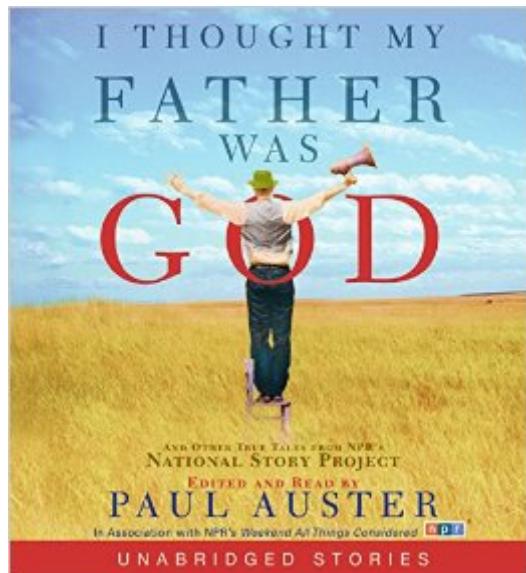


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I Thought My Father Was God



Synopsis

One of America's foremost writers collects the best stories submitted to NPR's National Story Project -- and illuminates the powerful role of storytelling in all our lives. When Paul Auster was asked to join NPR's Weekend All Things Considered program to tell stories, he turned the proposition on its head: he would let the stories come to him. He invited listeners to submit brief, true-life anecdotes about events that touched their lives. And so the National Story Project was born. It was one of NPR's most popular features. The response was so overwhelming, with more than 4,000 stories submitted that Auster decided to cull the top works and make them available in a book -- and now this CD collection. His selections -- hilarious blunders, wrenching coincidences, brushes with death, miraculous encounters, improbable ironies -- come from people of all ages and walks of life. This one-of-a-kind collection is a testament to the power of storytelling that offers a glimpse into the American soul. By turns poignant, nostalgic, funny, and strange, it is an audiobook to be treasured and shared for years to come.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

At first blush, I was not impressed with this collection of true-life vignettes collected from NPR's National Story Project. I would leaf listlessly about the book looking for something -- a sentence, a title -- that would catch my interest, and reading the piece (none of the selections, I think, are any longer than four pages) in a second or two. Initially I was disgruntled by the style and voice of some pieces; they would not have been out of place in the "Life In These United States" Reader's Digest feature. I don't know why I did not shelf the book and pick up something else, but I am glad that I

persevered (uncharacteristic for me: I am quite superficial and fickle, overdependent on first impressions) because as I kept reading, I found something within me responding to these stories. Reviewers here have heckled the abundance of sentimentality and reductive life lessons that pulse through these pieces, but they're seeking a literary sophistication from texts that never aspire to anything more than the urge to tell a story. (In the words of one writer included in the collection, "What do you do with a story like [this]? There is no lesson, no moral, barely even an ending. You want to tell it, hear it told, but you don't know why.") With that proviso, the patient reader will find pieces here of quiet movement, emotional honesty, jaw-dropping coincidence (a lot of these), eerie dreaminess, and everyday wonder. I especially like Joe Miceli's "Taking Leave," with its glimpse of a world I hope I never know; Mary Grace Dembeck's "Act of Memory," which made me cry; "Your Father Has The Hay Fever" by Tony Powell, which is as lunatic as anything by S.J. Perelman; "Table For Two" by Lori Peikoff, and Nicolas Wieder's "Ballerina," stories of love, coincidence, and hope.

This book is filled with hundreds of vignettes--some funny and some moving, but almost every one interesting (and NOT saccharine as I sort of expected them to be). I pick it up when I walk by it, read one, and feel re-connected and less numb. Give this to someone you know who's tired (it's easy reading) or sad or disconnected from daily reading or daily life. It revives the reader. Great stories. I hope NPR does another one.

This book is exceptional. I have read many books by Paul Auster and this one, although not technically written by Auster is true to this author's fascination with life's mysterious twists of fate. The stories assembled here are captivating, often deeply moving and sometimes hilarious. The fact that these are all real stories makes the reader relates strongly to the people involved. These are rich with familiar characters (the grumpy neighbor who hates kids in the title story, the soft spoken grandfather who does not dare confront his wife in "Revenge", etc.) I could not put the book down. In this day and age where so much attention is given to shallow story lines and pre-packaged entertainment, how refreshing it is to come across these incredible, yet so believable, stories that have happened to ordinary people. The French version of the book has been published before the American version. This is how I got advanced reading of this wonderful collection of stories. Tip: Most of them make great bedtime stories as well. My 7 year old daughter really enjoys it. I got the book from my public library but I want to buy it so I can go back to it again and again.

"I Thought My Father Was God: And Other True Tales from NPR's National Story Project" is a superb and unusual book that manages two wonderful things: it confirms the universality of the human experience and it amply demonstrates that everyone, EVERYONE has a story to tell. The experiences told in this eclectic and endlessly absorbing collection are varied and run the gamut of experiences life has to offer. There are stories of love, loss, regret, joy, sorrow, and growing up. The subjects that bring on these emotions are as varied as a pet bird, a sharp slap from a parent, a new piece of clothing, a weekend alone at the beach, a party in which the increasingly annoying guest of honor gets his face pushed into the cake, a reconnection with a former lover, a loose car tire, and a harrowing audition for a sleazy adult film. Some of the stories are flatly told, facts laid out on the page. Others take loving care with the details. Either way, the accretion of all the stories gives the reader a most satisfying sense of membership by the end of the book--membership in the human race.

Based on the sample stories recited as a monthly feature on NPR, I purchased this book to read while on a couple of long plane rides, thinking the short stories would be well suited to the task of keeping the mind entertained among the numerous waits and between the various interruptions becoming a standard of airline flight. For the first several stories, I felt I was on the right track. But my initial enthusiasm soon waned, as the repeated themes and predictability of outcome of most of the stories became more apparent. Surely, there are some real gems in this catalog of American life, but other efforts range from the plain to the ridiculous. I'm sure that Paul Auster had a difficult task in selecting among the many entries submitted, but eliminating a few of the "miracle" tales would surely have made it a better read. The organization of the book unfortunately emphasizes the sameness of many of the stories by grouping essays about objects, or war, or whatever, one after another. I suggest that an interested reader pick stories at random, to keep the topics fresh...

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