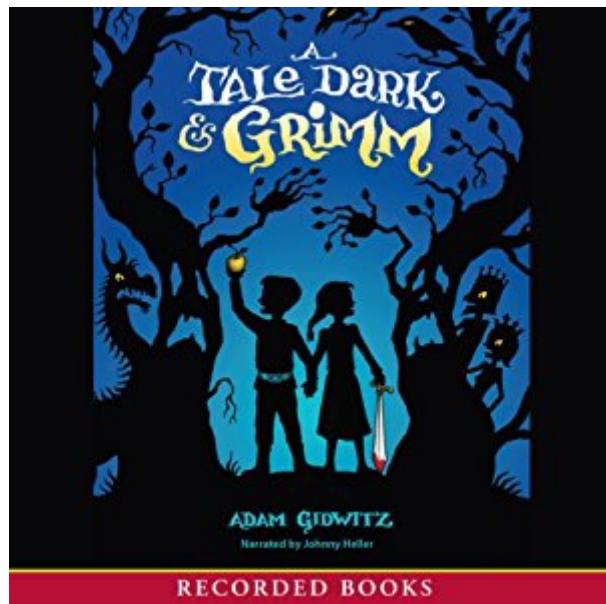


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A Tale Dark And Grimm



Synopsis

Adam Gidwitz makes a sparkling debut with a work that children are sure to request again and again. Not content within the confines of their own tale, Hansel and Gretel skip out on their story and jump into eight other classic Grimm fairy tales. But all is not sugarplums and candy houses. Danger lies ahead, and Hansel and Gretel have much to learn about avoiding witches' ovens and making sure "The End" isn't their end.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The first thing you will notice about this book is that the author's presence is very prominent throughout the journey. He'll interject, he'll muse, and he'll even make you laugh from time to time. I like how this method allows the book to differ from the usual YA fiction I usually read, but I'll admit that Gidwitz can sometimes disrupt and distract. But putting that aside, I'm impressed with how in tune he is to the traditions of fairy tales in terms of technique: the hero's journey, the rule of 3's, and repetition. More importantly, I love how the theme of the story is presented without a drop of didacticism often inherent in fairy tales; that it's about believing in a child's strength in the face of trial and despair, despite their age or experience.

"Once upon a time, fairy tales were awesome." With an opening line like that, how could you doubt the creative mind of novelist Adam Gidwitz? I read *A Tale Dark & Grimm* over the summer with my class of third graders, and though I had some reservations about some of the content, they all proved my worry wrong by handling it with maturity and desperation. Desperation for the next

chapter of course. End of the day discussions were monopolized by debates regarding Hansel and Gretel's fate, and predictions of where their adventures would lead them next. Though the characters faced trials of greed, lust, and hate; the students were learning lessons of bravery, selflessness, love, honor, and forgiveness through Hansel and Gretel's actions. My students thoroughly enjoyed this book, and I look forward to reading the rest of Adam's tales. This novel proves that creative writing still exist. Those of the fainthearted variety, steer clear.

What if the fairy tales we all grew up with were real? It's a familiar question thanks to the recent popularity of television shows such as Grimm and Once Upon a Time which that take the tales many of us loved as children and grounds them in the present-day reality. The original Brothers Grimm tales were more often than not dark, scary, bloody, and violent -- stories that by today's standards are often deemed unacceptable for children. With his twisty, imaginative debut Gidwitz seeks to reclaim the imaginative power of the original fairy tales, reminding readers of just why these tales hold such a timeless, imaginative appeal. In A Tale Dark & Grimm, Gidwitz seeks to set the record straight about the true story Hansel and Gretel -- there's so much more to their experiences than an edible house and nearly getting turned into a witch's supper. Pulling no punches, Gidwitz follows Hansel and Gretel in their quest to come to terms with childhood, parental disappointment, and growing up, enriched by timeless Grimm classics that have inspired and fueled the imagination of countless generations navigating the murky, danger-filled waters leading to adulthood. Opening with Hansel and Gretel's birth in the Kingdom of Grimm, Gidwitz sets the record straight regarding their birth -- they were in fact the children born to the king and queen of "Faithful Johannes" fame, who lose their heads when their parents sacrifice their children in order to save a loyal servant. Disturbed -- and rightly so -- by the murderous tendencies of their parents, Hansel and Gretel run away from home in search of parents less willing to axe their offspring. Along the way they wander through the tale that bears their names (edible house and child-craving cook included), "The Seven Swallows" (a variation on "The Seven Ravens"), "Brother and Sister," "A Smile as Red as Blood" (a variation of "The Robber Bridegroom"), and "The Three Golden Hairs" (also known as "The Devil with Three Golden Hairs"). Each adventure tests Hansel and Gretel's bravery and endurance, leading them to a crossroads -- the point where they must decide that in order to achieve the future they desire, they first must return home to deal with the demons of their past. The adventures Hansel and Gretel survive in Gidwitz's debut are from, for the most part, lesser known fairy tales -- lesser known, arguably, because they are decided un-PC by today's standards. Stories like "Faithful Johannes" and "The Seven Ravens" are decidedly darker in tone and content than the

more famous stories white-washed by Disney and the like for public consumption. Gidwitz retains the violence (hello, losing your heads!) and darkness (trips to hell) of the original fairy tales, interspersing commentary from a hilarious narrator (very much in the vein of Lemony Snicket), urging those of a squeamish nature to close the book and run. It's a shame that the original Grimm stories are perhaps discovered only after a person has been introduced to a more "sanitized" retelling, because the whole delightful purpose of folk and fairy tales, in all their wonderful extremes, was a way of teaching one how to live -- cautionary, hopeful, adventuresome tales that understood life is hard but worth it. In his delightfully snarky, entertaining debut, Gidwitz understands the purpose of fairy tales in a manner in which most of society today has arguably lost -- that "to find the brightest wisdom one must pass through the darkest zones. And through the darkest zones there can be no guide. No guide, that is, but courage." It's a study in the resilience of fairy tales, the power of childhood imagination, and an unexpected picture of grace -- underscoring that moment when, as children, our parents become human and less than perfect, and how in extending the grace of understanding that life is hard, but worthwhile, a new generation rises up and the circle begins anew. I'm thoroughly looking forward to Gidwitz's follow-up, *In a Glass Grimmly*, releasing this September.

"You know how it is with stories. Someone tells a story. Then somebody repeats it and it changes. Someone else repeats it, and it changes again. Then someone's telling it to their kid and taking out all the scary, bloody scenes - in other words, the awesome parts - and the next thing you know the story's about an adorable little girl in a red cap, skipping through the forest to take cookies to her granny. And you're so bored you've passed out on the floor." from *A Tale Dark and Grimm*

Adam Gidwitz is a very twisted man. I mean that in the very best possible way. Because there is no denying that it takes someone whose imagination is a little curvier than normal to come up with retelling the tales of the Brothers Grimm - in all their original, grisly splendor - in a way that modern readers will enjoy. And Adam Gidwitz's imagination has curls like a corkscrew.

A Tale Dark and Grimm is the story of Hansel and Gretel. Not just the bit that everyone knows, with the breadcrumbs and the witch and the oven and so forth. No, this is the full and authentic story of the intrepid twins, from their birth in a royal castle to their long wanderings and their eventual return home. Along the way, Hansel and Gretel manage to weave their way through several of the more obscure (and gruesome) tales ever collected by the Grimms. It's almost inconceivable that *A Tale Dark and Grimm* is Adam Gidwitz's first novel. The prose is sharp and sly and each successive chapter lures the reader into the state of 'just a few pages more.' The skeletal framework Mr. Gidwitz has lifted from

various Grimm's fairy tales is fleshed out by the author's own imaginative ideas and seamlessly interwoven with his unique observations on the Hansel and Gretel story. The intermittent interjection of the storyteller's voice, offering warnings and musings and explanations, adds just the right touch to this stellar new fantasy.

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