



They

Rudyard Kipling

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I saw the Doctor come out of the cottage followed by a draggle-tailed wench who clung to his arm as though he could make treaty for her with Death. "Dat sort," she wailed -- "dey're just as much to us dat has 'em as if dey was lawful born. Just as much -- just as much! An' God he'd be just as pleased if you saved 'un, Doctor. Don't take it from me. Miss Florence will tell ye de very same. Don't leave 'im, Doctor!"

They Details

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Laurel Hicks says

That was scary!

Ale Volpe says

Non riesco a farmi piacere la voce che sa e giudica tutto, i dialoghi ripetitivi e confusionari. Alcuni racconti hanno anche una bella trama, ma poi per esempio arriva Gesù Cristo, che non c'entra niente, e rovina tutto.

Mark J Easton says

As a brief anthology of three short stories—"They", "Mary Postgate", and "The Gardener"—this serves as the perfect panacea to the more familiar, up-beat and sometimes humorous voice that generations have grown to know as Kipling.

"They" is a brooding story about the lost ways of the old world, a tale en-witching in its simplicity, and a reminder that technology and the other raiments of progress will never lay claim to all corners of human experience.

"Mary Postgate" is a hard tale of sacrifice and war, out of which shines the unstinting and resolute flame of the female spirit. Shocking as it is satisfying, it offers a direct view of human life rooted firmly in nature and unencumbered by the unnecessary complexities of civilisation.

While "The Gardner" falls flat and doesn't work particularly well as a story, its careful backdrop of war and loss provides an ideal landscape for considering grief. As the protagonist drifts into fulfilling a detached but dutiful service, the story not only reminds the reader of the ghosts that haunted Kipling, but also that the complexities of the human heart are boundless, and the real nature of the human condition is not one of pain, but of an unescapable and indelible numbness.

Althea Ann says

Of course I had 'The Jungle Book' and 'Rikki Tikki Tavi' as a child, but I'd never read this Kipling tale before. It unfolds as a man, driving aimlessly in his motorcar, comes across an estate tenanted by a lonely blind woman... and, it seems, several children, who are strangely elusive. The setting is vivid and lush, the language evocative - it's more of a musing of life and loss than the ghost story it might seem to be. However, the ending is peculiar and rather unsatisfying - I'm not sure what to make of it.

(view spoiler)

Shannon says

Sometimes I feel like there is an obligation to like things by certain writers just because of who they are. 'They', Mary Postgate, and The Gardener are all good short stories. The language is beautiful. It's Rudyard Kipling, so of course it is. I love the mystery of the stories. They are dark and have an amazing atmosphere that almost leaps from the page. The downside is that for such short stories, it's a lot of build up for only a few truly brilliant pages at the end.

Vincent Grieve says

I read the title story recently, and found it to be incredibly moving, thought-provoking, and full of beautiful, evocative language that (perhaps because of its sincerity) does not come across as purple. The tale is somewhat elliptical, and I must confess that I am not entirely sure about the enigmatic conclusion of the story.

I know very little about Kipling's life, though I do know that he lost a young daughter (I believe she was six when she died) and that this loss weighed so heavily on him that he was never quite the same man. This fact, along with the poem that precedes the story, certainly adds to the poignancy of the story, and gives some extra weight to the narrative.

I don't think it matters much whether one is aware that "They" is a ghost story beforehand, as it becomes obvious to the reader that the shy children at the beautiful estate the narrator absentmindedly wanders into are spectres, and that he is indeed "lucky" to be able to see them--though the meaning is lost in the ambiguity of his conversations with the blind woman. This mutual misunderstanding, of which the minor characters defer from disillusioning out of respect, is the driving force of the plot. At the end, of course, the narrator understands that he had mistaken the ghosts for real children, and had misunderstood the blind woman. With this comes the sad irony of his "luck," for when he determines that he has no "right" to see the ghosts (and why he feels this way is not entirely clear, though it could be that he, unlike Kipling, is childless) he resolves to never come to the estate again.

Cecile says

Three short stories, some took longer to sink in and needed a reread. Makes you think about what you read, like that - just not all the time.

Miranda says

Not hugely gripping sadly.

Joel Gomes says

Quão diferente teria sido a minha infância, a minha vida, se em vez d' O Livro da Selva, tivesse lido este They? Como seria se, em criança, tivesse entrado numa livraria e escolhido este livro do senhor Kipling, achando que seria mais uma bonita história? Avaliando pelo título, They soar-me-ia como um livro sobre amigos, sobre amizade.

Nada disto aconteceu. A versão que eu li d' O Livro da Selva em criança foi a versão Disney. Este They foi o primeiro livro que li do senhor Kipling em adulto e é um livro que merece novas leituras. E, mesmo não tendo acontecido, a minha pergunta respondeu-se por si mesma: tivesse eu lido este livro em criança e teria apanhado um valente cagaço.

Christy says

As of now I'm still pondering the meaning of this short story, written in 1904.....I need a bit of help....or at least a re-read..... beautiful prose, and great atmospheric quality. I need some time to let the meaning slip in. This is the first time I've been this confused about an ending, I'm embarrassed to say....Yet I'm glad to find others felt this way.... I will give it a three, because I enjoyed it quite a bit, and the 'ghostly' atmosphere (Though it is NOT a ghost story per se...and it is not scary at all!) in the big grand house. It appears to have children living there who have passed on....(view spoiler)

By the way, it can be read in a few short hours.... My copy, which I bought from Amazon (by following the link here) for my Kindle had only the story They, which, after reading the other reviews, is fine with me as the consensus seems to be it was the best of the three.

My favorite quote from the story: *I was silent in reviewing that inexhaustible matter--the more than inherited (since it is also carefully taught) brutality of the Christian peoples, beside which the mere heathendom of the west coast n***** is clean and restrained.* This thought occurred when thinking of the unfair treatment so many at the time received for something they had no control over.

Remember this story was written in 1904, so sorry for the language used at that time. Replace the word with whatever we find "heathen/bad/ugly/uneducated", yet not cruel in nature....compared against those who ought to be loving....

There is a movie loosely based on this story, called They Watch, which also goes by the name of Children of the Mist...in a way, it helps me understand this story a bit better, though there is much added to the story...I suppose someone used their knowledge of Kipling's situation with his dead daughter and perhaps explained it in a very modern setting. Many of the scenes are the same as the short story, though. I suppose I used this movie as one would use "spark notes".....

Hadi says

Three stars for the title story. Two stars for "Mary Postgate" but the third story "The Gardner" fell flat.

Ailish Cleary says

Didn't like this at all. While the prose is wonderful at times, I felt the stories fell flat, particularly 'The Gardener'. 'They' has a very ambiguous ending which I didn't like - more of a personal thing than anything else. Would not recommend.

Lea says

Although beautifully written these three stories left me a bit confused. I liked "They" the best though, mostly the imagery.

Nuno says

I hadn't yet come across anything written by Rudyard Kipling, so it was interesting to get to know his style. From the three short stories contained here, it was "They" that stood out the most to me, and the reason why I liked the book as much as I did. The other two stories were still ok, but not great in my opinion.
