



Abhorsen

Garth Nix

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*The Ninth was strong and fought with might
But lone Orannis was put out of the light
Broken in two and buried under hill
Forever to lie there, wishing us ill.*

So says the song. But Orannis, the Destroyer, is no longer buried under hill. It has been freed from its subterranean prison and now seeks to escape the silver hemispheres, the final barrier to the unleashing of its terrible powers.

Only Lirael, newly come into her inheritance as the Abhorsen-in-Waiting, has any chance of stopping the Destroyer. She and her companions -- Sam, the Disreputable Dog, and Mogget -- have to take that chance. For the Destroyer is the enemy of all Life, and it must be stopped, though Lirael does not know how.

To make matters worse, Sam's best friend, Nick, is helping the Destroyer, as are the necromancer Hedge and the Greater Dead Chlorr, and there has been no word from the Abhorsen Sabriel or King Touchstone.

Everything depends upon Lirael. A heavy, perhaps even impossible burden for a young woman who just days ago was merely a Second Assistant Librarian. With only a vision from the Clayr to guide her, and the rather mixed help of her companions, Lirael must search in both Life and Death for some means to defeat the Destroyer.

Before it is too late. . . .

Abhorsen Details

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From Reader Review Abhorsen for online ebook

Joey Woolfardis says

I first read these when I was much younger, probably just a few years after they were published. I must confess, before I started them I could barely recall them at all, aside from a few episodes from the first book, *Sabriel*. I had hastily added 3 or 4 stars to them when I transferred them to GoodReads, so they must have had a lasting impression on me for me to do that.

Second re-through and I could see a little why I liked them, but they weren't the kind of thing I would love to read nowadays. I have thought about this a lot recently and I think my taste in almost all aspects of my life have changed dramatically since I was younger, so much that, although I absolutely adore Terry Pratchett's Discworld series and would probably count it as my favourite ever, I can remember being younger and not liking it at all.

Sabriel was my favourite out of the three. Although it was much shorter, and barely had any plot or character development, it read like a short story and was enjoyable. *Lirael* and *Abhorsen* were much the same, though somehow longer. Garth Nix's other series, like the *The Keys to the Kingdom* are more Young Adult orientated and are far better, probably because he had a bit of practise beforehand.

To me, the *Abhorsen* Trilogy, unlike quite a few other children's books, are written very much with children in mind and I wouldn't consider calling them Young Adult. Whilst there is nothing wrong with that, I personally didn't enjoy them as much as I had when a child myself.

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Montzalee Wittmann says

Rtc

Wouldn't be better if I had read previous books

Kay says

What a stunning conclusion to an amazing trilogy. The scope of the conclusion - which covers the foundation of the Charter - was incredible and tied up several loose ends. I can't wait to read more about *Lirael* and *Nicholas*.

TS Chan says

Abhorsen is a great conclusion to a narrative arc which started with *Lirael*, the second book in the series.

The two main characters introduced in the previous book, Lirael and Prince Sameth, have now accepted their respective legacies and fate in what is to become a fight for the survival of the very world itself. Finally, we have a lot more action, a lot less moping and some solid character growth with two young protagonists, both who have vast potential stemming from their unique bloodlines. There is also a third point-of-view which surfaced more regularly in this volume - Nicholas, a friend of the Prince from beyond the Wall to the south, who has fallen into the hands of the enemy and was manipulated in bringing forth ancient powers. Braving the overwhelming odds stacked against them, Lirael and Sam, together with the Disreputable Dog and Mogget, have to attempt to stop the enemy from manifesting. Else, all will be lost.

As I have mentioned before, the key strength of this series lies in its worldbuilding - a world between Life and Death - and its magic - of the wild and free, and the constructs which aimed to give such magic structure and direction, with which it can also bind and break. The narrative around these fantastical elements progressed through the series with more revelations on the lore surrounding the history of Charter magic, and deeper exploration through Death and its Nine Gates.

Given that this third volume serves as the final and climactic act to the story which began in the second, I will not deign to include further commentary on the plot. Even though I struggled a bit with the characters of Lirael and Sam initially, the development of their roles eventually made sense within the context of what they are becoming. In the face of the imminent and overwhelming threat to the world, both not only managed to overcome their angst but each drew upon their respective strengths as nothing but their best will suffice. The tone of the book is engaging throughout, and the narrative grabbed me right from the start.

Even though I have not read much of the YA genre, I can safely say that this is probably one of the better ones out there. There is enough depth in the storytelling and characterization, which without the corresponding ages of the main protagonists, one can easily mistake it for just another classic fantasy novel. And I'll say this again - the world and its magic are positively fascinating. I do recommend this series to those who want to read a classic fantasy with a difference.

This review can also be found at Booknest

Stephen says

4.5 to 5.0 stars. Having just finished this, the final book in the Abhorsen Trilogy, I have to say that it RANKS AMONG THE BEST YA FANTASY SERIES I have ever read. The world created by Garth Nix composed of the Northern Old Kingdon (where magic exists) sitting side by side with the South (looking much like an early 20th century city in Europe) is so realistically portrayed that the whole story comes to life. The interplay between these two realms is very well done.

Add to that one of the most interesting and original magic systems I have yet come across featuring among other things, free magic (wild and unbound) and charter magic (bound magic expressed through runes or marks), Abhorsens vs necromancers, lesser and greater dead, gore crows, the Great Charters and some amazingly unique free magic creatures and entities. All of these elements are woven together and used so well in the story that narrative always stays compelling and keeps the reader engrossed in the story.

This will certainly me on the short list of YA fantasy series that I recommend to friends. HIGHEST

POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION!!!

Charlotte May says

4.5 stars!

This series just keeps getting better!

We find Lirael and Sam immediately after book 2, on the hunt for Sam's friend Nick and the evil he has accidentally gotten himself trapped in. Along with the Disreputable Dog and Mogget the cat we are taken on a fantastic ride through a world where the dead don't stay dead!

"Confused Dead Hands staggered out of her way, gobbling their distress from their decayed throats."

Nix has created such an incredible magic system; with both Charter Magic - the fixed and governed magic but also Free Magic - the powerful and uncontrolled magic often used for evil. We even get to visit death - with its nine gates and mysterious allure.

A power known as The Destroyer is rising, to destroy the Charter and create a world of fire where the dead rule.

"There would be plenty of bodies for all."

It takes everything in Lirael's power to use the bells of the Abhorsen and save both Ancelstierre and The Old Kingdom.

"With sighs and groans and gurgles and the clicking of frozen joints and broken bones, the Dead Hands marched forward, sending the fog swirling all around them."

I was gripped from start to finish, there are constant shocks throughout and I had to see what would happen, even shed a few tears at times. I need the next book now!

"For everyone and everything, there is a time to die. Some do not know it, or would delay it, but it's truth cannot be denied."

Andrea says

A better-paced story than Lirael - in part because Lirael and Abhorsen are basically one complete story split into two, and while Lirael's plot involves the Old Kingdom being snared in the villain's plans - while the two main characters angst about their role in life - Abhorsen's plot is full speed ahead to confrontation.

One thing bothers me about the world-building though. The Old Kingdom exists thanks to an ancient binding contract that depends on three bloodlines. And there's an awful lot of people getting killed in this story, more or less in the background, while the descendants of these three bloodlines get the important stuff done. Quite a few of them have names, and a couple are main characters, but there's this strong sense that all the real, important people of this story are the ones with the bloodlines, and the rest are there so that someone can die

to demonstrate how dark and desperate the battle is.

Krissa says

So everything I held against Book Two, Lirael, was released in Abhorsen. The book races, literally and figuratively - I read it in a day. The climax is beautiful, BEAUTIFUL, with all the characters you love and hate from all three books playing their part with some powerful punches. It also drags tortuously through some characters' descents into madness which is, well, maddeningly written, curse Nix and his talent.

I adored this trilogy and wish people would stop resisting me forcing it upon them just because, you know, it's about necromancers and bells. Please! It's awesome.

Ahmad Sharabiani says

Abhorsen (Abhorsen #3), Garth Nix

Abhorsen is a fantasy novel by Australian writer Garth Nix, first published in 2003. It is the third book in the Old Kingdom series (following Sabriel and Lirael).

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Heather Turner says

As in "Sabriel" and "Lirael," Death is a riverine chasm from which the dead can be called back to the living by powerful necromancers. Only the Abhorsen (Sabriel) or the Abhorsen-in-waiting (Lirael) can pass from life into the river of Death, through the eight Gates of fog, whirlpools, waterfalls, and shadow, and do magical combat with the necromancers in their own dark realm...

Well, the Disreputable Dog can splash into Death, too and in "Abhorsen" you'll find out who she really is, along with Mogget the bad-tempered cat (who reminds me of some of the grouchier Jack Lemon characters).

"Abhorsen" is a worthy conclusion to Nix's Old Kingdom trilogy. Read "Sabriel" and "Lirael" before undertaking "Abhorsen," so that you can familiarize yourself with the Philosophy and Geography of Death. Nix isn't into summarization or repetition. He plunges his reader right into a whirlpool of death, animated

corpses, and Charter magic. If you don't already know such characters as the Disreputable Dog, the necromancer Hedge, or his bone-headed companion, Nick, you might never figure out what's going on.

This book is a direct continuation of "Lirael," with the ex-assistant librarian and her companion, Prince Sameth carrying on the battle against Hedge and the evil he is digging up at Red Lake. Although Prince Sameth was meant to be the Abhorsen-in-Waiting, heir to the powers of 'The Book of the Dead' and the seven bells, Lirael now takes up that role, and Sam seeks his destiny as a descendant of the mysterious Wallmakers, who built the barrier between the magical Old Kingdom and the mundane kingdom of Ancelstierre. The two will need all of the magic they can conjure up against an enemy that threatens not only the Charter, but all living beings.

The swirl and cross-currents of life gradually ebb as the dead pass through gate after gate on Garth Nix's nameless river--a river like Styx or Lethe that runs through each of our subconscious underworlds as a legacy of our water-bound gestation. It is an eerie experience to remember that journey of birth--only this time in the wake of the dead--in this marvelous fantasy trilogy.

Victoria Schwab says

This has become one of my favorite series of all time.

Ashley says

I think probably the best way to describe what it's like to read the Abhorsen trilogy is to compare it to a snowball rolling down a very, very large hill. We are all familiar with this metaphor--it basically implies that the thing being compared metaphorically moves faster and becomes MORE on the way down, whether that thing is the plot or your emotions as a reader, or both. *Abhorsen* is like this, but also THE SNOWBALL IS ON FIRE.

Sabriel introduced the world, the characters (most of them), the magic system, and the stakes. *Lirael* upped the ante, widening the scope of the world, but also deepening it, and ended with the characters facing the biggest challenge of their lives so far. *Abhorsen* is almost in its entirety devoted to confronting that challenge, like the whole book is the climax of the series, but it also has its *own* climax that is even more intense than the rest of the book. And the rest of the book is like a giant rollercoaster ride of emotion and action and scary stuff trying to kill you.

But also, remember the snowball? IT'S STILL ON FIRE.

I'm not going to say much about the plot of this book except in the vaguest terms. Firstly, that I thought it was a very fitting conclusion to the story built up in the first two books. Secondly, that the ending brought me to tears in a Starbucks. I did not anticipate this happening. I'd read it twice before, admittedly as a teenager, so I thought I knew what I was getting into. I didn't expect to be moved quite so much, particularly on the subject of death. And lastly, I understand why Nix does what he does with the Disreputable Dog, who I think I've made clear is my favorite character, but that doesn't mean I have to be happy about it.

My only real complaint is that there wasn't enough of a coda to the events of the series. We only get the

smallest inkling of the fates that befall these characters, although I suppose it is rather easy to guess. This is why I was so excited to learn he'd written a novella that takes place after the events in these books and that I'd somehow missed. It doesn't take place in the Old Kingdom, but we do get to check in with a couple of the characters. It filled a need. But also, I have more need. I'm very excited for *Clariel* in a couple of months, but seeing as how that's a prequel . . . look, Garth Nix. What I'm saying is I want more stories in this world.

Give them to me.

Give them to me now.

[4.5 stars]

Jessica says

Can I just say how shocked I am by how good this book was? I mean, I guess everything that happened in *Lirael* was necessary in setting the stage for *Abhorsen*, but man did *Lirael* put a damper on the Old Kingdom high I got from *Sabriel*. In book 2, Lirael was mopey, annoying, and the Mary-Sue from Hell. Sam was pretty angst, too, and the book felt entirely like exposition with no real pay off at the end (with a long ways to go). Needless to say, I approached *Abhorsen* with distrust and apprehension, prepping myself for a letdown.

AND WHAT IS THIS? LIRael UP IN HERE WITH A DECENT PERSONALITY AND ACTUAL CHARACTER GROWTH? SAM COMING OF AGE AND SHAPING UP LIKE A BOSS? MOGGET AND DOG REMAINING THEIR FLY SELVES AS THEY FACE THE CRAZIEST PLOT EVER? Alright, my capslock!Harry moment has passed. And I might have exaggerated a smidge, but seriously. This book was pretty epic. Dare I say, more epic than *Sabriel*? (Come on! The last third of the book I kept saying, “Whatever are they going to make it out of this!” or “As if someone ain’t gonna die right now!” and “There’s no way! NO WAY!”—and the first two-thirds of the book I had already been on the edge of my seat!).

Now, I'd like to address something that I haven't really mentioned in my previous reviews of the series. Most noticeably in books 1 and 3, there are really great and subtle messages sent about the gender stereotypes we've picked up in our lifetimes. Plenty of my favorite action heroines (be it movies or books) have to inevitably come up against some douche who refuses to answer to a *girl* of all things (or remember that awesome scene in RotK when Eowyn's like, “I am no man! You look upon a woman!” and the audience goes crazy and everyone's fist-pumping?). But, like, the story can be set 200 years in the future, in space, and some jerk acts like it's the craziest thing in the world to see a woman save the day. That sucks, no doubt, but almost worse is when the story is set in an alternate freaking reality (usually fantasy with magic and dragons and crap), and people are still shamelessly sexist. Like, really, screenwriter/author? It made sense to you to make this completely fictional world hate women, too? But wizards live forever and stuff, right?

In the Abhorsen trilogy, the roles of men and women are pretty evenly distributed between the sexes. There are both male and female royal guards and it ain't no big thang, some tribes have matriarchs and others patriarchs, and the people of the Old Kingdom answer to the female Abhorsen *and* the King with equal loyalty and reverence. I mean, that just makes sense to me. If magic has existed in a world since the beginning of time, than freaking equal rights should have as well.

Anywho, all-in-all, a fantastic book. It somehow successfully made me love Lirael after raging against her so much before, it totally does justice to anything left wanting regarding the mythos of the world in *Sabriel* (you get to see all of the nine gates of Death, so awesome!), and it kind of outdoes the final battle scene of *Sabriel* as well...a great conclusion! (Although I wouldn't say no to another book in the series...)

Jillian says

So now that I'm done with the trilogy I'll say that it was Great. I read the last book so fast, I think I read it in two days? Maybe three. Anyways, the climax is good (and not painfully predictable like book 2) and the characters are developed so well by the end that I was just sucked in. My face even scrunched up at the end when one character... you know. It always happens to someone. The fact that I even thought about crying is quite a feat for an author, since I pride myself on stoicism when it comes to things like books and movies.

So if you like fantasy books with maps and journeys and prophecies and magic and WOO necromancers! then read this series.

Katie.dorny says

I honestly just found this anti-climatic. Especially when compared to the first two. The conclusion just continues on for the spin off books; which I do understand. Sam's growth in this was wonderful; I hated him in the second book but in this one I really rooted for him. I am interested in reading Goldenhand to find out what happens to Lirael and Nicolas I just felt that this book and the previous one could have been shortened down to one big book instead of being dragged out over two when some of the plot and description was unnecessary.

Catriona (LittleBookOwl) says

Probably my favourite of the series so far! I adore these characters (especially the Disreputable Dog)!

Lindsey Rey says

[3.5 Stars]

I liked the ending, but I've decided I'm not the biggest fan of Garth Nix's writing style.

daisy says

i'm a mess

Nemo (The Moonlight Library) says

Despite their new destinies, Lirael and Sam continue their plan to recue Nick and stop whatever he is unearthing. Slowly the pair come to discover what it is: Lirael embraces her destiny as not only the Abhorsen-in-Waiting, but a Remembrancer as well, someone who can See the past like her Clayr sisters can See the future. Sam, relieved he no longer has to deal directly with Death, embraces his destiny as a royal Wallmaker – his hobby of inventing and his powerful skill as a Charter Mage really pays off.

Although this book is a little higher on action than Lirael, I actually forgot how much of it involves travelling and discovering and planning and then action. The action really ramps up in the final third to lead to what I think is possibly my most favourite climax in any book I've ever read.

Lirael has really come a very long way from being the shy Sightless Second Assistant Librarian locked away in the Clayr's Glacier – now she's a tough warrior who slays the dead, who walks into Death itself to save the world. She's really quite amazing.

Every time I moved back to Sam's point of view I could almost feel the relief he felt at no longer being responsible for putting down the Dead. I'm so glad his love of inventing magical trinkets paid off in the end. I felt really sorry for Nick, the poor guy was just overwhelmed with evil power. You have to admire his willpower and intelligence though. I'm really looking forward to reading more about him and Lirael in Goldenhand. I was glad to see Mogget actually have a character arc in this besides being snide and sneaky. Although I've read this book before I completely forgot what happened at the end and had to have a cry when I realised who wasn't coming back.

Nix's writing is as always perfectly elegant, giving this novel a feel of a classic high fantasy that will last through the ages. Every time I took a moment to catch my breath we moved on through motivations of the main characters which propelled the narrative forward with ease. It's not a fast-paced novel all the way through, it's more like a locomotive that gently picks up speed until you're suddenly in the third act and there's no way you can possibly stop because you just have to know what's going to happen next, and when all else seems lost you wonder how are our beloved characters going to get out of this unscathed?

Once more, like Sabriel, this was supposed to be the end of the story. I am so glad Nix can't keep his mind off the Old Kingdom and went on to produce a few novellas (Across the Wall and To Hold The Bridge, reviewed here), then Clariel and now Goldenhand after this. I love this world, as terrifying as it is, I love the characters, and I love the challenges they have to overcome. I can't wait for Goldenhand to see more of Lirael and Nick!

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

Audio #56

So far this is looking like the best of the three! I think it's because I'm getting a lot of Tim Curry's Moggat voice

