



The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

F. Scott Fitzgerald

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Today, F. Scott Fitzgerald is known for his novels, but in his lifetime, his fame stemmed from his prolific achievement as one of America's most gifted story writers. "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," a witty and fantastical satire about aging, is one of his most memorable stories.

In 1860 Benjamin Button is born an old man and mysteriously begins aging backward. At the beginning of his life he is withered and worn, but as he continues to grow younger he embraces life -- he goes to war, runs a business, falls in love, has children, goes to college and prep school, and, as his mind begins to devolve, he attends kindergarten and eventually returns to the care of his nurse.

This strange and haunting story embodies the sharp social insight that has made Fitzgerald one of the great voices in the history of American literature.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button Details

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Author : F. Scott Fitzgerald

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From Reader Review The Curious Case of Benjamin Button for online ebook

Jason Koivu says

If you read this backwards it totally makes sense!

Elizabeth Sagan says

Y'all know what this is about. Now take a look at this quote:

I'm not going to argue with you. But there's a right way of doing things and a wrong way. If you've made up your mind to be different from everybody else, I don't suppose I can stop you, but I really don't think it's very considerate. [...] You're simply stubborn. You think you don't want to be like anyone else. You always have been that way, and you always will be. But just think how it would be if everyone else looked at things as you do – what would the world be like?

Basically:

‘Why can’t you just be like everyone else?’

‘I can’t, I was born this way, I can’t change it.’

‘Yes you can. You just have to try. You just have to decide to be normal.’

And I was like:

Conclusion: choose your partner wisely.

Adita ?The Slumbering Insomniac? says

★★★★★? [9/10]

?If you happen to meet your kids and grandkids on your way down to childhood, will they regard you as their peer or their nemesis?

?Will they embrace you with arms wide open or regard you with vitriolic contempt?

?Will you still love your wife's wrinkled skin and mellow body or will she cease to interest you as you seek the company of prettier, younger women?

?Would you want to unlearn everything as you age(or un-age) without even a faint memory of ever having

accomplished wonderful feats? (No, not anything like Parkinson's or Alzheimer's, in case you're wondering)

?Would you rather die in your crib after having lived a peculiarly curious life of 70 years and be hailed "the oldman who died a baby"?

I believed all through my childhood that **Brad Pitt was The Benjamin Button**. I see now what all the exaltation is about. You can ruminate over all these out-of-the-world, outlandish schemes over your coffee break. Oh, if you ever wonder where *entropy* fits in the equation, you will be a goner. Otherwise, you would have had one of those enlightening, illuminating coffee breaks of a lifetime. Oh, and don't forget your coffee. Drink it before it goes back to being just coffee beans and milk and sugar.

?ntellecta says

“Der seltsame Fall des Benjamin Button“ is a short story, which can be read very quickly because it only has 66 pages. This story is very captivating and emotional. The novel is based on a mixture of weird tragedy and comedy. The destiny of this odd person in combination with Fitzgerald’s writing style and language could fascinate me simply.

Britany says

For some crazy reason, I had no idea that this was a short story written by F Scott Fitzgerald. I had seen the movie years ago and never read the book (The horror! I know...).

You can easily read this in one sitting at less than 70 pages. I wish that the book was structured so that we got to see Benjamin's whole life and the difficulty he faced as he aged in reverse. Most of the book is spent on the first few years of his life, and then quickly works backwards. This concept is unbelievably interesting and unique considering the time frame when it was written. I appreciated Fitzgerald's writing and imagination for his one.

Would recommend this short book, especially if you can appreciate a good story.

Sara Kamjou says

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Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

I've seen the movie (twice), and I've been looking forward to reading the short story that the movie is based

for a while now. The movie *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* has very little in common with the book. The name is the same, and the core is the same, Benjamin Button is born old and as he grows older he grows younger both in the book and the movie. But in the book, he is raised by his father and not abandoned at birth. And all the rest of the book differs also from the movie.

I liked the story, first I couldn't help at first to compare the story with the movie and feel that the story was lacking everything the movie had, but soon I was sucked into the story and I'm glad it was different since it's more fun reading something that not exactly like the movie.

It's a bittersweet story and in a way, a cruel story since Benjamin during all his life is met with contempt and misunderstanding. The story is set during the latter half of the 19th century but it could as well be taking place now a day since being different is something that is always going to be met with ignorance.

Amanda says

Yay! I finally completed my first audiobook. This isn't exactly a great feat seeing as this story is only about 1 hour and 20 minutes, but it was the perfect length for my walk and recent time constraints.

This was such a pleasurable read and worthy of the short amount of time needed to complete. This story is quite different from the movie, but I found it preferable. Even though I am more of a visual learner, the audio version gave me a chance to truly appreciate the writing skills of Fitzgerald and his impressive vocabulary upon hearing it spoken.

Benjamin Button was born in 1860 in Maryland. When he is born, he is a wrinkled and bearded 70 year-old man, approximately 5'8" and fully capable of speaking and walking. His father is ashamed and the family situation is difficult at first. However, as the years pass, Benjamin's body and mind "age" in reverse.

Fitzgerald imbues this story with humor and masterfully examines the concept of aging. At times the story is sad, especially considering Benjamin's early relationship with his father and his relationship with his own son as he descends into adolescence and childhood.

I highly recommend!

Nayra.Hassan says

Duane says

Most everyone knows the premise of this story; a man is born old, already smart and wise, and as he "ages" he becomes younger in body and mind. It makes me think of another saying, "you are who you are", but actually, throughout your life, you are a different person at different times. You look different, you act different, you think different, you are perceived different during the various stages of your life. I've read most of what Fitzgerald wrote and I think this is one of his best stories. It certainly has a different feel to it than the others.

Emily (Books with Emily Fox) says

3.5

Ilse says

The curious case of Benjamin Button, as a slightly melancholic and in its absurdity somewhat humorous, surreal tale on time and (non) conformism, could in a sense be read as a satirical allegory on ageism avant la lettre. (Or maybe I did so).

"You're just the romantic age," she continued — "fifty. Twenty-five is too wordly-wise; thirty is apt to be pale from overwork; forty is the age of long stories that take a whole cigar to tell; sixty is—oh, sixty is too near seventy; but fifty is the mellow age. I love fifty."

To everything there is a season. But as no man is an island, others might have fixed or preconceived ideas on what might be the appointed or appropriate time for certain life events happening to us and how we should be and behave at specific moments in life, even if the desirable behaviour or bringing about such events is beyond our control and we are helpless and unable to change so we fit into the frame of normality or in the plans of our relatives or larger society. Why be happy when you could be normal? If we have to live on someone else's terms, societal norms and standards might collide with our identity and condition and cause friction and chasm even with our near and dear when they cannot accept we digress. In presenting Benjamin Button's case, depicting the insensitive and petty responses of both outsiders as well as Benjamin's father,

wife and son on Benjamin's various stages of life and development, Fitzgerald caustically shows how deviance meets with shame, irritation, rejection, ridicule, shock and denial. Our loved ones are not always willing nor able to transcend their own frame of reference in perceiving and accepting us as we really are, even if this might make us thoroughly unhappy.

She sniffed again. "The idea," she said, and after a moment: "I should think you'd have enough pride to stop it."

"How can I?" he demanded.

"I'm not going to argue with you," she retorted. "But there's a right way of doing things and a wrong way. If you've made up your mind to be different from everybody else, I don't suppose I can stop you, but I really don't think it's very considerate."

"But, Hildegarde, I can't help it."

"You can too. You're simply stubborn. You think you don't want to be like anyone else. You always have been that way, and you always will be. But just think how it would be if everyone else looked at things as you do — what would the world be like?"

(© Postertext)

Of thoughtful satire and social criticism one can expect it speaks for itself. I wasn't particularly taken with the story, nor did I find any specifically enlightening insights on age or aging in it, but ostensibly such didn't seem the purpose of the story. The prose however, on the moments it quits the more outspoken satirical register, flows delicately and lyrically, movingly mellowing nearing the ending while Benjamin reaches the innocent sweetness of infancy, soothing like a lullaby.

"And when the long day was done at five o'clock he would go up-stairs with Nana and be fed oatmeal and nice soft mushy foods with a spoon. There were no troublesome memories in his childish sleep; no token came to him of his brave days at college, of the glittering years when he flustered the hearts of many girls. There were only the white, safe walls of his crib and Nana and a man who came to see him sometimes, and a great big orange ball that Nana pointed at just before his twilight bed hour and called "sun." When the sun went his eyes were sleepy—there were no dreams, no dreams to haunt him."

Bionic Jean says

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button is a strange little fantasy about a baby born in 1860, who appears to be a withered decrepit old man. He goes on to live his life in reverse, doing all the normal things - running a business, marrying and having children, going to war, attending school and college, and ending up in kindergarten and under the care of a nurse. It was written by Scott Fitzgerald in 1922. Clearly it is a social satire.

In his introduction, Fitzgerald says that he came across a similar plot in Samuel Butler's notebooks - but several weeks after the publication of his own story. That led me to wondering what the influences of this story had been.

It reminded me of Martin Amis's *"Time's Arrow"*, or *"The Confessions of Max Tivoli"*, but these are much more modern works. Thematically there are similarities with *"The Time Traveller's Wife"* and

"Slaughterhouse 5", but even "Slaughterhouse 5" dates from 1969. The idea of a person displaced in time is, of course, a staple of SF, but this is Scott Fitzgerald we are talking about here, the author who exemplified the Jazz Age. It is hardly his typical fare. So maybe the roots of this story lie in Mark Twain's "A Connecticut Yankee in Arthur's Court" of 1889; another humorous satire. But that is more of a burlesque, and as in the second two examples, the main character does not himself reverse his age.

Fitzgerald thought this was "*the funniest story ever written.*" That is highly debatable. But the message of the story is that age is more than just a number. Not only does it dictate our physical condition, but our personality and character traits as well. Benjamin Button is constantly unhappy and frustrated in his life as he has to pretend he is a chronological age which he does not feel. When he looks old, he wants to sit around and chat with other old men; when young he is happy to sit and play with strips of coloured paper. Somewhere in the middle of course he appears "normal" with the normal interests and tastes of a man of his apparent age.

Age plays a big part in our identity. We all change as we get older, but maybe the message of this story is the popular saying that "You are as young as you feel."

Brina says

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button by F. Scott Fitzgerald is the short story selection in the group catching up on classics for May 2017. This story was first published in Colliers Magazine in 1922 and describes Fitzgerald's views on aging in satirical form. While ageism has become a timely topic today, Fitzgerald first grappled with the issue nearly one hundred years ago.

Benjamin Button was "born" to Mr and Mrs Roger Button in 1860. In the place of the bundle of joy the Buttons expected, they received a seventy year old man. Prominent members of society, the Buttons fear that they will be the scandal of their town, and attempt to shield their son from all but select relatives. Lucky for the senior Buttons, the Civil War breaks out, turning attention to more serious matters.

A most remarkable thing occurs: Benjamin ages backward. He goes from a feeble contemporary of his grandfather to a younger man in the prime of his life and eventually becomes a hero of the Spanish American War and then a football hero at Harvard College. As he reverse ages, Button has a wealth of knowledge and ideas to share with the modernizing world because he already experienced life as an older citizen. Fitzgerald, through Button, reveals that age is but a number or perception, and goes against the common societal beliefs of how to treat both older citizens and children.

Even though I generally do not read satires or usually do not appreciate the wit, I enjoyed Fitzgerald's views on age and aging. Knowledge comes with age yet usually the most senior members of society with the most wisdom to share are treated like mere children. I just completed a contemporary book in which an octogenarian woman faces these same issues. Fitzgerald tackled the question of age nearly one hundred years ago, and, yet, society still does not always appreciate the elderly and children as intelligent individuals.

I probably would not have tackled this story if it was not a selection in one of my groups. Yet it conveniently fits nicely with the novel I have just completed, and even matches its wit. Benjamin Button may not be the most timeless classic, but its message still resonates, and I look forward to the discussions ahead. 3.5 stars.

Mia (Parentheses Enthusiast) says

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." -Søren Kierkegaard

This wonderful short story blurs a lot of lines. It's definitely a satire about aging and how it affects one's position in society, but it's also unequivocally a bittersweet tragedy. A whimsical odyssey in reverse, a story of falling in and out of love, a rumination on memory, a chronicle of one odd branch of a family tree.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button truly is all of these things, but first and foremost it is the beautifully sad chronicle of a life lived backwards, of seldom being in the right time, of knowing that the years ahead of you don't hold canes and grey hair, but swaddles and cribs.

Fitzgerald's writing is great here- sparkling and effervescent when it should be, wracked with Benjamin's frustrations and joys in the right spots, all while retaining the nostalgic tone. This story is very much like the faded and yellowing pages of a worn book coming to a close, the cover closed softly and placed upon a high shelf to gather the dust of time.

I'll leave you with this quote, and as always you can read the story here.

The past- the wild charge at the head of his men up San Juan Hill; the first years of his marriage when he worked late into the summer dusk down in the busy city for young Hildegarde whom he loved; the days before that when he sat smoking far into the night in the gloomy old Button house on Monroe Street with his grandfather- all these had faded like unsubstantial dreams from his mind as though they had never been. He did not remember.

Alex Farrand says

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button is about a man who was born old, and by a reverse process that is unknown converted into being young throughout his years of life. This short story just tells us about Benjamin's life.

I am not sure if it was the writing or the narrator that gave this novel such a poor rating from me, but there was something I didn't like. The narrator of my story spoke too fast, and made Fitzgerald's story sound abnormal. The story was already abnormal, but the way he spoke was obnoxious. Maybe, he had a hard time pronouncing words. Maybe, it was the way Fitzgerald wrote his work. I really can't place my finger on it. I think I will give this story another try once I have a physical copy, to see if there is any differences.

I like the idea of this novel. It would be a very interesting case to see someone turn younger throughout his ages. A little spooky, but interesting. I think the idea of this short story is to show that being elderly, and a newborn is basically the same thing. Besides the brain function, the elderly and newborns live sort of the same way. I think that is why the elderly and newborns typically get along so well. For example, someone in the middle ages tells their elderly parents and their children what to do. I guess the idea is that our human life cycle is a circle. If we started from the end or the beginning we end up the same. We live and we die. I could

be completely wrong, but that is what I took from this short story.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button is a short read about a man living his life backwards in time. Happy reading.

blog: www.dancingbetweenthecovers.com

Nandakishore Varma says

Goodreads is serendipitous! I have been planning to read this for a long time, but somehow kept on putting it off. I suddenly came across Fatty Bolger's review in my feed. It was during my lunch hour, so I Googled for a free version online, found it, and read it.

Surprisingly, I liked the story a lot better than I was expecting to. Unlike the movie, which has a heavy dose of pathos, the story is an out-and-out fantasy based on an outlandish premise: what would happen if one aged in reverse? This is a time machine applicable only to anatomy; the person moves forward in time.

Fitzgerald has explored all the absurd possibilities of such a wild scenario, including two grandfather-grandson interactions at the same biological age level - Benjamin the "infant" and his seventy year-old grandpa, and the "65-year old" Grandpa Benjamin and his five-year-old grandson. The most interesting thing about the story is that Benjamin, in his regressive trip through life, gets to interact with his grandfather, father, son and grandson as peers.

A weird little story, hilarious and melancholic by turns - right up my alley.

Inder Suri says

I have never read anything like this before.

When you pick up a book and you know that it is more a short-story than a novel, it's obvious you can't expect much from the book. It will either be a short tale telling you something related to a significant subject and maximum it can do is to give you a heartwarming and a satisfying ending.

But this book was something more. It was different. Yes, like many others, I already knew those two words very strongly related to this book i.e, "Aging Backwards". I also knew about the movie extracted from this book starring Brad Pitt and directed by David Fincher. And, even after being a fan of both these personalities, I am glad I haven't watched it yet.

Reading this book was a sheer pleasure. You pick up this thin book and keep it down only after you are done with it. It does not teach you anything nor does it give you any satisfaction. But, It tells you a story, a story which is very anomalous and different. Many a times we have some strange and absurd ideas and all we do is think about it and try to laugh it off. But here Mr F.Scott Fitzgerald presented a similar kind of an idea but in form of a beautiful story. I am really glad I read it and I know this will stay with me for sometime. And I am going to watch the movie very soon and I know I will like it.

Araz Goran says

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Paquita Maria Sanchez says

First of all, *how* is there an entire movie here? Yeah, yeah, it would probably be best to come back to that.

My overall vote is "meh?" From a clunky start, this short story waxes and wanes in a similar fashion to its title character. All that I could think while reading the first two sections was how Fitzgerald's dialogue and descriptions of character behavior were the literary equivalent of cutting paper dolls out of vellum and proclaiming them to be sentient creatures. Along with being generally flimsy prototypes for Dad, Mom, Doctor, Nurse, etc, each one of the figures in the story spoke as if they were awkward, bratty kids acting in a grade school stage play. Example from when Señor Button the First arrives at the hospital expecting to greet his newborn child (who is actually, as you surely know, a crotchety old man):

"What's the matter?" demanded Mr. Button appalled. "Triplets?"

"No, not triplets!" answered the doctor cuttingly. "What's more, you can go and see for yourself. And get another doctor. I brought you into the world, young man, and I've been physician to your family for forty years, but I'm through with you! I don't want to see you or any of your relatives ever again! Good-bye!"

Geesh, calm down, princess. And here I thought *I* was addicted to exclamation points like my keyboard

pumps helium through my fingertips directly up to my brain. Fortunately, the "pre-teen equivalent to daytime soap opera" dialogue eases up as you move along with the story. The soapy behavior, however, continues:

In the upper hall he addressed another nurse who approached him, basin in hand. "I'm Mr. Button," he managed to articulate. "I want to see my..."

Clank! The basin clattered to the floor and rolled in the direction of the stairs. Clank! Clank!

This is just one example, but YES, I am definitely nitpicking. However, have you ever seen the film *Wet Hot American Summer*? It cleverly addresses this irritating habit of bad movies, bad television shows, and (in this case) bad, bad writing: the tendency to have people convey the complex and often disparate emotions of astonishment, anger, and terror simply by dropping whatever they are holding (with overly high-pitched, generic sound effects included). In *W.H.A.S.*, every time a character throws something in frustration or shock, the same stock track of breaking glass is played regardless of what material the projectile is composed of. This happens something to the tune of a 10-ish times in the movie, and it is increasingly hilarious. In *Benjamin Button*, however, it is just another example of some of the slovenly writing contained therein.

As you move on, the story becomes more engaging. I don't know if it is necessarily better written in parts, or if the plot itself simply distracted me from otherwise weak wordplay. All the same, as the character hits his physical thirties and begins losing his passion and feelings of connection to his lethargic, 50's-ish wife, you feel for him a bit. As he regresses further and further back toward the womb, losing the respect of his community and even his ungrateful dickwad of a son, you feel for him a bit more. And so on and so on. In fact, the sections dealing with Benjamin's adult child's frustration with his increasingly infantile father were pretty emotionally charged. It seemed a fitting metaphor for the way that many adults tend to eventually see their aging parents as burdens rather than role models and givers of life. It invokes the reader's sympathies for those poor, loony old folks dumped into nursing homes and abandoned by their kin to rot in the diapers that life tends to cycle us back into. Sad, sad stuff.

All in all, *Benjamin Button* is an interesting story with somewhat poor execution. It is pretty watery, and considering that it is so short, I'd argue that sloppy writing is kind of inexcusable. Also, there is a point near the end where my interest dropped off pretty sharply, as I felt fairly certain that I knew exactly what was coming. By the end, the story had once again become about as fascinating as some stranger's drooling baby.

So, again: how is there a movie here? Oh, and why have I never seen it? There are so many things about it for which I have positive associations: Cate Blanchett, David Fincher, Brad Pitt, Fitzgerald. For some reason, though, I just never got around to it, and am even less interested now. Would you care to change my mind?
