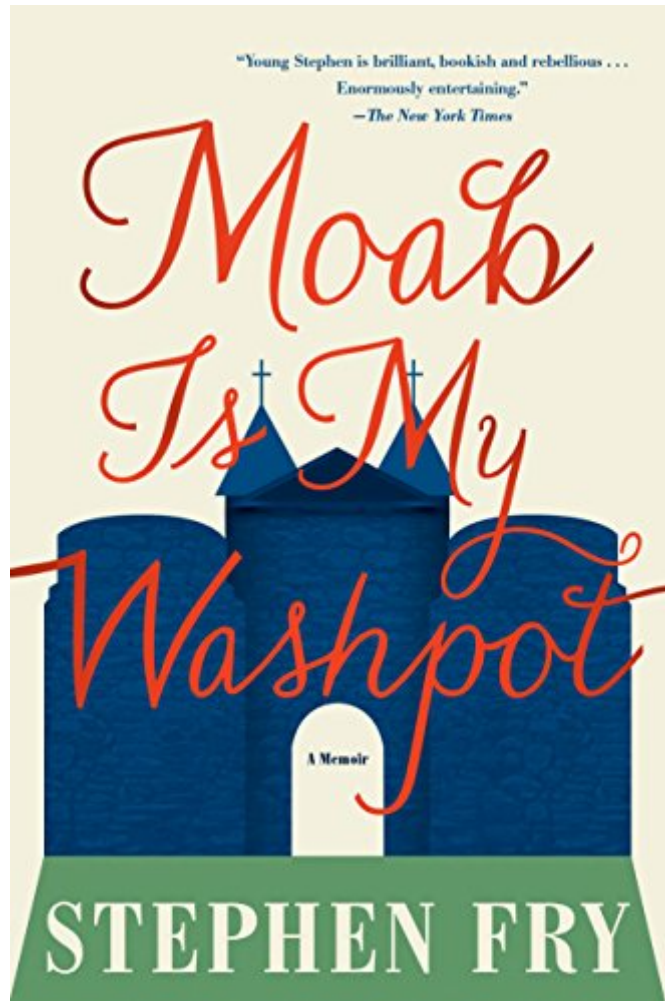




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Moab Is My Washpot



Synopsis

A number one bestseller in Britain, Stephen Fry's astonishingly frank, funny, wise memoir is the book that his fans everywhere have been waiting for. Since his PBS television debut in the *Blackadder* series, the American profile of this multitalented writer, actor and comedian has grown steadily, especially in the wake of his title role in the film *Wilde*, which earned him a Golden Globe nomination, and his supporting role in *A Civil Action*. Fry has already given readers a taste of his tumultuous adolescence in his autobiographical first novel, *The Liar*, and now he reveals the equally tumultuous life that inspired it. Sent to boarding school at the age of seven, he survived beatings, misery, love affairs, carnal violation, expulsion, attempted suicide, criminal conviction and imprisonment to emerge, at the age of eighteen, ready to start over in a world in which he had always felt a stranger. One of very few Cambridge University graduates to have been imprisoned prior to his freshman year, Fry is a brilliantly idiosyncratic character who continues to attract controversy, empathy and real devotion. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Moab is my Washpot

By Stephen Fry

Five stars

The basic reaction I had as I finished Stephen Fry's autobiographical *Moab is my Washpot* was: Would Stephen Fry like me? I'm not usually quite this narcissistic, but I couldn't help but feel that Fry was someone I wished I knew, someone quite remarkable, and yet palpably flawed and human in ways that provoked forgiveness. Against all better judgment, I rather fell in love with him. This should be honestly described as a partial-autobiography, since it only takes the famous British comic actor from birth to about the age of twenty. Given that he's just two years younger than I am, there's a lot of his life left undiscovered at the end of this book. But the part he writes is in equal parts hilarious and hair-raising. Apologetic and unrepentant, Fry's helter-skelter narrative describes to us exactly how he managed to bugger up his life without any help from his parents (who, if eccentric and quirky, were adoring and as patient as saints). Much better, from my point of view, than the fictionalized version of his early life offered in *The Liar*. *Moab is my Washpot* is a wry confessional in which the author admits freely what a twat he is while at the same time making the reader (at least this one) want to hold him tightly and promise that everything will turn out all right. As an American, I barely knew who Stephen Fry was, since the larger part of his most celebrated comedy never appeared on American television (unlike his best friend and comic partner Hugh Laurie, who became a household word through the television drama series *House*). As a gay man, I know rather more about him, both for his outspoken support of LGBT rights and more recently for his pending nuptials to a far younger man. There is a certain perverse David Copperfield quality to this book, *Oliver Twist* with a twist. It is an epic saga of a life lived in desperation; desperation probably caused by an awareness of his homosexuality and inability to deal with it in healthy ways. This in itself points to the difficulty of growing up gay in the world of the 1950s, 60s and 70s (whether British or American) with very little support of any kind. Adorably, Fry does not point the finger of blame—he insists, amusingly and convincingly, that getting caned at boarding school did nothing to damage his psyche. All the stereotypical nightmarishness of the British public school system is carefully shunted aside as possible cause for Fry's ill-behavior. He blames only himself, but in doing so embraces the general darkness of the world in his youth as the root cause of his excesses and his disastrous spiral into thievery and prison. He even makes prison sound sort of amusing. Writing honestly is difficult. Being funny about writing honestly is near miraculous. I loved this book and admire Fry deeply for unleashing it on the world.

One of the reasons I love Fry is his seemingly effortless erudition. He riffs on a theme with almost

brehtaking sophistication. The breadth and depth of his knowledge is almost incredible. In this memoir that treats his childhood and adolescence, Fry explores contemporary English culture focusing but not limiting himself to education and sexuality. The pain he evokes relating a hopeless love is so visceral I had trouble reading some passages without putting the book down for a while. As a plus for Fry aficionados, many characters and scenes here are recognizable sources for his first novel, *The Liar*.

Stephen Fry is a GLORIOUS writer. Listen to these words: "LSD reveals the whatness of things, their quiddity, their essence. The wateriness of water is suddenly revealed to you, the carpetness of carpets, the woodness of wood, the yellowness of yellow, the fingernailness of fingernails, the allness of all, the nothingness of all, the allness of nothing." Fry, Stephen (2011-09-06). *Moab Is My Washpot* (p. 83). Soho Press. Kindle Edition. (Note that neither Mr Fry nor I are advocating use of LSD) and "Music is everything and nothing. It is useless and no limit can be set on its use. Music takes me to places of illimitable sensual and insensate joy, accessing points of ecstasy that no angelic lover could ever locate, or plunging me into gibbering weeping hells of pain that no torturer could ever devise." Fry, Stephen (2011-09-06). *Moab Is My Washpot* (pp. 84-85). Soho Press. Kindle Edition. And these excerpts, taken out of context, don't come close to conveying what an experience it is to read this book. It's like it's 1 am, and you've been hanging out with Stephen in the living room, talking and talking and talking, and maybe drinking alcohol if that's your thing or maybe just lemonade or cup after cup of tea, and it's getting real, now, people. It's getting deep. It's getting serious. And he's eloquent almost beyond words, he's spilling out his deepest heart to you, he's being funny and heart-wrenchingly sad and you are amazed that he is telling you all this, you barely know him, but you feel that it isn't one of those meaningless "tell your whole life story" incidents in the line at the supermarket, that he has seen inside you and trusts you to share his closest secrets, the very sounds of the beat of his heart and the songs in his brain. And you lie there, because now you're both sprawled on the floor, staring at the ceiling, listening to his gorgeous deep voice spinning out these tales, and you think how lucky you are to have such a wonderful, flawed, intense, urgent new friend. And I'm only on chapter 4.

I just finished this book last night and think that Stephen Fry is a genius. I loved it. I must say, though, that there were so many typos, spacing, and punctuation errors that I am hesitant to ever buy a Kindle book again. Shame on the people who created the electronic version, and shame on for asking money for this inept version of an e-book.

This is a beautifully written autobiography of the author's childhood in middle-class England. I suspect that many of us who grew up in similar circumstances will identify with the same weaknesses, fears and imperfections that Stephen shares with us in his inimitable way. Refreshingly, he chooses not to really blame anyone for all that went wrong as he could so easily have done.. His wonderful use of the English language is, as always, a joy.

Stephen Fry's life is a huge inspiration for anyone suffering from bipolar disorder. I highly recommend this and his other memoirs to those suffering from mental health issues. It helps to know that, not only are you not alone, there is hope for success.

Funny, smart, and insightful memoir. I love Stephen Fry so it lived up to my expectations. Learned some new facts about my guy and look forward to reading more.

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