

A.A. Milne



Alan Alexander Milne was born on the 18th of January 1882 in Hampstead, London. He was the youngest of three sons born to John Vine Milne and Sarah Maria Higginbotham. His father was a schoolmaster at the Henley House where Alan did get his first education. He continued his education at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he graduated with a degree in mathematics in 1903. Milne's first literary efforts were published in the humorous magazine Punch, where, in 1906 Milne started to work as Assistant Editor. In 1913 Milne married Dorothy de Selincourt, the God-daughter of Punch editor, Owen Seaman.

With the out break of the First World War, Milne joined the army as a signalling officer in February 1915, despite being a pacifist. He was sent to France in the Spring of 1916 but he left the front lines later that year suffering from fever. After his recovery he was placed in charge of a signalling company at Fort Southwick until his discharge from the army in February 1919. After leaving the army, Milne resigned his post at Punch and concentrated on writing plays. In 1923 his first children's poem 'Vespers' was published in Vanity Fair. The poem featured his son **Christopher Robin**.

In 1924, after the success of 'Vespers' Milne published a book of children's poems entitled 'When We Were Very Young', with drawings by Punch illustrator, Ernest Shepard. This book includes a poem about a Teddy Bear who "however hard he tries grows tubby without exercise". This was Pooh's first unofficial appearance in A.A. Milne's writing. 'When We Were Very Young' proved to be an instant success and sold over 50,000 copies within eight weeks.



It was not until 1925 that Pooh officially came into being. Milne's contribution for the Christmas Eve issue of the Evening News was a bedtime story that he had made up for his son about adventures he had with his Teddy Bear who was known as Winnie the Pooh. It was also at this time that the Milne family moved to the cottage at Cotchford Farm in Sussex which later provided the setting for the Pooh books.

This bedtime story formed the first chapter of Milne's next book entitled 'Winnie-the-Pooh' (1926). This book was followed by the verses 'Now We are Six' (1927), and 'The House at Pooh Corner' (1928). In an attempt to shield his son from the publicity generated by the success of the Pooh stories, Milne announced that 'The House at Pooh Corner' would be his last Christopher Robin book.

Interestingly, Milne didn't write the Pooh stories and poems for children but instead intended them for the child within us. He also never read the stories and poems to his son Christopher, preferring rather to amuse him with the works of P.G. Woodhouse, one of Milne's favourite authors. Although Milne went on to write other plays and novels, these Pooh stories remain his best known work. For many years Milne himself resented the fact that his literary fame was based on children's books, not on his other work. Today, his plays are rarely performed in the professional theatre, although amateur productions are playing in almost every English-speaking country throughout the world.



In 1952, Milne underwent an operation of the brain, which left him an invalid. He survived the operation and returned to his home at Cotchford Farm in Sussex, where he spent the rest of his life reading and in country pursuits. After a long illness, he died on 31st January, 1956.

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