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The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman, Harper, 2010

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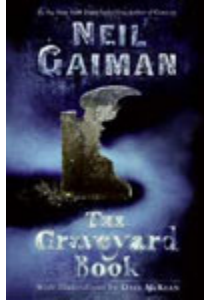
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Recommended Readings



The Graveyard Book

by Neil Gaiman, Harper, 2010

Reviewed by Richard McGowan

Sometimes I select a book to read because I am curious as to how in the world an author manages to draw a reader into a preposterous plot. In the case of Neil Gaiman's Newberry Medal-winning *The Graveyard Book*, the question might be, "How in the netherworld did he do that?"

Here is the book's plot: Nobody Owens, barely able to walk, inadvertently toddles off the night his parents and older sister are murdered. He wanders into a graveyard and there he lives, raised by ghosts.

Thereafter, Bod, as the child is called by his adoptive family, lives a normal life to the extent permitted by the graveyard's denizens. Bod encounters human visitors as can be expected from someone who is, in fact, a human being and not a ghost, but he learns the skills that can only be taught by the dead, too.

The book's central conflict is Bod's growing desire to live in the normal world as a normal human being, for those in the graveyard have come to love him and he loves them.

Hence, the book is not some fantastic science fiction but more a story about growth and development, of human affection and the nature of community. While the plot sounds like straight fantasy, the book reads like any 'normal' novel narrating the affairs of the human heart.

I do not know how in the netherworld Gaiman managed to pull this one off successfully; I do know it richly deserved the Newberry.

- Richard McGowan is Instructor of Business Ethics at Butler University.