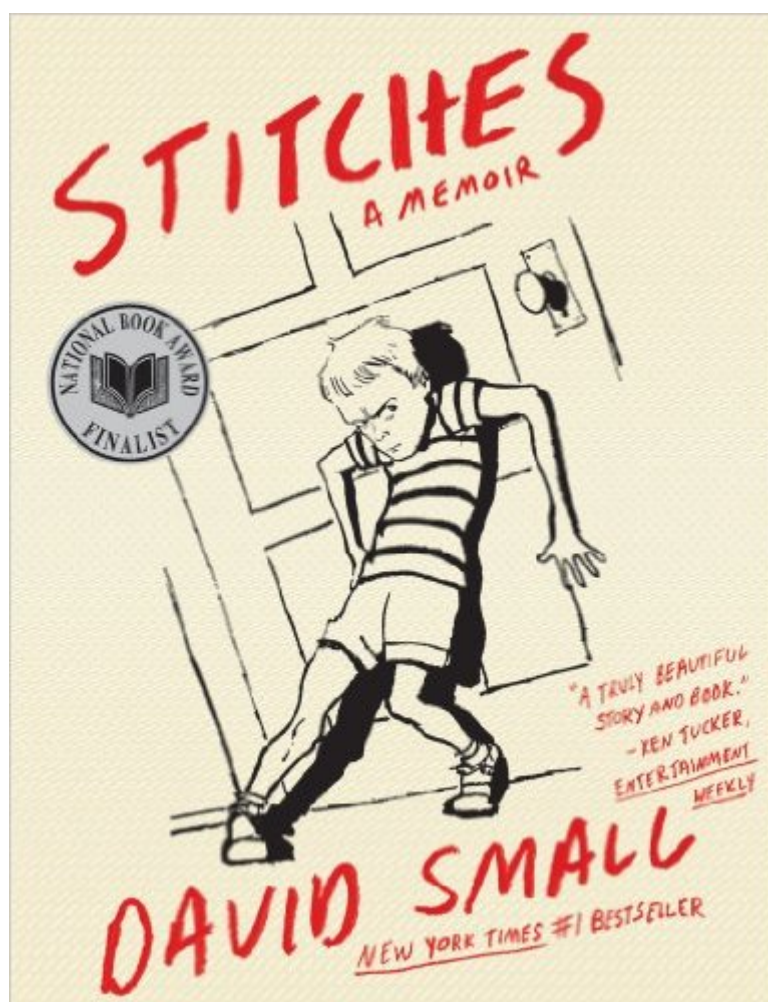


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# Stitches: A Memoir



## Synopsis

The #1 New York Times bestseller and National Book Award finalist that "breaks new ground for graphic novels" (Francois Mouly, art editor, The New Yorker). David Small, a best-selling and highly regarded children's book illustrator, comes forward with this unflinching graphic memoir.

Remarkable and intensely dramatic, *Stitches* tells the story of a fourteen-year-old boy who awakes one day from a supposedly harmless operation to discover that he has been transformed into a virtual mute—a vocal cord removed, his throat slashed and stitched together like a bloody boot. From horror to hope, Small proceeds to graphically portray an almost unbelievable descent into adolescent hell and the difficult road to physical, emotional, and artistic recovery. A National Book Award finalist; winner of the ALA's Alex Award; a #1 New York Times graphic bestseller; Publishers Weekly and Washington Post Top Ten Books of the Year, Los Angeles Times Favorite Book, ALA Great Graphic Novels, Booklist Editors Choice Award, Huffington Post Great Books of 2009, Kirkus Reviews Best of 2009, Village Voice Best Graphic Novel, finalist for two 2010 Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards (Best Writer/Artist: Nonfiction; Best Reality-Based Work). Illustrated throughout

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

First, I know nothing about this author. According to his biography information on the back of his book, he is an award winning children's author. In some ways, knowing nothing about the author makes this graphic novel even more enjoyable. Second, I need to break this down into two reviews--the story and the art. Both are excellent! The story revolves around David Small from the age of 6 to adulthood. He comes from an interesting family--his mother and her side of the family is

explored in depth. David develops a growth on his neck, which turns out to be cancer. However, his family does not tell him this, which is just one of the sources of conflict between him and his parents. I really enjoyed how the story was told. You can really feel the struggles David goes through growing up within this family. And in some ways, his mother reminds me of my grandma (in terms of the value of money and weighing the cost of something against something else). I also like how imaginative David (the character in the book) can be, and you see that throughout the story (like his admiration for Alice in Wonderland, which appears again towards the end of the story) In the end, the story has a great moral lesson--your voice is more than the words that come out of your mouth. It is also your actions, what you do and how you do them, that speak for you. That is a great message to learn from a book about a child growing up. The art is black, white, and gray, and in this story, it works perfectly. Some of the best frames in the book are when the author uses a direct light source on his character. For example, when David is in an elevator, and the doors open and close, he creates a fantastic effect by using this lighting technique. It happens a few times in the story, and it is definitely worth stopping to study the frame and look at the detail. Finally, I believe that this story could only be told in this way. It just would not have been as effective if it was told in a traditional book. You need the art, combined with the story, David's imagination and the writer's control of his words to get everything you see in front of you. It just works as a graphic novel, telling the story of his own memories. I read the entire graphic novel in about 45 minutes. I now think that was too fast, and I plan to go back and read it again. I highly recommend this book for its great story and art work, even if you know nothing about the author. By the time you are done reading, you will feel like you know him personally.

Do not let the fact that this is a graphic novel turn you off. It's not comic book/Watchman type art, this is pen and ink drawings. This is a complete story, and, I'm not exaggerating, this is one of the best autobiographies I've ever read. Most of it is told unflinchingly from the standpoint of David Small as a child, starting at age 6. His was not a happy household and the story includes a grandma, who, at one point, descends into physical abuse. I had, up to that point in the story, no sympathy with Small's mother. If she protected him from that point on from his grandmother, it isn't told. But her reaction when David said he was afraid of his grandma, because she was crazy, made me sit up and acknowledge something - David's mother's coldness didn't just spring out of nothing. There was something or somethings that helped shaped her that way. Near the end of the story, we learn that there was more than one thing that shaped her unhappiness. David acknowledges on the last pages, his later "maturity, reflection and some family research" helps him at least understand

his mother. It's not an excuse for not loving your own son, but it helps. It's not an excuse for his father enabling his mother, either. But read the story and make up your own mind. There is no whining; there is no using the past as a crutch. The story starts, I think, in the 50's, and medical knowledge and sociological acceptance were much different than they are now. Notice, I'm trying not to give too much away - I don't want to spoil it for you when you pick up this book. Finally, I'd like to mention that David's imagination, which oftentimes plagued him as a child, also allowed him to write and illustrate this memoir, which may have been cathartic. Oh, and in case you're wondering, the "Stitches" did not result from abuse. At least, not the stitches in his body. Much recommended. Happy Reader

I loved this book! It is so moving, and to think that David Small can write AND draw about his sad, tormented childhood is miraculous. I kept turning to the photo of the author on the back flap just to see his sweet smiling face, and be reassured as I read that he was going to be okay. I can barely stand to learn about child and/or animal abuse, and this is, of course, abuse in the extreme. The text is poetic and the drawings once again prove that "a picture is worth a thousand words" as they bring this family to life. David Small has illustrated several children's books, my favorite being THE LIBRARY written by his wife. I have no children at home, but I bought the book for myself because of the story of a voracious reader and book-buyer like myself as well as for the sweet, spot-on illustrations. I learned about SITCHES in Publishers Weekly which I have subscribed to for several years. I am not going to renew my subscription, however, because the \$200+ annual subscription cost is just too much for a journal/magazine that is shrinking in size rapidly and will probably disappear itself before too much longer. BUT, I did read about this book there, as well as several other fabulous books over the years, so I am going to have to find another source for book reviews; is doing a good job, but way too few reviews, not to mention having to steer my way through all the ads to find them. I do hope, however, that lots of people find and read this book. It gives hope. It shows that graphic books are to be taken seriously and are here to stay in all sorts of genres, not just "graphic novels". There are a couple other "graphic memoirs" recently published, and to me they are all delightful and a nice change in a publishing culture that has become stagnant in many ways. Thank you to David Small for sharing his story with us, for making us SEE what he went through. I am so sorry it happened, but happen it did, so thanks for trusting us with it.

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