



## This Boy's Life: A Memoir

*By Tobias Wolff*

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### **This Boy's Life: A Memoir** By Tobias Wolff

This unforgettable memoir, by one of our most gifted writers, introduces us to the young Toby Wolff, by turns tough and vulnerable, crafty and bumbling, and ultimately winning. Separated by divorce from his father and brother, Toby and his mother are constantly on the move, yet they develop an extraordinarily close, almost telepathic relationship. As Toby fights for identity and self-respect against the unrelenting hostility of a new stepfather, his experiences are at once poignant and comical, and Wolff does a masterful job of re-creating the frustrations and cruelties of adolescence. His various schemes - running away to Alaska, forging checks, and stealing cars - lead eventually to an act of outrageous self-invention that releases him into a new world of possibility.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Fiction writer Tobias Wolff electrified critics with his scarifying 1989 memoir, which many deemed as notable for its artful structure and finely wrought prose as for the events it describes. The story is pretty grim: Teenaged Wolff moves with his divorced mother from Florida to Utah to Washington State to escape her violent boyfriend. When she remarries, Wolff finds himself in a bitter battle of wills with his abusive stepfather, a contest in which the two prove to be more evenly matched than might have been supposed. Deception, disguise, and illusion are the weapons the young man learns to employ as he grows up--not bad training for a writer-to-be. Somber though this tale of family strife is, it is also darkly funny and so artistically satisfying that most readers come away exhilarated rather than depressed.

#### From Publishers Weekly

In PEN/Faulkner Award-winner Wolff's fourth book, he recounts his coming-of-age with customary skill and self-assurance. Seeking a better life in the Northwestern U.S. with his divorced mother, whose "strange docility, almost paralysis, with men of the tyrant breed" taught Wolff the virtue of rebellion, he considered himself "in hiding," moved to invent a private, "better" version of himself in order to rise above his troubles. Primary among these were the adultsdroly eccentric, sometimes dementedwho were bent on humiliating him. Since Wolff the writer never pities Wolff the boy, the author characterizes the crew of grown-up losers with damning objectivity, from the neurotic stepfather who painted his entire house (piano and Christmas tree included) white, to the Native American football star whose ultimate failure was as inexplicable as his athletic brilliance. Briskly and candidly reportedWolff's boyhood best friend "bathed twice a day but always gave off an ammoniac hormonal smell, the smell of growth and anxiety"his youth yields a self-made man whose struggle to fit the pieces together is authentic and endearing. Literary Guild alternate.

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#### From Library Journal

Winner of the PEN/Faulkner award for *The Barracks Thief*, Wolff offers an engrossing and candid look into his childhood and adolescence in his first book of nonfiction. In unaffected prose he recreates scenes from his life that sparkle with the immediacy of narrative fiction. The result is an intriguingly guileless book, distinct from the usual reflective commentary of autobiography, that chronicles the random cruelty of a step father, the ambiguity of youthful friendships, and forgotten moments like watching *The Mickey Mouse Club*. Throughout this youthful account runs the solid thread of the author's respect and affection for his mother and a sense of wonder at the inexplicable twistings and turnings of the road to adulthood in modern America. Highly recommended. Linda Rome, Mentor, Ohio

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#### From reader reviews:

#### Ruth Jones:

This *This Boy's Life: A Memoir* are reliable for you who want to certainly be a successful person, why. The reason of this *This Boy's Life: A Memoir* can be one of many great books you must have is definitely giving you more than just simple reading food but feed an individual with information that perhaps will shock your prior knowledge. This book is definitely handy, you can bring it all over the place and whenever your

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