

Timeline of Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*

Narrative (fictional) chronology by volume, section, and sub-section — not to be confused with the novel's publication dates (1913–1927), tabulated separately below.

Volume (French pub. date)	Section / Sub-section	Narrative Time Frame	Notes
Vol. I — <i>Swann's Way</i> (1913)	"Swann in Love" (Un Amour de Swann) — flashback predating the narrator's birth	c. 1877–1878	<i>Self-contained third-person novella; Swann's courtship of Odette de Crécy, before the Narrator exists.</i>
“	"Combray" (childhood at Combray; madeleine framing)	c. 1883–1888	<i>Narrator's early boyhood, roughly ages 5–10 given a birth year of 1878.</i>
“	"Place-Names: The Name" (Noms de pays: le nom) — Champs-Élysées, Gilberte	c. 1889–1893	<i>Narrator's later childhood/early adolescence in Paris.</i>
Vol. II — <i>In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower</i> (1919)	"Around Mme Swann" (Autour de Mme Swann) — Paris	c. 1893–1895	<i>Narrator's adolescence; salon of Mme Swann; meets Bergotte.</i>
“	"Place-Names: The Place" (Noms de pays: le pays) — Balbec	c. 1895–1897	<i>Seaside holiday; meets Albertine, Saint-Loup, Charlus, Elstir.</i>
Vol. III — <i>The Guermantes Way</i> (1920–21)	Part I — Paris apartment; Guermantes salon; grandmother's decline	c. 1897–1898	<i>Narrator's entry into aristocratic society.</i>
“	Part II — grandmother's death; Dreyfus Affair politics; Princesse de Guermantes's party	c. 1898–1899	<i>Coincides with the real Dreyfus Affair's peak (Zola's "J'accuse," Jan. 1898; Dreyfus's retrial/pardon, 1899).</i>
Vol. IV — <i>Sodom and Gomorrah</i> (1921–22)	Part I — Charlus/Jupien episode; Princesse de Guermantes's party	c. 1899	<i>Opens with the discovery of Charlus's homosexuality.</i>
“	Part II — return to Balbec; the Verdurins at La Raspelière	c. 1899–1900	<i>Narrator's jealous surveillance of Albertine begins in earnest.</i>
Vol. V — <i>The Prisoner</i> (1923, posthumous)	Albertine sequestered in the Narrator's Paris apartment	c. 1900–1902 (as dated by Genette; see note)	<i>Genette's fictional dating is widely flagged as inconsistent with internal details (motor-cars, aeroplanes) that feel later than 1900–02 — one of several chronological cruxes scholars have long debated.</i>
Vol. VI — <i>The Fugitive</i> (1925)	Albertine's flight, death, and the Narrator's mourning; Venice journey	c. 1902–1903	<i>Includes news of Swann's death and Albertine's fatal riding accident.</i>
Vol. VII — <i>Time Regained</i> (1927)	Tansonville visit with Gilberte; reflections on writing	c. 1903–1908 (approx.)	<i>Loosely dated; functions as a bridge passage.</i>

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“	Wartime Paris — blackout night, Charlus's decline, Jupien's brothel	1916 (explicit in text)	<i>Narrator revisits Paris from a sanatorium stay during World War I.</i>
“	Recalled: Saint-Loup's visit to enlist; his death in combat	1914 (recalled); death before Nov. 1918	<i>Reported, not narrated in real time.</i>
“	Closing scene — Prince de Guermantes's matinée	1925	<i>Per literary theorist Gérard Genette's reconstruction; notably later than Proust's own death in Nov. 1922 — see note below.</i>

A Note on Dating and Uncertainty

The overall span reconstructed here is roughly 1877/1878 to 1925. The most-cited scholarly reconstruction of the novel's internal chronology is literary theorist **Gérard Genette's**, in *Narrative Discourse* (1980), which places the Narrator's birth in 1878 and dates each volume as shown above. Genette's dating is an inference from internal textual evidence, not a chronology Proust supplied outright, and **Proust scholars have long noted that the novel resists precise dating**; its treatment of real historical material **is organized by symbolic and thematic logic rather than strict chronology**, and later volumes contain apparent anachronisms (motor-cars, aeroplanes, and other markers that sit awkwardly with their assigned years). Treat the 'Narrative Time Frame' column as the best available scholarly reconstruction, not as dates stated explicitly in the text — with the exception of the few points the text does date explicitly (1914 and 1916, in Time Regained).

The Dreyfus Affair material is not chronological. It's scattered non-sequentially across several volumes (mainly *The Guermantes Way* and *Sodom and Gomorrah*) for thematic rather than dramatic reasons — worth flagging if your group tries to map it onto the real Affair's 1894–1906 timeline.

Publication Timeline (for comparison)

Volume	French Publication	First English Translation	Notes
Swann's Way (Du côté de chez Swann)	1913	1922 (Scott Moncrieff)	<i>Self-published via Grasset after rejection by NRF/Gallimard.</i>
In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower (À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs)	1918/1919	1924	<i>Awarded the Prix Goncourt, 1919.</i>
The Guermantes Way (Le Côté de Guermantes)	1920–1921	1925	<i>Originally issued in two parts.</i>
Sodom and Gomorrah (Sodome et Gomorrhe)	1921–1922	1927	<i>Last volume Proust personally supervised before his death, Nov. 1922.</i>
The Prisoner (La Prisonnière)	1923	1929	<i>First posthumous volume; ed. Robert Proust.</i>
The Fugitive (Albertine disparue / La Fugitive)	1925	1930	<i>Most editorially contested volume; title and text vary by edition.</i>
Time Regained (Le Temps retrouvé)	1927	1931 (UK) / 1932 (US)	<i>Largely drafted early, alongside Vol. I, then expanded.</i>

Sources

1. **Gérard Genette, Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method**, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 91–92 — source of the volume-by-volume date ranges and the narrator's birth year (1878), as cited in the Wikipedia article "In Search of Lost Time" (accessed August 30, 2026).
2. George D. Painter, *Marcel Proust: A Biography* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 150 — cited by Genette/Wikipedia for the Narrator's birth year.
3. "Analysis of Marcel Proust's In Search of Lost Time," *Literariness.org*, July 26, 2023 — source for the claim that the closing episode of *Time Regained* is set in 1925, after Proust's own death, and that 'Swann in Love' takes place before the Narrator's birth, in the 1890s per this source's own (looser) framing; I have followed Genette's more specific 1877–78 dating for that section instead, since it is the more granular, source-cited figure.
4. Wikipedia contributors, "In Search of Lost Time," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, accessed August 30, 2026 — for the publication-date table, section/part structure of each volume, and the plot synopsis used to align sub-sections (Combray, Swann in Love, Balbec, the Dreyfus Affair scenes, the 1916 wartime episode, Saint-Loup's death) with Genette's date ranges.
5. "The Subversion of History: The Dreyfus Affair in *À la recherche du temps perdu*," *International Fiction Review* (via journals.lib.unb.ca) — for the point that the Affair's presence in the novel is fragmentary and non-chronological, concentrated mainly in *The Guermantes Way* and *Sodom and Gomorrah*.

Recommended for verification against primary synopses: Terence Kilmartin's "A Guide to Proust" (in the Modern Library Time Regained volume) and the end-of-volume synopses in the Penguin/Allen Lane translations, both of which give volume-by-volume plot summaries but do not assign calendar years as explicitly as Genette's reconstruction.