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(Introduction)*

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Published in 1943 and long unavailable, this landmark book is from the author of such beloved tales as "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", "James and the Giant Peach" and "Matilda." Digitally restored, this remarkable presentation of Roald Dahl's classic story is lavishly illustrated by the artists of the Walt Disney Studios.

The story of the *The Gremlins* concerns the mischievous mythical creatures of the title, often invoked by Royal Air Force pilots as an explanation of mechanical troubles and mishaps. In Dahl's book, the gremlins' motivation for sabotaging British aircraft is revenge of the destruction of their forest home, which was razed to make way for an aircraft factory. The principal character in the book, Gus, has his Hawker Hurricane fighter destroyed over the English Channel by a gremlin, but is able to convince the gremlins as they parachute into the water that they should join forces against a common enemy, Hitler and the Nazis, rather than fight each other. Source: Wikipedia

With full-page color illustrations and with several black and white illustrations by the Disney artists throughout.

This was Roald Dahl's first book and preceded the British publication by several months. The story was optioned by Disney and was intended to be made into an animated film, but it was never produced. A note on the copyright page states: "The RAF Benevolent Fund will receive the author's share of the proceeds from the sale of this book." Dahl's next children's book, James and the Giant Peach, published eighteen years later.

## The Gremlins: The Lost Walt Disney Production, A Royal Air Force Story by Flight Lieutenant Roald Dahl Details

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Author : Roald Dahl , Artists and Writers Guild (Artist) , Walt Disney Company (Artist) , Leonard Maltin  
(Introduction)

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Story by Flight Lieutenant Roald Dahl Roald Dahl , Artists and Writers Guild (Artist) , Walt Disney  
Company (Artist) , Leonard Maltin (Introduction)**

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## **From Reader Review The Gremlins: The Lost Walt Disney Production, A Royal Air Force Story by Flight Lieutenant Roald Dahl for online ebook**

### **Elizabeth says**

A cute little story set in WWII.

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### **Vimacone says**

Probably the best way to enjoy an animated feature that never saw the light of day. Leonard Maltin gives us an introduction explaining the history and development of this film. It is not exactly known why the film was never completed, but it might be because it would not have had stood the test of time. So what we get is a storybook form of the film containing what the story might have been. Production artwork from the film is used for illustrations.

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### **Alex (not a dude) Baugh says**

Gremlins are, of course, those pesky little creatures that only fliers can see and which wreck havoc on their planes. In Dahl's version of the story, the Gremlins were living happily in a lush northern England wood when one day, some humans showed up with the big trucks and machinery. First, the humans cut down all the trees and rolled over the dirt until it was hard-packed. Then, they built a factory that produced airplanes. In the process, they destroyed all of the homes belonging to the Gremlins.

Now homeless and angry, the Gremlins vowed revenge and set about sabotaging pilots and their planes. This was proving to be a problem during World War II whenever the RAF pilots came up against the German pilots. The Gremlins seemed to be as much their enemy as the Germans.

One pilot named Jamface told another named Gus that he had his plane's Gremlin almost reformed by feeding him transatlantic postage stamps, a rare delicacy in the Gremlin world. Gus tried that method, but with no success and on his next flight, he and his Gremlin were forced to bail out of their plane, because of the Gremlins antics. They ended up in the English Channel and for three hours, Gus tried arguing and reasoning with his Gremlin and finally won him over.

But while Gus may have won his Gremlin over, that was not so for all of them. The next time he went up in his plane, with a 102° fever, Gus didn't count on a large group of Gremlins working against him as well as a German Heinkel, whose pilot proceeded to shoot his plane up. Gus took two bullets in the leg and crash landed.

Gus spent a long time in hospital, thinking about Gremlins. He came up with a plan for reforming them by opening the first Gremlin Training School. The school had two courses – Initial Training and Advanced Training. The school flourished and grew as more and more Gremlins discovered they liked being good.

When Gus finally left the hospital, he was no longer fit for flying. But what good is an RAF pilot if he can't fly? Yet, try as he might, he continued to fail the medical test for flying. Seeing his distress, the Gremlins decided to help Gus. Word went out to all Gremlins that on the day and time of the next medical exam, they were to show up and help Gus pass the exam. And so they did and Gus was able to return to doing what he loved - flying.

Gremlins were well known among RAF pilots, who talked about them all the time. After all, it was very convenient to blame them for everything that went wrong. Capitalizing on this superstition, Dahl wrote *The Gremlins*, after he has been invalided out of active duty in 1942. After Dahl finished his story, Walt Disney considered making it into a movie, even bringing Dahl out to Hollywood to discuss the matter. But the movie was never made, though no one really knows why.

The text of *The Gremlins* was written by Dahl but the illustrations were done by artists working for Disney, who own the copyright on them. Only 50,000 copies were originally printed in 1943, so copies were scarce. But in 2006 the book was finally reproduced in volume and is still relatively easy to come by.

Dahl had joined the Royal Air Force in November 1938. He later wrote about his early flying experiences in a children's book called *Going Solo*. After many flying mission that resulted in being honored with the title flying ace, Dahl was invalided out of active duty due to severe headaches. He spent the rest of the war in Washington DC doing intelligence work. Dahl was invalided out of the RAF in 1946.

Though Dahl wrote for both adults and children, it is mainly his children's book for which he is most known. This book is recommended for readers age 10 and up.  
This book was read at the NYPL.

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### **Thebruce1314 says**

I love the concept of this book, and generally Dahl's books are amazing. This is the first published story that he wrote, so it's a little weaker than his later work for children: the story arc falls a little flat. However, the illustrations are pretty amazing, and I love the idea of mischievous gremlins wreaking havoc during World War II. I *so* wish this movie had made it to production!

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### **Ben says**

2.5 stars. This was the first book that I read with my son this year. While he found bits humorous, such as the parts about the dietary habits of the gremlins, this was one of Dahl's weakest stories, in my opinion, and also one of his earliest children's stories. It is also one of a handful of Dahl's many children's stories that I had not yet read with my son.

The most interesting aspect of this book was the four page introduction by Leonard Maltin, which unfolds the story of how Dahl had paired up with the brothers Disney (Walt and Roy) in the days of the Second World War to bring this tale of mythical creatures to life in a full-length animated cartoon. This intro really seems to paint Walt Disney as a bit of a power-hungry control freak (trying to suppress others from using the Gremlin idea, though this was already a very popular folk tale and had been used in *Bugs Bunny* shorts). And for many reasons, the film was never made. But as interesting as the intro may have been (which led me to rate this work 3 stars rather than 2, above) it could not save the work itself. For readers interested in the

works of Roald Dahl it may be a disappointing read (especially if they come to this work after reading the bulk of his better known children's stories first), but it is an essential piece to understanding the beginnings of his writing career - a style that certainly improved with time.

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## **Annawade Stevenson says**

"The Gremlins" is the first book written by Roald Dahl and illustrated by Leonard Martin, in about 1943. Interestingly, Roald Dahl collaborated with Walt Disney to create this story in the context of World War II and the fact that Disney was run by Armed Forces, when a lot of war propaganda for all ages was being made. The gremlins are cute little creatures that cause the mechanical failures on planes. They are taking revenge because their forest, where they live, got destroyed in the Industrial Revolution. Gremlin Gus, a mischievous gremlin persuades the other gremlins that they should stop messing up planes and fight with the English against the Nazis. The gremlins and pilots were only able to agree on this after they fed the gremlins their favorite food, which is "transatlantic-special delivery airmail stamps". The gremlins then went to a training school where they become better at fighting and news spread to other "fighter squadrons". However, the main gremlin, Gus, gets sick and the rest the story is about him trying to make a recovery and doing to hospitals. By the end, the other gremlins help him recover so he is fit enough to fly again. When this happens, they sing merry songs and drink "many tankards of good strong ale". The narrator notes that still many people do not believe in gremlins because only a few hundred people have had direct experience with the help of gremlins in war. Although this book is written by one of my favorite children's authors, Roald Dahl, I do not recommend this book. I still give it four stars because it might be great for someone who has fought in World War II or is a scholar about the topic. In that case, they might think the story is appealing. It is important to read old children's books and see how much children's literature has changed throughout the years, and it is also important to read books that take place in response to major historical events such as World War II. Yet, I do not think the book is high quality children's literature. The story is not very engaging for children because there is a lot of text on each page, and small illustrations. This book is more of an illustrated book, than a picture book because the pictures and text do not have a strong relationship. Further, it is difficult to understand, and only someone who has a lot of knowledge about World War II will be able to understand this story in my opinion. There are many abbreviations for war such as the R.A.F and C.O, and terms such as Heinkel's that are unexplained. There is no glossary or forward or extra piece of writing that will help children understand and access this story, except a complicated introduction written for adults. More importantly, this book does not embody the themes and characteristics Roald Dahl usually includes in all his stories. There is little witty and dark humor, silly language, and chaos that children can relate to. This story is more appropriate for high schoolers or college students who are studying war propaganda in World War II. Although given that this is Roald Dahl's first book, it is interesting to see how far he has come as a writer and how much more developed his later books were compared to this book, which is why I decided to read the story of "The Gremlins". I always recommend reading older classic books to children that may have timeless concepts and ideas, but "The Gremlins" is an illustrated book that might be boring to children and cause them to disengage in the lesson.

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## **Cruth says**

Author: Roald Dahl  
Illustrator: Disney Studios  
First Published: 1943  
Foreword: Leonard Maltin

Re-printed in commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of USAF.

Introduction from Andrew J Stephens, 11th Wing Historian, Bolling AFB.

While it is a picture book, with full page, full colour pictures illustrating the text, the narrative is more novella length. This is a significant work.

Forget for a moment this is a Dahl book. Let's look at it as a children's book written during WWII, optioned and illustrated by Disney. "The Gremlins" is the author's first book and it gives a humorous, creative look at the horrors of the time.

Often planes were shot down by the enemy.

But sometimes they came down for no good reason.

Perhaps because of Gremlins in the works?

It isn't what *we* (today) could call a "children's book" - there are no children in it - but it does take an approach to the subject that would appeal to a child. It's pretty typical of the time (eg Biggles) where fathers, brothers, and, one day, the child readers were going away and fighting.

As a historic piece it reminds us (me) of what was. The fighting was over England. Wounded planes landed on country roads. The camaraderie and friendship. Even that there were two people in that plane - the pilot and the gunner. Pilots were injured, sick, and they still got back in that plane to do their duty.

The illustrations are very early-Disney-esque, pencil drawings with heavy outlines ready for animation. Even the illustrations are of a time.

There are teases of future-Dahl in the whimsy, wonderful creatures with fully developed histories, and the tragicomedy.

But it isn't a *great* book. It isn't really well developed. The narrative is jumpy and the conclusion is rapid. The illustrations are somewhat hit and miss. There's a page - landing in the field - which doesn't quite make sense (missed editing?).

However, I liked it. It has appeal. It would excite a young reader who knows his war planes - Heinkel, Hurricane, Messerschmitt - or an older reader looking to engage with mythology of the time.

It's a piece of literary history I hope isn't lost, again.

### **Age**

Read Aloud - 8+

Read Yourself - 8+

(ISBN 9781593074968)

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## **Eyehavenofilter says**

Its semi-understandable why this never reached fruition as a movie or a 1 hour Walt Disney tv show. It just didn't have the pizzazz that a Disney show would have. Plus, it was based on a war that the US was involved in that wasn't very "popular" at the time. It hurts me to say this, since war is never very popular but we didn't have the media back then that we have now, nor the ability to promote the positive spin on things that we do now.

The little gremlins are sketchy and not as attractive as most Disney characters, but they never got the chance to be developed. The style is definitely WW2 which is not a drawback, but it will never get a chance to be restored at any point in the future. It's only incarnation is in this book, by Roald Dahl, so this is where they will stay. It is definitely worth a look, to see the development of the Disney style at this pivotal point in history, to read a story by Dahl, and how the Disney artists have progressed from the original Mikey Mouse, to what is being created now.

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## Miranda Reads says

### I'm so sad that I'm running out of Dahl Books

I'm nearing the end of my 6 month **adventure into the Dahl-verse** and the once limitless-seeming supply is slowly dwindling. On the plus side, once I finish **everything he's ever written**, I can always go back through again!

The Gremlins was Roald Dahl's **first published children's book** and functioned as a piece of **war propaganda** for Disney.

Roald Dahl joined the RAF (Royal Air Force) almost as soon as the WWII started. Throughout the RAF was **legends of Gremlins** - little creatures that did mischievous things to the planes when the pilots weren't looking.

In this novel, a young pilot for the RAF spots a gremlin and soon, the gremlins and all sorts of assorted creatures **come out of the woodwork** to make mischief happen to the planes.

The pilot soon comes up with a plan. If they can **train the Gremlins to help**, rather than destroy, then the RAF could stand a great chance at surviving. But can such troublemakers be trained? **Will the war be won?**

Disney bought the rights to this one and planned on making **an animated film**, only by the time the project got off of the ground...folks weren't interested and the war-film market was flooded.

It was an interesting story but **didn't have the same spark** that Dahl's later works contain. It certainly didn't knock my socks off but it was still cool to read Dahl's first book!

Blog | Instagram

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## David says

Imaginative debut children's story from the great Roald Dahl, a story that was featured quite prominently in other films and cartoons. No, it's not Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Matilda, or any of the other greats, but it's still good and deserves a wider distribution than its seen thus far.

## Rusalka says

We have a copy of this book that was given to Dad when it was published. He was a boy in Yorkshire during the war, and someone had the good sense to give him this book. It's now 70ish years old, has been dropped in at least one bath we know of, made it's way from England to Australia, and is simply a little worse for wear.

But I am so glad it made this journey as it allowed me to read a book that no one else my family that I know of has read. As a kid, that was so incredibly cool!!

And it was a book my Dad loved so much that when I was little, I was showered in Roald Dahl's other books. And I couldn't have asked for much else.

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## Buster says

Pretty cute, but not at all standard for Roald Dahl.

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## Eamon says

The Gremlins  
By Flight Lieutenant Roald Dahl  
3 Stars \* \* \*

This book fills out the 'Book Blog Bingo Board' category of 'A 'classic' book written before 1950'.

This book is about a pilot in World War 2 who finds some 'Gremlins' on his plane one day. They were drilling holes in his plane and sabotaging it. He tells his mates about them and they eventually have the problem as well. The pilots then all teach the 'Gremlins' to be good and help the pilots on their mission. They also help a pilot pass a medical exam which he had to pass to be able to fly again.

I quite liked this book because it is a good story that relates to the time that it was written in. I especially like the way that the naughty gremlins were taught to be good gremlins and how they helped the pilots on their flights by doing things like de-fogging windows, plugging leaks in gas tanks and scraping ice of windows. Overall it is a good book with an easy to follow story line.

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## Shadowdenizen says

A collaboration between classic Disney and Roald Dahl? Definitely a missed opportunity!! :(

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## **Ann says**

The Gremlins was the first publication of Dahl who went on to write many excellent children's books including Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. This story could use some polish but is an entertaining tale developed from perhaps more general stories or ideas in the RAF. The illustrations are very nice. The book includes the character Fifinella from which the mascot for the WASPS was taken.

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## **Robert says**

The introductory essay establishes the material nicely, and the bones of what would have been an interesting story are visible. Perhaps soon someone not afeared of the Disney legal machine will make it a reality and not just mock-up art and outlines.

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## **Jon(athan) Nakapalau says**

A fascinating book by Roald Dahl...sure to please Disney fans.

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## **Bonnie says**

### The Storyline

*"In this most beautiful green wood there lived a tribe of funny little people who were quite different from the rest. They had funny horns growing out of their funny heads and funny boots on their funny feet, and with these boots – and this was funniest of all – they could walk upside down under the branches of the trees. Oh, it was a happy and peaceful life that these little men led – until the humans came."*

And so begins the story of the Gremlins who were torn from their homes when the humans decided to build a factory for airplane production. The Gremlins knew it was time to act and *'to get revenge for the loss of our homes. We will make mischief for them, and we will harry and tease the men who fly them, until we obtain some satisfaction for all the harm that has been done to us.'*

The pilots finally figured out a way to appease these pesky Gremlins: feeding them Transatlantic-special-deliver-airmail stamps. By feeding them this delicacy, they were finally able to talk to the Gremlins and explain why they tore down their home and that it was to save their homes from all being destroyed. The pilot asked the Gremlins to help and that if they assisted and were victorious that they would give them a patch of forest back to them to be their new home.

### Interesting Facts

This was actually the very first children's book that Roald Dahl ever wrote. 'The Gremlins' is a story set in the 1940's when we were in the midst of WWII. This story was originally meant to be a film by Walt Disney but was dropped and never completed but the book was still published. This is considered to be a quite rare

book as fewer than 5,000 books were published worldwide.

### Thoughts

This was an adorable book that I stumbled upon. Highly recommended to anyone given the opportunity to read it!

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### **it'chy says**

what a ridiculously long title

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### **Caro says**

I really wanted to give it 4 stars... But I have to be honest the story is not that good. The illustrations are very nice but this first story of Dahl is not that good. Is his first one, so we have to take that into consideration, but to be honest for this collaboration between Dahl and Disney brothers I was expecting a little bit more.... or way more. Nevertheless the forward is interesting and the story is funny. Is a nice book for little children, but even for little children it can be way more.

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