

# **The Graveyard Book**

## **by Neil Gaiman**

### About the Book

In this ingenious and captivating reimagining of Rudyard Kipling's classic adventure *The Jungle Book*, Neil Gaiman tells the unforgettable story of Nobody Owens, a living, breathing boy whose home is a graveyard, raised by a guardian who belongs neither to the mortal world nor the realm of the dead. Among the mausoleums and headstones of his home, Bod experiences things most mortals can barely imagine. But real, flesh-and-blood danger waits just outside the cemetery walls: the man who murdered the infant Bod's family will not rest until he finds Nobody Owens and finishes the job he began many years ago.

A #1 *New York Times* bestseller and winner of many international awards, including the Hugo Award for best novel and the Locus Award, *The Graveyard Book* is a glorious meditation on love, loss, survival, and sacrifice...and what it means to truly be alive.

### Praise for the Book

*"The Graveyard Book, by turns exciting and witty, sinister and tender, shows Gaiman at the top of his form. In this novel of wonder, Neil Gaiman follows in the footsteps of long-ago storytellers, weaving a tale of unforgettable enchantment."*

— *New York Times Book Review*

*"Like a bite of dark Halloween chocolate, this novel proves rich, bittersweet and very satisfying."*

— *Washington Post*

*"Wistful, witty, wise—and creepy. This needs to be read by anyone who is or has ever been a child."*

— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

*Courtesy of HarperCollins Publishers*

## About the Author

Title: Neil Gaiman

Known As: Gaiman, Neil Richard; Gaiman, Neil

British Writer ( 1960 - )

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### PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Born November 10, 1960, in Portchester, England; son of David Bernard (a company director) and Sheila (a pharmacist) Gaiman; married Mary Therese McGrath, March 14, 1985; married Amanda Palmer, January 3, 2011; children: Michael Richard, Holly Miranda, Madeleine Rose Elvira. Politics: "Wooly." Religion: Jewish. Avocational Interests: "Finding more bookshelf space." Memberships: Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (board of directors), International Museum of Cartoon Art (advisory board), Science Fiction Foundation (committee member), Society of Strip Illustrators (chair, 1988-90), British Fantasy Society. Addresses: Agent: Merilee Heifetz, Writer's House, 21 West 26th St., New York, NY 10010.

### CAREER:

Freelance journalist, 1983-87; full-time writer, 1987--.

### AWARDS:

Mekon Award, Society of Strip Illustrators, and Eagle Award for best graphic novel, both 1988, both for *Violent Cases*; Eagle Award for best writer of American comics, 1990; Harvey Award for best writer, 1990 and 1991; Will Eisner Comic Industry Award for best writer of the year and best graphic album (reprint), 1991; World Fantasy Award for best short story, 1991, for "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; Will Eisner Comic Industry Award for best writer of the year, 1992; Harvey Award for best continuing series, 1992; Will Eisner Comic Industry Award for best writer of the year and best graphic album (new), 1993; Gem Award, Diamond Distributors, for expanding the marketplace for comic books, 1993; Will Eisner Comic Industry Award for best writer of the year, 1994; Guild Award, International Horror Critics, and World Fantasy Award nomination, both 1994, both for *Angels and Visitations: A Miscellany* and short story "Troll Bridge;" GLAAD Award for best comic of the year, 1996, for *Death: The Time of Your Life*; Eagle Award for best comic, 1996; Lucca Best Writer Prize, 1997; *Newsweek* list of best children's books, 1997, for *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*; Defender of Liberty Award, Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, 1997; MacMillan Silver Pen Award, 1999, for *Smoke*

*and Mirrors: Short Fictions and Illusions*; Hugo Award nomination, 1999, for *Sandman: The Dream Hunters*; Mythopoeic Award for best novel for adults, 1999, for *Stardust: Being a Romance within the Realms of Faerie*; Nebula Award nomination, 1999, for screenplay for the film *Princess Mononoke*; Hugo Award for best science fiction/fantasy novel, Bram Stoker Award for best novel, Horror Writers Association, and British Science Fiction Association (BSFA) Award nomination, all 2002, all for *American Gods*; BSFA Award for best short fiction, Elizabeth Burr/Worzalla Award, Bram Stoker Award, Horror Writers Association, Hugo Award nomination, and Prix Tam Tam Award, all 2003, all for *Coraline*; script *Signal to Noise* received a SONY Radio Award; Hugo Award for Best Short Story, 2004, for "A Study in Emerald;" Bram Stoker Award, 2004, for *The Sandman: Endless Nights*; August Derleth Award, 2006, for *Anansi Boys*; Locus Award for Best Short Story, 2007, for "How to Talk to Girls at Parties," and for Best Collection, for *Fragile Things*; Newbery Medal, Locus Award for best young-adult book, Hugo Award for best novel, all 2009, and CILIP Carnegie Medal, 2010, all for *The Graveyard Book*. Gaiman has received international awards from Austria, Brazil, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

#### WORKS:

#### WRITINGS:

#### GRAPHIC NOVELS AND COMIC BOOKS

- *Violent Cases*, illustrated by Dave McKean, Titan (London, England), 1987, Tundra (Northampton, MA), 1991, Dark Horse Comics (Milwaukee, OR), 2003.
- *Black Orchid* (originally published in magazine form in 1989), illustrated by Dave McKean, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1991.
- *Miracleman, Book 4: The Golden Age*, illustrated by Mark Buckingham, Eclipse (Forestville, CA), 1992.
- *Signal to Noise*, illustrated by Dave McKean, Dark Horse Comics (Milwaukee, OR), 1992.
- *The Books of Magic* (originally published in magazine form, four volumes), illustrated by John Bolton and others, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1993.
- *The Tragical Comedy, or Comical Tragedy, of Mr. Punch*, illustrated by Dave McKean, VG Graphics (London, England), 1994, Vertigo/ DC Comics (New York, NY), 1995, also published as *Mr. Punch*.
- (Author of text, with Alice Cooper) *The Compleat Alice Cooper: Incorporating the Three Acts of Alice Cooper's The Last Temptation*, illustrated by Michael Zulli, Marvel Comics (New York, NY), 1995, published as *The Last Temptation*, Dark Horse Comics (Milwaukee, OR), 2000.
- *Angela*, illustrated by Greg Capullo and Mark Pennington, Image (Anaheim, CA), 1995, published as *Spawn: Angela's Hunt*, Image (Anaheim, CA), 2000.
- *Stardust: Being a Romance within the Realms of Faerie*, illustrated by Charles Vess, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1997-98, text published as *Stardust*, Spike (New York, NY), 1999.

- (Author of text, with Matt Wagner) *Neil Gaiman's Midnight Days*, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1999.
- *Green Lantern/Superman: Legend of the Green Flame*, DC Comics (New York, NY), 2000.
- *Harlequin Valentine*, illustrated by John Bolton, Dark Horse Comics (Milwaukee, OR), 2001.
- (With Dave McKean, Jonathan Carroll, David Drake, Alisa Kwitney, Michael McClure, Rachel Pollack, Ian Sinclair, Karl Woelz, and Ashley-Jayne Nicolaus) *Bento: Story Art Box*, Allen Spiegel Fine Arts (Plantation, FL), 2001.
- *Murder Mysteries* (based on play of the same title, also see below), illustrated by P. Craig Russel, Dark Horse Comics (Milwaukee, OR), 2002.
- (With Andy Kubert) *Marvel 1602*, Marvel Comics (New York, NY), 2004.
- (With Dagmara Matuszak) *Melinda*, Hill House (Ossining, NY), 2004.
- (With Dean Motter) *Mr. X Volume 2 (Mister X)*, IBooks (Brentwood, CA), 2005.
- *Stardust: The Visual Companion: Being an Account of the Making of a Magical Movie*, screenplay by Jane Goldman & Matthew Vaughn, Titan (London, England), 2007.
- *Eternals*, Panini (Kent, England), 2007.
- *The Facts in the Case of the Departure of Miss Finch*, Dark Horse (Milwaukee, OR), 2007.
- *The Dangerous Alphabet*, illustrated by Gris Grimly, HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2008.
- *Batman: Whatever Happened to the Caped Crusader?*, illustrated by Andy Kubert, DC Comics (New York, NY), 2009.

## "SANDMAN" SERIES

- *Sandman: The Doll's House* (originally published in magazine form), illustrated by Mike Dringenberg and Malcolm Jones III, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1990.
- *Sandman: Preludes and Nocturnes* (originally published as *Sandman*, Volumes 1-8), illustrated by Sam Keith, Mike Dringenberg, and Malcolm Jones III, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1991.
- *Sandman: Dream Country* (originally published as *Sandman*, Volumes 17-20; includes "A Midsummer's Night's Dream"), illustrated by Kelley Jones, Charles Vess, Colleen Doran, and Malcolm Jones III, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1991.
- *Sandman: Season of Mists* (originally published as *Sandman*, Volumes 21-28), illustrated by Kelley Jones, Malcolm Jones III, Mike Dringenberg, and others, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1992.
- *Sandman: A Game of You* (originally published as *Sandman*, Volumes 32-37), illustrated by Shawn McManus and others, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1993.
- *Sandman: Fables and Reflections* (originally published as *Sandman*, Volumes 29-31, 38-40, 50), illustrated by Bryan Talbot, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1994.
- *Death: The High Cost of Living* (originally published in magazine form, three volumes), illustrated by Dave McKean, Mark Buckingham, and others, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1994.

- *Sandman: Brief Lives* (originally published as *Sandman*, Volumes 41-49), illustrated by Jill Thompson, Dick Giordano, and Vince Locke, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1994.
- *Sandman: World's End* (originally published as *Sandman*, Volumes 51-56), illustrated by Dave McKean, Mark Buckingham, Dick Giordano, and others, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1994.
- (Author of text, with Matt Wagner) *Sandman: Midnight Theatre*, illustrated by Teddy Kristiansen, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1995.
- (Editor, with Edward E. Kramer) *The Sandman: Book of Dreams*, HarperPrism (New York, NY), 1996.
- *Sandman: The Kindly Ones* (originally published as *Sandman*, Volumes 57-69), illustrated by Marc Hempel, Richard Case, and others, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1996.
- *Death: The Time of Your Life*, illustrated by Mark Buckingham and others, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1997.
- (Author of commentary and contributor) *Dustcovers: The Collected Sandman Covers, 1989-1997*, illustrated by Dave McKean, Vertigo/DC Comics (New York, NY), 1997, published as *The Collected Sandman Covers, 1989-1997*, Watson-Guption (New York, NY), 1997.
- *Sandman: The Wake*, illustrated by Michael Zulli, Charles Vess, and others, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1997.
- (Reteller) *Sandman: The Dream Hunters*, illustrated by Yoshitaka Amano, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1999.
- *The Quotable Sandman: Memorable Lines from the Acclaimed Series*, DC Comics (New York, NY), 2000.
- *The Sandman: Endless Nights*, illustrated by P. Craig Russell, Milo Manara, and others, DC Comics (New York, NY), 2003.
- *Absolute Death*, Vertigo (New York, NY), 2009.

## OTHER FICTION

- (With Terry Pratchett) *Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch* (novel), Gollancz (London, England), 1990, revised edition, Workman (New York, NY), 1990, William Morrow (New York, NY), 2006.
- (With Mary Gentle) *Villains!* (short stories), edited by Mary Gentle and Roz Kaveney, ROC (London, England), 1992.
- (With Mary Gentle and Roz Kaveney) *The Weerde: Book One* (short stories), ROC (London, England), 1992.
- (With Mary Gentle and Roz Kaveney) *The Weerde: Book Two: The Book of the Ancients* (short stories), ROC (London, England), 1992.
- *Angels and Visitations: A Miscellany* (short stories), illustrated by Steve Bissette and others, DreamHaven Books and Art (Minneapolis, MN), 1993.
- *Nowhere* (novel), BBC Books (London, England), 1996, Avon (New York, NY), 1997.
- *Smoke and Mirrors: Short Fictions and Illusions* (short stories), Avon (New York, NY), 1998.

- *American Gods* (novel), William Morrow (New York, NY), 2001.
- (Reteller) *Snow Glass Apples*, illustrated by George Walker, Biting Dog Press (Duluth, GA), 2003.
- *Anansi Boys*, William Morrow (New York, NY), 2005.
- (With Si Spencer), *Books of Magick: Life During Wartime*, illustrated by Dean Ormston, colored by Fiona Stephenson, lettered by Todd Klein, Comcraft, cover art by Frank Quitely, consultation by Neil Gaiman, Timothy Hunter, created by Neil Gaiman and John Bolton, DC Comics (New York, NY), 2005.
- *Fragile Things* (stories), Headline (London, England), 2006.
- (With Michael Reaves) *InterWorld*, Eos (New York, NY), 2007.
- (With Al Sarrantonio) *Stories*, William Morrow (New York, NY), 2010.

In 2008, composed a short story on a card that will be auctioned at the Waterstones *What's Your Story?* charity auction for English PEN and Dyslexia Action along with similar storycards by twelve other authors.

## SCREENPLAYS

- (With Lenny Henry) *Neverwhere*, BBC2 (London, England), 1996.
- *Signal to Noise*, BBC Radio 3 (London, England), 1996.
- *Day of the Dead: An Annotated Babylon 5 Script* (originally aired as the episode "Day of the Dead" for the series *Babylon 5*, Turner Broadcasting System, 1998), DreamHaven (Minneapolis, MN), 1998.
- *Princess Mononoke* (motion picture; English translation of the Japanese screenplay by Hayao Miyazaki), Miramax (New York, NY), 1999.
- *MirrorMask*, Destination Films/Samuel Goldwyn Films, 2005.
- (With Roger Avary) *Beowulf*, Warner Bros., 2007.

## FOR YOUNG READERS

- *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* (picture book), illustrated by Dave McKean, Borealis/White Wolf (Clarkson, GA), 1997, HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2004.
- *Coraline* (fantasy), illustrated by Dave McKean, Bloomsbury (London, England), HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2002.
- *The Wolves in the Walls* (picture book), illustrated by Dave McKean, HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2003.
- *Blueberry Girl*, illustrated by Charles Vess, HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2008.
- *Odd and the Frost Giants*, illustrated by Brett Helquist, Bloomsbury (London, England), 2008, HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2009.
- *The Graveyard Book*, illustrated by Dave McKean, HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2008.
- *Crazy Hair*, illustrated by David McKean, HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2009.
- *Instructions*, illustrated by Charles Vess, HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2010.
- *The Tales of Odd*, Bloomsbury Publishing (London, England), 2010.

## OTHER

- *Duran Duran: The First Four Years of the Fab Five* (biography), Proteus (New York, NY), 1984.
- *Don't Panic: The Official Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy Companion*, Titan (London, England), Pocket Books (New York, NY), 1988, revised edition with additional material by David K. Dickson published as *Don't Panic: Douglas Adams and the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Titan (London, England), 1993.
- *Warning: Contains Language* (readings; compact disc), music by Dave McKean and the Flash Girls, DreamHaven (Minneapolis, MN), 1995.
- (Co-illustrator) *The Dreaming: Beyond the Shores of Night*, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1997.
- (Co-illustrator) *The Dreaming: Through the Gates of Horn and Ivory*, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1998.
- *Neil Gaiman: Live at the Aladdin* (videotape), Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (Northampton, MA), 2001.
- (With Gene Wolfe) *A Walking Tour of the Shambles* (nonfiction), American Fantasy Press (Woodstock, IL), 2001.
- *Murder Mysteries* (play), illustrated by George Walker, Biting Dog Press (Duluth, GA), 2001.
- *Adventures in the Dream Trade* (nonfiction and fiction), edited by Tony Lewis and Priscilla Olson, NESFA Press (Framingham, MA), 2002.
- *Creatures of The Night*, Dark Horse (Milwaukee, OR), 2004.
- *A Screenplay*, Hill House (Ossining, NY), 2004.
- (Creator, with John Bolton) Carla Jablonski, *Reckonings*, Eos (New York, NY), 2004.
- (Author of introduction) Edgar Allan Poe, *Selected poems & Tales*, illustrated by Mark Summers, Barnes & Noble (New York, NY), 2004.
- (With David McKean) *The Alchemy of MirrorMask*, Collins Design (New York, NY), 2005.
- *The Sandman Presents Thessaly: Witch for Hire*, illustrated by Shawn McManus, colored by Pamela Rambo, lettered by Nick J. Napolitano (pt. 1), Rob Leigh (pt. 2), Phil Balsman (pts. 3-4), cover art by Tara McPherson; the Sandman is created by Gaiman, Kieth, and Dringenberg, Thessaly is created by Gaiman and McManus, DC Comics (New York, NY), 2005.
- *M is for Magic*, illustrated by Teddy Kristiansen, HarperCollins (New York, NY), 2007.
- *The Neil Gaiman Reader*, Wildside Press (Rockville, MD), 2007.
- *Neil Gaiman on His Work and Career: A Conversation with Bill Baker*, Rosen (New York, NY), 2008.

## EDITOR

- (With Kim Newman) *Ghastly beyond Belief*, Arrow (London, England), 1985.
- (With Stephen Jones) *Now We Are Sick: A Sampler*, privately published, 1986, published as *Now We Are Sick: An Anthology of Nasty Verse*, DreamHaven (Minneapolis, MN), 1991.

- (With Alex Stewart) *Temps*, ROC (London, England), 1991.
- (With Alex Stewart) *Euro Temps*, ROC (London, England), 1992.

Also author of the comic book *Outrageous Tales from the Old Testament*. Creator of characters for comic books, including Lady Justice; Wheel of Worlds; Mr. Hero, Newmatic Man; Teknophage; and Lucifer. Coeditor of *The Utterly Comic Relief Comic*, a comic book that raised money for the UK Comic Relief Charity in 1991. Contributor to *The Sandman Companion*, DC Comics (New York, NY), 1999, and has contributed prefaces and introductions to several books. Gaiman's works, including the short story "Troll Bridge," have been represented in numerous anthologies. Contributor to newspapers and magazines, including *Knave*, *Punch*, *Observer*, *Sunday Times* (London, England) and *Time Out*. Gaiman's books have been translated into other languages, including Bulgarian, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Spanish, and Swedish. He has written scripts for the films *Avalon*, *Beowulf*, *The Confessions of William Henry Ireland*, *The Fermata*, *Modesty Blaise*, and others.

#### MEDIA ADAPTATIONS:

*The Books of Magic* was adapted into novel form by Carla Jablonski and others into several individual volumes, including *The Invitation*, *The Bindings*, and *The Children's Crusade*, issued by HarperCollins (New York, NY). *Neverwhere* was released on audio cassette by HighBridge (Minneapolis, MN), 1997; *American Gods* was released on cassette by Harper (New York, NY), 2001; *Coraline* was released as an audio book read by the author, Harper (New York, NY), 2002; *Two Plays for Voices* (*Snow Glass Apples* and *Murder Mysteries*) was released as an audio book and on audio CD, Harper (New York, NY), 2003. Several of Gaiman's works have been optioned for film, including *Sandman*, by Warner Bros.; *The Books of Magic*, by Warner Bros.; *Death: The High Cost of Living*, by Warner Bros.; *Good Omens*, by Renaissance Films; *Neverwhere*, by Jim Henson Productions; *Chivalry*, by Miramax; *Stardust*, by Miramax and Dimension Films; and *Coraline*, by Pandemonium Films. *Coraline* was adapted to film, released by Focus Features, 2009. *Signal to Noise* was made into a stage play by NOWtheater (Chicago, IL).

#### Sidelights

An English author (now living in the United States) of comic books, graphic novels (text and pictures in a comic-book format published in book form), prose novels, children's books, short fiction, nonfiction, and screenplays, Neil Gaiman is a best-selling writer who is considered perhaps the most accomplished and influential figure in modern comics as well as one of the most gifted of contemporary fantasists. Characteristically drawing from mythology, history, literature, and popular culture to create his works, Gaiman blends the everyday, the fantastic, the frightening, and the humorous to present his stories, which reveal the mysteries that lie just outside of reality as well as the insights that come from experiencing these mysteries. He refers to the plots and characters of classical literature and myth--most notably fairy tales, horror

stories, science fiction, and traditional romances--while adding fresh, modern dimensions. In fact, Gaiman is credited with developing a new mythology with his works, which address themes such as what it means to be human; the importance of the relationship between humanity and art; humanity's desire for dreams and for attaining what they show; and the passage from childish ways of thinking to more mature understanding. Although most of the author's works are not addressed to children, Gaiman often features child and young adult characters in his books, and young people are among Gaiman's greatest and most loyal fans. The author has become extremely popular, developing a huge cult-like following as well as a celebrity status. The author perhaps is best known as the creator of the comic-book and graphic-novel series about the Sandman. This character, which is based loosely on a crime-fighting superhero that first appeared in DC Comics in the 1930s and 40s, is the protagonist of an epic series of dark fantasies that spanned eight years and ran for seventy-five monthly issues. Gaiman introduces the Sandman as an immortal being who rules the Dreaming, a surreal world to which humans go when they fall asleep. As the series progresses, the Sandman discovers that he is involved with the fate of human beings on an intimate basis and that his life is tied intrinsically to this relationship. The "Sandman" series has sold millions of copies in both comic book and graphic novel formats and has inspired companion literature and a variety of related merchandise.

As a writer for children, Gaiman has been the subject of controversy for creating *Coraline*, a fantasy for middle-graders about a young girl who enters a bizarre alternate world that eerily mimics her own. Compared to Lewis Carroll's nineteenth-century fantasy *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for its imaginative depiction of a surreal adventure, *Coraline* has been questioned as an appropriate story for children because it may be too frightening for its intended audience. Gaiman also is the creator of picture books for children, such as *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*, a comic-book-style fantasy about a boy who trades his dad for two attractive goldfish, and *The Wolves in the Walls*, which features a brave girl who faces the wolves that have taken over her house. His young adult novel, *The Graveyard Book*, won the Newbery Medal in 2009. The author's adult novel *American Gods*, the tale of a young drifter who becomes involved with what appears to be a magical war, was a critical and popular success that helped to bring Gaiman to a mainstream audience. Among his many works, Gaiman has written a biography of the English pop/rock group Duran Duran; a comic book with shock-rocker Alice Cooper that the latter turned into an album; a satiric fantasy about the end of the world with English novelist Terry Pratchett; comic books about Todd MacFarlane's popular character Spawn; and scripts for film, television, and radio, both original scripts and adaptations of his own works. Gaiman wrote the English-language script for the well-received Japanese anime film *Princess Mononoke*; the script of the episode "Day of the Dead" for the television series *Babylon 5*; and both a television script and a novel called *Neverwhere* that describes how an office worker rescues a young woman who is bleeding from a switchblade wound and is transported with her to London Below, a mysterious and dangerous world underneath the streets of England's largest city. Throughout his career, Gaiman has worked with a number of talented artists in the fields of comic books and fantasy, including John Bolton, Michael Zulli, Yoshitaka Amano, Charles Vess, and longtime collaborator Dave McKean.

As a prose stylist, Gaiman is known for writing clearly and strongly, using memorable characters and striking images to build his dreamlike worlds. Although his books and screenplays can range

from somber to creepy to horrifying, Gaiman is commended for underscoring them with optimism and sensitivity and for balancing their darkness with humor and wit. Reviewers have praised Gaiman for setting new standards for comic books as literature and for helping to bring increased popularity to both them and graphic novels. In addition, observers have claimed that several of the author's works transcend the genres in which they are written and explore deeper issues than those usually addressed in these works. Although Gaiman occasionally has been accused of being ponderous and self-indulgent, he generally is considered a phenomenon, a brilliant writer and storyteller whose works reflect his inventiveness, originality, and wisdom. Writing in *St. James Guide to Horror, Ghost, and Gothic Writers*, Peter Crowther noted that when Gaiman "is on form (which is most of the time), he is without peer. ... His blending of poetic prose, marvelous inventions, and artistic vision has assured him of his place in the vanguard of modern-day dark fantasists." Keith R.A. DeCandido of *Library Journal* called Gaiman "arguably the most literate writer working in mainstream comics." Referring to Gaiman's graphic novels, Frank McConnell, writing in *Commonweal*, stated that the author "may just be the most gifted and important storyteller in English" and called him "our best and most bound-to-be-remembered writer of fantasy."

Born in Portchester, England, Gaiman was brought up in an upper-middle-class home. His father, David, was the director of a company, while his mother, Sheila, worked as a pharmacist. As a boy, Gaiman was "a completely omnivorous and cheerfully undiscerning reader," as he told Pamela Shelton in an interview for *Authors and Artists for Young Adults (AAYA)*. In an interview with Ray Olson, writing for *Booklist*, Gaiman recalled that he first read *Alice in Wonderland* "when I was five, maybe, and always kept it around as default reading between the ages of five and twelve, and occasionally picked up and reread since. There are things Lewis Carroll did in *Alice* that are etched onto my circuitry." Gaiman was a voracious reader of comic books until the age of sixteen, when he felt that he outgrew the genre as it existed at the time. At his grammar school, Ardingly College, Gaiman would get "very grumpy ... when they'd tell us that we couldn't read comics, because 'if you read comics you will not read OTHER THINGS.'" He asked himself, "Why are comics going to stop me reading?" Gaiman proved that his teachers were misguided in their theory: he read the entire children's library in Portchester in two or three years and then started on the adult library. He told Shelton, "I don't think I ever got to 'Z' but I got up to about 'L.'"

When he was about fourteen, Gaiman began his secondary education at Whitgift School. When he was fifteen, Gaiman and his fellow students took a series of vocational tests that were followed by interviews with career advisors. Gaiman told Shelton that these advisors "would look at our tests and say, 'Well, maybe you'd be interested in accountancy,' or whatever. When I went for my interview, the guy said, 'What do you want to do?' and I said, 'Well, I'd really like to write American comics.' And it was obvious that this was the first time he'd ever heard that. He just sort of stared at me for a bit and then said, 'Well, how do you go about doing that, then?' I said, 'I have no idea--you're the career advisor. Advise.' And he looked like I'd slapped him in the face with a wet herring; he sort of stared at me and there was this pause and I went on for a while and then he said, 'Have you ever thought about accountancy?'" Undeterred, Gaiman kept on writing. He also was interested in music. At sixteen, Gaiman played in a punk band that was about to be signed by a record company. Gaiman brought in an attorney who, after reading the

contract being offered to the band, discovered that the deal would exploit them; consequently, Gaiman refused to sign the contract. By 1977, he felt that he was ready to become a professional writer. That same year, Gaiman left Whitgift School.

After receiving some rejections for short stories that he had written, Gaiman decided to become a freelance journalist so that he could learn about the world of publishing from the inside. He wrote informational articles for British men's magazines with titles like *Knave*. Gaiman told Shelton that being a journalist "was terrific in giving me an idea of how the world worked. I was the kind of journalist who would go out and do interviews with people and then write them up for magazines. I learned economy and I learned about dialogue." In 1983, he discovered the work of English comic-strip writer Alan Moore, whose *Swamp Thing* became a special favorite. Gaiman told Shelton, "Moore's work convinced me that you really could do work in comics that had the same amount of intelligence, the same amount of passion, the same amount of quality that you could put in any other medium." In 1984, Gaiman produced his first book, *Duran Duran: The First Four Years of the Fab Five*. Once he had established his credibility as a writer, Gaiman was able to sell the short stories that he had done earlier in his career. In 1985, Gaiman married Mary Therese McGrath, with whom he has three children: Michael, Holly, and Madeleine (Maddy). At around this time, Gaiman decided that he was ready to concentrate on fiction. In addition, the comics industry was experiencing a new influx of talent, which inspired Gaiman to consider becoming a contributor to that medium.

In 1986, Gaiman met art student Dave McKean, and the two decided to collaborate. Their first work together was the comic book *Violent Cases*. Serialized initially in *Escape*, a British comic that showcased new strips, *Violent Cases* was published in book form in 1987. The story recounts the memories of an adult narrator--pictured by McKean as a dark-haired young man who bears a striking resemblance to Gaiman--who recalls his memories of hearing about notorious Chicago gangland leader Al Capone from an elderly osteopath who was the mobster's doctor. As a boy of four, the narrator had his arm broken accidentally by his father. In the office of the osteopath, the boy was transfixed by lurid stories about Chicago of the 1920s but, in the evenings, he had nightmares in which his own world and that of Capone's would intersect. As the story begins, the adult narrator is trying to make sense of the experience. According to Joe Sanders, writing in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, the narrator "discover[s] that grownups are as prone to uncertainty, emotional outbursts, and naïve rationalization as children. The boy is delighted, the grownup narrator perplexed, to see how 'facts' change to fit an interpreter's needs." Writing in London's *Sunday Times*, Nicolette Jones called *Violent Cases* "inspired and ingenious," while Cindy Lynn Speer, writing in an essay on the author's Web site, dubbed it "a brilliant tale of childhood and memory."

At around the same time that *Violent Cases* was published in book form, Gaiman produced the comic book *Outrageous Tales from the Old Testament*, which is credited with giving him almost instant notoriety in the comic-book community. Gaiman teamed with McKean again to do a limited-run comic series, *Black Orchid*, the first of the author's works to be released by DC Comics, the publisher of the original "Superman" and "Batman" series. A three-part comic book, *Black Orchid*, features an essentially nonviolent female heroine who fights villains that she hardly can remember. Gaiman then was offered his choice of inactive DC characters to rework

from the Golden Age of Comics (the 1930s and 1940s). He chose the Sandman. Originally, the character was millionaire Wesley Dodds who hunted criminals by night wearing a fedora, cape, and gas mask. Dodds would zap the crooks with his gas gun and leave them sleeping until the police got to them. When Gaiman began the series in 1988, he changed the whole scope of the character. The Sandman, who is also called Dream, Morpheus, Oneiros, Lord Shaper, Master of Story, and God of Sleep, became a thin, enigmatic figure with a pale face, dark eyes, and a shock of black hair. The Sandman is one of the Endless, immortals in charge of individual realms of the human psyche. The Sandman's brothers and sisters in the Endless are (in birth order) Destiny, Death, Destruction, the twins Desire and Despair, and Delirium (formerly Delight); Dream (the Sandman) falls between Death and Destruction.

In the "Sandman" book *Preludes and Nocturnes*, Gaiman introduces the title character, the ageless lord of dreams, who has just returned home after being captured by a coven of wizards and held in an asylum for the criminally insane for seventy-two years. Dream finds that his home is in ruins, that his powers are diminished, and that his three tools--a helmet, a pouch of sand, and a ruby stone--have been stolen. He finds his missing helpers and the young girl who has become addicted to the sand from his pouch; he also visits Hell to find the demon who stole his helmet and battles an evil doctor who has unleashed the power of dreams on the unsuspecting people of Earth. Dream comes to realize that his captivity has affected him: he has become humanized, and he understands that he eventually will have to die. In *The Doll's House*, Dream travels across the United States searching for the Arcana, the stray dreams and nightmares of the twentieth century that have taken on human form; the story is interwoven with a subplot about a young woman, Rose Walker, who has lost her little brother. In *Dream Country*, Gaiman features Calliope, a muse and the mother of Dream's son, Orpheus; the story also brings in a real character, actor/playwright William Shakespeare. In *Season of Mists*, Dream meets Lucifer, who has left his position as ruler of Hell and has left the choice of his successor to Dream.

*A Game of You* features Barbara (nicknamed Barbie), a character who had appeared in *The Doll's House*. Barbie is drawn back into the dream realm that she ruled as a child in order to save it from the evil Cuckoo, who plans to destroy it. *Fables and Reflections* is a collection of stories featuring the characters from the series and includes Gaiman's retelling of the Greek myth of Orpheus. In *Brief Lives*, Dream and Delirium embark on a quest to find their little brother Destruction, who exiled himself to Earth three hundred years before. *World's End* includes a collection of tales told by a group of travelers who are waiting out a storm in an inn. *The Kindly Ones* brings the series to its conclusion as Hippolyta (Lyta) Hall takes revenge upon Dream for the disappearance of her son. Lyta, who has been driven mad by anger and grief, asks the help of the title characters, mythological beings also known as the Furies. The Kindly Ones take out Lyta's revenge on Dream, who succumbs to their attack. The tale comes full cycle, and Dream's destiny is joined with that of humans in death. In the final chapter of the series, *The Wake*, a funeral is held for Dream; however, as Gaiman notes thematically, dreams really never die, and Dream's role in the Endless is taken on in a new incarnation. The Sandman also appears in a more peripheral role in *The Dream Hunters*, a retelling of the Japanese folktale "The Fox, the Monk, and the Mikado of All Night's Dreaming."

Next to the Sandman, Death, Dream's older sister, is the most frequently featured and popular character in the series. Death is charged with shepherding humans who are about to die through their transitions. Once a century, she must come to Earth as a sixteen-year-old girl in order to remind herself what mortality feels like. In contrast to Dream, who characteristically is isolated, brooding, and serious, Death, who is depicted as a spike-haired young woman who dresses like a punk rocker or Goth girl, has a more open and kindly nature. Death is featured in two books of her own, *Death: The High Cost of Living* and *Death: The Time of Your Life*. In the first story, she helps Sexton, a teen who is contemplating suicide, rediscover the joys in being alive as they journey through New York City and, in the second, she helps Foxglove, a newly successful musician, to reveal her true sexual orientation as her companion Hazel prepares to die. Death and the rest of the Endless are also featured in *The Sandman: Endless Nights*, in which Gaiman devotes an individual story to each of the seven siblings.

Writing in *Commonweal* about the "Sandman" series, Frank McConnell stated, " "Sandman" is not just one of the best pieces of fiction being done these days; ... it emerges as *the* best piece of fiction being done these days." McConnell stated that what Gaiman has done with the series "is to establish the fact that a comic book can be a work of high and very serious art--a story that other storytellers, in whatever medium they work, will have to take into account as an exploration of what stories can do and what stories are for." The critic concluded, "I know of nothing quite like it, and I don't expect there will be anything like it for some time. ... Read the damn thing; it's important." Peter Crowder, writing in *St. James Guide to Horror, Ghost, and Gothic Writers*, noted that, with the "Sandman" series of comic books, Gaiman "has truly revolutionized the power of the medium." Crowder called the various volumes of collected stories "almost uniformly excellent, and any one of them would make a good starting point for those readers who, while well-versed in the field of Gothic prose literature, have yet to discover the rare but powerful joy inherent in a great comic book." In 1996, DC Comics surprised the fans of "Sandman" by announcing the cancellation of the series while it was still the company's best-seller; however, DC had made this arrangement with Gaiman at the beginning of the series. "Sandman" has sold more than seven million copies; individual copies of the stories also have sold in the millions or in the hundreds of thousands. "A Midsummer's Night's Dream," a story from *Dream Country*, won the World Fantasy Award for the best short story of 1991. This was the first time that a comic book had won an award that was not related to its own medium, and the event caused an uproar among some fantasy devotees. The "Sandman" stories have inspired related volumes, such as a book of quotations from the series, and merchandise such as action figures, stuffed toys, trading cards, jewelry, and watches.

In 1994, Gaiman told Ken Tucker in *Entertainment Weekly*, "Superhero comics are the most perfectly evolved art form for preadolescent male power fantasies, and I don't see that as a bad thing. I want to reach other sorts of people, too." In 1995, he told Pamela Shelton, "If you're too young for "Sandman," you will be bored silly by it. It's filled with long bits with people having conversations." Speaking to Nick Hasted in the *Guardian* in 1999, Gaiman said, "Right now, as things stand, "Sandman" is my serious work. ... It is one giant, overarching story, and I'm proud of it. Compared to "Sandman," all the prose work so far is trivia." In 2003, Gaiman wrote an introduction to *The Sandman: King of Dreams*, a collection of text and art from the series with commentary by Alisa Kwitney. He commented, "If I have a concern over *The Sandman*, the

2,000-page story I was able to tell between 1988 and 1996, it is that the things that have come after it, the toys (whether plastic and articulated or soft and cuddly), the posters, the clothes, the calendars and candles, the companion volume, and even the slim book of quotations, along with the various spin-offs and such--will try people's patience and goodwill, and that a book like this will be perceived, not unreasonably, as something that's being used to flog the greasy patch in the driveway where once, long ago, a dead horse used to lie. The ten volumes of "The Sandman" are what they are, and that's the end of it."

Throughout his career, Gaiman has included young people as main characters in his works. For example, *The Books of Magic*, a collection of four comics published in 1993, predates J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series by featuring a thirteen-year-old boy, Tim Hunter, who is told that he has the capabilities to be the greatest wizard in the world. Tim, a boy from urban London who wears oversized glasses, is taken by the Trenchcoat Brigade--sorcerers with names like The Mysterious Phantom Stranger, the Incurable Hellblazer, and the Enigmatic Dr. Occult--on a tour of the universe to learn its magical history. Tim travels to Hell, to the land of Faerie, and to America, among other places, each of them showing him a different aspect of the world of magic. He also searches for his girlfriend, Molly, who has been abducted into the fantasy realms; after he finds her, the two of them face a series of dangers as they struggle to return to their own world. At the end of the story, Tim must make a decision to embrace or reject his talents as a wizard. *The Books of Magic* also includes cameos by the Sandman and his sister Death. Writing in *Locus*, Carolyn Cushman remarked, "It's a fascinating look at magic, its benefits and burdens, all dramatically illustrated [by John Bolton, Scott Hampton, Charles Vess, and Paul Johnson], and with a healthy helping of humor." Speaking of the format of *The Books of Magic*, Michael Swanwick, writing for *Book World*, noted, "The graphic novel has come of age. This series is worth any number of movies."

In 1994, Gaiman produced *The Tragical Comedy, or Comical Tragedy, of Mr. Punch* (also published as *Mr. Punch*), a work that he considers one of his best. In this graphic novel, which is illustrated by Dave McKean, a young boy is sent to stay with his grandparent by the seaside while his mother gives birth to his baby sister. While on his visit, the boy encounters a mysterious puppeteer and watches a Punch and Judy show, a sometimes violent form of puppet-theater entertainment. Through a series of strange experiences, he ends up rejecting Mr. Punch's promise that everyone in the world is free to do whatever they want. Sanders, writing in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, called *Mr. Punch* "perhaps Gaiman and McKean's most impressive collaboration," while Crowder called it "an impressive work, rich not only in freshness and originality but also in compassion, Gaiman's hallmark. ... The collective impact is literally breathtaking." Writing in *Commonweal*, Frank McConnell noted, "This stunning comic book-graphic novel--whatever--is easily the most haunting, inescapable story I have read in years."

In 1996, Gaiman and McKean produced their first work for children, the picture book *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*. In this tale, a little boy trades his father for two of his neighbor's goldfish while his little sister stares, horrified. When their mother finds out what has happened, she is furious. She makes the children go and get back their father who, unfortunately, has already been traded for an electric guitar. While on their quest to find him, the siblings

decide that their father is a very good daddy after all. The children finally retrieve their father, who has been reading a newspaper all during his adventure. At home, their mother makes the children promise not to swap their dad any more. Writing in *Bloomsbury Review*, Anji Keating called *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* "a fabulously funny tale" and dubbed the protagonists' journey to fetch their father "delightful." Malcolm Jones, writing in *Newsweek*, predicted that Gaiman and McKean "may shock a few grandparents. ... but in fact the most shocking thing they've done in this droll story is to take the illegible look of cutting-edge magazines like *Raygun* and somehow make it readable."

In 2003, Gaiman and McKean produced a second picture book, *The Wolves in the Walls*. In this work, young Lucy hears wolves living in the walls of the old house where she and her family live; of course, no one believes her. When the wolves emerge to take over the house, Lucy and her family flee. However, Lucy wants her house back, and she also wants the beloved pig-puppet that she left behind. She talks her family into going back into the house, where they move into the walls that had been vacated by the wolves. Lucy and her family frighten the usurpers, who are wearing their clothes and eating their food. The wolves scatter, and everything seems to go back to normal until Lucy hears another noise in the walls; this time, it sounds like elephants. In her *Booklist* review of *The Wolves in the Walls*, Francisca Goldsmith found the book "visually and emotionally sophisticated, accessible, and inspired by both literary and popular themes and imagery." Writing in *School Library Journal*, Marian Creamer commented that "Gaiman and McKean deftly pair text and illustration to convey a strange, vivid story," and predicted, "Children will delight in the 'scary, creepy tone.'"

Gaiman's first story for middle-graders, *Coraline*, outlines how the title character, a young girl who feels that she is being ignored by her preoccupied parents, enters a terrifying, malevolent alternate reality to save them after they are kidnapped. The story begins when Coraline and her parents move into their new house, which is divided into apartments. Left to her own devices, bored Coraline explores the house and finds a door in the empty flat next door that leads to a world that is a twisted version of her own. There, she meets two odd-looking individuals who call themselves her "other mother" and "other father." The Other Mother, a woman who looks like Coraline's except for her black-button eyes and stiletto fingernails, wants Coraline to stay with her and her husband. Tempted by good food and interesting toys, Coraline considers the offer. However, when the girl returns home, she finds that her parents have disappeared. Coraline discovers that they are trapped in the other world, and she sets out to save them. The Other Mother, who turns out to be a soul-sucking harpy, enters into a deadly game of hide-and-seek with Coraline, who discovers new qualities of bravery and resolve within herself. Before returning home, Coraline saves herself, her parents, and some ghost children who are trapped in the grotesque world.

After its publication, *Coraline* became a subject of dispute. Some adult observers saw it as a book that would give nightmares to children. However, other observers have noted that the children of their acquaintance who read the book consider it an exciting rather than overly frightening work. A reviewer in *Publishers Weekly* noted that Gaiman and illustrator McKean "spin an electrifyingly creepy tale likely to haunt young readers for many moons. ... Gaiman twines his tale with a menacing tone and crisp prose fraught with memorable imagery ... , yet

keeps the narrative just this side of terrifying." Writing in *School Library Journal*, Bruce Anne Shook commented, "The story is odd, strange, even slightly bizarre, but kids will hang on every word. ... This is just right for all those requests for a scary book." Stephanie Zvirin, writing in *Booklist*, added that Gaiman offers "a chilling and empowering view of children, to be sure, but young readers are likely to miss such subtleties as the clever allusions to classic horror movies and the references to the original dark tales of the Brothers Grimm." A critic in *Kirkus Reviews* found *Coraline* "not for the faint-hearted--who are mostly adults anyway--but for stouthearted kids who love a brush with the sinister, *Coraline* is spot on." *Coraline* has won several major fantasy awards and has become an international best-seller.

Since his success with *Coraline*, Gaiman has continued to focus his writing for younger readers, producing both picture books for the young and novels for more mature readers. In *Blueberry Girl*, illustrated by Vess, Gaiman produces "a rich and beautiful prayer for a girl," as a *Kirkus Reviews* contributor noted. The prayer is issued by three figures hovering above a dancing girl, representing the three ages of woman: the young woman, a mother, and a crone. The *Kirkus Reviews* writer felt that Gaiman's verses are "lovely, sinuous and sweetly rhyming, piling on blessings." These blessings focus on the young girl being able to find her own way in life and her own truths. Wendy Lukehart, writing for *School Library Journal*, praised the "fresh approach" Gaiman and Vess take in this poem to an unborn child. "Fans of Gaiman and Vess will pounce on this creation," concluded a *Publishers Weekly* reviewer.

For middle grade reader, Gaiman produced a book focusing on Norse mythology. in *Odd and the Frost Giants*. Odd, the twelve-year-old protagonist, decides to leave his home in a Viking settlement and seek solitude in nature. He has had difficult time recently with the death of his father in a Viking raid and his mother quickly remarrying to a man Odd cannot stand. Added to this is the accident that left one of Odd's legs crippled. It is spring, but still cold, when Odd heads off for the wilderness to live on his own in a cabin. Soon he has interactions with various animals, helping a bear to free its paw in one instance. After helping the animals, Odd learns that they are actually gods--Thor, Odin and Loki--that the Frost Giant has changed into an eagle, a fox, and a wolf because he, the Frost Giant, wants to woo the spring-goddess Freya, and desires no competition. Thus he has banished the trio from the godly realm of Asgard. Odd conspires to get the gods back to their proper home by using a rainbow bridge. In Odd's subsequent encounter with the Frost Giant, the youth is able to outwit the giant. A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer found this a "simple but well-done tale," while *School Library Journal* contributor Lauralyn Persson called it a "a thoughtful and quietly humorous fantasy." Persson went on to observe that young readers will appreciate "Gaiman's simple and graceful writing, and the satisfying conclusion." Higher praise came from a *Kirkus Reviews* contributor who termed *Odd and the Frost Giants* a "winner," as well as a "sweet, wistful, slyly funny novella." *Horn Book* reviewer Joanna Rudge Long felt that "Gaiman's narration is impeccable" in this myth-inspired fantasy. Likewise, *Booklist* contributor Ian Chipman praised Gaiman's "deft humor, lively prose, and agile imagination" in this novella.

Writing for younger readers in *Crazy Hair*, Gaiman delivers a "surreal poem," according to *School Library Journal* reviewer Lukehart, about a young girl's encounter with a strange man who has long and wavy hair. Bonnie, the young girl, learns that cockatoos inhabit the man's

locks along with gorillas, tigers, and sloths. Eventually Bonnier herself becomes an inhabitant of this mysterious person's hair. A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer thought that "fans of Gaiman and McKean's ... twisted humor will welcome this lighter-than-usual addition." Similarly, Chipman, writing for *Booklist*, termed *Crazy Hair*, "another chaotic picture book popping with bright collage and multimedia imagery," while a *Kirkus Reviews* contributor called it a "rhymed defense of unshorn locks."

If there were ever any lingering doubt about Gaiman's prowess as a writer for young audiences as well as adults, that was erased with his 2008 young adult work, *The Graveyard Book* which, in addition to taking the prestigious Newbery Medal in 2009, also won the Locus Award for best young-adult book, and the Hugo Award for best novel in the same year. The book features Owen Nobody, better known as Bod, who lives in a graveyard and is cared for by a guardian, Silas, who is neither dead nor living. Bod is befriended by and educated by assorted ghosts of teachers, children, workers and numerous others who form a community for the orphan. Bod cannot leave the graveyard for fear of attack by a man named Jack, the very one who killed Bod's family. In the graveyard, Bod has adventures and faces dangers, from the ancient Indigo Man beneath the hill, to the strange and terrible Sleer. He learns things about his own family and about why they were murdered. In the graveyard since he was a toddler, by twelve Bod begins to understand what he must do to be able to leave the place and rejoin the living.

Reviewers responded warmly to this novel for teens. *New York Times Book Review* contributor Monica Edinger found it "by turns exciting and witty, sinister and tender." Edinger also felt that *The Graveyard Book* "shows Gaiman at the top of his form," and that it is "a tale of unforgettable enchantment." Writing in the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, Don L.F. Nilsen felt that "Gaiman's tale is delightfully spooky, but also heartrending, funny, and instructive at various times." *Spectator* reviewer S.E.G. Hopkin found the work to be "a beautifully constructed book," and further noted that "Bod is a charming hero, courageous, considerate and polite in the styles of many centuries." Further praise came from *Independent Online* contributor Tim Martin, who called it a "hugely satisfying little book."

In his interview with Pamela Shelton, Gaiman said, "What I enjoy most is when people say to me, 'When I was sixteen I didn't know what I was going to do with my life and then I read *Sandman* and now I'm at university studying mythology' or whatever. I think it's wonderful when you've opened a door to people and showed them things that would never have *known* they would have been interested in." Gaiman finds it satisfying to introduce his readers to mythology. He told Shelton, "You gain a cultural understanding to the last 2,500 to 3,000 years, which, if you lack it, there's an awful lot of stuff that you will simply never quite understand." He noted that, in *Sandman*, even readers unfamiliar with the Norse god Loki or the three-headed spirit of Irish mythology "sort of half-know; there's a gentle and sort of delightful familiarity with these tales. It feels right. And I think that's probably the most important thing. Giving people this stuff, pointing out that it can be interesting, but also pointing out what mythologies do know. And how they affect us." In an interview with Nick Hasted in the *Guardian*, Gaiman stated, "What I'm fighting now is the tendency to put novelists in a box, to make them write the same book over and over again. I want to shed skins. I want to keep awake. I definitely have a feeling that if I'm not going forward, if I'm not learning something, then I'm dead."

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## FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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## Author Interview

Q&A with Neil courtesy of HarperCollins Publishers

**Q: Did you know all along what kind of creature Silas was, or did it come to you as you were writing? Miss Lepescu?**

A: I knew them, and what they were, pretty much before I knew anything else. Originally I thought that Miss Lupescu would be there from the start, but when I wrote the book she didn't turn up until Chapter Three.

**Q: Besides Bela Fleck's "Danse Macabre," what other songs would be on your *Graveyard Book* playlist?**

A: What a great question. Here's another nine songs for a ten-song playlist:

- "Walking After Midnight," Cowboy Junkies version, or Patsy Cline original
- "Born on a Train," Magnetic Fields
- "City of the Damned," Gothic Archies
- "We Are the Dead," David Bowie
- "Graveyard," Tori Amos
- "She's in the Graveyard Now," Earl McDonald's Original Louisville Jug Band
- "My Death," David Bowie (again)
- "I Will Follow You Into the Dark," Amanda Palmer's cover of Death Cab For Cutie's song
- "Cemetery Polka," Tom Waits

**Q: Besides the ghoulish gate, are there other special passageways to be found in a graveyard?**

A: I think every graveyard, and every grave, will take you somewhere.

**Q: When you made the 33rd President of the United States a ghoulish, did you know it was Harry Truman? If so, then why Harry Truman of all the American Presidents?**

A: It's not that the ghouls actually were the people they call themselves after. Each ghoulish names itself after its first meal, once it has become a ghoulish, and they like to make it someone important, so they can boast about it.

**Q: Now that it's been several years since you wrote *The Graveyard Book*, what are the events or characters that stay with you the most? What parts of the book do you find**

**yourself re-visiting, either on the page or in your imagination?**

A: The last few pages. I wonder what happens next.

**Q: I always cry when I read the end of *The Graveyard Book*. Do you ever cry when you read your own books? Is there any other book that makes you cry?**

A: I got pretty sniffly on the last few pages of *The Graveyard Book*, when I wrote the first draft in longhand, late at night down at the bottom of the garden in the February cold.

I used to get angry when books made my eyes sting, as if the author or the book had somehow taken advantage of me. Now I think it's wonderful that I can be made to care.

**Q: What is Silas in THE GRAVEYARD BOOK?**

A: Silas is a Very Important Character in THE GRAVEYARD BOOK. Also, he is Bod's Guardian.

**Q: Could you write a sequel to THE GRAVEYARD BOOK? I just finished it and I want more!**

A: I will, yes, but it will go to very different places—and it may not get back to the Graveyard.

*Courtesy of HarperCollins Publishers*

## Discussion Questions

1. Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean are frequent collaborators. How do McKean's illustrations contribute to your reading of the story?
2. There is a rich tradition of orphans in children's literature, as well as a tradition of child-of-destiny themes in fantasy literature. Discuss how Bod fits squarely into both categories.
3. The graveyard is populated with characters we typically think of as evil. How does Gaiman play with this idea, particularly in the characters of Silas, Miss Lupescu, and Eliza Hempstock? What do these characterizations suggest about human nature?
4. From the opening lines, Gaiman is able to hook readers with a distinct narrative voice and a vivid setting. Discuss how both of these elements serve the story.
5. If you are familiar with Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, discuss how *The Graveyard Book* is reminiscent of Kipling's classic tale. How does a familiarity with *The Jungle Book* enhance the reading of Gaiman's story?
6. At the close of the novel, Mrs. Owens sings about embracing the human experience: "Face your life / Its pain, its pleasure, / Leave no path untaken" (p.306). How does this theme resonate throughout?
7. "A graveyard is not normally a democracy, and yet death is the great democracy" (p. 29). How is death the great democracy? How does Gaiman explore the relationship between the dead and the living?
8. It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. How does the graveyard come together to raise this particular child? Describe the special mentoring relationships that Bod has with Silas and Miss Lupescu.
9. Boundaries—between the living and the dead, the graveyard and the world—are an important part of the novel. How does Bod test these boundaries? What are the consequences of Bod's actions?
10. Bod's human interactions are limited to a shortlived friendship with Scarlett and a brief stint at school. Discuss how these experiences change Bod. How do our friendships and associations with others affect us?
11. What do you think of the advice that Bod receives from Nehemiah Trot, the dead poet: "Do not take revenge in the heat of the moment. Instead, wait until the hour is propitious" (p. 233)?

12. How does *The Graveyard Book* compare to Gaiman's first novel for young readers, *Coraline*? Much of *Coraline*'s success can be attributed to its strong and diverse following. What are some of the characteristics of Gaiman's writing that allow for a crossover appeal?
13. Like much of Gaiman's work, *The Graveyard Book* manages to fuse elements of humor, horror, fantasy, and mystery into a single story. Identify examples of these elements and discuss how they work together. How might the story read differently if one or more of these elements were removed?

*Courtesy of HarperCollins Publishers*