



# The Fry chronicles : an autobiography

By Stephen Fry

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Genre & subjects

Comedians - Great Britain

Autobiography

## Synopsis

Stephen Fry's first memoir, *Moab is my washpot: an autobiography* (1997) told of Fry's 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 steady rise to success as a writer and performer, meeting Emma Thompson, Hugh Laurie and Rowan Atkinson. It covers his way through sketch shows and his rise to fame on *Saturday Live* and *Blackadder*, while at the same time, his redaction of the musical *Me and My Girl* becoming a global success, making him a modest fortune, while he was still in his twenties.

This autobiography tells of his career in television, his written articles, as well as his adaptation of the musical *Me and My Girl*, which accounted for his early fortune.

## Author biography

Stephen John Fry was born on 24 August 1957. He is an English actor, screenwriter, author, playwright, journalist, poet, comedian, television presenter, film director, and a director of Norwich City Football Club. After a troubled childhood and adolescence he was able to secure a place at Queens' College, Cambridge, where he studied English Literature.

He first came to public attention in the 1981 Cambridge Footlights Revue presentation *The Cellar Tapes*, which also included Hugh Laurie, Emma Thompson and Tony Slattery.

## 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 leisured-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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*Moab is my washpot* by Stephen Fry

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