



# The Man Who Fell to Earth

*Walter Tevis*

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## **The Man Who Fell to Earth** Walter Tevis

The basis for a feature film starring David Bowie in his first major role, *The Man Who Fell to Earth* tells the story of Thomas Jerome Newton, an alien disguised as a human who comes to Earth on a mission to save his people. Devastated by nuclear war, his home planet, Anthea, is no longer habitable. Newton lands in Kentucky and starts patenting Anthean technology, amassing the fortune he needs to build a spaceship that will bring the last 300 Anthean survivors to Earth.

But instead of the help he seeks, he finds only self-destruction, sinking into alcoholism, abandoning his spaceship, and can save neither his people nor himself. This is the poignant story of a man fallen to addiction, materialism, and loneliness.

*“Beautiful science fiction... [Newton] acquires a moving, tragic force as the stranger, caught and destroyed in a strange land... The story of an extraterrestrial visitor from another planet is designed mainly to say something about life on this one.”*

—*The New York Times*

## About the Author

Walter Tevis was born in San Francisco in 1928 and lived in the Sunset District, close to Golden Gate Park and the sea, for the first ten years of his life. At the age of ten his parents placed him in the Stanford Children’s Convalescent Home for a year, during which time they returned to Kentucky, where the Tevis family had been given an early grant of land in Madison County. Walter traveled across country alone by train at the age of eleven to rejoin his family and felt the shock of entering Appalachian culture when he enrolled in the local school. He made friends with Toby Kavanaugh, a fellow student at the Lexington high school, and learned to shoot pool on the table of the recreation room in the Kavanaugh mansion, and to read science fiction books for the first time in Toby’s small library. They remained lifelong friends, and Toby grew up to become the owner of a pool room in Lexington.

At the age of seventeen, Walter became a carpenter’s mate in the Navy, serving on board the USS *Hamil* in Okinawa. After his discharge, he studied at the University of Kentucky where he received B.A. and M.A. degrees in English Literature and studied with Abe Guthrie, author of *The Big Sky*. Upon graduation he taught everything from the sciences and English to physical education in small-town Kentucky high schools. At that time he began writing short stories, which were published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Esquire*, *Redbook*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Playboy*. He wrote his first novel, *The Hustler*, which was published in 1959, and followed that with *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, which was published in 1963. He taught English literature and creative writing at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio for fourteen years, where he was a distinguished professor, and left that post in 1978 to come to New York and resume writing. He wrote four more novels—*Mockingbird*, *The Steps of the Sun*, *The Queen’s Gambit* and *The Color of Money*—and a collection of short stories, *Far From Home*. He died of lung cancer in 1984. His books have been translated into French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Icelandic, Greek, Slovak, Serbo-Croatian, Israeli, Turkish, Japanese, and Thai.

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