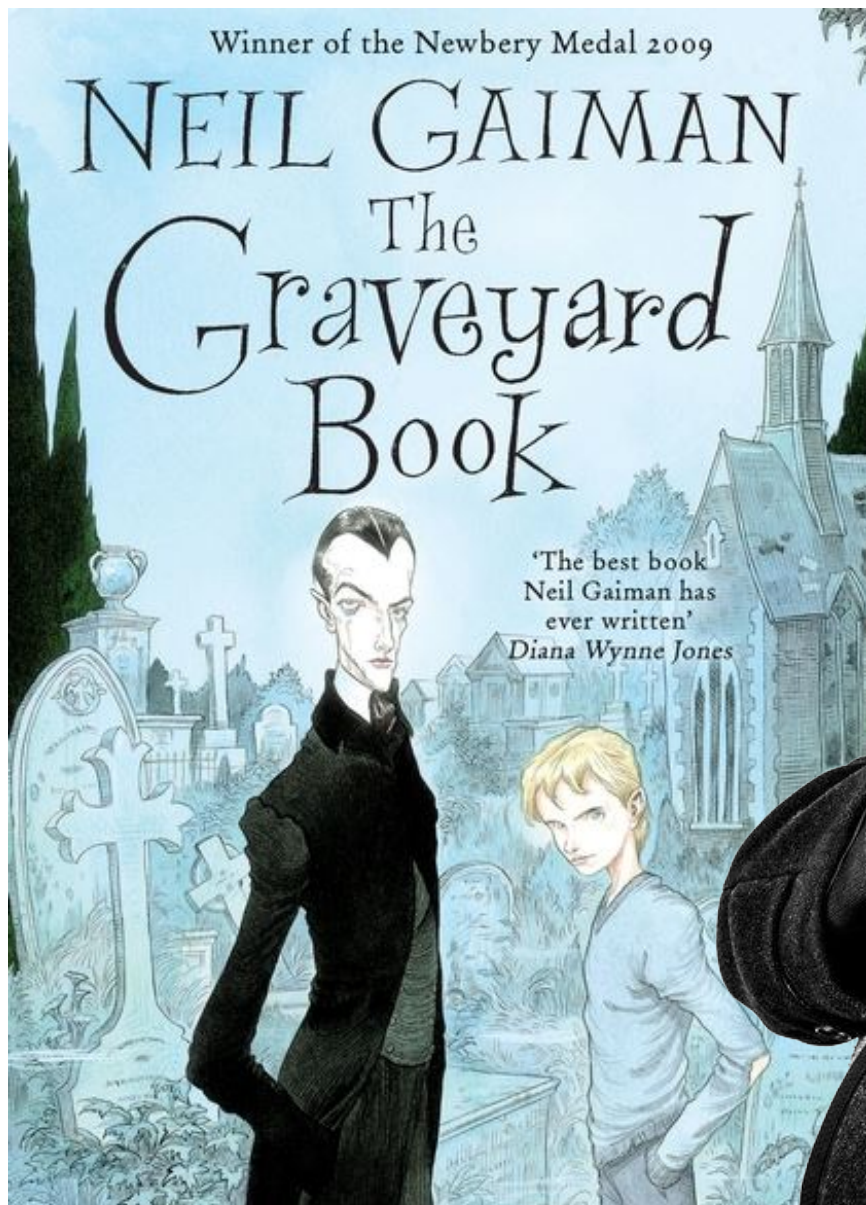


The Graveyard Book

A BOOK TALK
BY WILLIAM HUYNH



<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/12/books/neil-gaiman-norse-mythology.html>

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About The Author

- Neil Gaiman began his career his career in comic books. And his work has been adapted into the mediums of film, television, comics and animation.
- Gaiman got his inspiration for this novel by watching his son playing in a graveyard as comfortable as a playground. It wouldn't be until 15 years later that he would be ready to write this novel.
- He based this book on Kipling's The Jungle Book, but instead of a boy being raised in a jungle with animals, this novel contains a boy being raised by ghosts in a graveyard.
- Neil Gaiman's Website: <http://www.neilgaiman.com/>

Summary

The Graveyard Book starts with the shocking murder of a family. The sole survivor, a baby boy, escapes to the nearby graveyard. There he is safe from his family's killer, and taken in by the inhabitants. The boy is adopted by two ghost parents, gains a vampire guardian, and given the name Nobody Owens, or Bod for short. The rest of the book follows Bod as he grows up, learns about the secrets of the graveyard, and gains insight into the sinister motive behind his family's murder. He's tutored by a werewolf, travels to the underworld, and faces the secret society

that is after him. By the end of the novel Bod learns what it means to be alive in a place inhabited by the dead.

Three Quotes

- “It's like the people who believe they'll be happy if they go and live somewhere else, but who learn it doesn't work that way. Wherever you go, you take yourself with you. If you see what I mean.”
“They kill themselves, you mean? Said Bod.

Significance: This quote is one example of what this novel does very well, which is take a difficult issue and reinterpret them through the lens of fantasy. Here we have a character asking about the very real and important issue of suicide, and a character, a vampire, giving his own unique perspective on the issue. And while the character is wildly fantastical, his take on the issue still rings true to the reality of the situation. This is a particular strength of fantastical fiction. You can have discussions on themes that cannot exist in more grounded fiction. As here in this quote we have a vampire explaining to a child that suicide is often not the answer. And he knows this because he regularly commune with the dead who don't seem any happier after death. Now any young adult novel could have the theme of suicide in it, but this novel by virtue of having supernatural creatures in it can take this theme further. It can imagine the other side and give insight into what that may be like. The Graveyard Book is able to tackle topics other YA novels have but do so in wholly new and imaginative ways.

- “Yes.” Silas hesitated. “They are. And they are, for the most part, done with the world. You are not. You’re alive, Bod. That means you have infinite potential. You can do anything, make anything, dream anything. If you change the world, the world will change. Potential. Once you’re dead, it’s gone. Over. You’ve made what you’ve made, dreamed your dream, written your name. You may be buried here, you may even walk. But that potential is finished.”

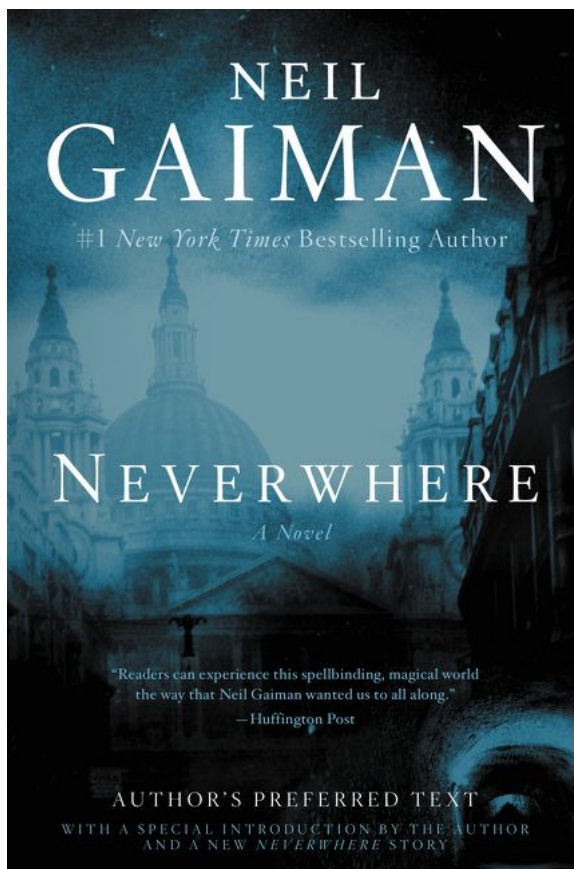
Significance: This quote is significant because it is here that Bod comes to realize what sets him apart from the other people in his life. They are all ghosts, they are quite literally in their final resting place. But not Bod he is still alive, and capable of doing near anything. And the young adult readers who have reached this part of the novel can come to the same realization. Because when you’re an adolescent you have infinite potential to your teachers or parents. They are in state where nothing is yet final, just like Bod. This quote is where the reader is able to most closely identify with Bod. Because like Bod they are alive and therefore there’s nothing they can’t do, but once it’s over, it’s over.

- “It was dark in the crypt, and it smelled of mildew and damp and old stones, and it seemed, for the first time, very small.

Bod said, “I want to see life. I want to hold it in my hands. I want to leave a footprint on the sand of a desert island. I want to play football with people. I want,” he said, and then he paused and he thought. “I want everything.”

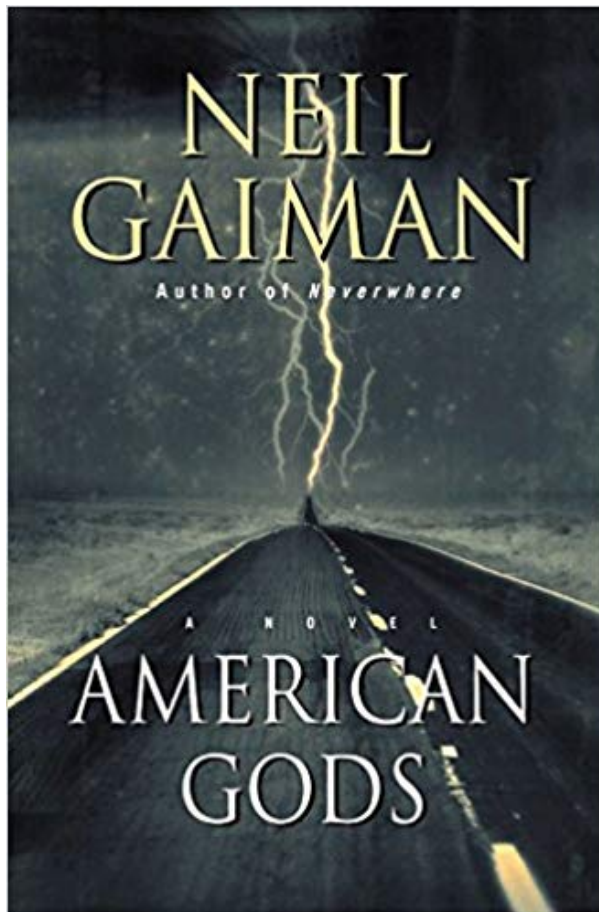
Significance: This quote is from the end of the novel Bod can barely the ghosts he once called his family, any longer. He is about to venture out into the world. This quote hold significance becomes it is about leaving home, and venturing out into the world. It's about how a boy who has spent his whole life among the dead is finally going out into the world of the living. But even more than that, he want to live, and it's universal this want to see and experience everything. We follow Bod from the time he's a baby to adulthood, and here we are the moment he's about to finally live his life on his terms. It surmises the novels central theme, which is that life, is worth living because of its potential.

Neil Gaiman's Other Works



Summary: This novel explores London Below which is a secret city beneath London inhabited by those forgotten by society and supernatural creatures, like angels, and monsters.

Themes: Much like The Graveyard Book tackles the difficult issues of suicide and death, this novel approaches the issue of homelessness through the lens of fantasy as well.



Summary: This novel explores how immigrants coming to America brought their own gods and now those gods are on the verge of war.

Themes: This book gives human personification to gods and through this analyzes how America is a melting pot of cultures.

- **The Graveyard Book Adaptation**

A film based on *The Graveyard Book* has been attempted multiple times. First Disney hired Henry Selick, who directed *A Nightmare Before Christmas*, and *Coraline*, another one of Gaiman's books, to try and adapt this novel. They were trying to do it as stop-motion animated movie. About 70% of the movie was animated before the studio decided Selick was too hard to work with to finish the film. Next Ron Howard tried to do it as a live-action film but eventually left to direct *Solo A Star War Story*.

Adolescents In the Search for Meaning

When compared to the kinds of book described in *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning*, two kinds of books stand out in relation to The Graveyard Book: Chapter 5, Books about Facing Death and Loss, and Chapter 8, Books on Allegory, Fantasy, Myth and Parable. This novel interweaves the two. Bod comes to understand the concept of death and loss through fantasy and myth.

Text Complexity

Lexile Level: Score: 820L, Age Range: 11-17

ATOS Level: Score: 5.1, 5th Grade and Up

Qualitative: From a qualitative standpoint this novel may prove more difficult for younger children. The subject matter which includes, murder, death, suicide, and romance are not suited for very young children. Children at the fifth grade level and approaching middle school may be well equipped for this novel if they have been exposed to such difficult concepts before. But readers from age 11 to 17 are best suited for this novel and will get much more out of the plot and themes.

Quantitative: In the case of this novel the quantitative score of both the ATOS and the Lexile are agreeable. The novel at certain points has a great deal of knowledge demands, parts involving Bod going to the underworld for example. Also the language poses some complications if the reader is not equipped for it. While at the same time this novel did with the Newberry which is an award for children's novels.

Summation: Younger readers can still enjoy the novel but may not get all of the best parts of this novel.