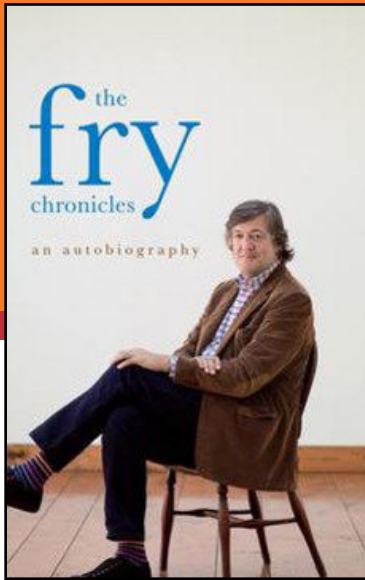


# The Fry Chronicles

By Stephen Fry

First published in 2010



## Genre and Subject

Autobiography

Comedians—Great Britain

## Synopsis

Stephen Fry's first memoir, *Moab Is My Washpot: An Autobiography*, published in 1997, told of his life up to the age of 18, when he was told that, despite his delinquent adolescence, he had won a scholarship to Queens' College in Cambridge.

*The Fry Chronicles* tells of his life up to his 30th birthday, covering his time at university, his rise to success as a writer and performer, meeting Emma Thompson, Hugh Laurie and Rowan Atkinson as he makes his way through sketch shows, and his rise to fame on *Saturday Live* and *Blackadder*, while his version of the musical *Me and My Girl* with Mike Ockrent becomes a global success and makes him a modest fortune while he is still in his twenties. Subsequently, many articles he has written are recalled. The book ends in August 1987, his 30th birthday, at his six-bedroom house in Norfolk.

The dedication of *The Fry Chronicles* reads simply "To M'Coll" meaning Hugh Laurie. Fry and Laurie both refer to each other as "M'Colleague" in their TV show *A Bit of Fry and Laurie*.

## Author Biography

Stephen Fry was born in Hampstead in 1957 and, following a troubled adolescence, went on to study English Literature at Queen's College, Cambridge. As well as being the bestselling author of four novels, *The Stars' Tennis Balls*, *Making History*, *The Hippopotamus*, and *The Liar*, and two volumes of his autobiography, Fry played Peter in *Peter's Friends*, Wilde in the film *Wilde*, Jeeves in the television series *Jeeves & Wooster* and (a closely guarded show-business secret, this) Laurie in the television series *Fry & Laurie*.

More recently, he presented *Stephen Fry: The Secret Life of the Manic Depressive*, his groundbreaking documentary on bipolar disorder, to huge critical acclaim. Before it was announced that Fry would retire as moderator, his legions of fans tuned in to watch him host the popular quiz show *QI* each week.

## Discussion Starters

- Mr Fry seems particularly prone to addictive behaviour, and is good at explaining to readers what the initial attraction for some of his addictions was. What was his most illuminating addiction? What caused him the most harm?
- There is a lot of anecdotes about entertainers in this book. Given that the celebrity of some of these people does not shine so bright in Australia as in the UK, does this detract from your enjoyment?
- Stephen's coming out is utterly anticlimactic. In a novel, this would have been a big thing, but in his autobiography, it's a weight from his shoulders with no other obvious repercussions. Is this failure to wring drama out of every opportunity a weakness or a strength of autobiography?
- Most autobiographies glorify the subject, but this one seems to seethe with self-ridicule. Does this make it sound more authentic? What are your reactions to the self-flagellation in the book?
- For someone so willing to bare his soul, and describe his many mistakes, Mr Fry is very cautious in discussing his primary romantic relationship in the book. Why do you think this is?
- Much of the time, the author seems to think you likely to resent him: his university place; his intellectualness; his wasteful use of money; his liesured-ness. Do you? Does his loathing of his younger self give you permission to loathe him as well or, in contradiction, make him more human and companionable?
- Did you expect it to be funnier? Why are so many comedians depressed, do you think? Does having to be funny all the time wear you out, or is there something in being miserable that helps you see the humour of things?
- Some of the book deals with the difference between the style of comedy Fry and Laurie were doing, and the emerging, more working class, 'New Wave' comedy. Did Australian comedy ever do high brow? Was it ever really intellectual? Think about some famous Australian comedians: where were they coming from in terms of class. Did Australian comedy ever suggest it was fun to be academically clever, before, say Adam Spencer? Does this say anything about Australians?

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