



Ethel And Ernest

By RAYMOND BRIGGS

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Poignant, funny, and utterly original, **Ethel & Ernest** is Raymond Briggs's loving depiction of his parents' lives from their chance first encounter in the 1920s until their deaths in the 1970s.

Ethel and Ernest were solid members of the English working class, part of the generation that lived through the most tumultuous years of the twentieth century. They met during the Depression--she working as a maid, he as a milkman--and we follow them as they court and marry, make a home, raise their son, and cope with the dark days of World War II. Briggs's portrayal of how his parents succeeded, or failed, in coming to terms with the events of their rapidly shifting world--the advent of radio, television, and telephones; the development of the atomic bomb; the moon landing; the social and political turmoil of the sixties--is irresistibly engaging, full of sympathy and affection, yet clear-eyed and unsentimental.

Briggs's illustrations are small masterpieces; coupled with the wonderfully candid dialogue, they evoke the exhilaration and sorrow, excitement and bewilderment, of experiencing such enormous changes. As much a social history as a personal account, **Ethel & Ernest** is a moving tribute to ordinary people living in an extraordinary time.

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By *RAYMOND BRIGGS*

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Ethel And Ernest By RAYMOND BRIGGS Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Raymond Briggs's loving tribute to his parents has an emotional power that far exceeds its deceptively simple technique. Graphic in format, the book combines vigorous but sensitive illustrations with dialogue that cogently elucidates its characters' personalities. Milkman Ernest meets lady's maid Ethel in 1928. In short order they are married, holders of a mortgage, and parents of a boy--solid members of the English working class, aspiring to more for their son. As they experience the Depression, World War II, postwar prosperity and cultural upheaval, readers come to know them intimately. Ernest is left-wing, unashamedly proletarian, and perennially enthusiastic about the great changes modernity is bringing, from unemployment insurance to highways. Ethel is a Tory, a bit of a snob, and far more realistic about how much actual improvement they can expect and what it will cost. They worry about their adored child constantly, especially after he goes to art school. She gets sick and grows senile in 1970; he dies shortly after her in 1971. It's hard to imagine a reader who won't weep when their son looks at the pear tree in the yard of the house the couple inhabited for 41 years and says, "I grew it from a pip." Plain words and plain people strike a universal chord in this touching memoir. --*Wendy Smith*

From Publishers Weekly

This wonderful book by noted children's author/illustrator Briggs (*The Snowman*) is something quite new: the story of his parents' quiet lives, played out against the stirring events of the century, done as a comic strip. Ethel was a rather timid ladies' maid, Ernest a dashing milkman, when they first saw each other in 1928. He swept her off in a whirlwind courtship, and they bought the little London row house where they were to live the rest of their days. In pictures exquisitely attuned to the niceties of English domestic architecture and period clothes, Briggs takes Ethel and Ernest fondly through the decades. He is born, a source of great joy, but it's a difficult birth and Ethel is told she can't have any more children. World War II approaches, and little Raymond is sent off to the country as an evacuee. After the war, Ernest, an ardent Socialist, believes that utopia has arrived, while the more cautious and conservative Ethel keeps bringing him back to earth. Then come the wonders of their first car, the advent of television, Raymond's eventual marriage in the swinging '60s and the aging couple's gradual decline into senility, floowed by their deaths within weeks of each other. The dialogue is heartbreakingly accurate, the pictures cinematic in their conveyance of delight and drama; the whole book is not only a deeply moving testament to "ordinary" folk but a precious piece of social history. The essence of a lower-middle-class English life over seven decades. This was deservedly a bestseller in England and warrants no less here. (Oct.)

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From School Library Journal

YA--An engrossing and revelatory picture story. After a brief courtship, Ethel, a ladies' maid, and Ernest, a milkman, married and bought a house. Much bemused at the size and amenities of this dwelling, they settled in to make a home. After some years, their only child, Raymond, was born and the small family moved through the world of working-class England before, during, and after World War II. Ernest's strong socialist bent contrasted with Ethel's admiration of the vanishing aristocracy. The Depression years, Raymond's evacuation during the war, the Blitz and the extended rationing, and the new socialistic government policies and the relative security of the '50s are realistically portrayed in both colored pictures and text. While presenting this story in a comic-strip format, Briggs doesn't flinch at revealing personal details; at the end, readers see his mother's disease-ravaged corpse and his father's inability to carry on. This is a vivid chronicle of a time and place not very far past and the life story of an average, but loved and loving couple. As a memoir, as a graphic novel, as an invitation to participate in someone else's memories, it is most successful.

A quick but haunting read that's sure to involve anyone who picks it up.

Susan H. Woodcock, Chantilly Regional Library, VA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Andrew Garcia:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have far more or little spare time? Yeah, you can choose the suitable activity to get spend your time. Any person spent their particular spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to typically the Mall. How about open or read a book called Ethel And Ernest? Maybe it is to become best activity for you. You realize beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have some other opinion?

Shellie Toy:

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Kevin Caputo:

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Ruth Lowry:

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