

ROALD DAHL, A MASTER OF THE MACABRE

Roald Dahl was born on September 13, 1916 of Norwegian parents. His father, who died when Dahl was still a little boy, had always wanted his children to be educated in good English schools. Although Dahl had to adjust to school life, he never liked it and as a pupil, he was often toward the bottom of his class. However, one of his favourite hobbies was reading.

After his school years, Dahl started an exciting life. He wanted to travel all over the world so he began to work for Shell Oil Company in East Africa. When World War II broke out, he joined the Royal Air Force, then went to the United States to work in the British Embassy as an assistant. He started to publish some stories in American magazines and decided to settle in New York. His wit and talent quickly enabled him to become a famous author. He wrote a tremendous number of books of very different literary genres: short stories, novels, books for children, tales, poetry, parodies, plays... In some of his books, such as *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *The Witches* (1983) or *Matilda* (1988), he offers the readers a fantastic, humorous and tender world. However, his talent also allowed him to write books of a very different style and some of Roald Dahl's short stories are masterpieces of the macabre and black comedy. The characters first seem to be completely normal people but they often hide a darker side.



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Lamb to the Slaughter is one of Dahl's most famous short stories. Mary Maloney, the main character, seems to be a nice housewife, leading a peaceful and monotonous life with her husband... Who could imagine what is going to happen in the Maloney's household?!

The Landlady is well-known and has been dramatized on television. The reader can feel the bizarre atmosphere of the spooky Bed and Breakfast right from the beginning of the story but the subtle and scary ending is still a surprise!

William and Mary is another of Dahl's best-known short stories. William, who is dying of incurable cancer, agrees to take part in a doctor's incredible experiment... Dahl did some medical research to make sure that William's scientific experiment would be realistic and the result is an intriguing and shocking tale!

Roald Dahl died on November 23, 1990, in Oxford, England. He is one of the most popular English authors. His books have been translated into many languages and some of them were turned into successful films.