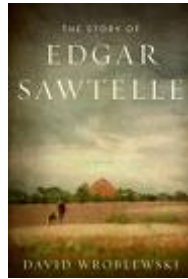


The Story Of Edgar Sawtelle



I just finished the almost 570-page novel Edgar Sawtelle by David Wroblewski. It took me months to read this mega-novel; especially because I only read at night before bed. There are some nights when I can't read at all because I'm just too tired (and this book was heavy – both physically and emotionally – for reading late at night!). Some nights, I only read a few pages, and then there are times like the night I finished the book – when I actually went to bed around 10:30 just so I could stay up reading for over an hour – and this is how I finally finished the story.

Edgar Sawtelle is an amazing book – it's almost indescribable. It took me a few chapters to get into the book however, mainly because of the author's extremely descriptive writing style. I wouldn't say it was boring in the beginning, but the narrative is very detailed, and it took awhile to get used to as well as for any actual events to take place. Once the action began, though, it didn't let up, and I was hooked. It's one of those books that I looked forward to ending my day with and one I was sorry to finish. Surprisingly, this is Wroblewski's **first** novel!

The Story of Edgar Sawtelle is set in the early 1970's in rural northern Wisconsin over one summer. It follows the life of a mute boy on the brink of manhood who is forced to grow up really quickly due to a set of tragic family circumstances beyond his control. Edgar's family has been breeding a special breed of dog for generations, and they do more than

just breed the dogs. Almost from birth, the dogs are very meticulously trained. The book has been compared to Shakespeare's Hamlet. Although I've never read Hamlet, I read a summary, and the stories do sound as if they have similarities. The descriptive nature of the novel paints a beautiful picture of the Sawtelle's farm and the countryside beyond. There are some very well developed characters as well. That's as much as I'm going to describe of the story because I realized I'm not doing it justice. I wouldn't want to turn off anyone just because I'm writing an unintentionally bad review. I loved the book; I really did – I'll go into that more later. For now, here are some of the raving comments the novel received – most notably from author Stephen King, who knows a thing or two about story-telling himself!

I flat-out loved The Story of Edgar Sawtelle. In the end, this isn't a novel about dogs or heartland America, it's a novel about the human heart and the mysteries that live there, understood but impossible to articulate... I don't reread many books because life is too short. I will be re-reading this one."

–Stephen King, author of Duma Key

The most enchanting debut novel of the summer... this is a great, big, mesmerizing read, audaciously envisioned as classic Americana... Pick up this book and expect to feel very, very reluctant to put it down.

– Janet Maslin, New York Times

Nothing quite compares to my experience of reading The Story of Edgar Sawtelle. This debut... is one of the most stunning, elegant books I have ever read... what can deservedly be called a great American novel.

– Lisa Jennifer Selzman, Houston Chronicle

I am completely smitten... The most hauntingly impressive debut I've read all year... Edgar might be silent, but his story will echo with readers for a long time.

– Yvonne Zipp, *Christian Science Monitor*

Overall, a great read, a book I highly recommend. Be warned however, that *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* is not for the casual reader. I think that for one to truly enjoy this book, he or she has to be a dedicated reader – someone who truly enjoys reading and has the time to devote to it, for reading this book is an experience. If you are at all interested in reading the book, then stop reading my review now because there is something I must add that will be somewhat of a spoiler.

SPOILER ALERT-SPOILER ALERT-SPOILER ALERT

**DO NOT READ BELOW THIS LINE IF YOU INTEND TO READ THE STORY OF
EDGAR SAWTELLE!**

CONSIDER YOURSELF WARNED!

The ending SUCKS. As much as I truly enjoyed reading the book, the ending came close to ruining the experience for me. Not because of death, but because of the way it's handled. The book ends rather abruptly, and I felt abandoned and ditched as a reader. There isn't any closure. The main character, Edgar, learns and grows so much during the course of the novel, and he takes us readers with him. But his knowledge isn't shared with any of the other main characters, mainly his mother! And his personal growth is also rendered pointless. And then there's the very last chapter, seen through the dog Essay's point of view, which I just didn't understand AT ALL. What was Essay's choice? I just didn't get it. And I know I'm not alone. It really says something when you do a google search for "Edgar Sawtelle ending" and all that comes up is a bunch of complaints from readers. That being said, I think it's still worth it to read this book – it was *that* good where a terrible ending didn't ruin it. But it came very close, and I was VERY disappointed when I first finished the book.

BEEE True To You

*This above all: To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.*

Hamlet, Act I scene iii

How rich these words sound nearly 400 years after William Shakespeare put them to paper. Polonius is advising his son Laertes to be true to himself and he will be true to those around him. Know himself for the person he is before others can know the true him. Many works of art have included this theme within them. One example is a seemingly simple movie: Disney's *Aladdin*.

Aladdin is a street wise beggar who lives by his wits in the village of Agrabah. However, he longs to be much more. One day in the marketplace, Aladdin comes face to face with a beautiful young lady who appears to be a common peasant girl until she reveals herself as the fair Princess Jasmine. When he finds a magic lamp, a comical genie appears and grants him three wishes. Almost immediately, the young peasant wishes to be something he is not: a prince. As Prince Aliababwa (or Ali Abooboo), the streetrat fumbles around making himself look totally foolish as he tries to win the heart of Princess

Jasmine.

One night, Ali takes Jasmine on a magic carpet ride to show her a "Whole New World." However, even before the couple go on their flight, Jasmine begins to see beneath the "prince's" disguise. Following the date, Jasmine tricks Aladdin into admitting his ruse. BUT, riddle me this, why was it ok for Jasmine to pretend to be something she was not in the marketplace? Can we say...EEEEVIL WOMAN.

There must be thousands of books, movies, songs, plays, or any type of art which attempts to convey the message of honesty to one's self. Isn't it ironic how such a fun Disney cartoon displays this message to children of all ages? Take the time to look back at the best of Disney's animated movies and see how many of life's lessons you can discover.