



Roald Dahl: A Biography

By Jeremy Treglown

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Provides an incisive, unauthorized biography of one of the world's most popular authors, discussing his youth, his early life as a wartime propagandist, his tormented marriage to actress Patricia Neal, his writing, and more. 15,000 first printing.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This revealing biography strips away the genial persona of popular children's book author Roald Dahl (1916-1990) to explore the personal demons that drove him. Born to Norwegian parents in Wales, Dahl, whose father and older sister both died when he was four, was a divided personality. An RAF fighter pilot, war hero, art collector, philanthropist and doting father, he was also, by his account, a wartime British spy who snooped on Americans in Washington, D.C., a bully, an anti-Semite, a vain, cantankerous alcoholic given to cruelty and outbursts. Dahl, who settled in New York City in the early 1950s, wrote Hollywood screenplays and stories for adults laced with black humor. His hectic marriage to actress Patricia Neal, according to Treglown, was marred by his envy of her success, too much liquor on both sides, and a series of misfortunes including her debilitating stroke, an infant son's skull fractures in a car accident, the death of one daughter at age 7 and the drug addiction of two teenage daughters. Treglown, former editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, convincingly separates the man from the myth in a scrupulously researched portrait. Photos.

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From Library Journal

Treglown, a former editor of *The Times Literary Supplement*, has written an honest yet deferential biography of one of the most important children's authors ever (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* ; *James and the Giant Peach*). Born in England to Norwegian parents, Dahl (1916-90) was a difficult and opinionated man whose life was riddled with tragedy, including the early deaths of his father and one of his daughters and the strokes of Patricia Neal, his wife of nearly 30 years. Although Dahl achieved success through his novels, stories, and screenplays, he found his niche in writing for children. His tales were sometimes criticized as too gruesome, yet they remain hugely popular with children because they unflinchingly confront childhood demons and fears. Treglown draws extensively from interviews with Dahl's family and a wealth of correspondence. This excellent portrait of one of modern literature's most creative minds is highly recommended.

- Diane Gardner Premo, *SILS, SUNY-Buffalo*

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From [Booklist](#)

Roald Dahl's writings are like the girl with the curl on her forehead. When they are good, they are very good, and when they are bad they are horrid. Exactly the same seems to have been true of Dahl himself, at least as he is portrayed in this first full-length biography. A devoted father dedicated to charity causes, Dahl was also petty, jealous of other writers, and an anti-Semite. He was a bully as well, just like the ones featured so prominently in his children's books. Though there are some juicy tidbits in Treglown's account, it is not really a dishy book. In fact, for those who have read Dahl's own memoirs, *Boy* (1984) and *Going Solo* (1986), it may seem rather dull. The more you read, however, the more interesting it becomes, perhaps because Dahl became more irascible as he grew older, but also because much of the focus is on his works and even on the role of his editors, including Farrar's Stephen Roxburgh. The moral of one of Dahl's most popular books, *The Witches*, is that what matters is not who you are or what you look like, but that somebody loves you. Readers will continue to adore Dahl's books, but the man himself is a might harder to love. *Ilene Cooper*

Users Review

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