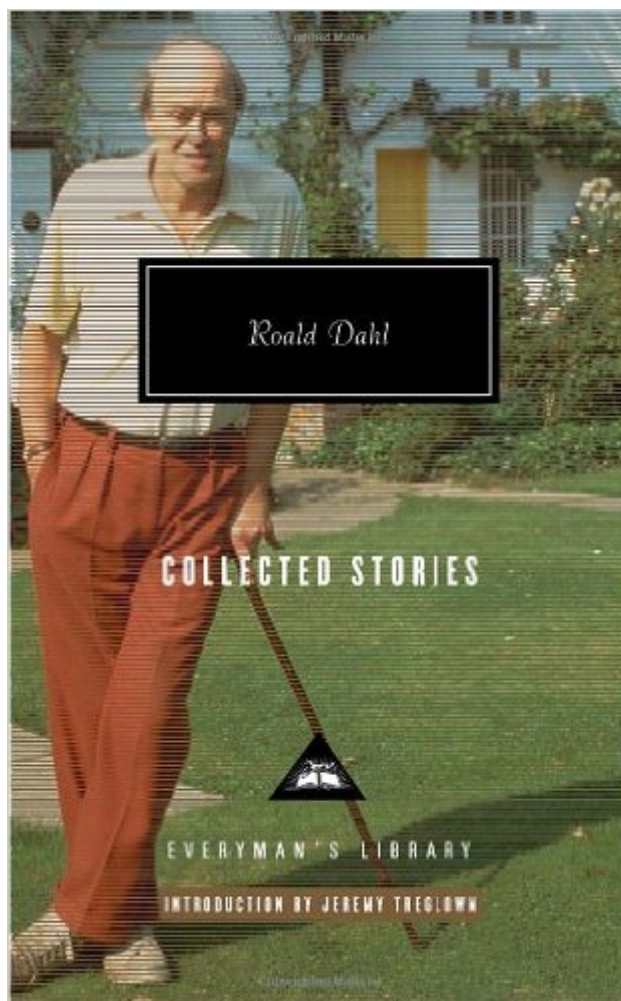


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# Collected Stories (Everyman's Library)



## Synopsis

(Book Jacket Status: Jacketed) The only hardcover edition of Roald Dahl's stories for adults, the Collected Stories amply showcases his singular gifts as a fabulist and a born storyteller. Later known for his immortal children's books, including *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *James and the Giant Peach*, and *The BFG*, Dahl also had a genius for adult short fiction, which he wrote throughout his life. Whether fictionalizing his dramatic exploits as a Royal Air Force pilot during World War II or concocting the ingeniously plotted fables that were dramatized on television as *Tales of the Unexpected*, Dahl was brilliant at provoking in his readers the overwhelming desire to know what happens next—and at satisfying that desire in ways that feel both surprising and inevitable. Filled with devilish plot twists, his tales display a tantalizing blend of macabre humor and the absurdly grotesque. From "The Landlady," about an unusual boardinghouse that features a small but very permanent clientele, to "Pig," a brutally funny look at vegetarianism, to "Man from the South," in which a fanatical gambler does his betting with hammer, nails, and a butcher's knife, Dahl's creations amuse and shock us in equal measure, gleefully reminding us of what might lurk beneath the surface of the ordinary.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is packed solid with 52 highly entertaining stories that have so many twists and turns you will not want to stop reading. Each well-written story is unique in its own way, whether it be amusing, thrilling, sad or altogether intriguing. The characters, even the dislikable ones, are so splendidly created and lifelike that you will be completely engrossed in their lives. This is a thoroughly

enjoyable read for those who love a good twist-in-the-tale story.

Once again! the Everyman's Library has outdone any other publisher's job of creating a thorough and precise piece of book history. This is the third book I have purchased and read through Everyman's Library and I sincerely feel their books are the only ones I will buy when creating my own hardcover collection. The quality of paper, the texture of the outer red cover, the beauty of the chronological timeline of events in the author's life, they not only think of it all, but go so far beyond what is called for in a \$20 book. If I were a tree that died in the name of paper, I would only hope my flesh would go towards another Everyman's success. On to Roald Dahl. Best writer Ever. Best collection Ever. Best stories I have Ever read. Best organization of stories contained within a single volume. This book is Paper Gold. My favorite writer and my favorite book publish company smooshed into a magnificent creation that is the perfect size for the average human; hand and lap!!! Touch the hard cover. Feel it upon your cheek. Smell the pages... In the name of all that is holy!

Roald Dahl is today best known as a children's writer. Books like "James and the Giant Peach" and "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" were part of my childhood when I was growing up in the sixties, just as they were part of the childhoods of many people of my generation. From what I understand, he is even more popular with modern children. This book, however, presents us with the other side of Dahl's work, his stories for adults which are perhaps less well known today, although they did go through a spell of popularity in the seventies and eighties when they formed the basis of the Anglia Television series "Tales of the Unexpected". Writers are often advised to write about the things they know best from personal experience, but unless he was lucky enough to enjoy a far greater variety of experiences than most other people, Dahl appears to have ignored this advice. Strangely, perhaps the part of this volume that I enjoyed least was the most personal, his first collection of stories "Over to You" which was based upon his wartime experiences in the RAF. Although deeply heartfelt, these generally lacked the wit and energy of his later work. Dahl's other collections, "Someone Like You", "Kiss Kiss" and "Switch Bitch", and the uncollected stories published here as "Eight Further Tales of the Unexpected" contain a much greater variety of subject-matter, and suggest that the author was very knowledgeable about many different subjects- wine-tasting, the game of bridge, the art world, greyhound racing and the antiques business, to name only a few. As the title of the television series suggests, a feature of many of his stories is a sudden, unexpected twist at the end, a device which has been successfully used by many other short-story writers, perhaps most famously by O. Henry. A frequent Dahl theme is that of the person who concocts an

elaborate and supposedly foolproof scheme to achieve some disreputable end, only to be thwarted by events. A bookseller sends out invoices for pornographic books supposedly purchased by their late husbands to grieving widows. An antique dealer poses as a clergyman in order to acquire valuable furniture at knock-down prices. An unfaithful wife pretends to have found a pawn ticket in order to conceal from her husband the fact that her lover has given her a mink coat. In each case an unexpected turn of events brings about their downfall. Of course, in some cases the twist- as in "The Umbrella Man"- is that the villain succeeds in his scheme. Sometimes the twist is less important than what has preceded it. In "Gallop Foxley", for example, a middle-aged commuter believes that the man sitting opposite him is the bully who made his life miserable at school. The twist- that he has, in fact, misidentified the man- is not particularly startling- what makes this story memorable is Dahl's description of the man's schooldays and his experiences of vicious schoolboy sadism. Not all the stories succeed; I felt that at times Dahl gave too much rein to his appetite for the bizarre and gruesome, with the result that some stories such as "William and Mary" or "Pig" tended to descend out of the real world and into a sort of grotesque Grand Guignol. Nevertheless, for every story that fails there are several that succeed. And when one of Dahl's stories succeeds, the result can be a delight. Among my favourites are "Lamb to the Slaughter", in which a woman who has killed her husband finds a neat way of disposing of the evidence, "Taste" which features the ultimate wine snob, "The Great Switcheroo" with its curious wife-swapping session and "The Surgeon" in which a stolen diamond is returned to its rightful owner by a most curious route. I suspect that most readers will find as much to enjoy in this collection as I did.

Simply put, Roald Dahl's short stories are fantastic. This collection provides an entertaining variation in content and themes from "the absolute master of the twist-in-a-tale". Dahl's characters and settings are well-rounded even in short-story format, and I had no trouble being sucked right into the stories. Collected tales of war, sex, revenge and adventure (sometimes in the same story), all spiced with sarcasm, irony and more often than not, a sinister twist. Don't be surprised if you find yourself silently cheering for a character. However, by the same token don't be surprised if the character in question is subjected to a well-conceived plot twist!! I believe one of the best features is that Dahl doesn't beat you over the head with resolutions to his stories. He gives you all the details needed to predict where events will inevitably end, allowing you to formulate and imagine it yourself. In an age of spoon-fed plots in both film and literature, this is a valuable and wonderful thing indeed. I highly recommend this book for people with a dark sense of humour, an appreciation for sarcasm and irony, and readers who prefer their characters to not be of the transparent 'cookie

cutter' variety. I would rate this book higher than five stars - 10 out of 10 easily.

If you like reading, than this Roald Dahl book is for you. If you hate reading, than this book is definatly for you. Its a great collection of stories for the young at heart, as well as for those cynical souls who believe they have "Seen and done it all". For those of you afraid that this will be sappy or sentimentel claptrap, rest at ease; TCSH has none of the blatentency found in todays suspense novels (such as Steven King), but rather a sly and crafty way of reaching to its conclusion. I read my first RD story in high school becuase I was forced to, loved it, and bought this collection on a trip to Oxford when I was 17...ever since then Ive turned to this book on long weekends and holidays; it has a funny way of making you feel like everytime like its the first time youve read it. Simply put, the this THE COLLECTION for true fans of the short story, leaving you not just statisfied, but longing for more more more (with special kudos to the Uncle Oswald stories...) Ironic content? Oh yes...Will these stories leave you awake at 3am , cursing the moment you started to read so early, because now its just all over? Most likely...

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