



# Q & A with Christopher William Hill

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Q & A with Christopher William Hill

**Osbert the Avenger** is Christopher William Hill's debut, a gruesome tale of injustice and revenge. Here he answers questions on the book for **Books for Keeps**.

**Comparisons with Roald Dahl are already being made - how does this make you feel?**

Bemused, embarrassed, vengeful, sick, scared, amused and slightly trembly around the knees (I don't actually feel vengeful in any way, but I think it's a nice word to include in a sentence).

**You write drama and play scripts - did this influence *Osbert the Avenger* in any way?**

I always find it really difficult to write a thing unless I can imagine it being played out in my mind ? and I think that comes from writing plays and seeing them performed on stage. It certainly helped to build up Schwartzgarten as a three-dimensional world.

**Commentators have predicted that adults will find the gruesome scenes in *Osbert Brinkhoff* objectionable - do you care? How do you hope children will respond?**

Adults always disapprove of gruesome stories (especially if they think that children might enjoy them). There's a great tradition of ghoulish children's literature, from Hilaire Belloc to Roald Dahl, Edward Gory and Neil Gaiman ? generations of children have read these books without growing up to become irredeemably peculiar. I don't imagine for one minute that **Osbert The Avenger** is going to give children diabolical ideas ? and even if it did, it's just not that easy to get hold of an industrial strudel slicer, is it?

**What were your school days like? Did they provide any inspiration for your book? (surely not!)**

Well, nobody died in delicious or mysterious circumstances ? not that I didn't imagine it happening. We had a fascinating menagerie of weird and wonderful teachers and I think those childhood memories did influence me while I was writing the book. We had a particularly brilliant history teacher who used to spend hours drawing detailed battle scenes on the blackboard in coloured chalk, and would sometimes leap from desk to desk to act out scenes from the Korean war.

**This is your first children's book - what are you most pleased about in the book?**

I'm very fond of little Osbert. His family have a terrible time in Schwartzgarten and to an eleven-year-old genius, exacting a delicious revenge is the natural way to settle the score. He's not an evil boy, he's simply misunderstood.

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