

The Graveyard Book Study Guide

The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman

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Plot Summary

The Graveyard Book by award-winning author Nick Gaiman is a novel about a baby raised in a graveyard by the dead. Nobody Owens' entire family is murdered in the middle of the night when he is only eighteen months old. Nobody escapes by wandering into an old graveyard and is adopted by a couple buried there for more than a hundred years. As Nobody grows up, he learns all there is to know about being dead and haunting the living, but must continue to hide in the safety of the graveyard until the man who wanted him and his family dead is found. The Graveyard Book is a story of an unusual child and his unusual childhood, one that starts out to frighten but ends up enlightening the unsuspecting reader.

A baby wakes in the middle of the night and finds the front door of his home open. Unaware of the danger that follows him, the baby walks to an ancient graveyard on the hill above his family home. A killer follows, intent on killing the baby as he has the child's entire family. Instead, two ancient souls who have been buried in the graveyard for more than a hundred years take the child under their guard, promising the spirit of the child's dead mother they will care and protect him from the killer.

The graveyard votes to give the child Freedom of the Graveyard. This permits the living child to have access to the entire graveyard, including locked and sealed areas that the living would normally not be able to access. The ancient couple, Mr. and Mrs. Owens, adopt the child and name him Nobody because he looks like nobody but himself.

When Nobody is four, a young girl the same age as him begins coming to the graveyard. The girl, Scarlett, befriends Nobody and often plays with him in the graveyard. Due to the fact that they never see him, Scarlett's parents think that Nobody is an imaginary friend. One day, Nobody takes Scarlett into the tomb of the most ancient of the graveyard's residents. In this tomb they run into a person they dub the Indigo Man, who attempts to scare them away. Nobody, however, is not frightened. Scarlett's parents become frightened while Scarlett and Nobody are in the tomb because they cannot find her. A short time later, the family moves to Scotland.

A few years later, Nobody, now called Bod for short, learns that his guardian, Silas, is going away and he will be cared for by Miss Lupescu. Miss Lupescu feeds Bod things he does not like and forces him to learn things he does not want to learn. One day Bod runs into a couple of ghouls and quickly finds himself on the road to their home city. Bod is frightened, but he does not know what to do. In time, a large grey dog comes to rescue him and Bod realizes this dog is Miss Lupescu. From that moment on, Bod decides to pay attention to what Miss Lupescu has to say.

Several years later, Bod comes across an area of the cemetery where there are no headstones. This area is unconsecrated ground where the poor, criminals, and witches have been buried. Bod meets the witch, Liza, and decides to get a tombstone for her. This requires going into town and speaking with the living, something Bod has never



done before. Bod quickly finds himself in trouble with an unscrupulous pawn broker, but Liza comes and rescues him.

Eventually, Bod comes to the decision that he needs to go to school with the living so that he might one day be able to survive in the real world. Silas supports this decision and sends Bod to school, but Bod quickly gets himself into trouble with a couple of bullies in the school. When Bod is arrested and nearly taken to juvenile hall, Silas and Bod both agree it would be better if Bod not attend school.

Scarlett returns to London after her parents are divorced and finds herself in the cemetery again. Scarlett meets a kindly Mr. Frost there, who gives her a ride home. Scarlett returns to the cemetery to help Mr. Frost with his research and runs into Bod. Scarlett recalls their friendship and begins investigating the murder of Bod's family to help him understand how he came to be in the cemetery in the first place. When Scarlett learns the truth, she introduces Bod to Mr. Frost, who happens to be living in the same house where Bod's family was killed. It turns out Mr. Frost is the man Jack who killed Bod's family and still hopes to kill him.

Bod lures the man Jack and his other companions into the cemetery where he disposes of them one by one. In the end, the man Jack is taken away by the sleer who protect the ancient tomb. Scarlett leaves the cemetery, unable to understand why Bod had to kill all those men.

A short time later, Bod finds himself unable to see and do the things he has always been able to do in the cemetery. It has come time for Bod to leave. Silas gives Bod money, clothes, and a passport that will allow him to finally explore the world as he has always wanted to do.



Chapter 1, How Nobody Came to the Cemetery

Chapter 1, How Nobody Came to the Cemetery Summary

Neil Gaiman is an award winning writer who is well known for both his graphic novels and award winning children's books. This novel is set in Gaiman's native England.

The man Jack comes into a house in the middle of the night and kills a mother, father, and daughter. When the man Jack goes to kill the eighteen-month-old baby, he discovers the baby has slipped out of his crib and walked up the hill to a small, ancient graveyard. In the cemetery, a pale woman finds the small, living child. The woman's husband tries to make her leave the child alone, but his wife will not listen. When they notice the man Jack trying to get into the cemetery, another spirit comes into the cemetery. This spirit, a young woman, begs Mrs. Owens to watch over her child. Others in the cemetery gather around, concerned about the attention their silent, ancient cemetery is getting.

The man Jack comes across a man in the cemetery who claims to be the caretaker. This man walks the man Jack to the gate where he unlocks it for him. This man has convinced the man Jack that the baby he seeks went down the hill rather than up. Back in the cemetery, this man is revealed to be Silas, a man neither living nor dead, who has been given Freedom of the Cemetery.

The residents of the cemetery gather together to decide the fate of the infant now called Nobody. Mrs. Owen insists that she and her husband be allowed to adopt the child so that she can fulfill her promise to the child's deceased mother. Silas offers to gather food for the child and other things he might need. The others of the cemetery are afraid of what it might mean for them to have a living child in their cemetery. While the cemetery is ancient and has not been active in many years, it has been declared a nature reserve. Humans often come to the cemetery during the day. The residents wonder what might happen if someone should see the child. When the lady on the Grey comes and reminds them to be charitable, the residents of the cemetery decide to grant the child Freedom of the Cemetery. At the same time, the man Jack continues to search for the child, determined to find him and kill him. However, the man Jack knows there is plenty of time to find this child.



Chapter 1, How Nobody Came to the Cemetery Analysis

An entire family is murdered in the middle of the night except for the eighteen-month-old baby who likes to wonder around on his own. The baby escapes into a cemetery where it is quickly taken under the guard of an ancient spirit whose body has been buried in the cemetery for over one hundred years. The baby is given the name Nobody and is taken under the guardianship of a man named Silas, who is clearly a vampire or a similar creature.

Raising a baby in a cemetery is an unusual set of circumstances. The reader wonders how the child will be cared for in this cemetery and suspects a great deal of magic and supernatural events will take place in this child's lifetime. At the same time, the reader wonders why this baby's family was targeted and what will happen to him as he grows older. The question of why these supernatural creatures, Silas and The Lady on the Grey who represents death, would want to help this living child. There must be something important about Nobody that will hopefully become clear as the novel continues to develop.



Chapter 2, The New Friend

Chapter 2, The New Friend Summary

When Nobody is about four years old, he begins to ask questions about his situation. Bod wants to know why he cannot leave the cemetery, why no other living children live in the cemetery, and what the letters mean on the tombstones. Silas answers Bod's questions as best as he can. To help Bod learn to read, he gives him paper and crayons that he can use to trace the words on the tombstones and then later Silas will help him read them. While doing this one day, Bod runs into a little girl, Scarlett, who has come to the cemetery with her mother because it is a nature reserve.

Scarlett befriends Bod and they begin playing together in the cemetery. However, Scarlett's mother never sees Bod, she and her husband believe that Bod is an imaginary friend their daughter has made up. Highly educated, the parents encourage their daughter's belief in Bod.

One day, Scarlett asks Bod where the oldest grave in the graveyard is. Bod asks one of the inhabitants, Caius Pompeius, if he is the oldest. Caius is a Roman buried at the cemetery hundreds of years before. However, Caius believes there is a tomb inside the hill where a Celt is buried, a person who came to this cemetery many years before the Romans. Caius tells Bod about two men who once entered the tomb. One was a farmer who refused to ever speak of what he saw in the tomb and another was a treasure hunter who never returned from the tomb.

Bod wants to explore the oldest tomb in the cemetery. When Scarlett comes again, he takes her with him into the oldest tomb. When they reach the bottom of the stairs, they come into contact with a man covered in tattoos that Scarlett dubs the Indigo Man. Scarlett is frightened, but Bod sees through the man's scare tactics and refuses to believe in him. The man disappears and a voice begins to speak inside Bod's head. The voice claims to be the Sleur, a creature left in the tomb to protect the treasure and the master upon his return. The treasure, however, is only a brooch, a knife, and a goblet.

When Scarlett and Bod return to the surface of the cemetery, they discover that Scarlett's parents have called the police to search for her. Bod hides while Scarlett makes her presence known. The parents rush to take Scarlett home, refusing to listen to her explanation of where she had gone. A few days later, Scarlett returns to the cemetery to say goodbye to Bod. Her family is moving to Scotland.

Chapter 2, The New Friend Analysis

Bod is now four years old and beginning to learn some of the same things a normal child his age might learn, such as his alphabet. Bod is aware of the oddness of his situation and he often asks questions of his guardian, Silas. This shows the reader that despite his situation, Bod is a normal child with a deep intelligence.



Bod befriends a young girl his same age as him in the cemetery and takes her into the depth of the oldest tomb in the cemetery. This tomb is guarded by something called a sleer that is designed to keep the treasure protected and to protect its master upon his return. This will prove to be important as the novel continues to develop, but at this point the most important thing is Bod's ability to move past the fear that would affect a normal living person and see through the sleer's scare tactics. Bod is not afraid of anything in the cemetery because he is a part of the cemetery and knows all the tricks behind the schemes to scare the living.

Scarlett is a normal child being raised in the living world. As a result, Scarlett's parents do not believe that Bod is real and they panic when she disappears. This leads to Scarlett moving away to Scotland. However, the reader suspects this might not be the last the reader will hear of Scarlett.



Chapter 3, The Hounds of God

Chapter 3, The Hounds of God Summary

Bod has learned that Silas plans to go away for a length of time. In his place, Silas has arranged for a Miss Lupescu to stay nearby and to provide Bod with food. After Silas leaves, much to Bod's distress, Miss Lupescu starts bringing him strange food and forcing him to learn strange lessons that he does not want to learn. Bod and Miss Lupescu do not get along and Bod finds himself hiding the lessons she has instructed him to learn rather than study them.

One day Bod complains to anyone who will listen to him about Miss Lupescu, but no one has any sympathy for him. In a pout, Bod takes a brief nap next to a memorial. As he sleeps, a group of small men come into the cemetery and head to that specific memorial. They wake Bod and he tells them how unhappy he is with Miss Lupescu. These creatures invite Bod to go with them and then open the memorial and throw him inside.

The creatures take Bod deep into the world under the memorial, a world lit by a red sun. They come into contact with other creatures. They tell Bod they plan to turn him into a ghoul, like them. Bod becomes frightened and asks for help from the Night-gaunts flying above the road as Miss Lupescu taught him, but nothing happens. They camp for the night, and the next morning two of the ghouls are missing. The group continues toward their city, Ghulheim, rushing now out of fear. As they near the city, a grey dog that Bod has noticed before in the cemetery comes up behind them. The dog rescues Bod from the bag in which the ghouls have been carrying him. Bod is frightened and nearly falls off the side of the road, but a Night-guant saves him.

The grey dog speaks to Bod, explaining how it came to find him. Bod realizes this dog is Miss Lupescu. When Bod returns to the safety of the cemetery, he makes an effort to study his lessons with Miss Lupescu more carefully. In fact, Bod decides he likes Miss Lupescu.

Chapter 3, The Hounds of God Analysis

In this chapter, Bod is once again a few years older. Silas has become a source of comfort and information to Bod; therefore, he is saddened when Silas tells him he must go away. In his place Silas, leaves a strict German woman who proves to be hard on Bod. Bod dislikes Miss Lupescu and refuses to work with her, a situation that causes Bod to be taken away by the ghouls.

There are many dangers in the cemetery that Bod does not understand and Silas has tried to teach Bod to beware of these dangers. In his place, Silas has left Miss Lupescu to continue Bod's education, but he refuses to listen. This is what leads to Miss Lupescu to being forced to save Bod. In the end, Bod discovers that Miss Lupescu is attempting

to help Bod despite her tough exterior and he comes to trust and care for her. This suggests to the reader a deeper relationship between these two characters than what has been revealed thus far.



Chapter 4, The Hounds of God

Chapter 4, The Hounds of God Summary

Bod learns about the unconsecrated ground in the far corner of the cemetery. It is a potter's field where the poor, criminals, and a witch are buried. There is an apple tree near the potter's field where Bod likes to hang out. One day Bod falls from the tree and a woman comes to his rescue. She introduces herself as Liza Hempstock. Liza was suspected to be a witch and killed by the town's people. Liza admits she is a witch and that she cursed the people who killed her. Each of them died within a short time of her death of the plague. Liza tells Bod that she does not mind being dead, but wishes she had a tombstone with her name on it.

Bod decides he wants to get Liza a tombstone for helping him. To do this, Bod knows he will need money. Bod takes the brooch from the oldest tomb and sneaks out of the cemetery in clothing he takes from the groundskeeper's shed. Bod goes to a pawn shop and the unscrupulous owner recognizes the brooch as an old, expensive piece. The pawnshop owner locks Bod in an office and calls a friend to help him deal with the child. The pawnshop owner plans to call the man Jack to come take the child. However, before he can, the pawnshop owner and his friend get into a fight over the brooch. At the same time, Liza comes to the pawnshop and helps Bod perfect his Fade spell. When the criminals come for Bod, they cannot see him.

When the two criminals are passed out on the floor after fighting over the brooch, Bod escapes from the room and takes his brooch back. Liza gives him the card with instructions on how to reach the man Jack. Silas takes the card to Silas and confesses all that has happened. Afterward, Bod takes the brooch back to the ancient Celtic tomb. Finally, Bod takes a paperweight he took from the pawnshop and places it over Liza's grave with her initials and the sentiment, "we don't forget", written on it.

Chapter 4, The Hounds of God Analysis

Bod meets a new inhabitant of the cemetery and decides to do her a good turn because she has helped him. Bod shows his compassion when he decides to break the rules and go out into the living world. This is Bod's first excursion into the living world, but he seems to know basically how he should look and behave because of all that Silas has taught him.

Bod's attempt to sell the treasure from the ancient Celt tomb proves to be a disaster because Bod is not prepared for the greed of humans. However, Liza comes to save him and she proves to be a good friend, despite being a witch. Liza is a lot like Miss Lupescu, forcing Bod to save himself while still offering him support and a mild amount of help. Liza seems to know more about what is going on in Bod's world as well as the



living world, but she does not give anything away to Bod. Instead, Liza appears to be trying to protect Bod from something he does not understand.

The man Jack appears again in this chapter. It appears that the man Jack is still looking for Bod, despite the many years that have passed since Bod miraculously escaped the murderer. This suggests to the reader that the man Jack will appear again and that Bod will one day be forced to face him.



Chapter 5, Danse Macabre, and Interlude, The Convocation

Chapter 5, Danse Macabre, and Interlude, The Convocation Summary

Bod discovers that no one wants to spend any time with him. Everyone is busy cleaning up and singing a song about a dance, but Bod does not understand. Then Bod sees the mayor of the city come into the cemetery and cut a white flower he has never seen bloom in the cemetery before. That night Bod cannot find anyone in the cemetery. Bod goes into the city and sees all the living people wearing one of the flowers. Bod gets one too.

Music begins to play and the citizens of the cemetery appear in the town. The dead begin to dance with the living. Everyone seems so happy and excited to dance this dance. The Lady on the Grey appears and Bod dances with her. It all ends too quickly and the living seem to forget as soon as the dead disappears.

Bod returns to the cemetery and tries to ask his parents and his friends about the dance, but no one will talk to him about it. Bod talks to Silas and learns it is a tradition that the dead are not allowed to talk about.

Interlude. At a small hotel, there is a convention of men who all look differently but dress the same. Among them is the man Jack. The man Jack is being lectured by an older man who is encouraging him to quickly find the boy child and kill him as he should have done the night to boy's family was killed. The man Jack assures everyone he will kill the boy, but the older man threatens to take over and kill the child himself.

Chapter 5, Danse Macabre, and Interlude, The Convocation Analysis

Bod experiences a tradition between the dead and the living in which the living is allowed to dance with the dead while wearing a special white flower that sometimes blooms in the winter. The dead are allowed to leave the cemetery for this short amount of time. It is an exciting event, but Bod finds himself on the outside in a way he has never felt in all his time living in the cemetery. It is a humbling experience for the boy who has always felt more a part of the cemetery than the living world.

At the same time, the man Jack is reminded that he is supposed to be searching for and killing Bod. This makes it clear to the reader that Bod is still a target of this killer for some unknown reason. Not only this, but there is a whole group of people who want the boy dead for an unknown reason.



Chapter 6, Nobody Owens' School Days

Chapter 6, Nobody Owens' School Days Summary

Bod goes to Silas and begs to be allowed to attend the living man's school. Silas reluctantly agrees. When Bod begins school, Silas has encouraged him to use one of the many spells of the cemetery to keep himself from being noticed. In fact, most of the teachers cannot remember Bod from time to time and have not placed his name in their records. However, Bod makes himself noticed one day when he interferes in the bullying of a young boy. Bod has become aware of a girl, Mo, who uses her friend, Nick, to force younger children to steal and pay them their lunch money. Bod tells the younger children how to stop this bullying.

Mo and Nick try to intimidate Bod to keep him from interfering in their scheme, but it does not work. Instead, Bod uses Dreamwalking to encourage Nick to stop bullying the children. Mo becomes angry and calls her uncle, a cop, and asks him to intimidate Bod. Bod is arrested and threatened, but Silas comes to his rescue when he allows the cops to hit him with their car. Silas and Bod decide together that Bod should not return to school. However, Silas agrees that Bod should experience the living world if he will one day live in it and agrees to allow Miss Lupescu to take him out from time to time.

Chapter 6, Nobody Owens' School Days Analysis

Bod wants to experience the living world, but Silas is worried that the man Jack will be able to find him. Bod is expressing his need for independence, however, like any child his age would. Now fourteen, Bod wants to experience life and to show how he can survive on his own. Unfortunately, like most boys of his age, Bod makes a mistake and makes his presence in his school known. This leads to Bod's first argument with Silas, but it also leads to some understanding of the overall situation for both of them.

Bod is growing up and facing reality. It is a tough situation for any parent, but Silas in particular because he is undead and cannot experience many of the normal things Bod wants to experience. The nature of Bod's situation is becoming a problem for him and those who care about him and suggests a separation will come eventually.



Chapter 7, Every Man Jack

Chapter 7, Every Man Jack Summary

Silas has left the cemetery and not left a replacement to care for Bod. Instead, Bod has access to stored food and money should he need anything. Bod is saddened by Silas' disappearance not only because he never told anyone he was leaving, but because he is Bod's confidant and without him Bod has no one to talk to.

Scarlett has returned to London in the aftermath of her parents' divorce. Scarlett does not remember living in London and does not remember the ancient cemetery where she once befriended Bod. However, she comes to the cemetery one day after taking the wrong bus home from school. There Scarlett meets Mr. Frost, a man studying the cemetery by making tracings of the headstones. When it begins to rain, Mr. Frost offers to give Scarlett a ride home. When he does, Mr. Frost charms Scarlett's mother and gets an invitation to dinner.

That night, after all the talk of the cemetery, Scarlett begins to remember Bod. Scarlett sees Bod in a dream. The following day, Scarlett goes back to the cemetery and sees Bod in person. Bod tells Scarlett how he came to be living in the cemetery. Curious, Scarlett goes to the library to research the murders of Bod's family. Surprisingly, there is little in the paper about the murders. However, Scarlett is able to discover that the crime took place in the same house Mr. Frost is living in.

Scarlett calls Mr. Frost and tells him what she has learned. Mr. Frost does more research and tells Scarlett that he has found something. However, Mr. Frost feels he should show it to the surviving boy before he shows Scarlett. Scarlett talks Bod into visiting the home where his family was killed. When they arrive, Mr. Frost takes Bod into the bedroom that was his as a baby and reveals that he, Mr. Frost, is the man Jack.

Bod manages to get away from the man Jack and runs out of the house with Scarlett. Four other men have arrived, men that are part of a group of men known as the Jack of All Trades. Silas and Miss Lupescu have been fighting these men to protect Bod, and these four men are the last of them. Bod hides Scarlett inside the ancient Celtic tomb.

Bod faces one of the men and tricks him into falling into a deep grave. Bod then sends three others into the world of the ghouls. Finally, Bod tricks the man Jack Frost into the Celtic tomb, where Bod tricks him into telling the Sleer he is their master. The Sleer takes the man Jack away to protect him, killing him. Now safe, Bod returns Scarlett to the cemetery where she becomes enraged that he killed all those men. Scarlett leaves the cemetery.

Silas, who has returned, tells Bod that Miss Lupescu has been killed in a fight against the Jacks of All Trades. Now they are all dead, just as had been predicted. The reason these men wanted Bod killed was because there was a prophecy that said if Bod was



allowed to reach adolescences, the Jacks of All Trades would cease to exist. This is exactly what has happened.

Chapter 7, Every Man Jack Analysis

Bod meets Scarlett again and they renew their relationship. This time Scarlett is old enough to realize that not only is Bod real, but his situation is an odd one. Scarlett attempts to help Bod by learning about the deaths of his family, but instead leads him straight to the man who wants him dead.

In this chapter, the reader learns that the Jacks of All Trades want Bod dead because a prophesy has predicted the end of their group should Bod be allowed to reach adolescence. It also turns out that Silas and Miss Lupescu have known about this situation all along and have fought to protect Bod from these people. In fact, the many times Silas has disappeared were times when he went to fight the Jacks of All Trades to protect Bod, with the largest battle taking place during this time period.

Bod has gotten rid of the last four Jacks and now is free. Bod learns of Miss Lupescu's sacrifice for him and is saddened, but feels now he can survive on his own in the living world.



Chapter 8, Partings and Leavings

Chapter 8, Partings and Leavings Summary

A short time after the deaths of the Jacks, Bod finds himself having trouble seeing the dead. Not only this, but Bod finds he can no longer move through stones and doors that he once could walk through without trouble. Bod goes to Silas and discovers that Silas has packed a bag for him. Silas gives Bod money, a passport, and clothing so that he might go into the living world. Bod does not want to leave, but admits he is excited by the idea of seeing the world.

When Bod leaves, he does not see many of the people he has grown up with. Bod speaks with Liza, telling her goodbye. When Bod reaches the gate, his mother is waiting. Mrs. Owens sings to Bod the song she sang to him his first night in the cemetery, wishing him adventure and happiness on his travels.

Chapter 8, Partings and Leavings Analysis

Bod has gotten old enough and is safe enough now to live out in the living world. For this reason, Bod's abilities in the cemetery begin to fade. It is an exciting time, but it is also a scary time as Bod finds himself forced to say goodbye forever to those he has known and loved all his life to face a world he still does not know. However, Bod proves his strength and individuality by facing this challenge with courage and some excitement.



Characters

Nobody 'Bod' Owens

Nobody Owens is a young man who has been raised in a graveyard. When Nobody was only eighteen months old, his family was killed and he wandered into a graveyard where he was granted Freedom of the Cemetery and was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Owens. For this reason, Bod grows up playing with spirits and learning how to haunt the living. When Bod befriends a young, living girl, her family believes he is a figment of her imagination.

Nobody learns a great deal about the world of the cemetery, but does not know much about the living world in which he will one day live. Nobody talks his guardian into allowing him to go to a living world school, but this turns out to be a mistake when Nobody cannot keep his presence quiet. Nobody is being stalked by an unknown killer and his life is in danger, making it important for him to hide his existence.

In the end, Nobody comes face to face with the men responsible for the deaths of his family. Nobody manages to outwit them and survive, but this survival comes at a price. Nobody is safe now and able to face the living world, but also at a price. Nobody will never be able to see his family and friends after leaving the cemetery.

The Man Jack/Jack Frost

The man Jack breaks into the home of a London family and kills the mother, father, and sister of an eighteen-month-old baby. The baby, however, manages to escape. It turns out later that the baby was the target of the killer all along and that it is important to the survival of the Jack of All Trades group that the baby be killed. In the end, the man Jack tracks the baby down to the cemetery where he escaped that fateful night, but the boy is able to outwit him, bringing an end to the organization of the Jacks of All Trades.

Scarlett

Scarlett is a four-year-old child when she first comes to the cemetery, an area declared a nature reserve where her parents like to take her for exercise. Here Scarlett meets Bod and goes on an adventure with him that causes her parents to believe she is missing. Scarlett moves away and comes back when she is fourteen, angry with her mother for taking her away from her friends in Scotland. When Scarlett returns, she remembers Bod and helps him find out what happened to his family. Unfortunately, this takes Bod directly into the hands of the man Jack. Scarlett, unhappy with how Bod deals with this threat against his life, walks away from him once again.



Mr. and Mrs. Owens

Mr. and Mrs. Owens were a couple married more than a hundred years ago who never had children. Now deceased, they live in the cemetery where their bodies were interred in a tomb. When Nobody wanders into the cemetery as a nameless eighteen-month-old infant, the Owens quickly take custody of him at the request of his dead mother. Mrs. Owens takes to the infant very quickly, arguing for the right to keep him even as all the other inhabitants of the cemetery argue the danger of having a living child in their cemetery. In the end, Mrs. Owens and her husband are allowed to adopt Nobody, giving him a name and a chance at life he might not otherwise have had.

Liza Hempstock

Liza Hempstock is a witch who lived in London hundreds of years ago. Liza was murdered when the townspeople came to believe she was a witch and responsible for their misfortunes. Liza cursed them as she died, the first curse she had ever spoken, and all those responsible for her death died of the plague a short time later. Liza becomes friends with Bod and helps him out on several occasions when he gets into trouble in the living world because she is not restricted to the cemetery because she is buried in unconsecrated ground.

Silas

Silas is undead, possibly a vampire, who is allowed Freedom of the Cemetery. When the baby first comes to the cemetery, it is Silas who uses his powers to push human minds to turn the man Jack away from the baby's trail. Later, Silas agrees to be a guardian to the child should he remain in the cemetery, promising to get him the food and other items he will need to survive that the spirits cannot provide. Over time, Silas becomes more of a father to Bod, providing for him answers to his many questions that the others either do not understand or simply do not know. Silas makes the big decisions for Bod, deciding if he should attend school and deciding when it is time for Bod to go out into the living world on his own. Silas clearly cares deeply for Bod and he places his own life on the line to keep Bod safe from the Jacks of All Trades.

Miss Lupescu

Miss Lupescu is something like a werewolf, a Hound of God who can turn into a grey dog whenever the situation calls for it. Miss Lupescu comes to take care of Bod when Silas has to go away on one of his many unexplained absences. At first Bod dislikes Miss Lupescu, but when she saves him from the ghouls, Bod comes to understand that Miss Lupescu may seem uncaring on the outside, but she really cares deeply about him and his well being. In the end, Miss Lupescu makes the ultimate sacrifice for Bod, giving her life to protect him from the Jacks of All Trades.



The Sleer

The Sleer is an entity that protects the tomb of the Celt buried in the cemetery. When Bod first enters the tomb, the Sleer appears as a tattooed man, but Bod can see that this man is imaginary and calls the Sleer out on it. The Sleer tells Bod that it is its job to protect the treasures and the master. This implies to Bod that the tomb is empty except for three insignificant items: a goblet, a brooch, and a knife. Bod tries to use the brooch to buy Liza a headstone, but the experiment is a failure and he returns it, just as the Sleer predicted he might. In the end, Bod convinces the Sleer that Jack Frost is its master and it takes him away, killing Jack in order to protect Bod.

Jack Dandy, Jack Nimble, Jack Ketch and Jack Tar

Jack Dandy, Jack Nimble, Jack Ketch, and Jack Tar are members of the Jack of All Trades. These men come to London to kill Bod when it appears that Jack Frost will fail to do so. When these men come into the cemetery, Bod is able to use all he has learned about haunting and the supernatural world to kill or otherwise stop these four men.

The Lady on the Grey

The Lady on the Grey is a woman who rides around on a white horse known by horse enthusiasts as a grey. This lady comes to people as they are dying and rides them into the next life. This lady comes when Bod first appears in the cemetery and convinces the inhabitants to allow him Freedom of the Cemetery. This woman appears to know why Bod's family was killed and his importance to the world of the supernatural; therefore, she does all she can to protect him.



Objects/Places

Winter Blossoms

There is a white flower that blooms in the cemetery during the winter. This flower only bloom in rare winters, but when it does, the flower is given to each living person in the city. When this is done, the dead are allowed to leave the cemetery and dance for a time with the living.

Paperweight

Bod uses a paperweight as a headstone for Liza after he fails to get enough money to buy her a real one.

Goblet, Knife, and Brooch

When Bod enters the tomb of the Celt, he discovers a treasure being protected by a Sleur that consists of an old goblet, knife, and brooch. Bod does not see much value in these things, but the pawnbroker to whom he takes the brooch values the piece as priceless. Later, Jack Frost seems to believe the knife is of some importance in ancient ceremonies.

Grave Rubbings

Mr. Frost is making grave rubbings in the cemetery when Scarlett first meets him. Mr. Frost explains he is doing this in order to research the history of the cemetery.

Cellphone

Scarlett is deeply annoyed that her mother refuses to buy her a cellphone.

Suitcase

Silas packs a suitcase with clothing for Bod when it is time for Bod to leave the cemetery and enter the living world.

Leather Trunk

Silas travels around with a leather trunk that has dirt from his homeland in it.



Celtic Tomb

Bod learns that the oldest grave in the cemetery is the tomb dating back to the Celtic era that has been long forgotten by most people, including the inhabitants of the cemetery. It is inside this tomb Bod finds a small treasure and the Sleer.

Bod's Natural Family's Home

Bod's family was killed in their home, a house that sits just below the cemetery. Bod is later brought back to this house when Mr. Frost convinces Scarlett that he has information on Bod's family that he found in the house which he is now renting.

Library

Scarlett uses old newspapers in the library to learn about the death of Bod's family. There is a curious lack of information on the triple murders.

Cemetery/Natural Reserve

The cemetery in old London was used for hundreds of years, but in modern times has stopped being used as a cemetery and has been declared a nature reserve because of a land donation made by one of its inhabitants before his death. The cemetery is largely abandoned by the living, but at night is filled with more than three hundred of its living spirits.

London

The novel is set in London in modern times.



Themes

Family

Bod is an eighteen-month-old baby when his parents and eight-year-old sister are murdered in their sleep. Bod, an infant who likes to wander, escapes into the night and into the cemetery at the top of the hill. Now an orphan, Bod is adopted by an old couple who have been interred in the cemetery for more than a hundred years.

As Bod grows, he discovers that his newly adopted parents, while kind and compassionate, know very little about the modern, living world. Bod finds himself turning more and more to Silas, the undead man who lives in the cemetery and who has taken on the responsibility of providing food and other items for Bod. Bod asks Silas many questions he has about the modern world and always receives quick and honest answers.

As Bod becomes older, he and Silas find themselves at odds when it comes to certain needs of Bod's. When Bod wants to go to school, Silas is frightened that Bod will place himself in danger from the man still searching for him. When Bod does cause trouble, Silas demands he quit school. Bod refuses and the two have their first fight ever. This relationship has clearly become a parent-child relationship that is going through some of the same growing pains any father-son relationship will encounter.

In the end, Bod protects himself, ridding the world of the last of the Jacks of All Trades. Silas has taught Bod well, but he is reluctant to let him go. When the time finally comes, Bod finds himself no longer able to see some of the dead and to move through the cemetery with the same ease he had before. Silas finally cuts him loose, sending him out in the world as any father would do. This is what makes family a theme of the novel.

Supernatural

Bod lives in a cemetery. Due to the Freedom of the Cemetery that the inhabitants of the cemetery have allowed Bod, he can see the spirits of the dead, move through their monuments as they do, and learn to use some of the tricks they use to haunt the living. It is as though Bod is one of the dead himself.

As the novel progresses, Bod slowly begins to understand that he is different from those with whom he lives. However, Bod is able to use the tricks of the cemetery to frighten a bully out of threatening younger children and to punish another for refusing to be frightened. Not only this, but Bod experiences things that other children would find scary, such as being forced into the world of the ghouls or facing a Sler without fear.

Bod's world is a world of the supernatural. There are things that exist in Bod's world that others in the living world can only imagine. For this reason, supernatural is a theme of the novel.



Danger

Bod's entire family is killed in the middle of the night while they lie in their beds sleeping. Bod might have died too if he had not escaped into the night and come under the protection of the cemetery. However, the man Jack continues to look for Bod with the desire to kill him before he can reach adolescence.

As the book progresses, the reader sees how Bod grows up in this odd world, raised by ghosts who teach him how to Fade and Dreamwalk, rather than how to add two and two. However, the idea of danger remains close as Bod is reminded again and again that he cannot leave the cemetery without placing his life at risk. When Bod wants to go to school, he is only allowed under the understanding that he not make himself noticed. When he fails to do this, Bod again places himself in danger.

Danger is a theme of this novel because it follows him everywhere he goes. In the end, danger comes to Bod under the guise of friendship and help. Bod must face the man Jack and his four accomplices, the last of the Jacks of All Trades. Bod wins, ending the danger in his life, but beginning a new chapter in the living world that could present all new dangers to the young man.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of this novel is third person omniscient. The narration follows the main character, Bod throughout most of the novel. However, there are several parts where the events in the plot are seen through the eyes of the man Jack or Bod's friend, Scarlett. This change of narration is not always clear to the reader, but it provides information to the reader that they might not have been aware of if the narration had stayed close to Bod.

The point of view of this novel works well with the plot because it tells the story from the point of view of the main character, but allows the reader to see everything important to the development of the plot. In the beginning, the main character is only an infant; therefore, the narration at that point is more of an authorial voice, a voice that allows the reader to know what happens to the infant even when he is too young to understand it himself. There are often changes in the narration, but this does not confuse the reader. In fact, these changes are helpful to the reader as they let the reader know what is happening even when the main character is not aware of it.

Setting

The novel is set in an ancient cemetery in the middle of what the characters refer to as Old Town. The cemetery has occupants dating back to the arrival of the Celts and the Romans after them. The cemetery also includes a witch from colonial times and a couple who died more than a hundred years from the opening moments of the novel. As the novel progresses, the reader gets the impression that Old Town is an old section of London.

The setting of the novel is unusual in that it is an old cemetery in the middle of a busy, modern city. The cemetery is home to more than three hundred living spirits who raise a little boy who has wandered into the cemetery in the middle of the night, the same night the man Jack killed his entire family. This is a setting that could be spooky, but the reader finds it almost homely as Bod grows up in this supernatural, odd location that to him is home. The setting of this novel becomes almost a character all on its own, changing the plot as it works with it, creating a unique novel with an important, unique setting.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written for young readers, therefore the language is not as complex as it might otherwise be. The novel's plot centers around a young boy who is growing and learning as the novel progresses. For this reason, the language of the novel remains simple at the beginning, but grows steadily complicated as the young boy learns and

grows. However, the language continues to be simple enough that the young audience it is intended for will not grow confused.

The language is simple and uncomplicated, appropriate not only to the intended audience, but to the characters in the novel. The characters speak in clear English, though some of them use an antiquated language from the time period in which they lived before their deaths. The language of each character fits with their experiences, giving them authenticity as the novel continues to develop. For this reason, and others mentioned above, the language of the novel works well with the plot.

Structure

The novel is divided into eight chapters, each with a title that refers to something or someone that is important to that particular section of the novel. Each chapter is fairly long, some longer than sixty pages. Each chapter is told in both exposition and dialogue, showing the story in scenes rather than simply telling.

The main plot of the novel is structured around the life and experiences of Nobody Owens, a young boy growing up in a cemetery. There are several subplots, however. One of these subplots surrounds the activities of the man Jack, a Jack of All Trades who has been giving the assignment of finding and killing Bod. Another plot follows Bod as he attempts to learn to live in the living world with often disastrous conclusions. All these plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.



Quotes

"There was a hand in the darkness, and it held a knife."
Chap. 1, How Nobody Came to the Graveyard, p. 2

"And the figure said, My baby! He is trying to harm my baby!"
Chap. 1, How Nobody Came to the Graveyard, p. 15

"On the way home Scarlet told her mother about the boy called Nobody who lived in the graveyard and had played with her, and that night Scarlett's mother mentioned it to Scarlett's father, who said that he believed that imaginary friends were a common phenomenon at that age, and nothing at all to be concerned about, and that they were fortunate to have a nature reserve so near."
Chap. 2, The New Friend, p. 42

"Scarlett said to Bod, 'You're brave. You are the bravest person I know, and you are my friend. I don't care if you are imaginary.'"
Chap. 2, The New Friend, p. 60

"Bod sat down on a clump of grass, and felt sorry for himself, and hated everybody. He even hated Silas, for going away and leaving him."
Chap. 3, The Hounds of God, p. 74

"The two of them shared the chips, and once or twice, Miss Lupescu even smiled."
Chap. 3, The Hounds of God, p. 97

"He reached in, and took out a card, only slightly larger than a business card. It was black-edged. There was no name or address printed on it, though. Only one word, handwritten in the center in an ink that had faded to brown: Jack."
Chap. 4, The Witch's Headstone, p. 127

"Something was going on, Bod was certain of it."
Chap. 5, Danse Macabre, p. 144

"Because there are mysteries. Because there are things that people are forbidden to speak about. Because there are things they do not remember."
Chap. 5, Danse Macabre, p. 164

"Going to school with the living did not excuse Bod from his lessons with the dead."
Chap. 6, Nobody Owens' School Days, p. 191

"Bod stared at him. It was as if Mr. Frost had been a coat or a hat the man had been wearing, that he had now discarded. The affable exterior had gone."
Chap. 7, Every Man Jack, p. 255

"But between now and then, there was Life; and Bod walked into it with his eyes and his heart wide open."

Chap. 8, Partings and Leavings, p. 307



Topics for Discussion

How does Bod get out of his family's house the night of the murders? Whose mistake allowed this to happen? Why does Bod go to the cemetery? Who follows him there? How does this person know to follow him there? What happens when this person gets to the cemetery? Who protects Bod? Why? What happens to Bod at the end of the night?

Who is Scarlett? Why does her mother bring her to the cemetery where Bod lives? How does Scarlett befriend Bod? Why does Scarlett's family believe Bod is a figment of Scarlett's imagination? Is he? Where does Bod take Scarlett on one of her visits? What happens there? Why does Scarlett's parents call the police? Why does Scarlett move? To where does she move?

What is a Hound of God? Why does Silas go away? Who comes in his place? Why does Bod dislike the lessons of his new teacher? What does she want him to learn? Is this important information? Why does Bod go into the world of the ghouls? What do the ghouls plan to do to Bod? What does Bod ask for help? Does he receive this help? In what capacity?

Who is Liza? How does Bod come to meet her? What is missing from her gravesite? Why does Bod want to replace this missing item for her? What did Liza do for Bod? Where does Bod go in the living world? For what reason? What happens there? What lesson does this teach Bod?

What is the winter bloom? Why does the mayor come to cut it? What does she think it is for? What happens when the townspeople wear the flower? Why will no one talk to Bod about it? Why does Silas not participate in this activity? What does he say to Bod about it? What does this say about Silas? What lesson does this teach Bod?

Why does Bod want to go to school? Why does Silas agree? What conditions does Silas place on this idea? What does Bod do to mess up the situation? Who is Mo? Why does she cause Bod so much trouble? What does she do to get Bod arrested? Who saves Bod? Why? What does Bod do to Mo? Why does Silas insist Bod stop going to school? What is Bod's first reaction? What is his later reaction? How does this experience change Bod's relationship with Silas?

Who is Mr. Frost? How does he come to befriend Scarlett? Who is Scarlett? How does she return to the cemetery? What does Scarlett learn about the deaths of Bod's family? Who happens to be living in Bod's family home? Why does Bod go to this home? What does he learn about Mr. Frost? Where does Bod take Scarlett? What happens to Mr. Frost? What happens to Scarlett and her mother in the aftermath of this experience?