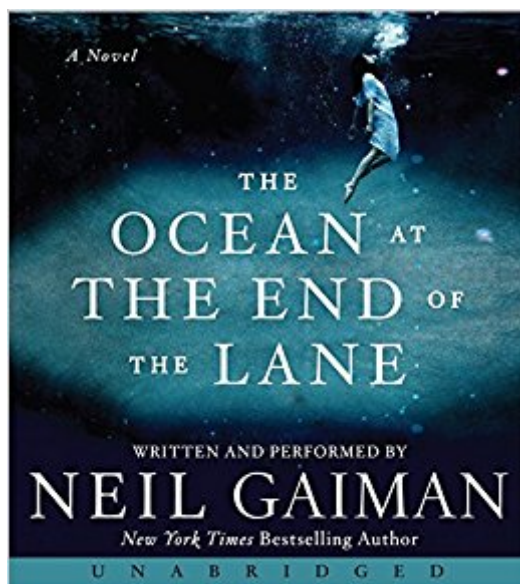


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# The Ocean At The End Of The Lane CD: A Novel



## Synopsis

Sussex, England. A middle-aged man returns to his childhood home to attend a funeral. He is drawn to the farm at the end of the road, where, when he was seven, he encountered a most remarkable girl, Lettie Hempstock. He hasn't thought of Lettie in decades, and yet sitting by the pond (a pond that she'd claimed was an ocean), the unremembered past comes flooding back. Forty years earlier, a man committed suicide in a stolen car at this farm at the end of the road. Like a fuse on a firework, his death lit a touchpaper and resonated in unimaginable ways. The darkness was unleashed, something scary and thoroughly incomprehensible to a little boy. And Lettie—magical, comforting, wise beyond her years—promised to protect him, no matter what. A groundbreaking work from a master, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* is told with a rare understanding of all that makes us human, and shows the power of stories to reveal and shelter us from the darkness inside and out. A stirring, terrifying, and elegiac fable as delicate as a butterfly's wing and as menacing as a knife in the dark.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

An Best Book of the Month, June 2013: Neil Gaiman's intent was simple: to write a short story. What he ended up with instead was *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*--his first adult novel since *Anansi Boys* came out in 2005, and a narrative so thoughtful and thrilling that it's as difficult to stop reading as it was for Gaiman to stop writing. Forty years ago, our narrator, who was then a seven-year-old boy, unwittingly discovered a neighboring family's supernatural secret. What happens next is an imaginative romp through otherworldly adventure that could only come from Gaiman's magical mind.

Childhood innocence is tested and transcended as we see what getting between ancient, mystic forces can cost, as well as what can be gained from the power of true friendship. The result is a captivating tale that is equal parts sweet, sad, and spooky. --Robin A. Rothman --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** In Gaiman's first novel for adults since *Anansi Boys* (2005), the never-named fiftyish narrator is back in his childhood homeland, rural Sussex, England, where he's just delivered the eulogy at a funeral. With an hour or so to kill afterward, he drives about aimlessly, he thinks until he's at the crucible of his consciousness: a farmhouse with a duck pond. There, when he was seven, lived the Hempstocks, a crone, a housewife, and an 11-year-old girl, who said they were grandmother, mother, and daughter. Now, he finds the crone and, eventually, the housewife the same ones, unchanged while the girl is still gone, just as she was at the end of the childhood adventure he recalls in a reverie that lasts all afternoon. He remembers how he became the vector for a malign force attempting to invade and waste our world. The three Hempstocks are guardians, from time almost immemorial, situated to block such forces and, should that fail, fight them. Gaiman mines mythological typology the three-fold goddess, the water of life (the pond, actually an ocean) and his own childhood milieu to build the cosmology and the theater of a story he tells more gracefully than any he's told since *Stardust* (1999). And don't worry about that for adults designation: it's a matter of tone. This lovely yarn is good for anyone who can read it. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** That this is the popular author's first book for adults in eight years pretty much sums up why this will be in demand. --Ray Olson --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Right up front I should admit, I'd never heard of Neil Gaiman before I read an enthusiastic newspaper review about this book and decided to preorder it a few days ago. Last night, it was wirelessly delivered to my Kindle and this morning, I picked it up and started reading. Almost instantly, I was so absorbed and lost in the storytelling experience that I didn't do anything else until I finished it a few hours later. It's a short book; it's enchanting; it's very well written...definitely top-quality fantasy literature. I'm not a fan of fantasy literature, but this book swept me away into such a delightful and fascinating series of incredible adventures--or should I say misadventures--that I could not pull myself away. The author is correct to warn that this is not a fable for children...the reality is far too stark and dark, and there are definitely some adult themes. "The Ocean at the End of the Lane" is a tale about a lonely bookish seven-year old whose life takes

a terrifying turn into a dark and creepy reality. The child is never named, but in recent interviews, the author admits that this child is very much like he was at that age. The child lives in the lovely English countryside of Sussex--the same environment where the author grew up. And like Gaiman, the child is wise, responsible, and moral beyond his years. The parents are blithely confident that nothing bad could happen to their brilliant bookish son in such a bucolic setting. But of course, bad things can, and do happen, especially to the pure and innocent...The parents have no idea that the Hempstocks--an eleven-year-old girl, her mother, and grandmother--who live by a pond at the end of the lane, are really a group of immortals who play at being human. Our seven-year-old child makes friends with the girl, Lettie Hempstock, and she introduces him to the pond, which is really an ocean. Eventually, our narrator and Lettie take a trip into a higher plain of reality that is entered somehow through the property owned by the Hempstocks, and so begins a series of remarkable misadventures with unforeseen consequences. This novel is a heroic tale about the age-old battle between childhood innocence and mythic forces. The book will charm you, fill you with awe, make you feel on edge, surprise you, and make you want to keep on reading no matter what important obligations you might have waiting for you to accomplish. Since finishing the book this afternoon, I was so curious about this fine writer that I started doing research into his life, philosophy, and writing. It seems that in prepublication interviews, Gaiman says that he's prouder of this particular work than anything else he's ever written...and, as I learned today, this is an author who has had an insanely prolific career spanning blockbuster successes across a large number of different creative media. He says he's put an enormous amount of effort into writing and rewriting this book in order to get the tone, words, and dramatic focus just right. A number of critics have already said they consider this work to be as close to sterling literary fiction as Gaiman is ever likely to get. Indeed, I was very impressed. For me, this work is, without doubt, first-rate fantasy and escapist fiction...and very fine literature, as well. It delivers a highly imaginative, fabulous and fascinating fable that envelops, and attempts to explain, everything in the space-time continuum. Yes, it's that ambitious! It had me hooked from the first to the last page. Simply put: it is an incredible gem of a novel.

This is a fantasy, very imaginatively and well-written, that is about fantasy, namely childhood fantasy. The significant twist in this book is that our adult conventional lives are the fantasies, while the children are in contact with a reality that is far stranger and dangerous than the adult world. While a short book, it is enthralling and magical. It is certainly an entertaining adventure for the few short hours it takes to read the book. I found myself wishing it had been a bit more filled out. Nevertheless, it is certainly a little gem, as it is, and I highly recommend it.

Truly an enjoyable story. Nothing exactly what it seems, dreams that were real, or were they? A young boy who is nothing that his family expects - or understands - meets a girl who is, or may be, older than time. They have an adventure full of strange events and stranger creatures, with unexpected results. The Girl's farm has a duck pond, which she calls an ocean. With all the self-assurance and dismissal of a seven year old, the boy insists it is a pond because it is not big enough. "It's as big as it needs to be," says Lettie. And as the boy discovers, that is exactly true. One of the best stories I've read. I recommend it.

This is my first introduction to Gaiman, and I have to say I was thrilled with it. His writing is so unique, a quirky dark fantasy that had me engrossed for days. It is a shorter novel so I finished it quickly and was actually sad when I read those final sentences. His characters were so interesting that I did not notice until the end of the book that the main character/protagonist was never given a name. His representation of the maiden, mother, and crone was perfection and one that played well into the story line and their interactions with the main character, a young boy. Even his villain/antagonist was strangely appealing and sympathetic for, as it was pointed out in the book, she was only doing what was instinctual to her. Gaiman's fantasy world brought me back to my childhood where things that go bump in the night are always scary yet peak a certain innocent curiosity that adults have forgotten or refuse to acknowledge. There was also a touch of dark whimsy that pulled you further into that childhood fantasy world. If you haven't had the pleasure of reading Gaiman, I highly recommend beginning with this book.

He said in the forward that people always ask him where he comes up with his ideas and he says out of his head. What a head... This story is delicate, dark, compelling and wonderful. Moving back and forth between the past and the present, he weaves a narrative that defies you to put the book down. OK, so I had a few nights I stayed up past my bedtime. I loved this story and the characters, the plot and the conclusion. It is frightening and sweet, sometimes at the same time. Don't wait, start reading it now.

I am a Neil Gaiman fan. I've read much of his output, but I have to say that this book left me feeling empty. I didn't connect to the characters and I felt it was a bit rushed. After brilliance like American Gods and Coraline, this just didn't have it. Many have called it a brilliant adult fairy tale. I feel it was more geared at children. The story meanders on from set piece to set piece and when it ends, it

does so flatly. It feels like there should be more here.

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