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Ulysses has been labeled dirty, blasphemous, and unreadable. In a famous 1933 court decision, Judge John M. Woolsey declared it an emetic book--although he found it sufficiently unobscene to allow its importation into the United States--and Virginia Woolf was moved to decry James Joyce's "cloacal obsession." None of these adjectives, however, do the slightest justice to the novel. To this day it remains the modernist masterpiece, in which the author takes both Celtic lyricism and vulgarity to splendid extremes. It is funny, sorrowful, and even (in a close-focus sort of way) suspenseful. And despite the exegetical industry that has sprung up in the last 75 years, Ulysses is also a compulsively readable book. Even the verbal vaudeville of the final chapters can be navigated with relative ease, as long as you're willing to be buffeted, tickled, challenged, and (occasionally) vexed by Joyce's sheer command of the English language.