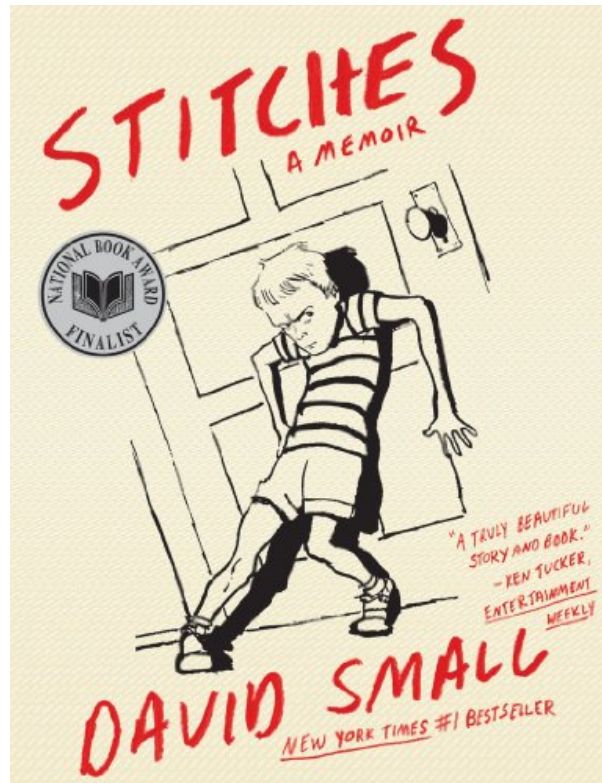
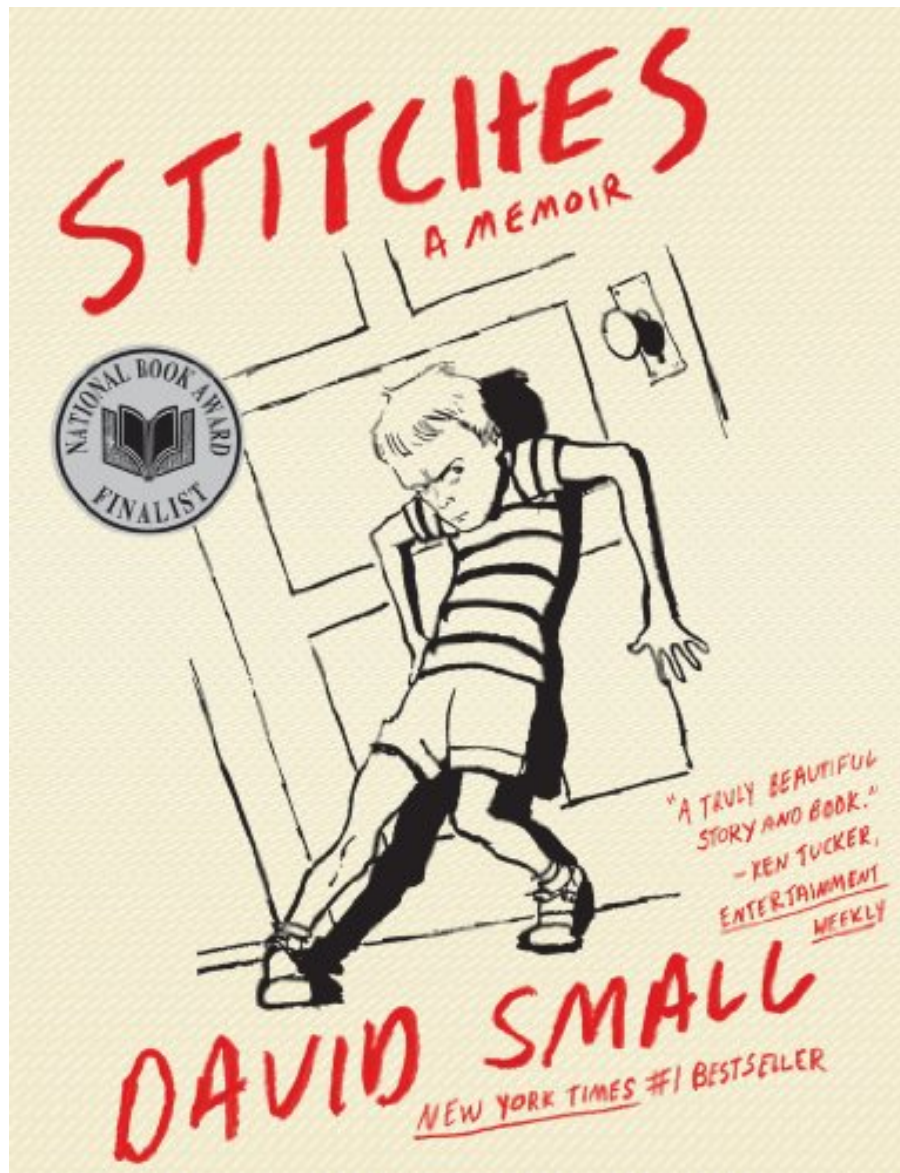


STITCHES: A MEMOIR BY DAVID SMALL



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Amazon.com: One of my favorite scenes in the book begins on p. 62, where you dive into your drawing, Alice in Wonderland-style. It struck me as a cherished fantasy. What scenes might you single out as your favorites?

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of revelation. He realizes that what happened to him as an infant has now reached out and shaped--perhaps even ruined--his future. The infant's face and the young man's face converge into one.

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STITCHES: A MEMOIR BY DAVID SMALL PDF

The #1 New York Times bestseller and National Book Award finalist that "breaks new ground for graphic novels" (Francois Mouly, art editor, The New Yorker).

David Small, a best-selling and highly regarded children's book illustrator, comes forward with this unflinching graphic memoir. Remarkable and intensely dramatic, Stitches tells the story of a fourteen-year-old boy who awakes one day from a supposedly harmless operation to discover that he has been transformed into a virtual mute—a vocal cord removed, his throat slashed and stitched together like a bloody boot. From horror to hope, Small proceeds to graphically portray an almost unbelievable descent into adolescent hell and the difficult road to physical, emotional, and artistic recovery.

A National Book Award finalist; winner of the ALA's Alex Award; a #1 New York Times graphic bestseller; Publishers Weekly and Washington Post Top Ten Books of the Year, Los Angeles Times Favorite Book, ALA Great Graphic Novels, Booklist Editors Choice Award, Huffington Post Great Books of 2009, Kirkus Reviews Best of 2009, Village Voice Best Graphic Novel, finalist for two 2010 Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards (Best Writer/Artist: Nonfiction; Best Reality-Based Work). Illustrated throughout

- Sales Rank: #25874 in Books
- Brand: W. W. Norton & Company
- Published on: 2010-09-13
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .90" w x 7.00" l, 1.38 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 336 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

93 of 97 people found the following review helpful.

A unique way to tell a story

By Herschel Greenberg

First, I know nothing about this author. According to his biography information on Amazon and the back of his book, he is an award winning childrens author. In some ways, knowing nothing about the author makes this graphic novel even more enjoyable. Second, I need to break this down into two reviews--the story and the art. Both are excellent! The story revolves around David Small from the age of 6 to adulthood. He comes from an interesting family--his mother and her side of the family is explored in depth. David develops a growth on his neck, which turns out to be cancer. However, his family does not tell him this, which is just

one of the sources of conflict between him and his parents. I really enjoyed how the story was told. You can really feel the struggles David goes through growing up within this family. And in some ways, his mother reminds me of my grandma (in terms of the value of money and weighing the cost of something against something else). I also like how imaginative David (the character in the book) can be, and you see that throughout the story (like his admiration for Alice in Wonderland, which appears again towards the end of the story) In the end, the story has a great moral lesson--your voice is more than the words that come out of your mouth. It is also your actions, what you do and how you do them, that speak for you. That is a great message to learn from a book about a child growing up.

The art is black, white, and gray, and in this story, it works perfectly. Some of the best frames in the book are when the author uses a direct light source on his character. For example, when David is in an elevator, and the doors open and close, he creates a fantastic effect by using this lighting technique. It happens a few times in the story, and it is definitely worth stopping to study the frame and look at the detail.

Finally, I believe that this story could only be told in this way. It just would not have been as effective if it was told in a traditional book. You need the art, combined with the story, David's imagination and the writer's control of his words to get everything you see in front of you. It just works as a graphic novel, telling the story of his own memories. I read the entire graphic novel in about 45 minutes. I now think that was too fast, and I plan to go back and read it again. I highly recommend this book for its great story and art work, even if you know nothing about the author. By the time you are done reading, you will feel like you know him personally.

48 of 50 people found the following review helpful.

Wow, a Searing Memoir

By Happy Reader

Do not let the fact that this is a graphic novel turn you off. It's not comic book/Watchman type art, this is pen and ink drawings.

This is a complete story, and, I'm not exaggerating, this is one of the best autobiographies I've ever read. Most of it is told unflinchingly from the standpoint of David Small as a child, starting at age 6. His was not a happy household and the story includes a grandma, who, at one point, descends into physical abuse. I had, up to that point in the story, no sympathy with Small's mother. If she protected him from that point on from his grandmother, it isn't told. But her reaction when David said he was afraid of his grandma, because she was crazy, made me sit up and acknowledge something - David's mother's coldness didn't just spring out of nothing. There was something or somethings that helped shaped her that way.

Near the end of the story, we learn that there was more than one thing that shaped her unhappiness. David acknowledges on the last pages, his later "maturity, reflection and some family research" helps him at least understand his mother.

It's not an excuse for not loving your own son, but it helps. It's not an excuse for his father enabling his mother, either. But read the story and make up your own mind. There is no whining; there is no using the past as a crutch. The story starts, I think, in the 50's, and medical knowledge and sociological acceptance were much different than they are now. Notice, I'm trying not to give too much away - I don't want to spoil it for you when you pick up this book.

Finally, I'd like to mention that David's imagination, which oftentimes plagued him as a child, also allowed him to write and illustrate this memoir, which may have been cathartic. Oh, and in case you're wondering, the "Stitches" did not result from abuse. At least, not the stitches in his body.

Much recommended.

Happy Reader

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

The most moving book I have read in a long time

By Anne Salazar

I loved this book! It is so moving, and to think that David Small can write AND draw about his sad, tormented childhood is miraculous. I kept turning to the photo of the author on the back flap just to see his sweet smiling face, and be reassured as I read that he was going to be okay. I can barely stand to learn about child and/or animal abuse, and this is, of course, abuse in the extreme. The text is poetic and the drawings once again prove that "a picture is worth a thousand words" as they bring this family to life.

David Small has illustrated several children's books, my favorite being THE LIBRARY written by his wife. I have no children at home, but I bought the book for myself because of the story of a voracious reader and book-buyer like myself as well as for the sweet, spot-on illustrations.

I learned about SITCHES in Publishers Weekly which I have subscribed to for several years. I am not going to renew my subscription, however, because the \$200+ annual subscription cost is just too much for a journal/magazine that is shrinking in size rapidly and will probably disappear itself before too much longer. BUT, I did read about this book there, as well as several other fabulous books over the years, so I am going to have to find another source for book reviews; Amazon is doing a good job, but way too few reviews, not to mention having to steer my way through all the ads to find them.

I do hope, however, that lots of people find and read this book. It gives hope. It shows that graphic books are to be taken seriously and are here to stay in all sorts of genres, not just "graphic novels". There are a couple other "graphic memoirs" recently published, and to me they are all delightful and a nice change in a publishing culture that has become stagnant in many ways. Thank you to David Small for sharing his story with us, for making us SEE what he went through. I am so sorry it happened, but happen it did, so thanks for trusting us with it.

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STITCHES: A MEMOIR BY DAVID SMALL PDF

Guides Stitches: A Memoir By David Small, from basic to difficult one will be a quite beneficial works that you can take to change your life. It will certainly not give you unfavorable declaration unless you don't get the meaning. This is certainly to do in reviewing an e-book to get over the definition. Commonly, this book qualified Stitches: A Memoir By David Small is read because you truly such as this type of e-book. So, you can obtain less complicated to comprehend the perception and also definition. Once again to constantly bear in mind is by reading this publication **Stitches: A Memoir By David Small**, you could fulfil hat your curiosity beginning by completing this reading book.

Amazon.com Review

Amazon Best of the Month, September 2009: Reading Stitches may feel unexpectedly familiar. Not in the details of its story--which is David Small's harrowing account of growing up under the watchless eyes of parents who gave him cancer (his radiologist father subjected him to unscrupulous x-rays for minor ailments) and let it develop untreated for years--but in delicate glimpses of the author's child's-eye view, sketched most often with no words at all. Early memories (and difficult ones, too) often seem less like words than pictures we play back to ourselves. That is what's recognizable and, somehow, ultimately delightful in the midst of this deeply sad story: it reminds us of our memories, not just what they are, but what they look like. In every drawing, David Small shows us moments both real and imagined--some that are guileless and funny and wonderfully sweet, many others that are dark and fearful--that unveil a very talented artist, stitches and all. -Anne Bartholomew

Amazon Exclusive: David Small on Stitches

Amazon.com: Stitches is a hard story to tell. What inspired you ultimately to write it?

David Small: I needed a direct confrontation with my past. It wasn't easy, but I was ready to do it, so the work--though it was very difficult--felt rewarding, even exhilarating at times.

Now that it's become a book it seems so complete, so seamless, and--looking at it now--it seems as if it simply fell out onto the page. In reality it was like herding cats for three solid years, especially after the book was under contract and I was really committed to doing it. But deadlines are great energizers. (So, I should add, are the faith of a great editor, a great agent, and a great wife. I am lucky. I have all three.)

Amazon.com: "Graphic novel" is a form that now encompasses all kinds of storytelling, fictional and factual. As an artist, how would you compare reading pictures vs. words? What might your story lose (or gain) if you told it without pictures?

David Small: I like to say that images get straight inside us, bypassing all the guard towers. You often go to the movies and see people with tears streaming down their cheeks, but you don't see this in libraries, not in my experience at least.

I know now that the graphic form was the only way my memoir could have been told. First of all, drawing is my most fluent means of expression. Secondly, it's a story about being voiceless. It demanded a visual

treatment because it involved so much of that guessing game we played in our family, of trying to figure out why someone was mad at us--someone who refused to communicate by any other means than slamming things around. If told in words--even if I could have--the story would have lost that visceral impact.

Amazon.com: Do you read a lot of graphic novels? Are there artists you'd recommend for fans of this genre?

David Small: I've read enough to know that the percentage of really good works in that medium is as small as in any other. For decades I've known and admired the work of Lynd Ward (*God's Man*, *The Silver Pony*), a pioneer of the form. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and Craig Thompson's *Blankets* were moving and very pure. Recently I was impressed by Josh Neufeld's *A.D.: New Orleans after the Deluge*.

A lot of the living artists I admire are European: Blutch, Sylvain Chomet, Winchluss, Frederik Peeters, Nicholas de Crécy, and Gipi are my favorites.

Amazon.com: We're always curious to know more about what authors like to read. Are there any you'd say who have influenced your own approach to writing?

David Small: I frequently go back to Chekov's stories and to the short works of Henry James and Thomas Mann. John Cheever moves me tremendously.

Since I am a visual artist, the most serious influences came from other artists. I used to get totally infected by contact with any artist whose work I admired. So, for a while, in college, I thought I was, among others, Daumier, Rembrandt, Egon Schiele and Kathe Kollwitz. I would drown myself in their ways of seeing the world, to the point that I sometimes wondered if I would ever have a style of my own.

Amazon.com: One of my favorite scenes in the book begins on p. 62, where you dive into your drawing, Alice in Wonderland-style. It struck me as a cherished fantasy. What scenes might you single out as your favorites?

David Small: I like that one also. I'm glad that you equate it with Alice, because the parallel is certainly there. In fact, though, I intended something truer to my own experience, growing up surrounded by x-rays. At six I knew that x-rays were pictures of the secret places inside us. I imagined myself going down into those shadowy places and finding--what? I don't know. A better world, I suppose. That is what I had in mind but, as I said, I have no problem at all with the Alice reference.

The party scene--where my entire adolescent social life gets summed up in a one-page image--also seems to work well. I'm happy with all the dream sequences. The 9-page "rain" sequence, in which the landscape is used as a metaphor for a state of mind, came out as I wanted it.

Amazon.com: The illustrations early in the story on pp 22-23--rendered again, in part, towards the end of the book on pp 290-91--are at once tender and terrifying, and they look remarkably different than most of the other panels that flow between them. Can you talk more about your approach to drawing this scene?

David Small: I tried to draw it the way it felt: that is, being an infant under all that hovering, humming x-ray machinery. If I recall correctly, I put an emphasis on the child's eyes looking around him at the dials, gauges, dangling cords and the blank walls of the machines. Later, the infant's gaze is coupled with the eyes of the young man who revisits the scene in his memory. Then, as the past and present fuse together, comes a shock of revelation. He realizes that what happened to him as an infant has now reached out and shaped--perhaps even ruined--his future. The infant's face and the young man's face converge into one.

Amazon.com: You've illustrated an award-winning roster of children's books. How did writing *Stitches*

impact your style of drawing? Were there elements that took more iterations than others?

David Small: I took the advice of artist Mark Siegel, an old hand at graphic novels who--although his style is entirely different from mine--recommended that I develop a way of drawing that is more like handwriting than regular drawing. "Otherwise," he said, "the whole process will drive you insane." I leapt on this piece of advice because it sounded so right and because it was a direction I'd been moving toward anyway, especially in my sketchbooks. This was a very different effort from my picture book work.

Amazon.com: I'm curious which section of the book you found yourself writing first. Did you find that drawing one part would help you to construct other scenes?

David Small: The scenes in the empty hospital--the elevator ride and so forth--were my strongest childhood memories. Of that whole sequence, the little fetus in the jar stood out most clearly in my mind. I found, as I started drawing, that by some natural-seeming process of visual mnemonics, I could make connections from one thing to another. Then, gradually, whole scenes and episodes would flood back. To put it a simpler way: when I could "see"--that is, draw--the room, and had it all furnished again, the actors (the ghosts) would move in and begin saying their lines. I found all that really quite remarkable.

Amazon.com: Memoirists are often asked questions about memories—the tools of their trade, in a way—but do you think memories tell the whole story?

David Small: No. They are only your memories. The other people there saw it through their own lens. It's Rashomon. Pure truth doesn't exist. We shouldn't insist on it, and we should always be willing to bend.

Amazon.com: The afterword to *Stitches* was unexpected, but I found I appreciated the visual reference points for you, and for your mother and father. Why did you feel this was important to include?

David Small: I'm glad you found them helpful. I always do, too, when I'm reading about the lives of others; I go to the photographs, maybe as a way of affirming the descriptive skills of the writer, but also to meet the subjects in a more concrete way. Now you've got me thinking. Maybe I was showing off. It was like saying, "Here! Look! I'm so certain I've done my job well that I'm not afraid to show you these people, whom I've been drawing for 300 pages." Mainly, though, it seemed like the right and fair thing to do.

Amazon.com: Reviews of *Stitches* seem to swivel on the question of whether the book is redemptive or cathartic. What do you think? Did you write it with any expectation of how you'd feel afterwards?

David Small: Seeing my early life again from the perspective of an adult, I came to know my family members as fellow human beings. I understood their drives. This broke the spell they had over me. It freed me of their influence. I'd had enough, frankly, of living and thinking the way they had taught me to think and behave.

Did I expect that this would happen? No. I had no expectations, only the need to do it.

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. In this profound and moving memoir, Small, an award-winning children's book illustrator, uses his drawings to depict the consciousness of a young boy. The story starts when the narrator is six years old and follows him into adulthood, with most of the story spent during his early adolescence. The youngest member of a silent and unhappy family, David is subjected to repeated x-rays to monitor sinus problems. When he develops cancer as a result of this procedure, he is operated on without being told what is wrong with him. The operation results in the loss of his voice, cutting him off even further from the world around

him. Small's black and white pen and ink drawings are endlessly perceptive as they portray the layering of dream and imagination onto the real-life experiences of the young boy. Small's intuitive morphing of images, as with the terrible postsurgery scar on the main character's throat that becomes a dark staircase climbed by his mother, provide deep emotional echoes. Some understanding is gained as family secrets are unearthed, but for the most part David fend for himself in a family that is uncommunicative to a truly ghastly degree. Small tells his story with haunting subtlety and power. (Sept.)

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From School Library Journal

Starred Review. Grade 10 Up—Small is best known for his picture-book illustration. Here he tells the decidedly grim but far from unique story of his own childhood. Many teens will identify with the rigors of growing up in a household of angry silences, selfish parents, feelings of personal weakness, and secret lives. Small shows himself to be an excellent storyteller here, developing the cast of characters as they appeared to him during this period of his life, while ending with the reminder that his parents and brother probably had very different takes on these same events. The title derives from throat surgery Small underwent at 14, which left him, for several years, literally voiceless. Both the visual and rhetorical metaphors throughout will have high appeal to teen sensibilities. The shaded artwork, composed mostly of ink washes, is both evocative and beautifully detailed. A fine example of the growing genre of graphic-novel memoirs.—Francisca Goldsmith, Halifax Public Libraries, Nova Scotia END

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