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## The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

*F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896 - 1940)*

Read by: Don W. Jenkins      Language: English  
 Length: 55 minutes      Style: Solo  
 Genre(s): Fiction, Short Fiction

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*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is the story of a child born in Baltimore in 1860 who has the appearance of a 70-year-old man. His family attempts to raise him in the usual manner but find that the condition creates conflicts. At kindergarten he does not have the energy to play with the other children and is withdrawn when he constantly falls asleep. Enrolled in Yale at age 18, he is sent home when officials think he is a 50-year-old nutcase. By then the family has realized he is aging backwards. He joins the family business at age 20. He meets and marries a younger woman who has a thing for older men and thinks he is his father's brother. His condition is never revealed to her, and after her beauty fades and she becomes a nag, in 1898 he enlists in the army to serve in the Spanish-American War and rises to the rank of lieutenant colonel. In 1910, now an apparent 20-year-old, he enrolls at Harvard and becomes a star football player, only to weaken and struggle with his studies as he matriculates. Returning home, he passes through the moody teenage years

into childhood, eventually attending kindergarten with his grandson. Before too long his memory fades and things fade to darkness. The story was published in *Collier's Magazine* in May, 1922 and then published in *Tales of the Jazz Age*. A perennial favorite, it was made into a major motion picture starring Brad Pitt in 2008.

Born in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1896, F. Scott Fitzgerald is the archetype of the youthful, handsome, tragic, Romantic American writer burdened with the heat of genius and the sting of excessive appetite. Fitzgerald was America's first pop-star writer. He ushered in the Jazz Age with his first novel, *This Side of Paradise* and a collection of short stories, *Flappers* and *Philosophers*. Fitzgerald attended Princeton, where he wrote and drank incessantly, did poorly, and made friends with the literary critic, Edmund Wilson, the man Fitzgerald called his aesthetic conscience. He did not graduate, but entered the Army in 1917 as World War I came to its close. Assigned to Camp Sheridan outside Montgomery, Alabama, he met and pursued Zelda Sayre (1900-1948), the golden girl from Alabama who possessed Fitzgerald from first sight. He courted her, and they were engaged until she broke it off, concerned that the writer and ad man would not be able to provide for her. Fitzgerald returned to his Minnesota home where he rewrote his first novel, which Scribner & Sons accepted for publication in 1919. With the success of *Paradise* Zelda agreed to marry the young writer. Fitzgerald and Zelda moved to Paris where he became friends with Hemingway and other ex-patriots. He wrote five novels in all. *The Great Gatsby* (1925) is considered his masterpiece and *The Last Tycoon* was published posthumously. Fitzgerald had been alcoholic since his college days, and during the 20's his legendary drinking damaged his health. In his mid-forties he suffered two severe heart attacks, the second taking his life at the home of Sheila Graham on December 21, 1940. His influence on writers is felt to this day. Despite all the press and stories and legends, F. Scott Fitzgerald was "all that" and more. In effect Fitzgerald was better than Fitzgerald.