



Storyteller: The Life of Roald Dahl

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Roald Dahl lived an extraordinary life, and this highly readable account vividly brings to life both the personal and professional sides of the man. His writing for children doesn't make an appearance until the later stages of book because there is so much to write about before then, some of which we know from his own biographical writing. Here we discover that not all the details were true, and the author perhaps makes too much of discrepancies between what really happened and what Dahl later wrote about in **Boy** and **Going Solo**. Dahl himself is quoted from his own notes in the late 1940s: 'I don't lie. I merely make the truth a little more interesting.' And why not? Isn't that what a storyteller is?

Newly revealed is Dahl's wartime work for the British intelligence services in Washington, where he knew Ian Fleming. His charm and dashing appearance made him a popular guest, with his letters home reporting on his weekends with President Roosevelt, and dinners with stars such as Walt Disney, Noel Coward, and his future wife, Patricia Neal, with whom he had five children.

But Dahl's life was also touched by tragedy, including the early death of his father when he was three, the death of his own daughter aged eight and a life threatening accident to his baby son. His wartime air crash led to a lifetime of pain, and his life as a writer was by no means plain sailing. He worked and reworked first short stories for adults, then film scripts (including **You Only Live Twice**) until he finally found real fame and fortune from his stories for children. Along the way he had rejections and disappointments, managing to fall out with editors and agents (and friends) on both sides of the Atlantic.

Years of letter writing form the basis of this biography which, together with eye witness interviews and other accounts, reveals and helps us understand the complexity of Dahl the writer and family man. Most interestingly, we learn the thought processes and roots for much of his storytelling, and get to understand his drive and his courage, alongside his humour and his vivid imagination. I knew and worked with Dahl during his last seven years, as his paperback publisher at Puffin, and am glad to have learnt so much more about what made him the man he was.

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