



What Ho!: The Best of Wodehouse

P.G. Wodehouse

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We all know Jeeves and Wooster, but which is the best Jeeves story? We all know Blandings, but which is the funniest tale about Lord Emsworth and his adored prize-winning pig? And would the best of Ukridge, or the yarns of the Oldest Member, or Wodehouse's Hollywood stories outdo them? This bumper anthology allows you to choose, bringing you the cream of the crop of stories by the twentieth century's greatest humorous writer.

There are favourites aplenty in this selection, which has been compiled with enthusiastic support from P.G. Wodehouse societies around the world. With additional material including novel extracts, working drafts, articles, letters and poems, this anthology provides the best overall celebration of side-splitting humour and sheer good nature available in the pages of any book.

What Ho!: The Best of Wodehouse Details

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Author : P.G. Wodehouse

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Nullifidian says

While this may have been created in collaboration with several Wodehouse societies, I'm afraid it's not as good as some other Wodehouse anthologies, particularly *The Most of P. G. Wodehouse*. The inclusion of the autobiographical material was a mistake, ironically for all of the reasons stated in the essay "Personal Details", which is included in the book. I can't understand why they didn't just include more stories, unless they were consciously trying to prove his point.

And that brings me to the other problem: not enough fiction. In *The Most of P. G. Wodehouse*, we're almost always treated to a broader variety of stories (with the exception of Psmith, who doesn't appear at all, and Lord Emsworth, who is represented by the single brilliant story "Pig-hoo-o-o-o-ey!"). There are seven Drones Club stories vs. six. Five golf stories vs. four (I'm not counting "Bingley Crocker Learns Cricket" and "A Day with the Swattesmore" as golf stories because they aren't — and they aren't as good as his golf stories). Five Ukridge stories vs. three. *Eight* Mr. Mulliner stories vs. three.

The best stories in *What Ho!* are also in *Most*, and the differences that remain are almost always in the latter's favor. It wasn't necessary to have two Hollywood-themed stories in the Mulliner section when one was enough (and that one, "Monkey Business" in *Most*, is funnier than the two included in *What Ho!*). "The Reverent Wooing of Archibald", "Strychnine in the Soup", "The Smile That Wins", and the aforementioned "Monkey Business" are *much* more amusing in this reviewer's opinion. ("Mulliner's Buck-U-Uppo" appears in both anthologies.)

However, since even a second-rate collection of Wodehouse is still better than no Wodehouse at all, I'm going to give it four stars. It also deserves four stars in part because of a beautifully written and insightful introduction from Stephen Fry.

An Odd1 says

Nicknamed "Plum", the author is little revealed by few letters, to be a kind, generous, funny, likable fellow.

The only "autobiographical" material is minuscule, last under "Theatre/ Hollywood" and "Essays, Verse and Thoughts on Writers and Writing". New house in Hollywood is "miles away up at the top of a mountain .. an advantage in a way, as we don't get everybody dropping in on us" p 497. Ethel doesn't like the roof at first, then does. Youngest Peke is called Wonder "The puppy is a comedian" p 497. Naturally same canines pepper fiction "Bingo and the Peke Crisis" p 231, "Ukridge's Dog College" p 371. Name-dropped friends are "Maureen O'Sullivan and her husband John Farrow .. I met Clark Gable the other day. Also Fred Astaire." p 498.

Sections called Jeeves, Blandings, Drones, Psmith are familiar. Golf and Other Stories, including cricket and flyswatting, Ukridge, Mr Mulliner, are new. Order is somewhat addled.

I remember when Lord Emsworth ducks flowerpots flung by secretary Baxter in early morning hours. Fresh is "The Amazing Hat Mystery" p 249, when fashionable Drones mix up custom-measured hats from Bodwin,

leading to love perfected. They switch harshly critical girl-friends to better-matched sizes. Large Percy Wimbolt melts for pal Nelson Cork's generously-proportioned Diana Punter; small Nelson finds Percy's tiny Elizabeth Bottworth the right fit.

Title occurs twice. In "Jeeves and the Song of Songs" p 36, narrator Bertie Wooster hops damp from singing "Sonny Boy" in the bath to welcome pal Tuppy Glossop "at the piano, playing Sonny Boy with one finger. "What ho!" I said, not without a certain hauteur" p 56. In "Goodbye to all cats" p 265, "Dahlia Prenderby .. cordial relations" with Freddie Widgeon progress warmly "she gave him a kind of shove and he gave her a kind of shove, and she said "You *are* a silly ass!" and he said "What ho!" .. Love obviously beginning to burgeon in the girl's heart" p 267.

In "From *Something New*" p 195, Ashe hides a shoe identified with red paint from curious Baxter. In book "Mike and Psmith", Psmith hides Mike's sneaker stepped in red paint from eager teacher Downing seeking criminal who doused his dog Sammy. In both, the would-be detective smashes a locked closet p 203, and face "positively covered with soot" p 205 to elicit in the observer, Lord Emsworth "a series of pleased chuckles" p 205.

Lord Ickenham in lead story "Uncle Fred Flits By" p 1 modestly declaims "I always make it my aim, if possible, to spread sweetness and light. I look about me, even in a foul hole like Mitching Hill, and I ask myself - How can I leave this foul hole a better and happier foul hole than I found it? And if I see a chance, I grab it" p 17. So does "Plum" improve today's world, to smallest detail, nephew's name "Pongo Twistleton" p 17.

Typos:

p 335 "admirationfor" is "admiration for"
p 386 "GeorgeTupper" is "George Tupper"
p 510 "bight lights" is "bright lights"

Stuart Haining says

Took an age to read due to the offputting size, over 550 pages, but a brilliant stater book for anyone new to PG with great extracts from his best 90 novels as picked by fan societies around the globe - plus a surprisingly good mix of extracts from letters and journals that give an insight to the great mans mind - and he thought he was boring!

Donna says

2006:

"I am now completely in love with [his works]. This is all Hugh Laurie's fault, you know. I found out about Jeeves and Wooster when *ahem* looking for info about him on the internet, saw it on TV, noticed it was based on some books I'd never heard of by a guy whose name was familiar, and bought the book. And now I'm hooked. As if I don't have enough books to read already. I loved the Emsworth and Jeeves/Wooster especially. Psmith seemed interesting, but there wasn't much in the collection, so I'm not sure.

So yay, another 90 books to read. Why do all these great authors have to write so much? I am never. ever. going to get anything done. Just - they're useless. They're not, you know, deep or informative or intellectual studies or other such crap. They are completely irreverent and hilarious and beautifully written. The man was a genius. And he further confirms my (not at all ridiculous) theory that all the funniest people are British."

Aditya Mallya says

This is not a book for Wodehouse beginners (For I regret to say that such people exist). What that poor, downtrodden section of society that has never savoured the master's fare wants (apart from a sound beating) is a full meal. I recommend a light Uncle Fred to start with, followed by a sumptuous Jeeves and Wooster, with a nice Blandings to wash the whole thing down. Once this has been completed, a marked change will come over the unwashed beginner. His spine will straighten. His collar will stiffen. A gleam will enter his eye. He will spring up and shout "Golly!". Or perhaps "Hoy!", for these beginners can be an uncultured lot. Some have even been known to say "Cor!" but one prefers not to reveal these things to a sensitive audience. Whatever be the exclamation our beginner chooses to use, it is reasonably certain that he will thereafter be a Changed Man. At some future unspecified date, his biographers will solemnly classify his life into two epochs: Before Wodehouse, and After.

I say, that was rather good, what?

The anthology "What Ho! The Best of P G Wodehouse" declares that one of its functions is to serve as exactly the kind of introductory meal that I just described, but it is closer to being a collection of tasty snacks that an experienced Wodehousian will appreciate more than our poor beginner. In fact, this is the book's second function - to serve as a sort of light snapshot of the great writer's body of work. Grizzled Wodehouse veterans can flip through the stories as they would with a photo album and chuckle as their favourite memories are recalled.

For such readers, this book is a treasure. Not only do we get Bertie Wooster, Jeeves, Lord Emsworth, Uncle Fred and Psmith in one place, we also get Mr. Mulliner, The Oldest Member and his golf stories, Ukridge and of course our favourite collection of Eggs, Beans and Crumpets from the Drones Club. There are also lesser known, but equally funny, Wodehouse works such as his Hollywood stories.

There are some unique offerings as well. The always eloquent Stephen Fry (who played Jeeves in the BBC television series) writes a wonderful foreword which in itself is worth reading. The anthology also features some of Wodehouse's story notes, poems, letters and thoughts on other writers, all of which offer very enjoyable insights into his personality.

So if you are an old Wodehouse hand, go ahead and read this. If you are one of those beginners that are slinking away in shame to lead a life of quiet desperation, fear not, laddie. We were all like you once. Stiffen up the sinews. Summon up the courage. For there is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune. And there is a road to the bookshop, which, taken during working hours, leads on to your very first Wodehouse book. What ho!

Somdutta says

What a gem of a book from a gem of an author! This book is a delight to read especially for Wodehouse fans, it's a treat of ginormous proportions. This book is a perfect gift to anyone who has not yet been initiated to Wodehouse's world and is willing to try a few reads. This book is fine assortment of colourful characters created by P.G Wodehouse. To top it all the later part of book contains poems, Wodehouse's experience during his stay in Hollywood, New York and some on his life. My particular favourite is his poem on his missing a catch at a cricket match. Well, to conclude as Stephen Fry said, " You don't analyze such sunlit perfection, you just bask in its warmth and splendour. Like Jeeves, Wodehouse stands alone, and analysis is useless."

Sarah says

It is a truth universally acknowledged that I am an avid reader, both in despairing tones by those who think that the only proper thing for females of my age to be really interested in is useless saps like the Bieber, and also in proud accents by those like to boast the intellectual in their family circles (if such lovely things exist today). But I'm getting off track.

What I'm driving at, is that avid readers like good books. Strange as it may seem, these entertaining pieces of paper and paste are rather in short supply today, so you need to head back about fifty-odd years if you want to hit a corker. And nothing's a better corker than this Wodehouse collection, what? Built along the lines of Ethel Merman (and thankfully as talented as that illustrious dynamite) it's perhaps the most entertaining thing I've read or seen this year, short of Miley Cyrus looks like at the moment. It's truly the best collection of Wodehouse out there - it even contains his greatest triumph, 'the Crime Wave at Blandings' - a spiffing short story which, as legend tells, Marx banned all Communists from reading , lest it would make them laugh and look happy.

But that's not all. There's Mulliner, and Jeeves, and Hollywood, and then the editors decided to top this marvellous sundae off with the red cherry of Wodehouse's personal letters to friends; but decided to go even one better and shoved in the back some of his humorous verse and thoughts on other writers. So do your feeble frame a favour and read this book. Life is short and hard, if income tax and grumpy women who write letters to the newspaper complaining about the price of toothpaste are anything to go by, but I say as long as tea's available, and the world's not overrun with Kindles, then P.G. Wodehouse will do wonders for your digestion.

NOTE: This review was written with liberal doses of artist's license

Josephine says

3.5

I've always been curious about P.G. Wodehouse's work, and when I got this collection I was really excited to find out what I would end up thinking of it. Wodehouse's writing is certainly excellent, and I did chuckle quite a few times, but in the end a lot of the stories that were selected here weren't entirely for me. Some were wonderfully funny, and I think my favourite in this was 'The Clicking of Cuthbert' or 'The Eighteenth Hole'. I think what I've discovered is that I need a bit more of a plot, or some more excitement, rather than these everyday-type stories (that were good, don't get me wrong, just not for me). I did end up skipping a few that didn't grip my attention (as one ends up doing when reading collections of stories), but all in all I did enjoy this quite a bit. I'll probably return to reread some of them, and maybe give the ones I skipped another

try. All in all it was an OK experience, but not my favourite stories.

Mike says

This is a wonderful selection of choice Wodehouse, much of which I've never read before. In fact, most of which has eluded me until now.

There are marvellous pieces that make you laugh out loud, endless pieces of witty writing, marvellous moments when the words seem to leap off the page as though they'd never been used before, and much more. Great for dipping into again and again.

The only puzzling chapter was the one that was supposedly cut out of the English edition of a book, but kept in the American version. This seems such a weak piece, with little of real Wodehouse style and aplomb that I wonder if it wasn't written by some hack pretending to be Wodehouse. But I must be wrong...

Prakash Yadav says

Dense Dense dense wodehouse for the attention-span deficit insatiable soul. Every page oozes the best of his work and though it leaves one a heretic for having forgone the story between the pages, this guilt trip is a boon for people who don't yet realise they were better off reading his entire set of omnibuses.

Tim Murray says

Without any hesitation, this is a true 5 star book. I can't believe that I'd never really heard of Wodehouse before. If you like clever writing then I thoroughly recommend you read this. It contains such lines as "The Right Hon. was a tubby little chap who looked as if he had been poured into his clothes and had forgotten to say 'When!'". This collection is mainly short stories that take about half an hour to read each, which is a perfect length of time.

While reading this, I happened to read A.A.Milne to my daughter and saw the line "the more he looked, the more Piglet wasn't there" and realised that Wodehouse is A.A. Milne for adults, and no bad thing.

If I had to give one criticism it would be that these are very male books. The female characters are generally little more than decoration in the stories. I found I could forgive this though and will almost certainly try one of the Jeeves or Blandings books in the near future.

Anna says

This is a wonderful overview of the Master's works chosen by the international Wodehouse societies with a lovingly written introduction by Stephen Fry.

Aside from the selections of comic escapades, my personal favorites are the excerpts from letters and essays about Hollywood and various writers. In his usual style, he wrote about his own endeavors: " All we authors have our limitations and I have long recognized mine. Hot stuff though I am in many respects, I have never

been able to master the art of writing letters to the papers. ... Without wishing to wound, you have revealed my secret sorrow and touched an exposed nerve. For I yearn to write letters to papers. All authors do, Novelists are merely those who have failed as contributors to the correspondence column. Unable to make the grade, they drop down a rung on the ladder and write novels."

So if you would like to get a glimpse of Wodehouse's universe or see if one of your favorites has been included in this edition, you need to read this book. Relax ... and laugh ... and marvel!

Karthick says

So far, it has lived up to the testimonies that 'nothing can ever go wrong in the world of wodehouse'. Lovely read.

Shree says

I can't believe no one reviewed this book before... I'm only half way through and i've spent nights just clutching my abdomen in laughter!!

This guy's a genius!! I laugh to myself on the way to work thinking abt some line i read the previous day...

The pig is out of this world..

Best literary comic in the universe!! No contest!

Sugan Shreyas says

"What a very, very lucky person you are. Spread out before you are the finest and funniest words from the finest and funniest writer the past century ever knew" - this is how the introduction to the book begins. And this is by no means an exaggeration.

Been a while since I read PGW, had picked up this collection out of curiosity and this turned out to be pure gold! Makes me want to go and buy the entire collection of Jeeves and Blandings, and read, re-read it. I think I might just do that.

Ramachandran Sivaram says

a few classics from the great man

Chetan Tyagi says

Right ho!

This is the ideal book for those uninitiated in Wodehouse. It gives you a flavour of all his writings and can serve as a first step as to which are the ones you would want to pick up for a more complete reading.

I loved the most famous Jeeves-Wooster stories. The Blandings Castle was the second in line. The others are not stories I would pick up now. The golf and Hollywood bits dragged along a bit and are the reason for the four star.

Wodehouse's world is one of genial, good natured "Edwardian" men away from the struggles of life. They always have a distant aunt flush with the moolah and as long as she's made happy things will turn out just fine. Some of the stories and sequences are genuinely funny. The language may not be the simple but that adds to the overall charm of the writings.

A book I would recommend for anyone who wants an overview of Wodehouse.

Fips says

Despite the advancing years I had up until receiving this book for Christmas never read any Wodehouse, though I had been read excerpts in my younger years. Of course, the problem with Wodehouse is that being such a prolific author, it's difficult to know where to start. And since most Wodehouse readers have their favourites, asking for advice on what to read is a bit like asking which football team you should support.

All of which is precisely why this compendium fits the bill nicely. There's a little bit of everything here to give the newcomer a real taste of Wodehouse's world, with stories from Jeeves, Blandings, Ukridge, Mr Mulliner, The Drones, Psmith and Uncle Fred. There's also a section of golfing stories, and at the back, as a sort of appendix, a collection of letters and sundry other writings. As for the prose itself, well if you really need more convincing, you could always start by perusing the introduction by Stephen Fry.

The only other review of this book to date criticised the quality of the book, and to some extent I must agree. Whilst I found nothing lacking in the book's manufacture, there were a surprising number of typographical errors to be seen, albeit only small niggly things. Nevertheless, for the price this volume is an absolute steal, a definite must for anyone looking for a glimpse into Wodehouse.

(And having read the lot, I can now say that my jersey is emblazoned with the Blandings crest.)

Kaushik says

A collection of some of the finest stories of arguably the greatest humorist ever. The only issue any reasonable person can have with this book is that it isn't long enough. Stephen Fry's enormously witty and slightly emotional introduction is the icing on the cake. From Jeeves to Psmith, the reader will be introduced to some of the most endearing characters ever to grace English fiction. This is a book that every English knowing person must read before going to the grave.

Patricia says

P.G. Wodehouse wrote like a fiend, and his particular specialty was soft, intelligent, wry humour. Whenever I read Wodehouse's work, I find myself smiling and smiling -- always makes me feel good. Gentle stories in a language that is beautifully wrought.
