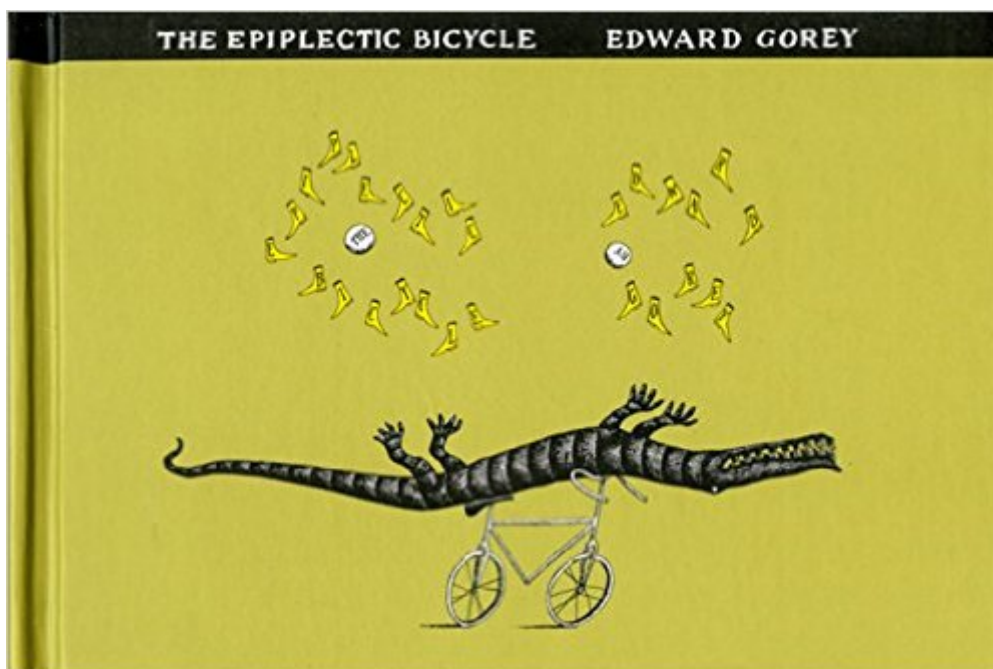


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The Epiplectic Bicycle



Synopsis

A charming burlesque concerning an intrepid voyage of epic proportions by the "incredibly sophisticated . . . stylish and inventive" • Edward Gorey (New York Observer). Now available in a special gift edition.

Book Information

Hardcover: 64 pages

Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (June 15, 1998)

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Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.4 x 4.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 0.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars • See all reviews (31 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Two children go on an "adventure" of sorts, riding around on an "Epileptic Bicycle" (which eventually meets its demise) in this "chapter book" of sorts by Edward Gorey. One detail I enjoyed was the chapter numbers-I noticed about halfway through reading it that I was on something like Chapter 11, but never remembered seeing Chapter 10... Pure Gorey fun! If you're not really into the scarily macabre Gorey stuff, try this book instead. It's much more light, but still has those touches that only Edward could add. It's even good for slightly older children (9-11 year olds), and the pictures are good for any age (like the picture that is all black except for a sliver of light on a bicycle wheel).

This is my second favorite of all Gorey tales, behind only "The Doubtful Guest." The story concerns Embley and Yewbert, who, after hitting each other with croquet mallets, have quite an adventure on the bicycle in question. One of the beautiful things about Gorey is the number of interpretations that are possible. In all likelihood no two people will take the same thing away from his stories, which immeasurably enhances the reading experience. As in all Gorey tales, this one contains extremely peculiar turns of phrase, and this one has the bonus of seemingly randomly numbered chapters, although it took me three times through the book before I noticed. This is a delightful introduction to

Gorey, and is one of his distinctly less macabre stories. This book is wonderful fun for all ages and is highly recommended.

This book travels through time. The chapters are numbered out of sequence yet the story progresses in a brilliantly funny approximation of a linear manner, the art is quirky, the text is silly, and the book itself just feels good to hold. I've seen "The Epiplectic Bicycle" presented in this little picture-book format and with two pictures a page in a larger Gorey anthology, and it's more fun in this edition, as the pictures and text are arranged in a way that looks better on a smaller, oblong page. The title, as best as my friends with fondnesses for strange words can determine, refers to an epilexis, a debating strategy/rhetorical-device that tries to convince listeners by mildly upbraiding/insulting them. Just what the bicycle is trying to persuade people to do, fortunately (as it makes the book that much more fun) is harder to determine, so I heartily recommend buying this strange little book and leaving copies in your bathroom, on a table by the front door, anyplace anyone will be waiting for a little while as a way of making their day better with a little fun weirdness.

THE EPILEPTIC BICYCLE is one of the Gorey's usual stories told through ink drawings accompanied by pithy captions. This tale concerns Embley and Yewbert, two children who are distracted from their pastime of hitting each other with croquet mallets by a sentient bicycle that appears out of nowhere. Thereupon they hop on and go through various adventures, ending in a shocking revelation that seems right out of the "Voyage of Bran". The story is one of great whimsy and a love of nonsense, and amusingly contradicts itself at several points. While THE EPILEPTIC BICYCLE is quite funny, I don't rate it among Gorey's most substantial works due to the sparseness of the drawings and the fact that it lacks the macabre tone common to Gorey's greatest work. If you've never read an Edward Gorey book before, start with THE OTHER STATUE or THE BLUE ASPIC, grim stories whose drawings are of astounding quality.

I had only recently become aware of Edward Gorey and his works, and this was one of my first Gorey Books along with "The Gashlycrumb Tinies". This book is not his most macabre work, yes, but it one of his most charming. The story may seem relatively simple, and to a simple mind it is nothing more than a witty story that is full of nonsense, but to others it is slightly thought provoking. The chapters are numbered in a strange order for a reason, and many small details of the book hold some significance. Without giving too much away, if you stop and think about it, and if you look at the first illustration and then the part where the main characters reach the bush, you will begin to

see what this story is, or rather may possibly be, about. I'd rather not say what my interpretation is, but suffice to say this book cannot be reduced to a chronicle of nonsense which some narrow-minded people might say. It is true that not a lot of people will interpret the story the same way, but that's part of the appeal of it. Other than its thought-provoking aspect, it is an extremely charming children's book. The illustrations are delightful, the humor is subtle but funny, and the book is overall just a fun read. Who can forget lines like "It was too dark to hear anything" or the alligator's emotionally deep verse, "I die"? This book is amusing for all ages, whether your child is 8, 16, or an adult. Even I, being a teenager, can't help but laugh at it. While many may consider it inane, if you approach it with an open mind, you're in for an interesting experience.

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