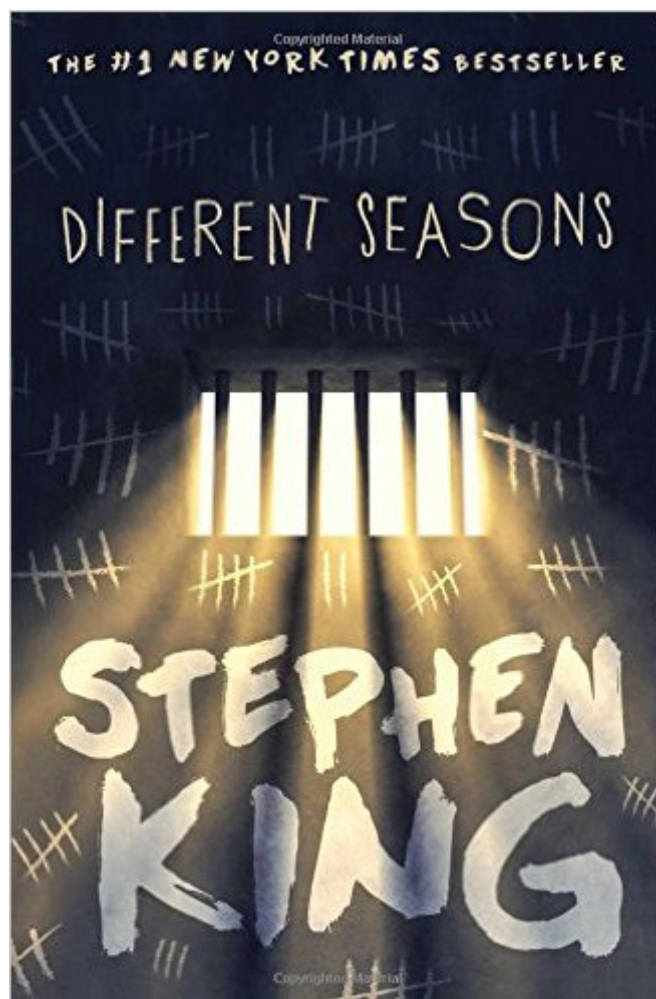


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Different Seasons: Four Novellas



Synopsis

A *hypnotic* (The New York Times Book Review) collection of four novellas from Stephen King bound together by the changing of seasons, each taking on the theme of a journey with strikingly different tones and characters. The wondrous readability of his work, as well as the instant sense of communication with his characters, are what make Stephen King the consummate storyteller that he is, hailed the Houston Chronicle about *Different Seasons*. This gripping collection begins with *Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption*, in which an unjustly imprisoned convict seeks a strange and startling revenge—the basis for the Best Picture Academy Award-nominee *The Shawshank Redemption*. Next is *Apt Pupil*, the inspiration for the film of the same name about top high school student Todd Bowden and his obsession with the dark and deadly past of an older man in town. In *The Body*, four rambunctious young boys plunge through the facade of a small town and come face-to-face with life, death, and intimations of their own mortality. This novella became the movie *Stand By Me*. Finally, a disgraced woman is determined to triumph over death in *The Breathing Method*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sometimes collections like this can be hard to judge. Most of the time the author will have ups and downs, with one story that may appeal to one audience and another which appeals to a different one. *Different Seasons*, however, manages to provide a good body of work that should appeal to just about everybody. To be clear on the content of the book, this is actually two novellas and two

short stories--both Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption and The Breathing Method are both on par with such classics as "Bartleby the Scrivener." The format of the book is perhaps a little hokey--the stories follow the seasonal theme--but ultimately that artistic touch is irrelevant to the real appreciation of the book, at worst, and endearing, at best. The stories themselves are excellent, a fact attested to by the production of three major films based on the first three of these pieces. The first presented is Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption, and of them all, it's probably the best on the whole. The characters in the story are well written and, all things considered, it's really just a fine story with a positive message that you might not be used to seeing in Stephen King's writing. Second is Apt Pupil, which is more reminiscent of King's usual subject matter and tone, but still manages to provide an engrossing and interesting view into the nature of evil and the parasitic relationship that a man can develop with it. The Body is probably the most endearing of all the stories in the book, even if it is the roughest in terms of production. With a reflective, old-man-on-the-porch-in-the-sunshine voice, King is able to relate this tale of the loss of innocence and the passage into adulthood. The final tale is actually reminiscent of other, older authors than King.

Different Seasons was the first Stephen King book I have ever read. I chose to read it after watching the movie "The Shawshank Redemption", which I thoroughly enjoyed. I was interested in reading the story on which the movie is based, so I soon found that "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption" was one of King's novellas in Different Seasons. One of the ways I determine whether or not I like a book is if I become involved in the story; not as a reader, but as a character. If I can envision the actual events and feel that I am watching the story unfold, then the story is worthwhile and a pleasure to read. I felt this way while I was reading Different Seasons. The first of the four novellas, "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption", was interesting to read. It was somewhat unfortunate that I had seen the movie beforehand because I found myself making many comparisons and contrasts. Nevertheless, I came to enjoy the story of Andy, Red, and prison life in Shawshank. The story "Apt Pupil" was the basis for a recent movie of the same title in 1998. I have not seen the movie -- yet. I found this story to be the most captivating of the four; it left my eyes riveted to the page and I almost finished it in one sitting. The story of a young boy who becomes obsessed with a Nazi was well-written and intriguing how King built up to the final climax. By far, "Apt Pupil" was the best story in the book. Next comes the story "The Body", which served as the basis for the eighties movie "Stand By Me" (I have not seen this movie either).

This book was very dark and frightening. This haunting novella, about a young boy's strange and perverse "relationship" with a fugitive Nazi, is quite thought provoking. King gets into the psyche of a serial killer, whether he is a Nazi or the salutorian of his high school class. The former SS man and butcher of 800,000 now lives as a "kindly old man", hiding his identity from the world and charming the pants off of his "pupil's" naive parents. The "pupil", Todd Bowden (or the "boy", as Kurt never refers to him by name), is a bright and seemingly normal young teenager. Kurt brings out a dormant evil in Todd that he feeds with his nightmare stories of the concentration camps. Kurt and Todd share a common bond and even though they have nothing outwardly in common. These commonalities are more telling than the exteriors they represent. They are both masters of deception and lies. They share a sick need to torture and hurt people and animals. Most of all, they lack a conscience and have no love or empathy for their fellow human being. Todd thinks of killing his loving parents and torturing young girls. He gets his kicks on murdering homeless drunks, as does the old man he emulates. He hates this old man because he sees too much of himself in that rotting diseased old package, but he has a need, an addiction almost, to visit him and experience the tales of the massive slaughter. Separated by 65 years and countries halfway across the globe, the similarities between these two individuals exist nonetheless. The old man recognizes it and enjoys the company of one so much like himself. King points out that in the deep dark places of the mind, there is sometimes an inward need to experience the macabre and horrific.

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