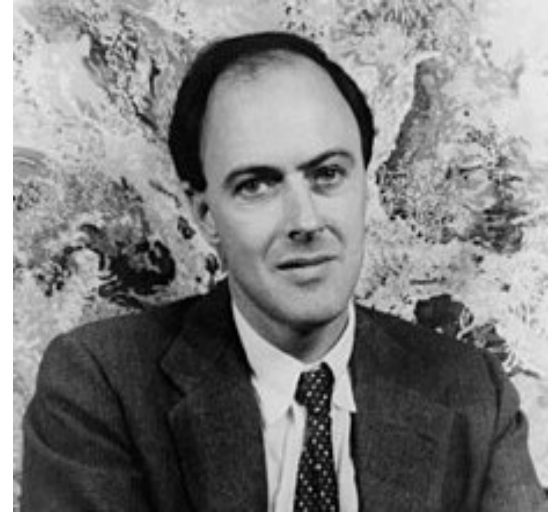


## Roald Dahl (British Author, 1916-1990)

Roald Dahl was an author of children's books and short stories and a poet. His books have sold more than 300 million copies worldwide. He has been called "one of the greatest storytellers for children of the 20th century".

Roald was born in Wales to rich Norwegian immigrant parents, and lived for most of his life in England. He served in the Royal Air Force (RAF) during the Second World War. He became a fighter pilot and subsequently an intelligence officer. He rose to prominence as a writer in the 1940s with books for children, and he soon became one of the world's best-selling authors. He won two awards for literature. Roald Dahl is said to be one of the 50 greatest British writers. In 2021, he was ranked as the highest-earning dead author.



Dahl's short stories are known for their unexpected endings.

Here is one of his short stories – “Parson’s Pleasure”.

---

### Parson’s Pleasure by Roald Dahl

This story is about a man called Cyril Boggis, who works as an antiques dealer. His job is to find old, valuable furniture and buy it cheaply from people who do not know the true value. He is very good at recognizing expensive furniture, especially old English tables and cabinets from the 18th century.

In a way, Cyril is a type of con artist. He does not believe in fair deals. Instead, he believes that clever people deserve to make money, and that ignorant people deserve to lose it. He looks down on farmers and villagers, thinking that they are simple and easily fooled. To him, tricking them is not wrong, it is just good business.

To help him cheat people, Cyril uses a disguise. He dresses like a poor clergyman, wearing old clothes and a white clerical collar. He knows that people trust priests and see them as kind and harmless. When he visits houses in the countryside, people welcome him warmly and never suspect his real purpose.

One day, Cyril visits a remote farmhouse owned by a couple called Mr. and Mrs. Bance. They are ordinary, practical people who live a simple life. Their house is full of heavy, old furniture that has been used by the family for many years. To the Bances, the furniture is just furniture; nothing special.

As soon as Cyril enters the house, he sees a large wooden table. Even though it looks old, scratched, and badly treated, he immediately knows what it is. From the shape of the legs and the style of the wood, he realizes that it is a rare Chippendale table, worth a lot of money, even in its poor condition. Inside, he is extremely excited, but he makes sure not to show it.

Cyril begins talking politely, asking questions and making friendly comments. He pretends to be only mildly interested in the table. He asks how long it has been there and whether it is used often. The Bances explain that the table has always been in the house and that they use it every day. They have no idea that it could be valuable.

Then Cyril starts his plan. He tells them a story about a table he owns at home. He says that the table itself is fine, but the legs are damaged, and he is looking for replacement legs. He says that the legs on their table might be useful to him. He gives the impression that the table itself is not worth very much. The Bances listen to him and see no problem with this. To them, the table is old and heavy, and they are happy to earn a little money from it.

After a short discussion, they agree to sell the table to Cyril for a very small price. Cyril feels very excited at the prospect of making a lot of profit. He tells them that he will go and get his car and come back to collect the table. As he walks away, he is already imagining how rich he will become when he sells the table.

While Cyril is gone, Mr. and Mrs. Bance think about how to prepare the table for him. They know his car is small, and they want to make things easier. Since he said he only wants the legs, they decide to cut the legs off the table before he comes back. So, using a wood saw, they cut off the legs. Once the legs are removed, they break the table into small pieces so that they can use it for firewood.

When Cyril returns, he is happy and confident. But the moment he sees what has happened, he is completely shocked. The beautiful, priceless table has been destroyed. The legs are badly removed, and the rest of the table is completely destroyed.

Inside, Cyril is furious and devastated. He knows he has just lost a fortune. He understands immediately that his own trick has caused this disaster. If he had been honest from the beginning, the table would still be intact. But he cannot say anything. If he shows his anger, the Bances might realize that he lied to them. So he forces himself to stay calm. He pretends everything is fine, pays them the small amount they agreed on, and politely thanks them. Cyril drives away with the table legs, knowing that they are useless. He feels humiliated and angry, but there is nothing he can do.