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King Of Shadows



Synopsis

Only in the world of the theater can Nat Field find an escape from the tragedies that have shadowed his young life. So he is thrilled when he is chosen to join an American drama troupe traveling to London to perform *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a new replica of the famous Globe theater. Shortly after arriving in England, Nat goes to bed ill and awakens transported back in time four hundred years -- to another London, and another production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Amid the bustle and excitement of an Elizabethan theatrical production, Nat finds the warm, nurturing father figure missing from his life -- in none other than William Shakespeare himself. Does Nat have to remain trapped in the past forever, or give up the friendship he's so longed for in his own time?

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

"Cooper brilliantly weaves past and present together, using London's Globe Theatre as a backdrop, to demonstrate the timelessness of Shakespeare's works and the theater at large," said PW in a boxed review. Ages 10-14. (June)
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Grade 5-8-Orphan Nat Field is chosen as part of an American theater group to perform at the new Globe Theatre in London. Nat's big role will be Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. However, his

debut is pushed 400 years into the past when he is put to bed with a high fever and wakes up in Elizabethan England. Forced to adapt or be discovered, Nat figures out his situation quickly with judicious questions that result in naturally occurring explanations of the times, the plays, and the theater. The time-travel element is well constructed. Through occasional flashes to the present, readers learn that a boy presumed to be Nat is being treated for bubonic plague. Nat Field has switched places with the infected Nathan Field, who is just about to arrive at the old Globe on loan from another company—thus, thanks to modern medicine, Shakespeare and his plays are saved for the ages. Something in the boy attracts the attention of Will himself and Nat soon becomes his protégé. The father/son relationship between the two fills a need for Nat, whose suppressed sorrow at his father's suicide after his mother's death is finally expressed. The circumstances of his father's death and Nat's reluctance to deal with it are hinted at rather clumsily in the beginning of the book and dispatched succinctly when finally addressed, and come off as clearly secondary to the involving theater experiences. Still, Cooper's readers and fans of Gary Blackwood's *Shakespeare Stealer* (Dutton, 1998) will revel in the hurly-burly of rehearsals and the performance before the queen, the near discoveries, the company rivalries, and some neatly drawn parallels. Sally Margolis, Barton Public Library, VT Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Nat is a talented orphan who is chosen to be part of an international Shakespeare festival. The first part of the book is about the people he's working with and the plays he's in. But when Nat gets sick and slips into a coma, he's really traveled back in time to Elizabethan England, where he is performing in the same plays with Will Shakespeare, who befriends him and gives him a very special gift. The rest of the book is about Nat's relationship with Shakespeare and the other actors, as well as the differing interpretations of the plays that he's in. I liked that we're told right away that Nat's in a coma rather than having it revealed at the end of the book that it's a dream or hallucination. Also, the discussions of how different time periods and directors see the plays in various ways was a sophisticated concept for a kid's book; it's nice when the author assumes some intelligence on the part of the reader! The story is interesting on many levels -- we learn a lot about England of the time, but within the context of interesting events and happenings -- drama without violence. Highly recommended.

I really liked this book! I am an actor myself and it intrigued me the love of the art that was shared with me! I learned to love the characters including William Shakespeare and Thomas. I loved how I

felt to really be there! I also like the connections that Nat had when he woke up to how he was 400 years ago, like how gross his hair was because he did not wash it back then and how it could have seemed like part of the dream because nurses did not clean it! I have recently gone to England and went on the London tower and everything! I felt I was there again when reading. I did not give it five stars because it had some slow parts. Although I think it is a great read and I recommend it to others!

The trope of waking and finding oneself acting in one of Shakespeare's own productions is a clever one, and any book that introduces Shakespeare's theatre to middle school students has much to be said for it. The writing is somewhat pedestrian, but not leaden, and it is certainly readable. But the sophomoric use of obscenities, joking references to child molesters, etc., make this book thoroughly unsuitable for the younger end of the age spectrum suggested -- quite irresponsibly -- by Library Journal and others. A great pity, because otherwise this would be a wonderful book for bright ten-year-olds. I am hardly a prude, but it is wearying to see the extent to which the culture is manically trying to ensure that children not be allowed to be children any longer than can possibly be helped. Again, this could have been much more than the current fashion allowed it to be. A pity the author could not resist marching along.

Nat Field, an actor in the American Company of Boys, goes to London with the troupe to play the role of Puck in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" at the new Globe Theatre. Suddenly, he is transported back in time to 1599 London and finds himself portraying Puck at the original Globe. Not only that, he's performing with Will Shakespeare himself, who is playing Oberon! The author brings the sights, sounds and smells of Elizabethan London to life and takes us behind the scenes of the Bard's own production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." After reading this, you'll probably want to read the play and see a performance yourself. Susan Cooper, who was a student of J.R.R. Tolkien, is an outstanding writer and storyteller. Don't miss her magnum opus, the five-book "The Dark Is Rising" series.

This was a good book in many ways. There was action and mystery. But there was not enough action for me at most points. Also, there were many things I found that should not be in the story or that don't matter and sort of make the book boring. There were many parts during the end that I thought the story was over but it continued and ruined it for me. But overall it was ok.

The book is good for stimulating the background knowledge of Shakespeare for young or reluctant readers.

I have a soft spot for time-travel books and have read a fair few. This one will go right to my "very special" shelf of YA books, alongside "The Dark is Rising" (which is actually better than this, but it's better than just about anything!). I read a borrowed copy in one gulp, and now I'm ordering my own. Looking through the reader reviews, I didn't notice anyone linking this to the "Dark is Rising" series, but did anyone else notice that we have a character in here who has been living for a very long time, making things happen for Good?

Mystery, suspense, and questions to be answered. Great for reports, class novel reading, and just to read for enjoyment purposes.

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