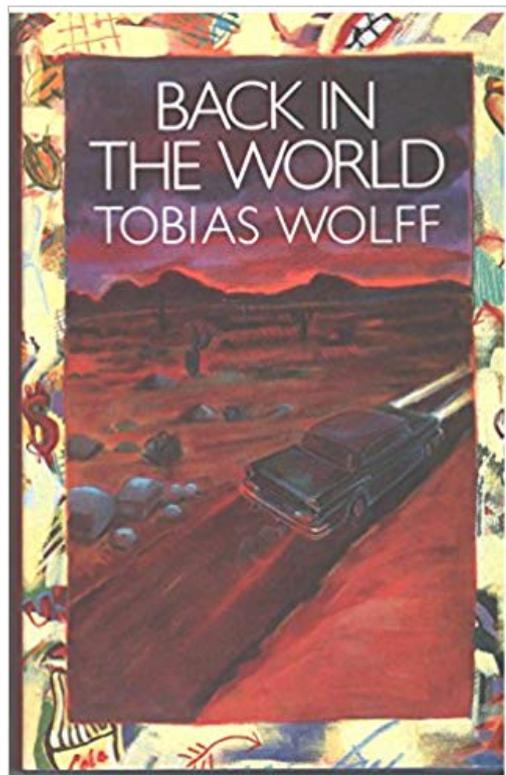


## Back in the World *by* Tobias Wolff



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**Author:** Tobias Wolff

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Short stories by a young Wolff.



## Reviews of the *Back in the World* *by* Tobias Wolff

Brightfury

Tobias Wolff is the master of the short story and reading these stories makes you feel like you're looking through a keyhole into small dramatic moments of ordinary life. After reading these stories, you'll swear that you know these characters as people. He writes beautifully, but the language is so concealed in the story, that you're not aware of the words. If you haven't read short stories, give this a chance to see if you might get hooked.

INwhite

Tobias Wolff is a fine story teller. The stories in this collection have Raymond Carver undertones with simplicity of everyday life and conversation. The stories don't actually end but leave the reader in the moment. Excellent.

Laizel

An expert at making the reader feel what is written. In a very select group that includes writers like Ron Carlson.

## Blackseeker

These are great stories, complex psychological studies, all woven into page-turning narratives by a writer who doesn't write to show off his linguistic skills (of which he has many), but to get the reader completely absorbed by the stories without being distracted by verbosity and other annoyances writers too often use to gain attraction for themselves. Wolff is too profound a writer to rely on gimmicks of any kind. Here are some highlights of the collection:

"The Rich Brother": Two brothers, one rich and arrogant, the other a poor drifter, both blame each other for their problems when in fact both are blind to their own pride and their own neediness which makes them need to rival against the other as a distraction from their empty lives.

"Desert Breakdown, 1968": A spoiled brat, now married to a beautiful pregnant woman, has fantasies of leaving his wife to be a single hedonist. He also loathes his parents who have spoiled and enabled him all his life. His delusions catch up with him in a way that I'll leave for the reader to discover in this excellent story.

"The Missing Person": A spiritual cousin to the drifting brother in "The Rich Brother," Leo is a waif afraid of women who sublimates his fears by joining the priesthood where, in an ironic twist, he meets a Trickster and becomes a corrupt hustler upon which, through too many twists of events to chronicle here, he finds his real self.

"Say Yes": A naive young house wife realizes that her husband is a racist and that racism can't be compartmentalized. His racist views contaminate all other aspects of his personality and he must therefore re-invent himself or suffer his wife's contempt and perhaps worse.

These stories are mostly gems, wrought with irony, tales of folly, people's misguided attempts at redemption, predatory tricksters wreaking havoc on the lives of others. His best stories are more richly packed with themes and ideas than most novels.

## Kanal

Aren't short stories amazing? As where a novel often times gives the reader time to lounge in another world, with different people and strange, yet sometimes familiar situations, a collection of short stories lets you peer in many windows. I think at some point most of us, at least the more curious of us, have sat on the Subway, or at Subway, and seen the various people and wonder what their story is. A collection of short stories allows you to act out that fantasy. That being said, Tobias Wolff's 1985 collection of stories, *BACK IN THE WORLD*, gives glimpses of many characters and situations that play out in the Pacific Northwest. The best three, *THE POOR ARE ALWAYS WITH US*, *DESERT BREAKDOWN 1968* and *THE RICH BROTHER* all involve cars to some degree, and the tentative bond that we have with each other. There are seven other, equally enjoyable stories, but it's these three where Wolff shines. Wolff's prose is like that of a Southern writer without the collection of grotesques, and without the Waspish sensibilities and Jewish insecurities of the Yates-Updike-Roth style. While not western, Wolff has given his own take on a unique American landscape, one populated with fog and ennui.

## Munimand

As if "The Night In Question" wasn't good enough, I went and bought "Back In The World." Just the first story alone could be printed ten times in between two covers and you'll read it different every time. There is this girl who likes to shop lift, works in a theatre, goes home to her little brother. It's us, beautifully written and immaculately realized. Tobias Wolff is gold and everything he touches turns just the same. Read this, then "The Night In Question" and then read "This Boy's Life." Read his made up words and then read his personally inspired words and found out just what he had to go through, how he triumphed over adversities to become the best short story writer out there today.

Mr\_KiLLaURa

Are you reading Tobias Wolff yet? Are you? If not, you should be.

With *Back in the World*, Wolff gives us yet another outstanding compilation of short stories. As always, Wolff's stories are brief and absolutely potent, offering all the complexities and awkwardness of the human condition in a direct and entrancing manner. His stories are so rooted in everyday life that when something unusual takes place it reminds us just how odd life can sometimes be in the middle of all the humdrum. Never does he take us beyond the possibilities of reality, however, and I believe that's why I so remarkably relate to his work.

I unconditionally recommend all of Wolff's writings, and *Back in the World* is certainly not to be excluded.

~Scott William Foley, author of *The Imagination's Provocation: Volume I: A Collection of Short Stories*

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