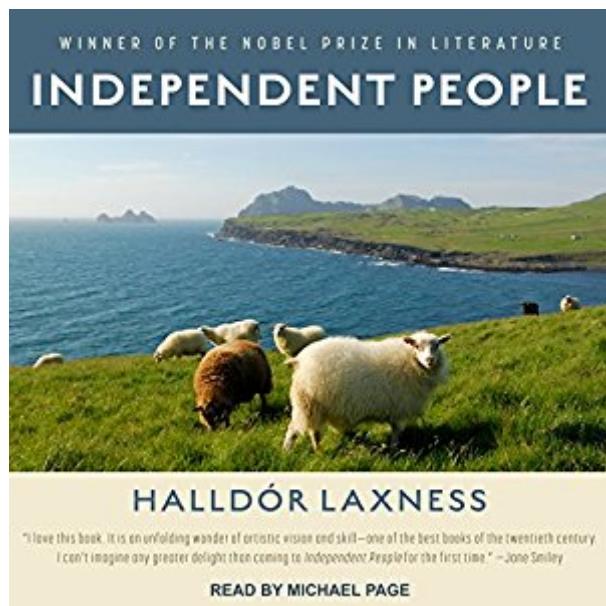


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# Independent People



## Synopsis

This magnificent novel - which secured for its author the 1955 Nobel Prize in Literature - is now available to contemporary American audiences. Although it is set in the early 20th century, it recalls both Iceland's medieval epics and such classics as Sigrid Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter*. And if Bjartur of Summerhouses, the book's protagonist, is an ordinary sheep farmer, his flinty determination to achieve independence is genuinely heroic and, at the same time, terrifying and bleakly comic. Having spent 18 years in humiliating servitude, Bjartur wants nothing more than to raise his flocks unbeholden to any man. But Bjartur's spirited daughter wants to live unbeholden to him. What ensues is a battle of wills that is by turns harsh and touching, elemental in its emotional intensity, and intimate in its homely detail. Vast in scope and deeply rewarding, *Independent People* is a masterpiece.

## Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Version: Unabridged

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Whispersync for Voice: Ready

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## Customer Reviews

This is a great way to introduce yourself to Icelandic culture and history before or during a trip. Beautifully written and translated, with just the right mixture of humor, irony, and pathos to hold your interest.

Timeless epic about an Icelandic crofter who could not compromise his principles even when it made economic sense. I cried at the end. We're going to Iceland this summer to photograph some of the venues in this book. I own both the paper back edition and Kindle edition because I found the

text in the paper back edition to be too small and fuzzy to read the whole 500+ page text with 72 year old eyes. The Kindle edition is much easier to read but you should be aware that there are over 100 typos apparently made by the scanner which could have easily been corrected with a spell checker. It is outrageous that charges more for the typo ridden Kindle edition than the paper back edition.

I read this book before, during and after a trip to Iceland and I absolutely loved it. It's a hefty volume and it's not exactly a quick read, but there is just something about it that I can't put my finger on that I loved. The general plot description is that it's the story of a man who is stubbornly determined to live an independent life, regardless of the cost or repercussions. In some ways, I would compare it to a novel like *A Land Remembered*, about a man trying to make his way in an unfriendly frontier landscape, but there is also a dark humor and satirical wit to it that makes it more unique than a mere frontier-narrative. I found myself laughing aloud at many points in this book, bizarrely, because not much happens that most people would find funny, but the actions of the protagonist in this book sometimes warrant no other possible reaction than laughter. You may never read another book like it.

I wanted to find out why this old novel has appeared on the "must read" lists of so many established authors...and now I know. It is timeless, intriguing, and mesmerizing.

This is a book you will remember and return to your entire life. It is the intimate story of an Icelandic sheep farmer, Bjartur, and his struggle to maintain the independence of himself and his family. But what is independence? Bjartur's proud and eternal insistence on refusing assistance from all who offer demonstrates that attaining the goal of being "independent people" is a never-ending struggle that leads to poverty - both the material and spiritual kind. Bjartur could certainly use some assistance; he and his family eke out a poor living on a remote farm, and he is an aloof difficult man. Despite the limited scope of the novel - there are few characters beyond Bjartur's family, and the entire novel takes place mainly on his small farm - it has the grand sweeping feel of an epic. Perhaps that is because the author confidently and expertly sprinkles bits of wisdom about the human condition throughout the book; these are beautiful, sad, nostalgic observations. The tone of the story is surprisingly uplifting, especially considering that Bjartur's life can't be described as happy or easy, except when it comes to his daughter Asta. Their complex relationship forms the core of the book and is worthy of a Shakespearean play. Although their proudly independent

natures cause them to spend several years apart, at the end of the book they have reunited to continue the struggle.

A classic tale of Man versus Man and Man versus Nature. Laxness portrays the hardships of living in rural Iceland at the turn of the century through the experiences of a lowly shepherd who fights for the one thing that's important to him - his independence - and in the end fights himself as well as he comes to terms with a child he knows is not his. A tough read but well worth it.

Impossible to begin to comment on this too wonderful for words epic (or anti epic) novel. Magical, funny, compelling and beautifully translated. Dearves to be read and reread through one's lifetime

A tale of an unremittingly hard life, stoically lived, redeemed only but the force of human character and unfailingly penetrating prose.

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