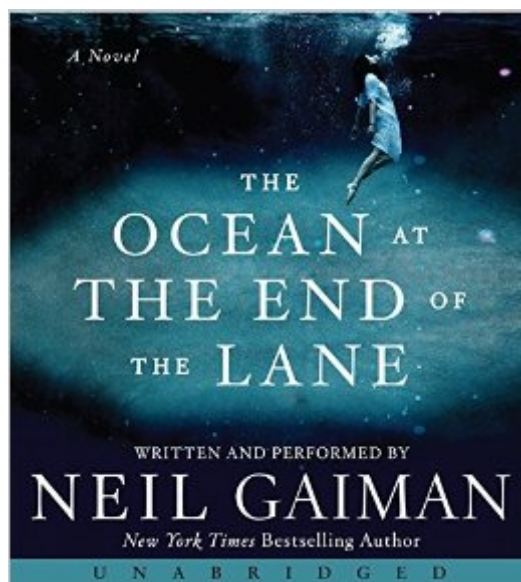


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The Ocean At The End Of The Lane CD: A Novel



Synopsis

Sussex, England. A middle-aged man returns to his childhood home to attend a funeral. He is drawn to the farm at the end of the road, where, when he was seven, he encountered a most remarkable girl, Lettie Hempstock. He hasn't thought of Lettie in decades, and yet sitting by the pond (a pond that she'd claimed was an ocean), the unremembered past comes flooding back. Forty years earlier, a man committed suicide in a stolen car at this farm at the end of the road. Like a fuse on a firework, his death lit a touchpaper and resonated in unimaginable ways. The darkness was unleashed, something scary and thoroughly incomprehensible to a little boy. And Lettieâ"magical, comforting, wise beyond her yearsâ"promised to protect him, no matter what. A groundbreaking work from a master, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* is told with a rare understanding of all that makes us human, and shows the power of stories to reveal and shelter us from the darkness inside and out. A stirring, terrifying, and elegiac fable as delicate as a butterfly's wing and as menacing as a knife in the dark.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Right up front I should admit, I'd never heard of Neil Gaiman before I read an enthusiastic newspaper review about this book and decided to preorder it a few days ago. Last night, it was wirelessly delivered to my Kindle and this morning, I picked it up and started reading. Almost instantly, I was so absorbed and lost in the storytelling experience that I didn't do anything else until I finished it a few hours later. It's a short book; it's enchanting; it's very well written...definitely top-quality fantasy literature. I'm not a fan of fantasy literature, but this book swept me away into

such a delightful and fascinating series of incredible adventures--or should I say misadventures--that I could not pull myself away. The author is correct to warn that this is not a fable for children...the reality is far too stark and dark, and there are definitely some adult themes. "The Ocean at the End of the Lane" is a tale about a lonely bookish seven-year old whose life takes a terrifying turn into a dark and creepy reality. The child is never named, but in recent interviews, the author admits that this child is very much like he was at that age. The child lives in the lovely English countryside of Sussex--the same environment where the author grew up. And like Gaiman, the child is wise, responsible, and moral beyond his years. The parents are blithely confident that nothing bad could happen to their brilliant bookish son in such a bucolic setting. But of course, bad things can, and do happen, especially to the pure and innocent...The parents have no idea that the Hempstocks--an eleven-year-old girl, her mother, and grandmother--who live by a pond at the end of the lane, are really a group of immortals who play at being human.

Neil Gaiman is one of those modern authors I automatically categorize as classic. I've loved his previous novels and all his little projects in between, and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* solidifies his position as one of my all-time favorite writers. Through a drowsy, overwhelming narrative, we follow the sudden, startling recollection of one man's past--one that is all of magical, terrible, and sobering. While visiting the little English country lane of his childhood, our unnamed protagonist reunites with a familiar face who prompts him to think of an old friend he hasn't thought about in years. Upon remembering one thing, he remembers everything. Vividly Proust-like and told in calm, focused prose, this novel submerges readers into the sweet, wise, sometimes wondrous, and sometimes frightening mementos of a forgotten childhood, while expertly capturing the one-track mind of a seven-year-old boy. His memories immerse us into a world that is all of strange, fantastical, but still utterly believable--as well as introduce us to an intriguing character, Lettie Hempstock, who teaches us the most valuable lesson about being a friend. The fantasy setting of the child's experiences is out of this world--literally. I don't know how Gaiman comes up with the most bizarre concepts and the most sinister of villains while still managing to sound so real, but he does it beautifully. The story definitely has dark undertones, but it is masked by the naïf tranquility of an ignorantly blissful child. Not only is this aspect of magical realism so smoothly incorporated, but the injustices and powerlessness of childhood are also exquisitely portrayed.

Over the course of his career, author Neil Gaiman has delighted readers with his storytelling abilities. His almost childlike sensibilities have allowed him to reach audiences through various

mediums, spanning from comic books to more traditional children and adult literature. With his latest adult novel, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, he explores a dark story with enough whimsy and emotion to attract readers of all tastes. The novel begins with a forty something year old man returning to the small English town where he grew up. His old home has long been demolished, but he is drawn instead to a dilapidated farmhouse at the end of the lane. When he arrives there, he begins to reflect on his childhood and the dark events that occurred at the place. He was only seven years old when it began. A quiet boy, more at home with his nose in a book than playing with other children, he was an outcast within his own family. We learn that the family is struggling with money. They decide to move him from his own room to bunk with his sister, leaving an empty bed to rent out. With the arrival of the renter, a mysterious opal miner, dark events begin to occur. The boy meets the three generations of Hempstock women who run the farm at the end of the lane. Lettie Hempstock, who claims to have been eleven years old for a very long time, immediately entrances the boy with her enchanting way with words and conviction that the pond that rests at the very end of the lane is actually an ocean. She agrees to allow him to tag along as she takes a trip to an odd place that lies somewhere between this world and the next. Upon their return from the strange place, an evil is released.

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