

Emil and the Detectives

by *Erich Kastner*

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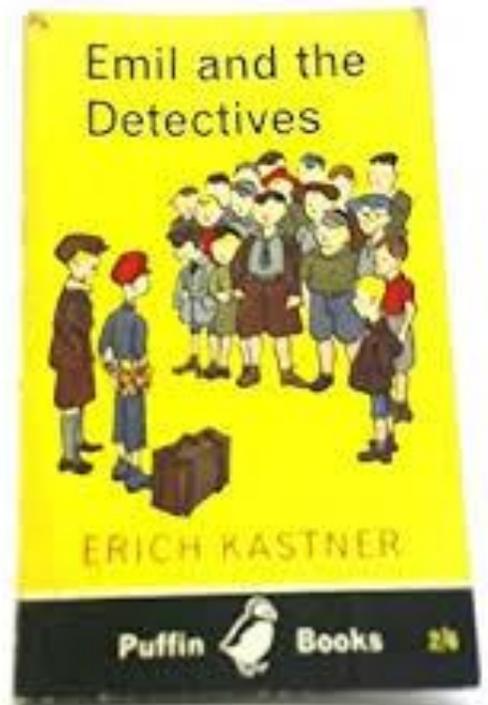
This story was first published in Germany in 1929.

The version I read as a child was published in 1931 (*and no, I am not quite that old!*). It had been translated into English by Eileen Hall and was illustrated by Walter Trier; it sold in the U.K. for just 90p!

I thought that it might be nice to re-visit some stories that I hadn't read for a while during the time that schools are closed so I picked this one off the shelf and read it in one sitting – *well there are only 128 pages and it was a sunny day.*

The story is of a very well-behaved and responsible boy called Emil who is sent by his hard-working mother to visit relations in Berlin. He is packed-off with a sum of money which his mum has saved up to pay for his keep and to share with his Grandma. It was just seven pounds but back then it was a fair amount, especially for a family with very little to call their own.

During the train journey, Emil falls asleep and awakes just in time to find his money gone and the only possible culprit making his way off the train.



Emil tails the man called Grundeis to a café where he is joined by a group of other children who help him to stake out the hotel where the villain is staying.

The boys confront the thief the next morning and are taken into custody by the police who soon learn that they are telling the truth as Grundeis is found to be wanted for other crimes.

Emil becomes a celebrity as his story is published in the newspapers and his new friends are all rewarded for their efforts in helping to bring the criminal to justice.

'A thrilling story of robbery, and the tracking and exposing of the thief – with Emil himself as both victim and detective.'

By modern standards the plot is relatively straight forward but is enjoyable because of the simplicity of the idea and eventual outcome.

Emil and the Detectives was made into a film in 1964 by none other than Walt Disney. It has also been performed on stage.

By following the link below you can hear other authors reviewing the story, including Phillip Pullman, author of 'The Northern Lights' (recently studied by Years 5 & 6 at Crowan Primary):

<https://www.london-theatreland.co.uk/theatres/national-theatre-olivier/emil-and-the-detectives.php>



Free audio version available:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcqCGshCQ_M