

American Gods by Neil Gaiman

Image: the cover of American Gods

Released from prison, Shadow finds his world turned upside down. His wife has been killed; a mysterious stranger offers him a job. But Mr. Wednesday, who knows more about Shadow than is possible, warns that a storm is coming – a battle for the very soul of America . . . and they are in its direct path. American Gods is a kaleidoscopic journey into myth and across an American landscape at once eerily familiar and utterly alien.

Visit Neil Gaiman's site: <http://neilgaiman.com/>

Read Chapter 1: <http://neilgaiman.com/works/Books/American+Gods/in/181/>

Reviews:

Library Journal:

In his latest novel, Gaiman (Neverwhere) explores the vast and bloody landscape of myths and legends where the gods of yore and the neoteric gods of now conflict in modern-day America. The antihero, a man of unusually acute intellect through whose eyes we witness the behind-the-scenes dynamics of human religion and faith, is a convict called Shadow. He is flung into the midst of a supernatural fray of gods such as Odin, Anansi, Loki One-Eye, Thor, and a multitude of other ancient divinities as they struggle for survival in an America beset by trends, fads, and constant upheaval—an environment not good for gods. They are joined in this struggle by such contemporary deities as the geek-boy god Internet and the goddess Media. There's a nice plot twist in the end, and the fascinating subject matter and impressive mythic scope are handled creatively and expertly. Gaiman is an exemplary short story writer, but his ventures into novels are also compellingly imaginative. Highly recommended for all libraries.—Ann Kim

Kirkus:

An ex-convict is the wandering knight-errant who traverses the wasteland of Middle America, in this ambitious, gloriously funny, and oddly heartwarming latest from the popular fantasist (Stardust, 1999, etc.). Released from prison after serving a three-year term, Shadow is immediately rocked by the news that his beloved wife Laura has been killed in an automobile accident. While en route to Indiana for her funeral, Shadow meets an eccentric businessman who calls himself Wednesday (a dead giveaway if you're up to speed on your Norse mythology), and passively accepts the latter's offer of an imprecisely defined job. The story skillfully glides onto and off the plane of reality, as a series of mysterious encounters suggest to Shadow that he may not be in Indiana anymore—or indeed anywhere on Earth he recognizes. In dreams, he's visited by a grotesque figure with the head of a buffalo and the voice of a

prophet—as well as by Laura's rather alarmingly corporeal ghost. Gaiman layers in a horde of other stories whose relationships to Shadow's adventures are only gradually made clear, while putting his sturdy protagonist through a succession of tests that echo those of Arthurian hero Sir Gawain bound by honor to surrender his life to the malevolent Green Knight, Orpheus braving the terrors of Hades to find and rescue the woman he loves, and numerous other archetypal figures out of folklore and legend. Only an ogre would reveal much more about this big novel's agreeably intricate plot. Suffice it to say that this is the book that answers the question: When people emigrate to America, what happens to the gods they leave behind? A magical mystery tour through the mythologies of all cultures, a unique and moving love story—and another winner for the phenomenally gifted, consummately reader-friendly Gaiman.

Neil Gaiman

Image: Neil Gaiman reading at a podium

“I’ve always wanted to be a writer, but Alan Moore’s work and help inspired me to write comics. In some ways, the biggest influence on my writing was Punk. There was the idea you could do something simply by doing it.”

Neil Gaiman combines horror with whimsy, spooky settings with comedic circumstances. His writing is deliciously unsettling and his stories are endlessly creative.

Gaiman writes novels, short stories, teen lit, comics, film and television scripts. He writes science fiction, urban fantasy, horror. His work has won numerous awards: Bram Stokers for horror, Hugos, Nebulas, Locuses, and Geffens for scifi/fantasy. Gaiman’s graphic novel series Sandman was the first comic to receive a literary award, the 1991 World Fantasy Award for Best Short Story.

Click here for cool stuff: http://www.neilgaiman.com/p/Cool_Stuff

Youtube embedded video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMveRgNmGa4>

More about American Gods

Genre? Urban Fantasy. Magical stories told in contemporary urban/city settings.

Tone? Dark humor. Character-driven. Otherworldly imagery.

Reading Guide from www.neilgaiman.com:

<http://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/American+Gods/in/180/>

Neil Gaiman, Patton Oswalt, and Zelda Williams read the Bilquis scene (NSFW! Spoiler alert!):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlpdqwszQOg>

Read-Alikes

Read-alikes by Neil Gaiman

Images of the covers of Anansi Boys, Neverwhere, and Fragile Things

1. [Anansi Boys](#) - A mythology for a modern age -- complete with dark prophecy, family dysfunction, mystical deceptions, and killer birds. Not to mention a lime.
2. [Neverwhere](#) - Richard Mayhew is an unassuming young businessman living in London. One night he stumbles across a girl bleeding on the sidewalk. He stops to help her--and the life he knows vanishes like smoke. He has fallen through the cracks of reality and has landed somewhere different, somewhere that is Neverwhere.
3. [Fragile Things](#) - By turns delightful, disturbing, and diverting, this extraordinary collection showcases Gaiman's storytelling brilliance as well as his terrifyingly entertaining dark sense of humor.

Read-alike Authors

1. [Charles de Lint](#) – urban fantasy
2. [Emma Bull](#) – urban fantasy
3. [Haruki Murakami](#) – intricate characters, haunting surrealist fiction
4. [Jane Yolen](#) – uses folklore, fantasy, and mythology to tell modern stories
5. [Caitlín R. Kiernan](#) – dark fantasy and horror
6. [And more.....](#)

Read- & Watch-alikes Titles

1. [Pan's Labyrinth](#) – Fantasy horror; it's right up AG's alley.
2. [The Wood Wife](#) – Similar use of mythological characters toying with humans. Less scary than AG.
3. [Moonheart](#) – Blending of multiple mythologies, and straddling that line between our reality and The Others'.
4. [War for the Oaks](#) – Urban fantasy adventure focused on faerie.
5. [Dogma](#) – Christian mythical creatures somewhat lost in modern America. More comedic and less creepy than AG.
6. [Welcome to Bordertown](#) – Similar feeling of walking the line between our reality and The Others' reality. Includes a story by Gaiman.
7. [Skinny Legs and All](#) – Mythology in the modern world but more comic. Like in AG, multiple storylines elaborates the world author is creating. Not horror.
8. [A Madness of Angels, or, The Resurrection of Matthew Swift](#) – Dark urban fantasy.
9. [Little, Big](#) – An urban fantasy adventure epic.
10. [More urban fantasy...](#)

Who are the American Gods? The ones we brought with us? The ones we created here?

Mythology, Legends, and Folklore...

- [Encyclopedia Mythica](#) (website)
- [Folklore and Mythology Electronic Texts](#) (website)
- [Mythology Guide](#) (website)
- [Encyclopedia of World Mythology](#) (eBook; requires log-in)
- [Grimm's Fairy Tales](#) (website)
- [SurLaLune Fairy Tales](#) (website)
- [Internet Sacred Text Archive](#) (website)
- More [folklore](#), [legends](#), and [mythology](#) from PPLD's catalog

Sources!

Synopses of American Gods, Anansi Boys, Neverwhere, and Fragile Things adapted from www.neilgaiman.com

Photo of Neil Gaiman by Ken Conley, www.flickr.com/photos/kwc

Spooky Tree and Storm Fairy photos from Photos.com

Created by Esti Shay

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