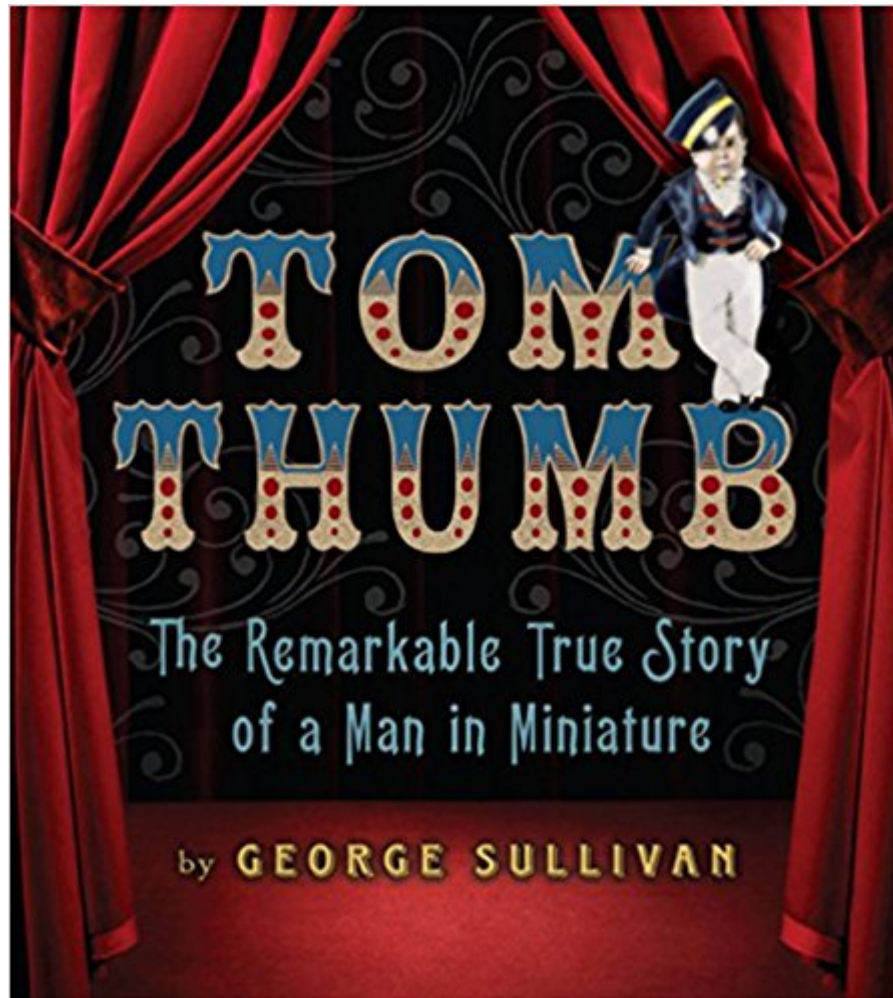




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Tom Thumb: The Remarkable True Story Of A Man In Miniature



Synopsis

When Charles S. Stratton was born in 1838, he was a large baby, perfect in every way. But then he stopped growing. At age four, though a happy and mischievous child, he was just over two feet tall and weighed only fifteen pounds—•the exact same size he had been as a seven-month-old baby. It was then that the notorious showman P.T. Barnum dubbed him Tom Thumb and put him on display, touring him around the world as a curiosity. ••••• A natural performer, Charley became enormously popular and wealthy, more so than any other performer before him. In this spirited biography—•the first on its subject—•George Sullivan recounts the fascinating adventures of Tom Thumb, and raises challenging questions about what constitutes exploitation—•both in the 19th century and today.

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Customer Reviews

Bonus content from Tom Thumb When the 200th anniversary of P. T. Barnum's birth was being celebrated in July 2010, Tom Thumb's name was at the forefront once again. Tom was not quite five years old when, in 1842, Barnum first presented him at his American Museum, billing him as "the smallest person in the world that ever walked alone." He quickly became the best known of all of Barnum's countless "human curiosities." While Tom left Barnum's employ at the age of 18, the two remained lifelong friends.

Gr 5-9-A talented performer and charming celebrity, Charles S. Stratton, born in 1838 in Bridgeport,

CT, began his career at the tender age of five. Around his first birthday, Charley's parents noticed that he had stopped growing at 25 inches long and 15 pounds, and their doctor soon confirmed that their son would be a little person into adulthood. As a preschooler, Charley embraced his size, reveling in the attention he attracted and making friends all over town. His relationships and reputation landed him on the radar of P. T. Barnum who, with dollar signs in his eyes, convinced Charley's parents to bring the boy to New York City for a four-week display at his American Museum. Although Barnum lied about Charley's age and nationality to sell tickets, the Strattons decided to trust him with their son, now known by his stage name, General Tom Thumb. From his first performance, Tom's career took off and years of touring both in the U.S. and abroad followed. Presented by Sullivan with respect and admiration, Tom is shown as a complex person with sincere struggles and desires outside the spotlight. Extensive notes are provided for the quotes found throughout the text, though they do not always point to primary-source material. The many period photographs and illustrations that fill out the narrative will fascinate readers.-Heather Acerro, Allen County Public Library, Fort Wayne, IN (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

A fascinating story about a little person, probably the most famous little person, who made a mark on the world. The book provides not only a biography of Charley but also a look at entertainment in the 19th century. Charley spent most of his life on the stage. One wonders though, what made him so successful? Was it Barnum's superb but often deceitful marketing? Was it Charley's own talents? Was it his size? Or was it a combination of all three. That would be an interesting topic for discussion. Deceit in entertainment is another topic that this book raises, but doesn't analyze. The book is very well written and could make a fascinating read-a-loud. The pictures have clearly been carefully chosen to match the text, always a good thing in my opinion. One of my pet peeves is when the photographs don't match the text on the page. The only problem I had with the book is the picture of mermaids with their chests uncovered, however, the picture does relate to what is being discussed in the text. Overall, a great look at a fascinating topic.

This biographical account of Charles Stratton (A.k.a Tom Thumb) is both fascinating and informative. It begins with his birth and goes a little bit beyond his death. It includes details about his relationship with P.T. Barnum, how he obtained fame and how that fame changed his life. In short, it's a story about how something normally seen as an obstacle (his short stature) turned into a blessing. For me, the best thing about this book were the included photos and illustrations, and I

think that they would be a big draw to the kids. It's a natural human tendency, to be fascinated by those who are different. Many photos are of Tom Thumb himself and they showcase his unusual size, his demeanor, his showmanship. The wedding photos were especially fascinating because the entire wedding party consisted of little people and the contrast to the normal-height official marrying them was startling. There are also photos of the other "freaks" in P.T Barnum's show as well. The book also includes a brief explanation of dwarfism in general and what may cause it. All in all, a worthy book for everyone but particularly for kids who are small in stature. I think it shows that height is by no means an indication of how far you rise in the world.

George Sullivan has written quite a books for young people, including numerous historical biographies. This one is the story of Charlie Stratton, born in 1838 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, who received the stage name of General Tom Thumb from PT Barnum. Charlie was a cheerful, even rambunctious little boy who enjoyed amusing his parents and the guests of the inn that they ran in that coastal town. His parents only concern for the boy was that he stopped growing as an infant; in every other way he was perfectly normal. When Mr. Barnum discovered the lad while visiting the inn, he was completely captivated by him and was sure that Charlie would have a good life and be a big hit in Mr. Barnum's entertainment business. Eventually he prevailed upon the parents to allow him to take Charlie, now Tom Thumb on this adventure which became his live. I found this book to be quite readable and also enjoyed the photographs and illustrations. There were pictures of his town, of him dressed in various costumes, of adverts, maps, and much more. A longer section was devoted to his famous wedding to Lavina Warren. The book tells about Lavina's life, and also many other people who Charlie met and worked with along the way. The author's portrayal of PT Barnum, his successes, his challenges, and his hoaxes was honest yet sympathetic. Barnum promoted and even exploited Tom, but Tom also led a good life, got to travel around the world, meet kings, queens and others, and he became immensely rich in the process. This book would appeal to many readers ages 10 and up who like to read about history, biography or just like to learn something new. The book immerses the reader in a world that is often exotic, and always interesting. A worthwhile read.

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