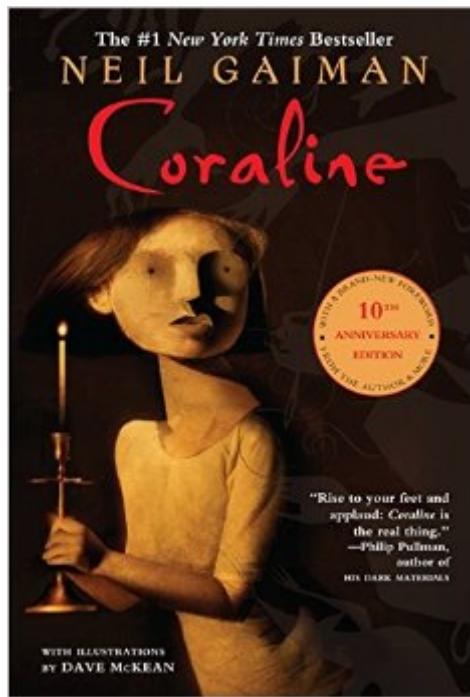


The book was found

Coraline



Synopsis

"Coraline discovered the door a little while after they moved into the house. . . ."When Coraline steps through a door to find another house strangely similar to her own (only better), things seem marvelous. But there's another mother there, and another father, and they want her to stay and be their little girl. They want to change her and never let her go. Coraline will have to fight with all her wit and courage if she is to save herself and return to her ordinary life. Celebrating ten years of Neil Gaiman's first modern classic for young readers, this edition is enriched with a brand-new foreword from the author, a reader's guide, and more.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (1,166 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 and up

Customer Reviews

Neil Gaiman has shown an admirable knack for fiction for young adults and children as he has shown in adult fiction. I am tempted to attribute this to his experience writing graphic stories, but it is really something more than that. It is an ability to touch the sources of wonder and fear without the necessity of excessive gore and grimness. Not that bad things don't happen in Gaiman's tales, but they tend to go right to the heart, instead of the stomach. This tale is about a remarkable young woman named Coraline (who remains polite, even when you call her Caroline). Recently she and her parents have moved into one of those wondrous old houses that are sometimes converted into

flats. Both Coraline's parents work at home, and sometimes she feels a bit ignored and bored. Nevertheless, she is encouraged to explore and so she does. First her neighbors. The Misses Spink and Forcible are two retired thespians who live together in the bottom flat, and up above is Mr. Bobo, who is an avid trainer of mice. Having run out of people, Coraline investigates the premises. Her flat is most unusual; it has 21 windows and 14 doors. Only one door is locked, and that only leads to a brick wall. Well, most of the time it does. On some occasions, it opens up on a world just like this one, where Coraline finds her other mother, other father, and even other neighbors. At first it seems quite nice, people pay more attention to one there, the toys are better, and, of all things, the cat talks. Soon Coraline finds all is not quite as it seems. Everyone has buttons for eyes, her other mother has strange hands that seem to have a life of their own, and there are a remarkable number of rats. In fact, if you dig deep enough, things are really most horrible.

Neil Gaiman is a master storyteller. His diction is perfect. He does not waste words, but is not miserly with them either. His descriptions never fail to rouse a knowing nod and smile from the reader. Even when writing a quick throwaway piece in his journal...his style is impeccable. For this novel, Neil sets his eyes on another audience: young adults. He gives children (or, as he has said, 'strange little girls of all ages and genders' - a nod to his friend Tori Amos and her 2001 "Strange Little Girls" album) a deliciously creepy novel about a girl, a new flat, and her other mother. Coraline (not Caroline, even though all of the adults who live in the other flats keep on saying it that way and ignoring her corrections) and her parents move into a new home. One day, she pesters her father one too many times, so he sends her off on an expedition: find the water heater, count everything blue, count all the doors and windows. She does so, and is shocked to find that there are 13 doors that open and one that doesn't. She asks her mother what is behind the 14th door, and is told that it was bricked over when the house was broken up into flats. Her mother unlocks the door to show her this, but doesn't lock it again. Later, Coraline creeps back, and finds that the door opens into another flat. It is just like her own, but not quite. In her room (green and pink, not boring like her own), she finds the sorts of clothing that she thinks she would have if she could pick out her own wardrobe -- not a grey school skirt, but costumes. In the kitchen, she finds her other parents -- not her real parents who work and don't play with her, but other parents who cook real food (not something from a "recipe" involving tarragon and butter beans) and dote upon her.

I received the audio CD of Coraline in the mail yesterday in the early afternoon. I'd read the book, and heard parts of it read by the author here and there, so I put it on for background, while I did

other things. The "other things" didn't even get started for roughly three hours. The recording begins with a verse from a quirky Gothic Archies tune in which Stephin Merritt sing-songs, "You are not my mother, and I want to go home," over layers of atmospheric dings and bonga-bongas. The song echoes the story's cohesion of humor and spookiness, and is split into three parts, playing a bit before each of the three CDs. The story itself is a delight. Coraline is a typical child-explorer, examining the house and grounds to which she recently moved, uncovering the strange personalities that inhabit her world, and discovering that a door in her home which was previously bricked-up actually leads to a misty echo-world where old, hungry, button-eyed creatures masquerade as her other parents, having parent-napped her real parents, while trying to convince her to stay there forever so that they can keep her soul . . . Well. Perhaps her story is not so typical. Not typical, also, are the fantastic characters who pop in and out of the story, such as the Slavic mustached man who lives in the upper flat and is training a mouse circus, and his other-self, or the pair of dotty, but kind, retired theater mavens who read tea leaves and worry about their dogs' tummies, and their less-benevolent, other-world counterparts. Like any true exploration story, Coraline has an assistant for the more dangerous times, in the form of a condescending, snarkily witty black cat. And like every true exploration story, there are acts of great courage and startling discoveries made along the way.

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