



Wilkie Collins: A Brief Life (Ackroyd's Brief Lives)

Peter Ackroyd

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A gripping short biography of the extraordinary Wilkie Collins, author of *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*, two early masterpieces of mystery and detection.

Short and oddly built, with a head too big for his body, extremely nearsighted, unable to stay still, dressed in colorful clothes, Wilkie Collins looked distinctly strange. But he was nonetheless a charmer, befriended by the great, loved by children, irresistibly attractive to women—and avidly read by generations of readers. Peter Ackroyd follows his hero, "the sweetest-tempered of all the Victorian novelists," from Collins' childhood as the son of a well-known artist to his struggling beginnings as a writer, his years of fame, and his lifelong friendship with that other great London chronicler, Charles Dickens. In addition to his enduring masterpieces, *The Moonstone*—often called the first true detective novel—and the sensational *The Woman in White*, he produced an intriguing array of lesser known works. Told with Ackroyd's inimitable verve, this is a ravishingly entertaining life of a great storyteller, full of surprises, rich in humor and sympathetic understanding.

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