



[Home](#) > Awful Auntie

Awful Auntie

Books Reviewed:

[Awful Auntie](#) [1]

Issue:

[210](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

[New to Choice](#):

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This is the first David Walliams' book I've read, and, yes, I can see the comparison to Dahl: the villainous adults, the appealing child protagonists, the occasionally dark humour and, above all, the facility for telling a compelling story. But, on the strength of this, Walliams is rather lighter on his feet, somewhat more tongue in cheek, lacking the moral edginess that's in much of Dahl, and happy to push his flights of comic fancy well into the stratosphere. In this story, he keeps it very simple. There's one location, a country house sometime between the two world wars, and four main characters: the Auntie of the title; Wagner, her vicious avian enforcer (a Great Bavarian Mountain Owl); poor persecuted young Lady Stella; and Soot, the ghost of a boy chimney sweep. There are walk on parts for Gibbon, an aged deaf, blind and daft butler; and a suspiciously inefficient and uncooperative detective called Strauss. The plot, too, is relatively straightforward. Lady Stella is set to inherit the house and estate and her Awful Aunt is out to get it for herself. To do this Aunt Agatha needs to find the hidden deeds to the property and force Stella to sign them over to her. Sporting a monocle and dressed in deer stalker hat, tweed jacket and plus fours, Agatha is magnificently and absurdly nasty, even fighting for the Germans in the Great War because they had the best helmets, and losing all the family's money gambling at tiddlywinks. Wagner is a bird of intimidating proportions and habits; and Stella and Soot are delightful conspirators, she posh and he speaking in a cheerful Ealing Comedy cockney. The four chase one another round the house and up and down the chimneys, while Gibbon wanders in and out in bungling butlering mode. Now and again, as a break from the story, Walliams indulges a passion for loopy lists ? of the tricks that Agatha has taught Wagner, for instance, or Gibbon's craziest feats of housekeeping ? which help to make quite a thick book out of a slim story. The other leavening additions to the story are Tony Ross's brilliant and gratifyingly frequent illustrations, without which the story would be very much poorer. There are cutaway plans of Saxby Hall's rooms and chimneys, individual characterisations of the main protagonists, and accompanying cartoons for Walliams's lists. Ross never seems to miss a chance to add to the fun. It's a perfect partnership and a story that can hardly fail to please Walliams's army of fans.

Source URL (retrieved on Sep '20): <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/210/childrens-books/reviews/awful-auntie>

Links:

[1] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/awful-auntie>

[2] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/210>

[3] <http://www.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/clive-barnes>