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The White Feather Details

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From Reader Review The White Feather for online ebook

Emily says

I liked this a lot more than I had anticipated. Some of the themes were a massive departure from your average Wodehouse book (few feature the same amount of long-range planning, for instance). It did feel odd to be cheering at the conclusion, instead of grinning wryly.

Sue says

Given that this is about a boy's school and a boxing champion, it was more enjoyable than I would have expected. Wodehouse was a talented writer, and his insights into life and characters are always, in my view, well done.

Worth reading by fans of Wodehouse, and as a piece of cultural history, albeit (I hope) slightly caricatured. But the gradual growth of a studious schoolboy into a strong fighter is nicely done, albeit rather depressing to those of us who prefer quiet, intelligent types and loathe any form of violent sport.

I read a Project Gutenberg free edition; as far as I know it's only currently available in electronic form, or second-hand.

Amrith says

Another early inning foray by the master is just that -- solid, flowing, keeping the scorer busy with neat singles, with an occasional flash that goes to the ropes. While not in the finest fettle of the mid and late season form, navigation of the early innings uncertainty is quite, er, masterful.

Maria says

Having read a certain amount of Wodehouse, I was expecting something light and frivolous. Since this is one of his earliest books, my expectations were not high. Hence, the four stars. Although this book has his trademark colloquialisms of the day, the subject matter has more depth than I was expecting. The subject is cowardice versus panic, what one is used to versus being taken by surprise and how one reacts. The dynamics of public school and peer pressure are also explored. Sheen is a quiet, studious, non-athletic sort who finds himself unexpectedly in the midst of a town fight. He "funks it" and runs. The rest of his house are appalled and shun him. I usually have no difficulty putting down a Wodehouse to do other things, but I found this book curiously intriguing and hard to put out of mind. Thank heavens it is short, as are most of Wodehouse's works, or I would have gotten nothing else done until I finished it. I wonder how much of the book is based on Wodehouse's own public school experiences. Note: I read the first chapter of this book nine days before I read the rest. I almost didn't go on. The first chapter was difficult to understand and could have been left out, in my opinion. It certainly didn't inspire me to continue for a while. After chapter three, I

changed my mind and had no problem reaching the end of the book.

Mailis Viiland says

This book had old-school charm poured all over it, sprinkled with picturesque English countryside nostalgia. When I visit England and see those parks, teashops and huge college campus buildings I get a bit weak in the knees and starry eyed. Honestly, I could've just went and kissed those massive Cambridge library doors. Those castles built for brains are like the holy mecca for bookish nerds like me. So when I read Wodehouse and get glimpses of that buddyboy college life heydays with all those funny traditions, rules, orders and friendships, I always enjoy them to the fullest.

Phil Syphe says

In my opinion this is the best of PG Wodehouse's full-length school stories. The others all have good moments here and there, but this one has much more quality scenes, with fewer sections that make me want to skip over them.

The only parts I skimmed over in "The White Feather" were the detailed descriptions of team sporting events. The boxing, on the other hand, I can cope well with, especially so because I like the character - Sheen - who takes up the sport.

And it's Sheen who raises this tale above Mr Wodehouse's other school stories, as whilst the others feature several lead characters, this tale focuses on one 'hero' and a few secondary characters. Thus at last we have a school story with a focal point, creating sympathy & interest, while also boosting the plot.

Had it not been for the digressions into graphic descriptions of team sporting events I would've given this four stars.

Worth checking out unless you hate reading about boxing, though that said, Sheen's story makes the boxing side of things more interesting, so you may like it anyway.

Himanshu Modi says

A simple, straight, sweet book. I would have thrown it away in the empty fields beyond my bedroom balcony if Wodehouse had written anything else. I read P.G. Wodehouse mostly for his way with words. His light sense of humour helps, and the happy endings always cheer me up.

The book is about the horrors and helplessness of a typical geek in a setting which demands physical prowess. Sheen, the geek, fails miserably short of expectations. He then ends up being the disgrace of the house, the black sheep. And the seething and boiling that ensues in his soul in the weeks following the unfortunate incident, drives Sheen to take some remedial, if not drastic, measures. Fortunately he has a mentor to guide him. And a world renowned mentor, at that.

So how does the story unfold? Does Sheen manage to win the glory back for his house? Does he redeem

himself fair and square? This is nail-biting, blood stopping, breath freezing suspense. Actually, its not. It's P.G. Wodehouse for crying out loud. I read him for just plain fun. Predictability be damned. And that's what a P.G. Wodehouse book gives me. Do not expect this book to be a crash course on "boxing". Because while it is the central sport in the book, and a "straight left" can apparently knock down even Hercules himself, there is a lot more to boxing than Wodehouse cares to explain. But one thing that he does contribute to boxing, which was never before present in the sport, is his quintessential humour.

You can relate to the Sheen the geek, or Drummond the good guy who everyone in school listens to, the school days rowdiness... all of it. Quite frankly, the book is not as funny as some of the other Wodehouse books, and the plot is quite simplistic as well. This is a work from the initial part of the Wodehouse's career and is not nearly as "totally awesome" as his later works. Yet, I enjoyed the book immensely. A Wodehouse fan will definitely love this book. I guess the other readers could give it a miss. In fact, if I were to be neutral this book would get pretty low ratings. But as it turns out, I am a Wodehouse Fan. So my 3 stars for a more general audience is really worth quite a bit more to myself.

Christopher says

"The White Feather" is one of two of the newest Wodehouse books published by Overlook Press. there are now 86 titles available with just a few more left to publish. i enjoyed this book immensely. coupled with "The Gold Bat," this book continues the stories of school life at Wrykyn College, which for those that know, include Mike Jackson and his friend Psmith. Plum's school stories are often difficult to get into, because he begins each story dropping us in the action already under-way, and the reader has to scramble somewhat to learn all the players, as they aren't introduced to us in a normal manner. we just have to read along, and soon each name becomes as if we'd known all along who each person was. anyway, this book is worth the investment. however, if you are planning on reading it, may i suggest that you begin with "The Gold Bat," as it introduces characters that figure prominently in "The White Feather."

Andrew Fish says

Those who know their Wodehouse well know that he did not spring his light fully-formed on the world, but rather rose slowly like an elderly aunt at daybreak. This, then, is Wodehouse at the cock-crow - a pre-Jeevesian jaunt into the world of public school life. As such it differs significantly from what comes after: straighter plot and characters, less literary allusion and an overall grittier tone. Wodehouse's earliest novels were school stories with a heavy emphasis on sporting aspiration and achievement, but *The White Feather* is something of a transitional novel, the sport - in this case boxing - being included not simply for its own sake but as part of a broader story. Some readers have commented that it was actually something of a step back after *Love Among the Chickens*, but the truth is the former book was not an immediate success and Wodehouse thoroughly rewrote it a decade later.

Anyway, back to *The White Feather*. This being Wodehouse, the initial set-up is relatively simple - boy suffering guilt after avoiding a fight takes lessons from a professional boxer to redeem himself by winning a school trophy - and being a relatively short novel there are fewer twists and turns than in Wodehouse's later tales. As with those later novels, however, it isn't the plot that draws you in but the characters. The hero, Sheen, is rooted and realistic - a studious but not profoundly intelligent boy who isn't quick to confrontation.

It is his transition from sympathetic coward to sporting champion provides the emotional hook on which the novel hangs. Boxer Joe Bevan is the mentor, less prosaic than Wodehouse's later pugilists like Porky Chop, he combines a simple philosophy with a history as a Shakespearean bit-part actor, making him the somewhat improbable mouthpiece for Wodehouse's love of the Bard. The other characters are largely recognisable as the beginnings of Wodehouse types, from the self-interested fellow schoolboys who invite themselves to tea (think Claude and Eustace in the Jeeves books) to the anonymous toughs and political agitants of the town (think of the rallies when Bingo gets involved with the Communists). The dialogue may not crackle with the absurd wit which later came to characterise Plum's world, but once it gets into its stride it reads well enough, and there are flashes of observation here and there in the narrative which suggest the author beginning to get to grips with the style which would finally flourish in books such as *Piccadilly Jim* or the revamped *Love Among the Chickens* a few years later.

Were this a novel by someone other than Wodehouse, I've no doubt it would be regarded as a charming classic of its time. As it is, it is overshadowed by what was then still to come. Those expecting something like *Bingo Little's schooldays* should look elsewhere (probably to Anthony Buckeridge's Jennings novels), but for those prepared to look past the Wodehouse brand, these early novels do merit a read.

Sarah says

July 12th finished *The White Feather* by P. G. Wodehouse

This is one of Wodehouse's public school tales, which are often rather confusing for the American audience, since they are usually cricket centered. This one was actually about boxing, which I don't know much about either, but it was still interesting. The main character is trying to redeem his character after "funking" a fight, one of the worst sins in the eyes of the public school boys. He succeeds in winning an important boxing competition, and is received back into favor. Amid much humor and schoolboy slang, Wodehouse manages to convey the importance of honor and justice.

Gautam Valiveti says

The book is a classic set in a bygone era of relative innocence. Although not descriptive of the geographical setting, it gives a rough idea of the surroundings and it's enough, in my opinion, to understand the story and serves not to distract the reader unduly. The character development of the protagonist is not complete but indicative of his triumph over a foe that he himself chose, giving him the admirable opportunity to win on his own terms - something about which almost everyone might dream. The loss of face and subsequent regaining of it are brilliantly encapsulated in the story as is the emotional merry-go-round associated with overcoming fears. The biggest shortfall however is the slow beginning. The humorous style of writing is seducing enough to continue reading though.

Phrodrick says

The White Feather dates to 1907 and was the 6th book of his to be published. At this time he was writing

about topics he most loved and were easiest for him. The setting is an English public school, what we would call a private school, and is deeply concerned with school sports and social standing. The intended audience for these early Wodehouse stories was not American and a huge amount of the language will be hard for an American to follow. Playing fives was a British form of Handball, being a member of the sevens and eights are rugby/football terms. As will be the case with much of his later work there is a fair amount of slang that you may be able to research. My suggestion is that you let your imagination handle what you do not understand and depend on context to carry you through.

This is his second book set in the fictional school of Wrykyn, The Gold Bat being the first. We are to follow young Sheen who dodges a "town versus gown" fight and is labeled a coward. The main story follows his efforts to redeem himself. Filling out the rest of the 150 page we get to see some of what will become the great Wodehouse wit, particularly in a sea battle between Wrykyn and a neighboring rival. Also well drawn are the profiles and motivations of people who will work with and against Sheen.

The White Feather is something of a classic type in British school boy stories, a fact Wodehouse will mention on a few occasions. It has more in common with books like Tom Brown School Days and may be thought of as juvenilia for middle school boys rather than all ages. Those of us who are fans should enjoy it for the chance to enjoy very the author as a young writer.

The Kindle version had no formatting issues and I note that the Amazon page indicates that besides the Kindle edition (free as of this review, April 2014) it can be downloaded from elsewhere on the web. The hardback is not free through Amazon and is part of a handsomely publish reissue of many Wodehouse titles.

My bottom line is that I enjoyed this book, even if parts of it were for me guess work. I recommend it to Wodehouse fans but I suspect that as an intro to this wonderful writer, it will not work for a non-British reader.

Senad Subasic says

dnf

Gillian says

As is the case with the other PGW School Stories, I didn't start out enjoying this book, and I ended up giving it 5 stars. He made me care so much about these "lads" and their principles. For the first time, I could understand why a boy would box. Remarkable.

Scot says

Another look at life at Wrykyn, Wodehouse's prototypical early 20th century British public school. The main plot focuses on the struggle of Sheen, who has been shamed by an act of public cowardice and thus subsequently shunned by his peers, so he determines to redeem himself by excelling at both a scholarship competition and (more dramatically) a major boxing competition. He learns boxing from a wise and cheery cornerman, former champ Joe Bevan. I would have enjoyed visiting Joe's gym atop the Blue Boar Inn--to get

there, our hero either sneaks out and rows a punt up a scenic river, or catches a ride in one of those new fangled motorcars with a stand-up day student named Bruce, who could coax the auto up to the then dangerous and exciting speeds of 20 or even 30 mph when he really gets her going. There are some meandering subplots that seem unnecessary but are used to tie in to characters mentioned in previous Wrykyn volumes or to establish mood, I suppose.

Ian Wood says

That after the triumph of 'Love Among the Chickens' Wodehouse should continue to publish school stories was possibly a mistake. 'The White Feather' is another story of schoolboy morality, similar to 'The Gold Bat' and 'The Head of Kay's'.

This is the story of Sheen, given the White Feather by his school chums for failing to fight for his school in a brawl between Wrykyn and their sworn enemies St Jude's. Sheen is sent to Coventry by his peers and tries to redeem himself by competing in the school boxing tournament. A morality tale where the reader is stretched to really care about the outcome.

The book was written in another lifetime and any humour in the book does not come from Wodehouse's wit but on the accuracy that the book's tone has been perfectly parodied in tales of 'Ripping Yarns', 'Monty Python' and countless other TV sketch shows. A book that cannot showcase Wodehouse's talent and should only be read by a reader who has already sampled Wodehouse's sweeter plums.

Dave says

I was pleasantly surprised by "The Gold Bat", but its sequel, "The White Feather", published on October 9th of 1907, falls short of its predecessor in many ways. While the return to Wrykyn offers some familiar surroundings for the reader, the major characters are new. There are some familiar characters as well, but they don't fit in with the main story, and some of them are clumsily used to insert plot points, making parts of the story seem very contrived. This is unfortunate, because it is a decent story, and the new characters are sufficient to drive the story forward. One can only wonder at how Wodehouse would have written the story when he was at his height.

The book opens with a collection of familiar characters as both Trevor and Clowes have returned to their former school and visit with Allardyce who has become Captain of the Football Team, and who is lamenting the sorry state of athletics at the school in the new year. As it turns out, none of these characters plays more than a bit role in the book. The main story starts in chapter two as Sheen is introduced to the reader, and this is essentially his story. The one character from "The Gold Bat" who plays a significant role in this story is Drummond, though his role is mainly that of influencing others, rather than of being central to the action.

Sheen is caught between a friendship with Stanning, a football player from Appleby's House, and Drummond a football player from his own house, Seymour's. For many reasons, Drummond is preferable to Stanning, and the two of them dislike each other intensely, so Sheen's attempts at being friends to both fails and Stanning is left out. When heading into town, Sheen and Drummond come across a fight between some Wrykyn students and some of the students from St. Jude. Drummond immediately acts to join in and

encourages Sheen to do the same, but Sheen runs away. It is this act of cowardice which Sheen is forced to live with, and he becomes an outcast in Seymour's House and the school as a whole, and which leads to his decision to try to learn to box to return something to the house which he let down.

It is a fairly standard story of trying to right a wrong, but Sheen is a likeable character, as is Joe Bevan, the ex-lightweight champion boxer who takes on the training. Wodehouse throws some curves in the story, such as misunderstandings about who Sheen believes told others of his cowardice, and how ongoing fights between Wrykyn and St. Jude's results in the town being put out of bounds, and thus forcing Sheen to break the rules to get to his training. Most of these feel a bit clumsy with regards to story flow, but I did enjoy the boat sinking episode when Sheen ends up stranded.

This is not Wodehouse's worst attempt, but it does lack in several areas. It is a bit too serious as the humor in the situations is a bit too subtle for me. The infamous "White Feather" from the title, never makes an actual appearance, though there is one chapter that has the title. Many of the situations feel forced, with a couple of chapters focusing on almost a completely different set of characters in order to bring in some plot points. What is done best is the characters, and one shouldn't be too hard on it, after all this is only Wodehouse's eighth book, and it follows "Love Among the Chickens" which was one of his best to this point.

Ian says

Outstanding example of a Wodehouse public school ripping yarn of his early era (aged 26 in 1907). Full of chaps, rotters, fags and bounders of various types, rugger, boxing and fives. Has a number of flaws which he later discusses in his "Performing Flea" autobiography, notably the inclusion of too many characters, and having "big" scenes where the major characters aren't actually present. Nonetheless a thoroughly enjoyable read.

Barb Moore says

I liked this better than I thought I would--I expected to be lost in the play-by-play of British schoolboy sports (and I did have to Google "fives") but the story was sound and the dialogue up to the usual Wodehousian standard. A nice, pleasant read.

Neil says

Wodehouse's first few books were all set in public schools and are all fairly unremarkable. They all seem to deal with different school sports in this case it's boxing. After a very shaky start the book hit its stride and is an enjoyable yarn, but there nothing great about it or indicative of Wodehouse's books to come.
