

Many of the stories in *The Doll's Alphabet* are set in uncertain time periods—they could be set in a version of the present day, the early twentieth century, a more general past, or a version of the future. What do these uncertain settings achieve? How does displacing the reader in time change the way they experience the story?

Gender roles play a big part in these stories, particularly in “Waxy.” Do the confines of how men and women operate, and relate to each other, in *The Doll's Alphabet* offer ways for you to think about gender dynamics in the world we live in? How so?

“Waxy” is one of many stories in *The Doll's Alphabet* that feature strong elements of dystopian fiction. Could the story imagine a possible future, or perhaps an alternative past? Does it gesture toward a moral or a possible cause of its dystopian reality?

What do you make of the shortest story in the collection, the title story “The Doll's Alphabet”?

The Doll's Alphabet has much in common with fairy tales or Franz Kafka, both in their oddness and their sly comedy. In such precarious circumstances, what role does a sense of humor play?

The Doll's Alphabet was inspired by:

Edward Gorey *Amphigorey Again*
Barbara Comyns *Sisters by a River*
Georges Perec *Life a User's Manual*
T.S. Eliot *The Complete Poems & Plays*
Vladimir Nabokov *Ada, or Ardor*
Samuel Beckett *More Pricks Than Kicks*
Charles Dickens *The Old Curiosity Shop*
Franz Kafka *Complete Stories*
Gunter Grass *Cat and Mouse*