

The Estate of JB Priestley

Playwright / Author

John Boynton Priestley was born in 1894 in Yorkshire, the son of a schoolmaster. After leaving Belle Vue School when he was 16, he worked in a wool office but was already by this time determined to become a writer. He volunteered for the army in 1914 during the First World War and served five years; on his return home, he attended university and wrote articles for the *Yorkshire Observer*.

After graduating, he established himself in London, writing essays, reviews, and other nonfiction, and publishing several miscellaneous volumes.



Agents

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Publications

Fiction

Publication Details	Notes
Blackout in Gretley 1942 Valancourt Books	Originally published during the height of World War II, J. B. Priestley's classic spy thriller <i>Blackout in Gretley</i> (1942) is both a highly entertaining page-turner and a fascinating window into British life during the war. Humphrey Neyland is a middle-aged Canadian engineer recruited by British Intelligence to go undercover in the industrial city of Gretley, where aircraft essential to the war effort are being produced and where it is feared Nazi agents and saboteurs are lurking. Almost everyone he meets in Gretley seems to have a double life and a secret agenda, and it doesn't take long before Neyland is caught up in a web of murder and deceit in this sleepy town, where death lurks around every corner.

Publication Details	Notes
Bright Day 1946 Valancourt Books	<p>In the vein of Proust's <i>In Search of Lost Time</i>, J. B. Priestley's <i>Bright Day</i> (1946) is one of his finest works and his own favorite of his novels, a haunting and unforgettable evocation of a vanished England as yet unravaged by the devastation of two world wars. Gregory Dawson, a middle-aged and disillusioned writer, is holed up in a Cornish hotel working on a film script he must finish. A chance encounter with an old acquaintance in the bar sends him back to the England of 1913, when he was just eighteen and longed to enter the seemingly magical world of the glamorous Alington family and its three lovely daughters. Replaying the events of those days in his mind, Dawson relives a long-forgotten story that ended with a mysterious tragedy whose effects linger on in the present and threaten to shatter his placid existence . . .</p>
Benighted 1927 Valancourt Books	<p>A classic 'old dark house' story of psychological terror, was the second novel by Priestley. This edition includes an introduction by Orrin Grey, who discusses the connections between the novel and its film adaptation, James Whale's <i>The Old Dark House</i> (1932). A torrential downpour forces Philip and Margaret Waverton and their friend Roger Penderel to seek shelter in an ancient, crumbling mansion inhabited by the strange and sinister Femm family. Determined to make the best of the circumstances, the benighted travellers drink and talk to pass the time while the storm rages outside. But as the night progresses and tensions rise, dangerous and unexpected secrets emerge. On the house's top floor are two locked doors: behind one of them is the mysterious, unseen Sir Roderick Femm, while the other conceals something terrifying and deadly ...</p>
The Other Place and Other Stories 1953 Valancourt Books	<p>The nine tales in this collection are strange, fantastic, and often unsettling, and they represent Priestley at his best. In "The Grey Ones," a man visits a psychiatrist after he becomes convinced that a group of demons masquerading as people are plotting the overthrow of the human race . . . but what if he's not insane? In "Guest of Honour," a banquet speech becomes a horrifying affair when the keynote speaker realizes his audience is made up of monstrous and menacing creatures. "The Leadington Incident" recounts the disturbing experience of a Cabinet minister who suddenly perceives that though the people around him move and talk as though alive, they are all actually just animated corpses or sleepwalking zombies.</p>
Salt is Leaving 1966 Valancourt Books	<p>The only detective story by Priestley, <i>Salt is Leaving</i> was originally written for the author's own amusement but has gone on to be recognized as a classic of the mystery genre. Salt is leaving the dismal and depressing town of Birkden, and his departure can't come soon enough. Recently widowed and newly retired from the practice of medicine, Salt looks forward to starting a new life in a sunnier clime. But before he can go, he must solve the mystery of the disappearance of one of his patients, Noreen Wilks, a young woman in urgent need of a life-saving drug. Believing she's just a flighty girl who has run away, the police refuse to investigate, but Salt has reason to suspect foul play. Joining forces with Maggie Culworth, whose father has also inexplicably vanished, Salt must contend with powerful forces desperate to conceal the truth as he follows the clues towards a shocking and macabre conclusion.</p>

Non-Fiction

Publication Details	Notes
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Delight

1949

HarperNorth

Re-issued by HarperNorth in 2023, DELIGHT is a series of short essays, all focussing on a single simple pleasure, from reading detective stories in bed to smoking a pipe in the bath; from 'Cosy planning' to the earliest summer mornings; and from mineral water in the bedrooms of foreign hotels to the smell of bacon in the morning. Combining poignant memories of his childhood with glimpses of his interior world, panoramas of life abroad with thoughts about writing, music, theatre – some strictly personal, some universal –this highly readable book bursts with humour and literary flare on every page.

English**Journey**

1949

HarperNorth

Re-issued by HarperNorth in 2023, prophetic and as relevant today as it was nearly ninety years ago, ENGLISH JOURNEY is an elegant and readable love letter to a country Priestley finds unfathomable.

Three years before George Orwell made his expedition to the far and frozen North in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, celebrated writer and broadcaster JB Priestley cast his net wider, in a book subtitled 'a Rambling but Truthful Account of What One Man Saw and Heard and Felt and Thought During a Journey Through England During the Autumn of the Year 1933.' Appearing first in 1934, it was a huge and immediate success. Today, it still stands as a timeless classic: warm-hearted, intensely patriotic and profound.

An account of his journey through England – from Southampton to the Black Country, to the North East and Newcastle, to Norwich and home – *English Journey* is funny and tender. But it is also a forensic reading of a changing England and a call to arms as passionate as anything in Orwell's bleak masterpiece. Moreover, it both captured and catalysed the public mood of its time. In capturing and describing an English landscape and people hitherto unseen, writing scathingly about vested interests and underlining the dignity of working people, Priestley influenced the thinking and attitudes of an entire generation and helped formulate a public consensus for change that led to the birth of the welfare state.
