



GADSBY: Not an 'E'-book

By Ernest Vincent Wright

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GADSBY: Not an 'E'-book By Ernest Vincent Wright

Many years ago, a man named Ernest Vincent Wright wrote a book called Gadsby, which contained 50,000 words, all without the letter "E"

Gadsby: A Story of Over 50,000 Words Without Using the Letter "E" is a 1939 novel by Ernest Vincent Wright. The plot revolves around the dying fictional city of Branton Hills, which is revitalized thanks to the efforts of protagonist John Gadsby and a youth group he organizes.

The novel is written as a lipogram and does not include words that contain the letter "e". Though self-published and little-noticed in its time, the book is a favourite of fans of constrained writing and is a sought-after rarity among some book collectors.

The novel's 50,110 words do not contain a single e. In Gadsby's introduction Wright says his primary difficulty was avoiding the "-ed" suffix for past tense verbs. He focused on using verbs that do not take the -ed suffix and constructions with "do" (for instance "did walk" instead of "walked"). Scarcity of word options also drastically limited discussion involving quantity, pronouns, and many common words. Wright was unable to talk about any quantity between six and thirty. An article in the linguistic periodical Word Ways said that 250 of the 500 most commonly used words in English were still available to Wright despite the omission of words with e. Wright uses abbreviations on occasion, but only if the full form is similarly lipogrammatic, i.e. "Dr." (Doctor), and "P.S." (Postscript) would be allowed but not "Mr." (Mister).

Wright also turns famous sayings into lipogrammatic form. Music can "calm a wild bosom", and Keats' "a thing of beauty is a joy forever" becomes "a charming thing is a joy always".

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