



2004

# Past Perfect, Present Tense: New and Collected Stories

Betsy Spackman

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Peck, Richard. *Past Perfect, Present Tense: New and Collected Stories*. Dial Books, 2004. ISBN 0803729987. \$16.99. 177 pp.

Reviewer: Betsy Spackman

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction; Historical fiction; Occult fiction;

Subject: Children's stories-American;

This delightful compilation brings together thirteen stories, including two that have not been previously published. Peck, a well-loved and prolific author, discusses the craft of writing short stories and uses stories to illustrate his suggestions. Peck begins the collection with his well-known story "Priscilla and the Wimps." He uses the concept of time to divide the remaining stories into three sections: the Past, the Supernatural (in which time is not always as it seems), and the Present. Peck suggests that in order to write well, authors must read, rewrite, develop voices, and consider the question of change.

Peck's stories illustrate his statement that short stories are about change. His suggestions on writing are perfectly demonstrated in his stories. Plots involve a variety of intriguing changes in characters and their environments. Peck's succinct writing and choice of topics will charm young adult readers because of stories about issues important to teenagers such as coming of age, school, and rebelling against parents. Those who love *A Long Way from Chicago* and *A Year Down Yonder* will enjoy old favorites and new stories that show another side of Richard Peck.