



# Neil Gaiman

In addition to horror, Neil Gaiman writes fantasy, fairy tales, science fiction, and apocalyptic stories, in the form of **novels, comics, picture books, short stories, poems, and screenplays**. He writes for all ages, not just children. He is known for mixing the real world with the fantastic – with a range of creepy, unsettling characters and settings, often putting his lead characters in danger.

Something that one asks themselves when reading an author with such a rich and diverse work of the imagination as Neil Gaiman is where does he get his ideas from? In an article on the subject, he says something elemental about it: **“You get ideas from daydreaming. You get ideas from being bored.**

Style of Writing	Specific books/ examples
<p>Gaiman’s characters often have quirks that are applicable to whatever world they’re in. Each character fits perfectly into their own world, but wouldn’t fit anywhere else.</p>	<p>Bod (The Graveyard Book) is a young boy longing for adventure because he’s grown up in a graveyard. He knows his life is abnormal and that perhaps it will allow him to adjust to the real world in ways ordinary people can’t.</p> <p>Richard is a young businessman who’s tired of the mundane and has a collection of troll dolls simply because people keep giving him troll dolls. He’s just odd enough that he can serve as a straight man in the bizarre London Below, but doesn’t belong in the dull reality of London Above.</p> <p>Crowley is a free-wheeling, hedonistic demon who’s grown to like life on earth. His methods of torture are cruel in their modernity. He’s bad at being a demon, but he’s not good at anything else.</p>
<p>Gaiman loves using a Classical Omniscient POV (point of view) for his stories. This is the “fairy tale narrator”, the one who can fly around the story world and tell you its history, the character’s thoughts—even give you a peek at the future! This POV is a godlike character unto itself and, as such, has its own thoughts and opinions about the characters and what they do.</p>	

Gaiman likes to put a spin on a traditional tale...

1. He begins by rereading an old story that 'belongs to the world', as he puts it. A fairy tale, folktale, **myth**, or legend.
2. Then he tries to see the story with fresh eyes, by looking at it as literally as possible, with as few preconceived notions as possible.
3. Finally, he rewrites that story in a slightly different context and with his **reimagined** version of the events.

Gaiman, in conversation, gives the example of *Snow White*:

A queen tries to keep a prince from awakening a dead princess with a kiss.

He asked, **but why?** Well, what if the queen really was the hero?

What if the Snow White was so pale because she was actually undead? A vampire even? Wouldn't that make the prince a villain too? A necrophile prince trying to awaken an undead vampire bride?

Whoa! If someone described Gaiman's version of Snow White, would you ever recognise the source material in it? Probably not.

<p><b>Gaiman puts a fantastical twist on a familiar place:</b> Gaiman claims to always begin his stories by outlining the major elements of his fantasy world, then he researches the real-world analogs to elements in his stories. So, instead of copying Middle-Earth or Narnia, he suggests looking around at our world and subtly changing it. He recommends writers take their native situation and exaggerate it, guessing the effects of those exaggerations on their world.</p> <p>For comparison...</p> <p>Tolkien approach: Authors create a whole new and different world in which their protagonists act.</p> <p>Lewis approach: in which people from our world enter a fantasy realm</p> <p>Enter Gaiman: He tells stories in which the real world and the fantasy world aren't separated but overlap or the 'real' world becomes much larger than we (and his protagonists) believed it is.</p>	<p>He interweaves two worlds in <i>Neverwhere</i>,</p> <p>He expands the concept of reality in <i>American Gods</i> and he even does that in stories that don't take place in our reality in the first place as in <i>Stardust</i> (where a fantasy reality gets the same treatment of a world behind the veil).</p>
<p>Gaiman says he doesn't hold with writers who preach the 'Show, Don't Tell' dictum. Because the author is the god of their world, they get to do what they want as long as readers find it engaging.</p> <p>The two places this shows up most prominently in Gaiman's work is in his character introductions and his setting descriptions. Spending pages introducing a character and their home for pages on end may have died in the 19<sup>th</sup> century for everyone else, but Gaiman is fighting to keep this tradition alive.</p>	<p><b>Example:</b> <i>Stardust</i> opens with a whole chapter on the town's history and a character history—not for the protagonist, but for his father!</p>
<p>Short Sentences for suspense</p>	<p><i>Coraline</i> - "Something moved."</p>

	<p>He would be back for them soon, he said.</p> <p>They waited.</p> <p>"He is never coming back," said Hansel.</p> <p>- Hansel and Gretel</p>
<p>Intriguing opening sentences that hook the reader</p>	<p>There was a hand in the darkness, and it held a knife. The knife had a handle of polished black bone, and a blade finer and sharper than any razor. If it sliced you, you might not even know you had been cut, not immediately. <span style="float: right;">The Graveyard book</span></p> <p>Coraline - "Coraline discovered the door a little while after they moved into the house."</p> <p>Stardust - "There was once a young man who wished to gain his Heart's Desire."</p> <p><b>T</b>his all happened a long time ago, in your grandmother's time, or in her grandfather's. A long time ago. Back then, we all lived on the edge of the great forest.</p> <p>-Hansel and Gretel</p>
<p>Repetition</p>	<p>His hair was dark and his eyes were dark and he wore black leather gloves of the thinnest lambskin.</p> <p>The toddler's room was at the very top of the house. The man Jack walked up the stairs, his feet silent on the carpeting. Then he pushed open the attic door, and he walked in. His shoes were black leather, and they were polished to such a shine that they looked like dark mirrors: you could see the moon reflected in them, tiny and half full.</p> <p>The man Jack was tall. This man was taller. The man Jack wore dark clothes. This man's clothes were darker. People who noticed the man Jack when he went about his business – and he did not like to be noticed – were troubled, or made uncomfortable, or found themselves unaccountably scared. The man Jack looked up at the stranger, and it was the man Jack who was troubled. <span style="float: right;">- The Graveyard Book</span></p> <p>Stardust - "At that time Dunstan Thorn was eighteen, and he was not a romantic. He had nut-brown hair, and nut-brown eyes, and nutbrown freckles."</p>

I've only found this once (there could be more examples) but it's a definite stylistic choice to start a description with "A description: ...."

Stardust - "A description: She had her mother's grey eyes and heart-shaped face, her father's curling chestnut hair. Her lips were red and perfectly shaped, her cheeks blushed prettily when she spoke. She was pale, and utterly delightful. When she was sixteen she had fought vigorously with her mother, for Victoria had taken it into her head that she would work in the Seventh Magpie as a pot-maid, "I have spoken with Mister Bromios about this," she told her mother, "and he has no objection."

### Some other books from this author include:

- The Graveyard Book
- Coraline
- Hansel and Gretel
- The Wolves in the Walls
- Pirate Stew
- Fortunately, The Milk
- Odd and the Frost Giants
- Mirror Masks