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The Grey King (The Dark Is Rising Book 4)



Synopsis

There is a Welsh legend about a harp of gold, hidden within a certain hill, that will be found by a boy and a white dog with silver eyes -- a dog that can see the wind. Will Stanton knew nothing of this when he came to Wales to recover from a severe illness. But when he met Bran, a strange boy who owned a white dog, he began to remember. For Will is the last-born of the Old Ones, immortals dedicated to saving the world from the forces of evil, the Dark. And it is Will's task to wake-with the golden harp -- the six who must be roused from their long slumber in the Welsh hills to prepare for the last battle between the Dark and the Light.

Book Information

File Size: 1551 KB

Print Length: 176 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0689710895

Publisher: Margaret K. McElderry Books; Reprint edition (February 15, 2002)

Publication Date: February 15, 2002

Language: English

ASIN: B000FC0PEE

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #63,672 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #15

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Customer Reviews

I adore this book and this series! It's been one of my favorites since I was in grade school. The story itself is rooted in old legends from Wales, and the whole series seems to take in old legends from England, Cornwall, Wales, etc. to make a cohesive story. The series is for youth, much like the Harry Potter books, but equally enjoyable for adults. I love this book in particular because I have always liked linguistics, and this book gives some basic introduction into Welsh. I've read this book

at least 10 times and listened to the audio version at least 5. The narrator helps bring the book to life.

"The Grey King" is the fourth volume in Susan Cooper's The Dark is Rising Sequence, and in the opinion of many, the best of that series. (The fact that it won the Newbery Medal doesn't hurt the claim.) In this book, Will Stanton is on his own, recovering from a severe illness that has suppressed the knowledge of his powers and duties as an Old One. Sent to a relative's farm in Wales to recuperate, it is not long, however, before he is set upon the path of another quest - and meets a strange, white-haired, white-skinned local boy named Bran. Will and Bran and face the might of The Grey King - one of the most powerful Lords in service to the Dark - whose hold over the Welsh countryside is both powerful and terrifying. They must find the mythical Golden Harp and use it to wake The Sleepers - soldiers in service to the Light who have lain in slumber for centuries, waiting to be called to do final battle against the Dark. As is true with each successive book in the Sequence, author Susan Cooper seems increasingly comfortable and confident in her writing, and in "The Grey King," she gives us a many-layered story filled with the fantastic, but also shot-through with elements of loneliness and sadness. Will's growth as a character is central to the plot, and the role of Bran and his deeply tragic origin make this volume a high point in one of the most deservedly-beloved story arcs in young adult fiction.

I love this series probably more than any other I've read. It could be because my fifth grade teacher read part of this series to us and it was what got me truly interested in reading. This particular book is gorgeous. The imagery and romance of Wales! I remember after reading this I wanted to learn the language and go visit! :). This one is mainly about Will and Bran, though you see a few of the other characters a bit. Later everyone returns to this same setting for the final battle. It's a wonderful story about a budding friendship, growing up and of course battling the Dark.

I've posted this review, in basically this form, for all five of the "Dark is Rising" CD audiobook sets, because there aren't many other reviews of the CD sets. I have all five sets and have been uniformly pleased with the audio quality. I'll skip any summary of this book or of the series; dozens of reviewers have done that quite well. I assume that you are familiar with these books, probably have read this volume, (likely more than once), but now wish to have the book available as an audio CD. Perhaps a long car trip is in the offing? Good for you. I am happy to report that, at least for me, this audio version gets high marks across the board. First, I can hear it and understand it. No mushy

sound recording. No odd imbalance in volume that requires you to keep turning the volume up and then down. All of the spoken words are crisp and clear. Second, there are no sound effects or such folderol. Third, there is a single reader. This is not a play for voices and is not read by a number of different character actors. Fourth, Richard Mitchley is an effective reader. There are a lot of Welsh characters in this book and Mitchley gets that across without being so authentic in his accents that he becomes hard to understand. His approach is flavorful but not overly dramatic. Much like Alex Jennings, who read the other four books, he is not coy or arch, and does not ham up any of the big scenes. He succeeds in establishing a distinct and recognizable identity for each character. Finally, the reading is very respectful. By that I mean the book is not read as though it were just some silly children's book. It is treated as the triumphant work that it is and this adds greatly to its weight and impact. Please note that like all of the CD books this reading is unabridged. There are 5 compact discs. Runtime is a bit over five and a half hours. Enjoy.

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