

Neil Gaiman's 'The Graveyard Book' wins top UK children's literary prize



Written by Indy Pendant

British sci-fi/fantasy author Neil Gaiman has become the first writer to win both the UK's CILIP Carnegie Medal and the US's Newbery Medal, considered the regions' highest distinctions in children's literature. Gaiman accepted the Carnegie Medal on June 24 in London for his dark tale *The Graveyard Book*.

For readers aged nine and over, Gaiman's award-winning title is called a "spooky reworking of Kipling's *The Jungle Book*." The story opens with the violent murder of a toddler's parents and sister. The two-year-old escapes their fate and finds himself in a graveyard, where he is adopted and raised by its resident ghosts.

The Graveyard Book, which won the 2009 Newbery Medal, was shortlisted alongside books by Terry Pratchett, Philip Reeve, Helen Grant, Laurie R. King, Julie Hearn, Patrick Ness and Marcus Sedgwick. Illustrated by Chris Riddell for its UK publication, it was also shortlisted for the simultaneously awarded CILIP Kate Greenaway Medal for outstanding illustration, which went to Australian illustrator Freya Blackwood for *Harry & Hopper*.

Margaret Pemberton, chair of the judges, reviewed, "With great skill Gaiman has created a gripping page turner, expertly supported by well developed characters, that is full of humour and humanity. Not a word is wasted in this episodic tale that draws the reader through Bod's childhood to a well crafted and satisfying conclusion."

Neil Gaiman, who now lives in the US, is known for works in a wide variety of genres, including his award-winning 2001 novel *American Gods*, comic book series *The Sandman*, and books for children and adults including *Stardust*, *Coraline*, *Mirrormask*, and *The Dangerous Alphabet*.

The CILIP Carnegie Medal, which includes no cash prize, has been awarded for more than 70 years by librarians across the UK. Previous winners have included Eleanor Farjeon, Anne Fine, Elizabeth Goudge, CS Lewis, Mary Norton, Noel Streatfield, Philip Pullman and David Almond.