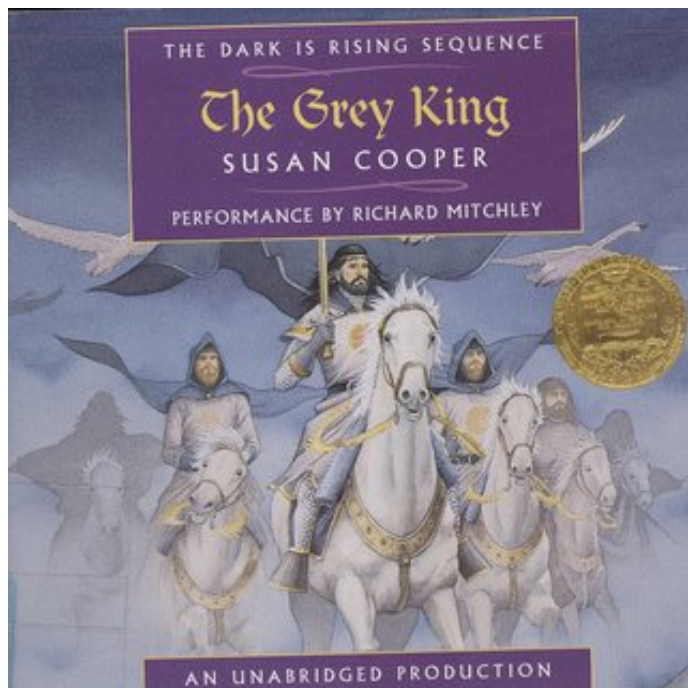

Susan Cooper

The Grey King (The Dark Is Rising #4)



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Description

*"Fire on the mountain shall find the harp of gold
Played to wake the Sleepers, oldest of the old..."*

With the final battle between the Light and the Dark soon approaching, Will sets out on a quest to call for aid. Hidden within the Welsh hills is a magical harp that he must use to wake the Sleepers -- six noble riders who have slept for centuries.

But an illness has robbed Will of nearly all his knowledge of the Old Ones, and he is left only with a broken riddle to guide him in his task. As Will travels blindly through the hills, his journey will bring him face-to-face with the most powerful Lord of the Dark -- the Grey King. The King holds the harp and the Sleepers within his lands, and there has yet to be a force strong enough to tear them from his grasp...

Insightful reviews

Alex Sarll: Straddling Hallowe'en (of which surprisingly little is made) in an unnaturally hot autumn, this was the book I remembered least from *The Dark is Rising*, but the prizewinner. Both those things could be explained by dullness, but no, this is maybe the best yet - surprisingly small scale in terms of what mortal eyes could see happening, but (like Machen's 'White People', set in the same Welsh hills) rich in the strange significance thereof. And even at the mundane level, it's a quietly heartbreaking story of a lonely boy and his dog, and an entitled prick of a neighbour in whose very human nastiness the Dark finds all the purchase it needs.

Mary Overton: John Rowlands, merely human, struggles to explain his understanding of the Old Ones who maintain the Light:

"... those men who know anything at all about the Light also know that there is a fierceness to its power, like the bare sword of the law, or the white burning of the sun.' Suddenly his voice sounded to Will very strong, and very Welsh. 'At the very heart, that is. Other things, like humanity, and mercy, and charity, that most good men hold more precious than all else, they do not come first for the Light. Oh, sometimes they are there; often, indeed. But in the very long run the concern of you people [the Old Ones] is with the absolute good, ahead of all else. You are like fanatics. Your masters, at any rate. Like the old Crusaders -- oh, like certain groups in every belief, though this is not a matter of religion, of course. At the centre of the Light there is a cold white flame, just as at the centre of the Dark there is a great black pit bottomless as the Universe.' (114-5)

"For a flicker of an instant too, then, [Will] remembered what John Rowlands had said about the coldness at the heart of the Light But it was only for an instant. To an Old One such things were not of importance." (160)

David: **July 2013 reread**

This fourth book is where the Dark is Rising sequence begins to pick up its pace and become more epic, weaving the final battle of the Dark vs. the Light into a retold Arthurian mythos. Rereading it as an adult, I began to feel again a little bit of the magic that so entranced me as a

child when this was my favorite series ever.

In *The Grey King*, Will Stanton, last of the Old Ones, has been sent to stay with an uncle in Wales to recover from an illness, thus continuing to contrast his humanity (physically he is still an eleven-year-old boy) with his immortal nature as an Old One. He is coming into his power and is now able to work magic and know things without everything being fed to him by his mentor Merriman, who makes only a token appearance in this book. Indeed, this is Will's first true solo quest. Notably, the Drew children, who starred in book one and shared the story with Will in book three, are completely absent and unmentioned here.

*On the day of the dead, when the year too dies,
Must the youngest open the oldest hills
Through the door of the birds, where the breeze breaks.
There fire shall fly from the raven boy,
And the silver eyes that see the wind,
And the light shall have the harp of gold.*

*By the pleasant lake the Sleepers lie,
On Cadfan's Way where the kestrels call;
Though grim from the Grey King shadows fall,
Yet singing the golden harp shall guide
To break their sleep and bid them ride.*

*When light from the lost land shall return,
Six Sleepers shall ride, six Signs shall burn,
And where the midsummer tree grows tall
By Pendragon's sword the Dark shall fall.*

*Y maent yr mynyddoedd yn canu,
ac y mae'r arglwyddes yn dod.*

Susan Cooper definitely has a more poetic pen than Rowling, and in *The Grey King* you get a lot of Welsh — Welsh landscapes, Welsh mythology, even a little bit of Welsh language lessons. The Grey King is the Brenin Llwyd, a great Lord of the Dark who dwells in Cader Idris, a misty mountain over a pleasant farm valley, where six sleepers lie sleeping, to be awoken by a harp of gold — if Will can find it and play it and prevent the Grey King from preventing him.

Also to play a role in this story is Bran, the Raven Boy, an albino the same age as Will, whose true nature is revealed in dramatic and powerful fashion.

Highlights of this book, besides the magnificent Welsh scenery, were the bits of magic, much more forceful and powerful this time. Will isn't playing around any more, but he's no god or even a full-fledged wizard, and the Light and the Dark both have hard limits on what they can do, bound by universal rules. Susan Cooper gives the magic powers a sense of mystery and epic scope even while applying appropriate narrative constraints and without trying to enumerate them in the style of a modern fantasy novel.

There is also much more powerful human drama this time around. Caradog Prichard, the human "villain" of the piece, is a nasty piece of work, yet ultimately just a man, and so Will's inevitably doomed efforts to save him from his own folly read as real and yet foreordained. There is an eternal human tragedy replayed as Will proceeds toward the final stage of his quest.

Although it's been too long and I'm now too much of a grown-up to feel the same wonder and thrill I did reading this in elementary school, the first three books were pleasant but not really that much fun and kind of left me wondering why I loved them so much as a child, while this book shows Susan Cooper's talents as a dramatist and storyteller more.

Nikki: the gray King is very likely my favorite booklet of this series -- and that I swear that isn't basically simply because it really is set in my domestic country. It is a lovely, stunning book. This is often the main layered of the books, I feel -- in which I suggest this is often the publication that has the main to supply for individuals of all ages. There are the extra open and noticeable feelings of Bran -- grief, pride, vanity -- and the extra complicated grief and guilt of Owen Davies, which I am not certain a more youthful reader will be capable of absolutely understand. The characters during this ebook are all excellent. We now have one new major character, finishing our six, and that is, of course, Bran. He is a truly fascinating character, I find. His aloofness and exclusion is definitely kept away from being overdone, I think, and the moments while he acts similar to an ordinary boy with Will are beautiful. He is enormously human, and but he is additionally princely/kingly at times... the juxtaposition of the 2 is as attention-grabbing with him because it is with Will. It is not simply Bran who proves an enticing character, though: I am additionally attracted to Owen Davies and John Rowlands. Either one of them are so human. Owen is so unfair to Bran, in a few ways, and but it really is transparent he loves him and needs to do good by means of him. John is a type of those that is actually stable and unwittingly (most of the time) serves the Light: it truly is attention-grabbing to determine a personality like that, past the truth that he is simply likeable. This can be the ebook within which the tricks at an Arthurian historical past blossom a little. Nonetheless now not up to within the final book, yet we have long gone from realising Merriman is Merlin on the finish of the 1st ebook to seeing the genuine King Arthur and his son. My precise favorite scene within the entire series is available in the final web page of this book: "Bran went to Davies and placed his arm around his waist, and stood close. It was once the 1st gesture of love among the 2 that might have ever seen. And wondering, loving shock woke in Owen Davies's worn face as he appeared down on the boy's white head, and the 2 stood there, waiting." Reread back in December 2009. Beautiful. Made me cry. Swept me off into its little international as always.

Linda: Will Stanton, the youngest of the previous Ones has been very ill. To ensure that him to recover totally his mom and dad ship him to the Welsh nation-state to stick with friends. As soon as there'll turn into neighbors with Bran, a boy approximately his age who's an albino. The 2 of them needs to then conflict the gray King and win. The gray King, however, is the most powerful entity of the Dark. He understands what's going to and Bran try to do and manipulates the realm round them to maintain them at bay. For no matter what reason, I've got beloved this quantity of the The Darkish is Emerging series the best. Although the complete storyline has been fascinating occasionally it will get a section bogged down. This one did not.

Eric: as soon as again, Cooper units the temper admirably. i am getting the sensation of Wales here. At least, i believe I do, i have by no means truly been there. Anyway, the sunshine continues to be good. The darkish remains to be bad. i am by no means truly stunned by means of results but, although part the phrases she makes use of were banished from the SATs, it is a child's book. i think just like the books of yesteryear have been a section extra straightforward. part story...I as soon as used to be backpacking in Glacier nationwide Park whilst rain all started rolling in over the mountains - one in particular. I instantly grew to become pagan and began calling it the hurricane King. Anyway, finish of story. Here it is: <http://furstie.smugmug.com/Backpackin...>

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