtly,

convincingly, yet in complete accord with Conrad's general convictions, by the world they are in.

*Nostramo* was a difficult book for Conrad. It was initially published in serial form, and the pressure to produce the work added to his considerable pains in writing it. He was drained by it, and was aware that he had created something the like of which he would never achieve again, despite living until 1924. But he constructed a work that was unwavering in its moral conviction, vivid imagination and detail; haunting, intense and resonant. He created unmatched individuals as well as archetypal characters that would become stereotypes for over a century; and for all its nihilism, *Nostramo* is dryly compassionate and passionately objective.

### **Notes by Roy McMillan**

# Joseph Conrad Nostromo

Read by **Nigel Anthony**

Set in the fictional South American country of Costaguana, *Nostromo* explores the volatile politics and crippling greed surrounding the San Tomé silver mine. The story of power, love, revolutions, loyalty and reward is told with richly evocative description and brilliantly realised characters.

But *Nostromo* is more than an adventure story; it is also a profoundly dark moral fable. Its language is as compellingly resonant as the sea itself; the characters absorbing and complex. It was Conrad's masterwork, a forerunner of Modernism, and one of the greatest novels of the twentieth century.



**Nigel Anthony** is one of Britain's leading voice actors with wide experience of reading for audiobooks and on radio. His extensive work for BBC Radio has won him two awards. Audiobook credits include *The Lady of the Camellias*, *The Alexandria Quartet*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* for Naxos AudioBooks. He has also read the part of Sir Reginald de Courcy in *Lady Susan* and the parts of Lucky and the narrator in *Waiting for Godot* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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