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The Graveyard Book

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Gaiman, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. Illus. Dave McKean. New York: Harper Collins, 2008. Print.

“Bod said, ‘I want to see life. I want to hold it in my hands. I want to leave a footprint on the sand of a desert island. I want to play football with people. I want,’ he said, and then he paused and he thought. ‘I want *everything*.’” – page 304

When a baby boy climbs out of his crib and wanders into a cemetery one night, he escapes the man who just murdered his family and finds a new, adoptive family of ghosts at the same time. The boy, named ‘Nobody’ but better known as ‘Bod,’ has many adventures in the graveyard; however, though Bod loves his home, he must eventually leave. Bod must learn to survive in the world of the living. First, however, he must defeat the man Jack, who killed his family when he was just a child.

The Graveyard Book follows Bod’s progression from toddler to teen, with each chapter set roughly two years apart and representing a typical childhood problem – with a macabre twist. Bod struggles to make friends, both living and dead. He struggles to balance lessons inside the graveyard (Fading, Haunting, Dreamwalking) as well as in the outside world (History, English, Science). Bod strives to understand love and girls in general, and in addition, he strives to acknowledge and appreciate his own feelings regarding his confinement in the graveyard he calls home. Bod attempts to learn everything he needs to know about life inside and outside of the graveyard, and when he meets the man Jack for a second time, he will need to remember it all in order to survive.

Neil Gaiman’s Newberry Award winning tale, *The Graveyard Book*, is an imaginative story full of unique characters and settings. Nevertheless, each situation in which Bod finds himself is applicable to the daily internal and external struggles of the reader and the vivid details and familiar situations throughout the story allow readers to overlook the peculiarities of the characters and of the setting, making the impossible seem believable. Bod’s story is common and yet very unusual; like everyone else, Bod simply tries to understand who he is and what he wants to gain from his life, however, unlike others, Bod does so from a graveyard.