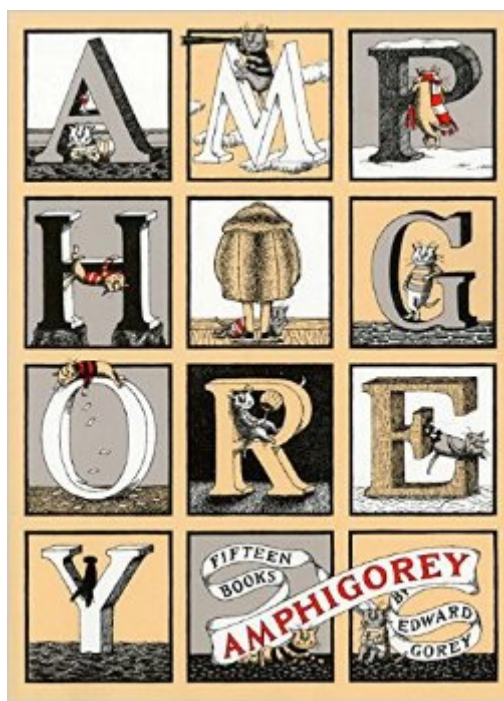


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Amphigorey: Fifteen Books



Synopsis

Fifteen works by the American artist and author provide a journey into a macabre world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Edward Gorey was a master of the macabre. Seemingly inappropriate, always bizarre, Mr. Gorey walked the taboo tightrope in his stories and illustrations. Here are fifteen such delightfully atrocious tales, compiled for the convenience of his very demented fans (including yours truly). First is "The Unstrung Harp" about a befuddled and (in appearance) paranoid writer who trudges through his maddening existence, as so many a writer inevitably will. The casual reader might find this tale odd, but anyone who has ever taken to writing seriously will feel nothing but empathy. Has one of the greatest ending lines of any story I've ever read. Next is "The Listing Attic", a series of devilish rhymes with correlating illustrations. Many of these are horrible in design yet strangely you'll find yourself laughing at the unfortunate mishaps that fall upon the characters. Now, on to "The Doubtful Guest" about a mysterious penguin-like creature that arrives at a residence only to act in a seemingly irrational way, doing things for inexplicable reasons. Personally I think this is nothing more than a metaphor for the unexpected in life and how it's more irrational for people to waste time trying to make sense out of these things. But that's just me. "The Object Lesson" is just plain confusing, as if Mr. Gorey was just penning random thoughts and then illustrating them. Definitely weird. "The Bug Book" is pretty childish in design and, to me, not particularly noteworthy. "The Fatal Lozenge" is another series of rhymes, although the level of morbidity and violence is pretty much maxed out. Reading these you won't find yourself able to laugh, only maybe able to produce a

nervous twitter as you ponder how very real these situations could be.

If for no other reason than cost-efficiency, you ought to buy this collection of the late Edward Gorey's books; it doesn't cost very much more than the individual hard-cover original editions of the fifteen books collected here. Most people will recognise Gorey as the designer of the credits for the long-running PBS series "Mystery!", if nothing else; but he is so much more. If I were forced to guess, based strictly on the contents of the fifteen volumes collected here, I would have had to say that Edward Gorey was obviously an elderly and somewhat dotty Englishman. As a matter of fact, he was neither elderly nor English -- but that's the type of material he excelled at; that somewhat macabre but utterly devastating straight-faced black humour that seems to a Mere Colonial such as myself as Utterly British. One could, for instance, question whether the untimely demise of twenty-six children -- in alphabetical order, with lovingly-rendered illustrations of their antepenultimate moments -- was a fit subject for humour. Whether or not it is becomes a moot question almost as soon as one begins reading "The Gashleycrumb Tinies" -- "'A' is for ANNA, who fell down the stairs. 'B' is for BASIL, assaulted by Bears..." Sick or not, if you can read all twenty-six pages of this little monograph and not laugh, there is something wrong with you. Possibly the best thing in the book -- though it's **all** excellent -- is "The Unstrung Harp, or, Mr Earbrass Writes a Novel", which has been described by an acquaintance who works as an editor at a major New York publisher as one of the more accurate portrayals of the process he has ever read. Rather gentler and more restrained and cultured than the work of Gahan Wilson, a bit less anarchic than "The Far Side", this is still a wonderful antidote to all of society's little hypocrisies and refusals to face the reality of the gleeful darkness that every one of us has (generally fairly well hidden) somewhere in our soul."}

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