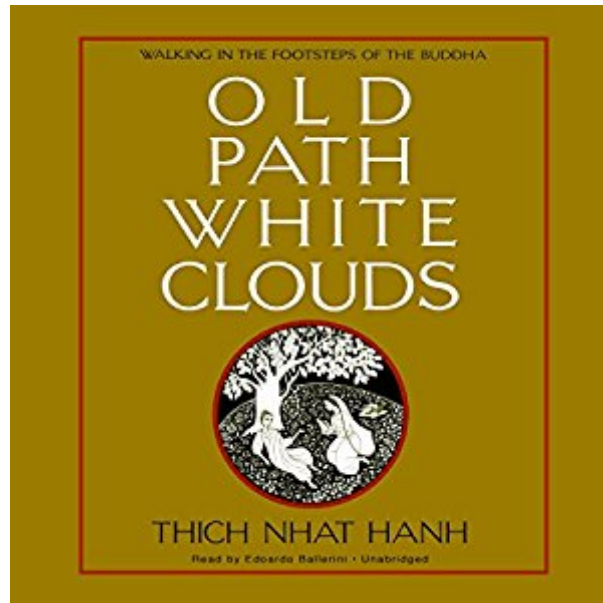


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Old Path White Clouds: Walking In The Footsteps Of The Buddha



Synopsis

Old Path White Clouds presents the life and teachings of Gautama Buddha. Drawn directly from 24 Pali, Sanskrit, and Chinese sources, and retold by Thich Nhat Hanh in his inimitably beautiful style, this book traces the Buddha's life slowly and gently over the course of 80 years, partly through the eyes of Svasti, the buffalo boy, and partly through the eyes of the Buddha himself. Old Path White Clouds is destined to become a classic of religious literature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you read only one book on Buddhism, let it be this one. Thich Nhat Hanh is one of the world's great teachers, and this life of Shakyamuni Buddha is his masterpiece. Every chapter is a perfect gem, every idea put forth bears witness not only to the noblest spiritual tradition, but to the purity of heart of its author. I have read this book many times over; it has never failed to move me, never ceased to nourish within me immense avenues of hope and understanding. I think it is an extraordinary literary accomplishment, however efficacious its spiritual impact. Conversely, it is clear that it derives at least some of its literary merit from the profundity of the ideals which it transmits. It is a clear, often surprising, reverent and humane book, a classic of religious literature in the finest tradition of a universal humanist aesthetic. The breadth of Nhat Hanh's gifts is apparent from the outset; the chapters on young Gautama's princely early life, his marriage, the nascent inward understanding that is his even before taking up the search for life's hidden meaning, are so exquisitely composed that one finds oneself already in possession of the truth to come, already one

knows intimately the thirst that takes the Buddha from the life he has known and loved, against the wishes of his father's heart, against his love for and commitment toward his own wife and child. This is literature of an everlasting kind. The art of narrative found here really has no equal in all of contemporary religious literature. Beautifully delicate line drawings accompany every chapter like a faint temple bell, the language is as constant and profound as a child's, able to encompass the sophisticated searching of the most ardent doubter and the simple heart of the believer alike. It is a truly great book. Art of this kind is surely what Gutenberg's invention was intended for. A perfect treasure. Read it, and live.

Old Path White Clouds Walking in the Footsteps of the Buddha by Thich Nhat Hanh Drawings by Nguyen Thi Hop This beautiful book is perhaps the best biography of the Buddha available in English. Comparisons with Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha* are probably inevitable because both books employ a lyrical, literary style, but actually this book is quite different. Hesse's novel is an exploration of Siddhartha's motivations and the search that led to his enlightenment; Thich Nhat Hanh's book is a biography covering all eighty years of the Buddha's life based on Pali, Sanskrit, and Chinese sources, which are assiduously notated in the book's appendix. The story throughout is told very simply and in a tone that may be described as devotional. Chapters are short and usually illustrate a particular concept or event, and the text throughout is illustrated with many beautiful drawings. It is not a short book but its structure and style maintain the reader's interest over the course of story, and one may be tempted to say that it reads like a novel. The length of the book is due to the fact that beyond being a history of the life of the Buddha, it is an exposition of his teachings, which are presented clearly and with increasing depth as the story of the foundation of the Sangha unfolds. Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike will benefit from this summation of the many concepts inherent in the Buddhist tradition, presented as they were to Buddha's first disciples. One of the most interesting aspects of the story for this reader was to see clearly how the teachings of the Buddha were encapsulated from the very beginning as a monastic tradition. For Western Buddhists, who for the most part are lay practitioners, this monastic foundation is something to be clearly understood as one tries to formulate one's own practice which is inevitably a compromise with the way of life originally presented by the Buddha. Highly recommended.

A couple of years ago on retreat I asked a nun from Plum Village what her favorite Thich Nhat Hanh title would be. She named this hefty tome which I purchased but did not read for quite awhile, assuming that it would be tedious and difficult going. (I have no idea why, none of Thay's books are

anything but lovely and engaging...) What a wonderful surprise I received as I started reading vignette after vignette from the Buddha's life. In breathtakingly beautiful prose, Thay brings this great historical figure to life in a way that just makes you wish you had been there. The stories also explain and illustrate some of the more esoteric teachings in ways that are simple and easy to grasp, especially for those of us not raised in this tradition. Don't be put off by the size of the book as I was. Keep it on your bedstand and read a few stories a night. You'll be sorry when you are done!

Old Path, White Clouds is a wonderful book for anyone wanting to learn more about the life of Buddha, whether they be experienced with Buddhism or completely ignorant. The simplicity of this book makes it readable by a scholar or a junior high school student. Many popular books on Buddhism overlook the role of this historical Buddha. This book changed the way I thought about life and helped me experience mindfulness. Don't let the large size of this book deceive you. It is so engrossing and easy to read that you seem to quickly slide through it wishing for more when it is done. A book I would strongly recommend for the Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike.

Of all the religious books I have read over the years, this is the one book that I will always treasure. The simple yet elegant style of Thich Nhat Hanh's writing is a joy to read. The book not only provides a wonder narration of the Buddha's life but also many parables that teach the Dharma. A definite recommendation for those who want a nice introduction to what Buddhism is about without taking the scholarly approach.

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