

**Influence of fantasy and gothic elements on children's literature: A reference with Neil  
Gailman's The Graveyard Book**

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**Abstract**

Children's Literature takes a central part in the society to its sublimity. Children are the solid pillars of the world. Words have massive power to erect or annihilate the souls of a nation. There is no exact definition used for children's literature. It is mostly defined as the body of written works and associated with illustrations which can instruct or entertain to the children. It can be also used for the functions of assisting academic disciplines. Children's literature is different and varied between other literatures. The genre of children literature is a broad range of works jointly with the classics of world literature; Children can easily understand through the picture books, and fairy tales, lullabies, fables, and folk songs are used by children since their childhood. This paper explores the possible of fantasy to perform as a philosophical mediator in presenting such futures to child readers.

**Key Words:** Imagination, Horror, Fantasy, Fairy Tale and Folklore

Children's literature gives confidence to children to do all the activities in their daily life such as thinking ability, creativeness, enhance their verbal communication and develop their personal character. Children literature often promotes children's thinking ability and lengthening their cognitive background, develops their perceptive and imagination, and allowing them to develop their communication skills in the better way.

When children read or watch the children's literature books or movies they can connect with the characters, events, places, and problems in literature on a personal level. Children's books contains both good and dire. Fantasy or reality, horror or science fiction, fairy tale or folklore whatever may be the curiosity and dreams of Children never diminish.

In the early stage, children's literature covers the part of oral stories and songs used to teach, train, inculcate and entertain to the children. Children's literature raised from stories accepted orally from generation to generation. The first books to be illustrated for children are Chapbooks and pocket-sized books which were stitched together. They made with woodcut pictures to go along with their contents of popular ballads, folk tales, or religious passages. The mixture and worth of illustrated children's books has created them an interesting and enviable

focus for rare book collectors. In the imaginary world magic, mystical and inexplicable creatures are common. In the earliest epoch it is oral traditions, which then became fantasy literature and drama. In the beginning of the twentieth century it has prolonged further into various media, including film, television, graphic novels, and video games. The Graveyard Book is a Gothic fantasy and compelling adventure. Fantasy is a speculative genre in literature which set in an imaginary world often inspired by real world myth and folklore.

A versatile writer and the English novelist Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* is a juvenile adult fantasy novel. He is one of the best writers of children's and young adult literature in today's world. His writings are science fiction, fantasy literature, comics, fairy tale rewritings, audio plays, and graphic novels. His comic book series are *The Sandman* and novels *Stardust*, *American Gods*, *Coraline*, and *The Graveyard Book*. He was influenced by the famous writers such as C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Lewis Carroll, Mary Shelley, Rudyard Kipling, Edgar Allan Poe, Michael Moorcock, Will Eisner, and G. K. Chesterton and their works which makes him to write fantasy and gothic elements on children's literature.

Readers' attraction with panic paved the way for a exhilarating innovative ideal that helped popularize the movement. Gothic literature makes it audience curiosity in the way of mystery and expectation, ambiance and setting, and omens and curses. The crucial element of an enchanting Gothic story evokes the feelings of anxiety and panic. Mostly Gothic works include the horror scenes like burials, flickering candles, evil potions, murders, kidnappings, people going mad, tragic illnesses and other frightful concepts. The central character of Gothic literature is isolated or alone. The individuality of this novel deceit in the reality is the main character co-exists in the worlds of both the alive and the dead.

In recent years fantasy literature has more popular among the people. The writers of adolescent literature changed their attention to demonstrate the ghoulish and the bizarre. Authors of fantasy literature attempt to explain that something that is imaginary, bizarre, capricious, or paranormal however has an internal logic and stability. In the fantasy world the events, settings, or characters are external.

*The Graveyard Book* has received many awards, some classified particularly under Children's Literature. The novel is filled with ghouls, flying creatures, and ghosts of the dead. It is the story of a boy Nobody 'Bod' Owens growing into a man which spans most of Bod's childhood ends when he turned old. The whole book draws his development as it depicts oddments of his life as a toddler, a child, and an adolescent. Bod makes mistakes and learns from them, and grows up to be a shrewd and valiant young man. The novel start with the character of

Jack is generally mentioned in the novel as ‘the man Jack’, a member of a secret association. He murders all the members of Nobody ‘Bod’ ‘Owens’ family when he was toddler. Jack did not know about the toddler. From the house, the toddler crawls and escapes with his diaper and up a hill to a graveyard. The entrance into the graveyard provides the readers that The Graveyard Book is a work of fantasy, but the whole novel fruitfully remains the fantastic separated from reality. Farah Mendelsohn defines The Graveyard Book is a “liminal fantasy” work by Neil Gaiman.

In the graveyard the ghosts discover Bod. Lady on the Grey who is the Angel of Death, appears and suggests that the baby should be kept. The ghosts agree to take the baby. The baby is first discovered by his foster parents of the ghost, Mrs. Owens and her husband Mr. Owens. Nobody Owens is the baby’s name. Since Mrs. Owens announces “He looks like nobody except himself”. Silas is a caretaker to Nobody Owens and the most important and traditional monster figure in the novel who is also mentioned as a vampire. In the novel the term vampire never used by the writer but the character Silas revealed by allusions throughout the story. Miss Lupescu, who is a powerful were-wolf and a Hound of God and Silas is his guardian. They are his main teachers. Mr. and Mrs. Owens begin Nobody Owens to life in the graveyard. Silas and Miss Lupescu train him bounty of knowledge and helpful skills for his survival in the intimidating human world.

Neil Gaiman begins with the character of murderer, and then introduces the characters of ghosts are considered as redeemers, a mystifying man who can interact with ghosts as well as the murderer. Finally a firm Lady on the Grey becomes visible as tremendous and frightening figure. Bod grows within the graveyard. He intermingles with other living humans also. He travels between the fantastic and regular worlds of the graveyard and outer side. As a growing boy, he becomes friend with a girl, Scarlett Perkins. She is finally influences by her mother that he is her fantasy friend. Earlier than meeting Scarlet, he is frequently under the fortification of adults. It is the first time in his life, Bod perceives his own capacity to go on an exploit and protect others. In a sense, Scarlet assists him re-affirm his survival and importance. The setting is the daunting graveyard. Gaiman’s aim is to construct a traumatic atmosphere. The plot covered the area of massacre, killing, vengeance, and exploration in an unknown world. Bod becomes skilled at the supernatural abilities such as vanishing, sliding, haunting, and hallucination.

Years are gone, but Jack’s searching for the toddler that he is an unsuccessful person to kill. He must complete his task otherwise his ancestors, will be smashed by the surviving boy,

Bod. It is discovered that Jack initially went to murder the Dorian family because of a prediction which confirmed that Bod would destroy the Jacks of All Trades.

In the last two chapters enlighten the readers about the transformation of Bod's identity, motivated by his strong wish to explore the real world. He is willing for knowledge and wisdom unavailable in the graveyard. The relationship with Scarlet begins him into a new knowledge of safety and sweetness, educating him "how fine it would be to walk safely in the lands beyond the graveyard, and how good it was to be master of his own small world" (237).

Silas and Miss Lupescu both go away from Bod and to attend some business on Bod's 14th year at the graveyard, in the meantime, Scarlett's parents became separate after getting divorce. Her mother and she arrive to the town. Bod and Scarlett reunite. Scarlett became friend with a historian called Mr. Jay Frost leads his life in a house which is near to the graveyard. Scarlett finds out that the historian lives in the house that Bod once lived in when she is searching the murder of Bod's family. Bod wants to know more about his family and visits the house where he lived as a baby. When Bod enters into the room, Mr. Frost divulges his reality that he is the man Jack; Jack Frost is his full, original name. The man Jack and four other members captured Bod. Bod and Scarlett run away from them to the graveyard where Bod can conquer to Jack and the others separately. Jack Frost captured Scarlett and imprisoned in the chamber of the Sleer.

Bod turns 15 in the concluding chapter of the book. He is starting to lose his liberty in the Graveyard and ability to see ghosts. At the end of the book, Silas prepared a passport and suitcase in his hand and gives to Bod. Due to spending 14 years in graveyard, Bod is worried to see life and learn about everything in the real world. He says good-bye to his ghostly family and friends. He departs from the graveyard to start a new life. Bod never care that others think about him. He permits himself a distinctive sovereignty. He comes to his own accepting of the world and develops an individuality that allows him to manage with being different.

The final conversation that Bod has with someone from the graveyard is with his mother, Mrs. Owens:

"Hullo, Mother," said Bod.

Mistress Owens rubbed her eyes with a knuckle, then dabbed at them with her apron, and she shook her head. "Do you know what you're going to do now?" she asked.

"See the world," said Bod. "Get into trouble. Get out of trouble again.

Visit jungles and volcanoes and deserts and islands. And people. I want to

meet an awful lot of people.” (Gaiman 306)

Mrs. Owens sings a song for Bod. The last lines are,

“Face your life/Its pain, its pleasure, Leave no path untaken,”

and Bod replies,

“Leave no path untaken’ [...]. ‘A difficult challenge, but I can try my best’ (Gaiman 306).

Final paragraph highlights Bod’s fate. In the novel, passport and money are the major symbols which represent Bod’s progression from adolescence to adulthood. The symbol passport conveys to the readers that Bod’s departure from the otherworld to the real world. The usage of money makes clear that exchanging the otherworld and beginning into the secular world. Bod has strong-minded to taste the life to the fullest “with his eyes and his heart wide open” (307).

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