



# **Ghostlight**

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Avery is looking forward to another summer at Grandma's farm, at least until her brother says he's too old for "Kingdom," the imaginary world they'd spent years creating. Lucky for her, there's a new kid staying in the cottage down the road: a city boy with a famous dad, Julian's more than a little full of himself, but he's also a storyteller like Avery. So when he announces his plan to film a ghost story, Avery is eager to join in.

Unfortunately, Julian wants to film at Hilliard House, a looming, empty mansion that Grandma has absolutely forbidden her to enter. As terrified as Avery is of Grandma's wrath, the allure of filmmaking is impossible to resist.

As the kids explore the secrets of Hilliard house, eerie things begin to happen, and the "imaginary" dangers in their movie threaten to become very real. Have Avery and Julian awakened a menacing presence? Can they turn back before they go too far?

## **Ghostlight** Details

Date : Published August 4th 2015 by Knopf Books for Young Readers

ISBN : 9780553522143

Author : Sonia Gensler

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## From Reader Review Ghostlight for online ebook

### Aeicha says

Twelve year old Avery loves spending the summer at her Grandma's house, but this summer is different: Avery's older brother, Blake, says he's too old for their imaginary world of "Kingdom". Lucky for Avery, there's a city boy staying with his famous father in the cottage down the way. Julian, an aspiring filmmaker, is a little hard to like, but Avery is intrigued by his desire to film a ghost story. Julian wants to film in the creepy, abandoned Hilliard House, and Avery has been strictly forbidden to enter that house...but Avery's curiosity wins out and, along with Julian's little sister, they set out to film an unforgettable ghostly story. Soon their ghost story starts to become all too real and scary!

Sonia Gensler's *Ghostlight* is an entertaining, genuinely spooky middle-grade read, with an atmospheric setting, captivating storytelling, and likable characters. Gensler offers readers deliciously eerie frights that are scary enough to amuse and enthrall, but not too scary to give younger readers nightmares. Hilliard House provides the perfect spooktacular backdrop to both the ghost story Avery and Julian are trying to capture and the emotional story Gensler has created for her characters. Like a classic horror film, *Ghostlight* relies on steady pacing and subtle frights, instead of theatrical, in-your-face scares, which will keep readers eagerly and anxiously turning pages. The clever ghost story woven throughout *Ghostlight* is full of mystery, history, and unexpected turns.

*Ghostlight* isn't all chills and thrills, though. Gensler's characters each come with their own emotional and personal struggles, from absent parents; mental illness, regret, loneliness, etc., and, for the most part, these hard, emotional subjects are handled well. I found Gensler's characters to be likable, engaging, and often amusing. There is quite a bit of focus on religion (both positive and negative aspects), which sometimes feels out of place or forced.

Both stories within *Ghostlight* (the ghost story and Avery's story) take some interesting turns and conclude in satisfying ways.

my final thoughts: With genuine frights, an atmospheric setting, and effective storytelling, *Ghostlight* proves to be a captivating and enjoyable read.

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### Angie says

I started this one during Halloween week, but another, scarier book, gained my full attention. From what I read, it's a juvenile fiction book that's a pretty easy read, as the writing is simple. Perhaps tweens ages 9+ would enjoy it's spooky-ness!

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### Paula says

While spending another summer at her grandmother's farm, Avery makes a new friend in Julian, a would-be filmmaker whose famous dad is staying in a cabin on the property. Since her older brother Blake no longer wants to engage in the make-believe story-telling games they used to do, twelve-year-old Avery tags along

with Julian as he declares he wants to film a ghost story. The perfect setting is the creepy old house on the property that her grandmother has forbidden her to enter. Of course, against all warnings, they begin to explore the house and soon encounter alarming paranormal activity. This sets Avery on a mission to discover the history of the haunted Hillard Mansion. Her research uncovers family secrets and vindication for the maligned last resident of the house and the source of the ghostly activity. Avery's first-person narration reveals a tween's frustrations with mother-daughter and grandmother-granddaughter relationships. Themes of religion and ancestry are also woven into this genuinely frightening and suspenseful ghost story. Hand this to those readers always asking for a scary story.

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## **Dark Faerie Tales says**

Review courtesy of Dark Faerie Tales

**Quick & Dirty:** Young teens investigate a haunted house in this spooky and entertaining read. They also learn hard truths about secrets and the power of forgiveness.

**Opening Sentence:** We'd only been at Grandma's for five minutes before Blake ruined everything.

**The Review:**

Ghostlight is a middle grade novel about young teens as they investigate a haunted house in this spooky and entertaining read. They also learn hard truths about secrets and the power of forgiveness. The novel stars Avery, a twelve year old girl, who spends the summers at her Grandma's house with her brother. Avery has just arrived with her brother when he informs her that they will not be playing the game they made up because he is now too old to play at age fifteen. Avery storms off because of her hurt feelings from Blake. In her fit of anger she sees a strange boy, Julian, about to go into Hilliard House. Hilliard House is the vacant house that Avery's grandmother warns her to stay away from.

Avery and Julian become fast friends and since Avery has nothing to do all summer, Julian talks her into making a movie. His giddiness and love for film rub off on Avery so much so that she wants to film a movie over her potentially boring summer. Julian wants to film a horror movie and use the Hilliard House as the backdrop. The problem? Avery isn't allowed to go anywhere near Hilliard House. Plus, they need to get inside the house and Avery's grandma is the only one with a key. With the help of Julian's sister Lily they find more inside the house than they ever imagined.

Ghostlight delivers a powerful message about how terrible lies can be and the need for the truth and forgiveness. I will say I was a little surprised by some of the events that happened but overall I would recommend this for a young reader who is interested in film and horror/hauntings.

Avery is a fun and inquisitive girl but she is very temperamental. She starts out as immature and selfish but as the story plays out she begins to learn lessons that are very valuable. I enjoyed Avery's tenacity even in light of how much trouble she knew she was going to be in. Ghostlight is told entirely through Avery's first person point of view.

Julian is the same age as Avery's brother but I often felt that he was closer to Avery's age. He also has some deep issues that he has to work through and maybe with Avery's help he may learn a lesson or two. I felt bad for Julian even though he kind of put himself into those situations.

I will say I was surprised by a few events in this novel. A kid shouldn't have to go through that. I was even surprised how this novel played up the paranormal aspect. I was totally expecting something else. I will say that I connected to this book in a way because I used to spend my summers at my grandparents' house in Alabama. It was also in the country and there was an abandoned log home nearby that was kind of creepy. I never explored it but after reading this, I wonder what I would have found.

Overall, I would recommend *Ghostlight* to a young reader who would like to read something a bit paranormal without going all R.L. Stein or Christopher Pike. I didn't feel like there was anything objectionable and the message delivered was enlightening.

Notable Scene:

I struggled to stand. "Don't you dare touch me!"

Just as the words came out of my mouth, the bulb on Julian's forehead shattered. He flew back, slamming against the opposite wall.

"Jules!" cried Lily, dropping the doll.

I scooped up my flashlight and pointed it at him. His body slid down the wall, camera clattering as it hit the tile floor. He lifted a finger to his cheek and it came away streaked with blood.

Lily shrieked.

I turned the light on her. "Shut up!"

A tear spilled out of her eye. "When you pointed the flashlight...there was a shadow in the mirror. A man's shadow!"

That strange pressure filled my ears, making them ache, and I gritted my teeth to keep from screaming back at her. "That's it. Seriously, you can quit the whole act now, because I'm done with this."

After one last glance at Julian, I stumbled out of the bathroom, leaving them to fend for themselves in the dark.

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FTC Advisory: Knopf Books for Young Readers/Random House provided me with a copy of *Ghostlight*. No goody bags, sponsorships, "material connections," or bribes were exchanged for my review.

### **Lindsey says**

Mary Downing Hahn was one of my favorite authors when I was little. I loved ghost stories and ghost mysteries, and I spent hours as a kid reading as many of those types of books as I could. *Ghostlight* was exactly the kind of book I would have loved then. The story is just creepy enough and just mysterious enough to make the reader want to keep going long after bedtime. It's not too scary for young readers but it's just scary enough for adults to enjoy. The characters were fleshed out and the pacing of the story was excellent. The mystery unfolded at just the right time to keep the story from lagging. It was a quick read for me (I finished in a few hours) but would probably take a little longer for a young reader. The language wasn't

too difficult or confusing for young readers but it didn't speak down to them, either, which is a difficult feat to manage. My daughter is a little young for the book right now (she's only 4) but I'm sure she will love it when she gets older! And I'll probably have to suffer a few nights of her sleeping in my bed. Really well done!

I received an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review. I also have to say that Ms. Gensler included a hand-written thank you note with my copy, which was very thoughtful and much appreciated. Thank you to Sonia Gensler for the book, the thank you note, the autograph, and the bookmarks! I will definitely be seeking out the rest of your books to add to my collection.

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### **Tom RWG3 says**

Ghostlight is the popular horror fiction story which was written by author Sonia Gensler. The book talks about some horror experience on the Hilliard house which Avery grandmother notices Avery and her brother Julian that they shouldn't go.

The story begins on the main character, Avery and her brother summer day. Next, they are going to visit to grandmother. Then, Avery's grandmother is very happy that their granddaughter and grandson ate dinner together. At night, they felt very bored and they decided to go to the Hilliard house, which her grandmother doesn't let them to go because this house has a ghost. Next, Avery wants to make a horror movie in the Hilliard house so she asks his sister to steal the key and go to the Hilliard house. When they arrive at the house, they felt very cold. Then they never imagined which they will experience in the ghost house. I can tell you this book which feels very scary in the end.

There are two parts about the book which I like to talk. The first part is the main character, Avery. She is a brave and selfish person. Why do I say she is a brave and selfish person? Because she doesn't care about her grandmother's and her brother's warnings and went to the Hilliard house and she faced a lot of problems. Then she changed her personality after Avery faced this awfulness experience, she became mentally mature and careful person. The second part about the book is when Avery and her brother needed to suggest some ideas to escape the Hilliard house. They found some items to fight the ghost and used the ladder to escape the Hilliard house.

The part that I disliked about the book is that there isn't enough horror in the book. In the book, there are a lot of interesting parts, such as how to finish their movie, how to solve the entire problems and how to get out the horror house. For example, they need to think about some ideas to fight the ghost and listen to people's advice. But the beginning and the middle part of the book weren't very scary and it might prefer for children to read. I want to see more horror parts in the book.

In conclusion, I will recommend this book because the author writes very interested in every part and when Avery faces a problem, she usually had some ideas to solve those problems, which make me feel excited on the book. For example, Avery and her brother found out the history of the house and they found out some weapons to hurt the ghost. If I need to give a score in this book, I will give four stars in this book. I hope you will enjoy reading it.

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### **Michelle \*Get off my lawn!\* says**

Epic fail. It's a ghost story, but with a harmless ghost who only appears once (kind of), and there's nothing remotely scary. AT ALL. For the love of all that's holy, please take a pass on this one. Read The Wardstone

Chronicles by Joseph Delaney instead. Or anything. Just not this.

ETA: I left my copy lying around on my bedroom floor, and my cat urinated on it. Not only am I not even mad, but I think it's a rather fitting end to Ghostlight's reading experience. I was more concerned about the rug (cue unpaid promo for Clorox Pet Urine Remover).

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### **Jessica Headlee says**

This is a small portion of the actual review. If you are interested in reading the full review you can find it here:[Of Books and Pen](#)

#### **Final Thoughts:**

For a story meant for younger readers, this book was pretty enjoyable. I would recommend it to anyone who loves spooky themes, but not full on demon possession and unleashing hell and damnation on the cast of characters. Even though the book may be intended for more of a 9-15 year old audience, I believe any age would enjoy Ghostlight. The themes and lessons in this story are ones that people of all ages need to learn, especially nowadays when society seems to be shifting so much because of discoveries in science and engineering. There were good lessons in letting go, learning to accept yourself and others, and the power that truth (or lies) has on a person's life.

The list of characters was diverse and really did seem to model the people and families of current American society. This book had many firsts for me, like portraying a mixed family, character(s) born from test tubes, a mother who held a high paying, powerful job, and realistic character(s) with mental illness. I also enjoyed the Southern setting, because a lot of books that I have read with a 'Southern' setting just make it stereotypical and fake sounding. However, Ghostlight just drops little details here and there that remind you that the characters are in Tennessee.

#### **Rating(s):**

5/5

At first, it was a little hard for me to get into the story because I'm not usually one for spooky books. However, it wasn't long before I was flying through the pages and immersing myself into the story! Overall, this wasn't a really scary book, although there was one scene that almost got me going. The characters were likable and modern, and the children were definitely relatable. The interactions between the characters were realistic and insightful, especially between the pairs of siblings. I loved that the story was set in Tennessee. The author didn't bother with writing cheesy accents; instead she used idioms and colloquialisms of the area to really bring that part of the South alive. If you're looking for a suspenseful mystery with enough spook to get your kids (or yourself) into the spirit of Halloween, then this book is just for you!

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### **Kristen says**

Creepy!

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### **Ms. Yingling says**

E ARC from Blue Slip Media

Avery loves to visit her grandmother on her farm, but is irritated that her older brother, Blake wants to devote himself to his summer reading instead of playing with her. Luckily, Julian and his younger sister Lily are staying with their country music singer father in a cottage that Avery's grandmother rents out. Julian is an aspiring film maker, and has decided that nearby Hilliard House, which has been abandoned for years, would make the perfect setting for a horror film. The problem? After a spooky incident years ago, Avery is not allowed to be anywhere near the house that her grandmother is trying to sell. After a couple of creepy experiences in the house, Avery wants to know more about the people who lived there, especially the young Margaret Ann, who died at a very young age. She interviews several people in the area and finds out information about spirit they suspect is haunting the house. In the process, she finds out more information about her own past, as well as Julian's. She makes her own film about the inhabitants of the house, but will it be enough to help the ghost move on?

**Strengths:** This was a nicely creepy tale that included a lot of information about making a film, and about what makes horror films scary. With the technology that children have available, I'm surprised that there aren't more budding filmographers! The family problems add some intrigue as well.

**Weaknesses:** I would have preferred it if this started off with a creepy scene instead of Avery throwing a fit because her brother didn't want to play with her. The first few paragraphs are crucial for reluctant readers and should set the tone of the book.

**What I really think:** I liked the film making details, and I swear that there was a creepy house just like this one near my best friend's house growing up. We were always intrigued by it, but never went near it!

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### **Kimberly says**

I really enjoyed this ghostly adventure.

Set in a quiet town, with old Victorian homes and modern cottages, Avery our main character is on summer vacation along with her brother. Finding things to do can be tedious, but when a boy moves in near their Grandmothers home, the adventures begin. Julian, the boy who moved in, is into film making. So when he sees an old, run down Victorian which happens to belong to Avery's Grandma, he knows the moment he sees it, that this is the place for a film. Avery is not allowed on the property and she doesn't know why, only that the last time she broke the rules she received a beating for it.

As the kids explore the creepy home, ghostly things begin to happen and the film begins.

I read this book in a day and really got into it. Even though it was written from a teenage perspective, I think any adult who appreciates a good ghost story, would enjoy it.

One of my favorite lines from the book which I think would resonate with many of us was, "To me, being Avery meant loving stories. On the page, on the screen and in my head before I went to sleep at night. Before this summer, all I wanted was to escape into the tales of people from past times and unusual places. But what about unusual people who lived in ordinary places. In the here and now? "

I highly recommend this book!

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### **Paula says**

Legit middle-grade scares of the unquiet ghost variety.

The old Hilliard house sits vacant on the large piece of Tennessee property owned by Avery's grandma Ava.

Avery and her brother Blake have been told in NO UNCERTAIN TERMS not to go in there, and fearing the wrath of a strong-willed grandmother, have mostly stayed away.

Enter Julian, city boy and aspiring filmmaker, renting a cottage on the property for the summer with his dad and little sister. Where does Julian want to film? And will he get Avery, who is feeling a little burned after her brother declares he is too old for their usual summer games, to steal the key to Hilliard House from grandma?

There's maybe a lot piled in here - daddy stuff, mental illness, long-buried secrets, class divisions - but that's kind of par for the course for a haunted house book. There's also an odd whiff of gender disparity. Avery is characterized as a hothead, and she does blow up when angry, but this is treated as more of a character flaw than Blake's unapologetic stand-offishness. I will partly write this off to Grandma's old-fashioned Southernness, but I also can't let it go without comment.

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### **Cindy Hudson says**

Avery and her brother have always played make-believe games to pass time during summers at their grandma's house in the country. But one summer Blake announces he's too old for the games, and Avery isn't sure what to do with her time until she runs into the son of a man renting a house from her grandma. Julian wants to make a movie using his phone, and Avery thinks it would be fun to help.

The trouble is, Julian wants to make a scary movie filming at the Hilliard House. Strange things have happened at that house, and Avery's grandma has warned her to never go there. When Julian insists anyway, unexplained events keep occurring, and they get scarier every day. Avery will have to dig deep into local history to find out the truth of what happened in the abandoned house before someone gets hurt.

Ghostlight by Sonia Gensler is a story about the supernatural, but it's also grounded in real-life issues for pre-teens. Gensler's Avery is very relatable in the dilemmas she faces: defying her grandmother, voicing her anger at her brother, confronting a friend when she's wronged, and facing her fears to solve a mystery. Topics for thought and discussion (which apply to more than one generation) include adapting to changing interests as you age, communicating with family members, being honest on important issues, and more.

Ghostlight has just the right amount of creepiness to entice young readers without scaring them too much. I highly recommend it for mother-daughter book clubs with girls aged 8 to 13.

The author provided me with a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Gaby says**

I won this book through Goodreads Giveaway in exchange for an honest review. I want to thank Ms Sonia Gensler for sending me the book along with some bookmarks, a thank you note and the autograph. It was very kind of her and I really appreciate it! Thank you very much!

Avery and her brother Blake like to spend their summers at their grandmother's farm. Like any other summer, they used to play together, but this time Blake thinks he's too old now that he's starting high school, so Avery is kinda mad at him. Soon after they arrived, she met a boy named Julian, an aspiring filmmaker who's staying at a nearby cottage with her country- singer dad and his little sister . He asked about Hilliard house, a place owned by Avery's grandma which has been abandoned for years and that Avery is not allowed to be there. He thinks that place is perfect for his film and,so he tries to convince her to help him with it.

They start the project but something goes wrong at that place,they immediately feel the need to start an investigation about the spirit that they think is haunting the house...

This story reminds me the ones I used to read when I was younger and actually were the only ones I realy enjoyed, so I was excited .

What I liked about this book is the background story of the spirit and how the characters were developed. Also, I found interesting to know more about making a film without being a professional. Other things I like where the relationship mother/daughter,which wasn't the best but challenging.

It might not be too creepy, but is enough for young readers to start reading these kind of stories and I think adults can enjoy it as well, I did and im sure this wont be the only book i read of her.

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### **Barbara says**

At loose ends while staying for the summer at her grandmother's farm, Avery May Hilliard misses her brother, Blake, who has decided that he's too old to keep creating and dramatizing the game they've been working on for years. When she meets Julian, an eccentric boy whose father, a country-music singer, and realizes that he's interested in making a film, she eagerly joins him, even while knowing that his subject matter is an old house that just might be haunted. Julian schools Avery in the ways of filmmaking as well as introducing to some of the best makers or scary movies. The house does, indeed, turn out to be haunted and Avery is the one who figures out the ghost's identity. What works very well here is how the author uses some of the best techniques from horror films to build suspense, ratcheting up the suspense only to leave readers hanging or laughing at their fears and then follows it up with something even scarier. There are all sorts of red herrings tossed around the book's pages and different directions the book could possibly have headed, but middle grade readers will find this one just exactly right for their tastes. Avery is on the cusp of big changes as she moves into adolescence, and this summer might be more important than she realizes. The author nails down precisely how someone her age might behave in such circumstances. I liked all the different characters introduced in the book, some of whom readers barely get to know, and her grandmother's affectionate cat.

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