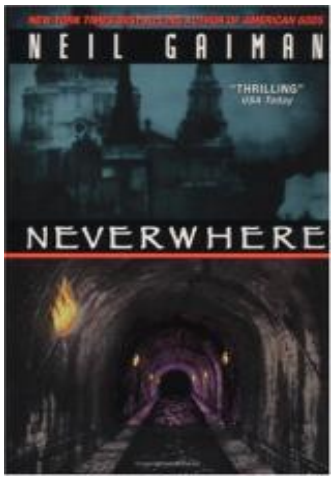
Neverwhere

by Neil Gaiman



About the Book

The #1 *New York Times* bestselling author?s ultimate edition of his wildly successful first novel featuring his ?preferred text? --- and including the special NEVERWHERE tale ?How the Marquis Got His Coat Back.?

Published in 1997, Neil Gaiman?s darkly hypnotic first novel, NEVERWHERE, heralded the arrival of this major talent and became a touchstone of urban fantasy. Over the years, a number of versions were produced both in the U.S. and the U.K. Now, this author?s preferred edition of his classic novel reconciles these versions and reinstates a number of scenes cut from the original published books.

NEVERWHERE is the story of Richard Mayhew, a young London businessman with a good heart and an ordinary life, which is changed forever when he is plunged through the cracks of reality into a world of shadows and darkness --- the Neverwhere. If he is ever to return to the London Above, Richard must join the battle to save this strange underworld kingdom from the malevolence that means to destroy it.

Discussion Guide

1. In the preface, Neil Gaiman writes, ?What I wanted to do was write a book that would do for adults what the books I had loved when I was younger, books like ALICE IN WONDERLAND or the *Narnia* books, or THE WIZARD OF OZ, did for me as a kid.? In reading NEVERWHERE, were you reminded of these or any other classic fantasy-adventures? In what ways?

2. Discuss the references to mythology in NEVERWHERE. How do the descent into the underworld, the series of trials, the labyrinth and beast and the return home connect Richard Mayhew to Odysseus and other mythological heroes?

3. A major theme of the book is the idea of ?falling through the cracks.? Gaiman describes this as a physical possibility as well as a metaphor, and it happens to characters both Above and Underside. What does it mean to fall through the

cracks for the various characters? When is it something to avoid, and when is it something to embrace?

4. NEVERWHERE is host to several strong and compelling female characters like Anaesthesia, Hunter, Door and Serpentine. Which one appealed to you most and why? How do they provide a contrast to Jessica? How does each challenge Richard and make him stronger and more confident?

5. Have you ever lived in or traveled to a place with an underground like the old and abandoned parts of London that Gaiman describes? What do you imagine is down there? Can you think of other types of secret places that exist in the real world?

6. By the end of the novel, Richard has become a respected warrior and hero. Is this merely a result of his defeating the Beast, or does he become fierce and heroic in other ways and by other means as well? How is his heroism connected to his compassion?

7. What do you make of the villains? Were Croup and Vandemar, despite their bloodthirst, fun characters to read? Was Hunter still likable despite her treachery? Were you surprised by Islington's role in the plot and his ultimate motive?

8. The home of the Portico family is described as an ?associative house? and is made up of parts of other buildings and distant spaces. If you were to construct such a house, what buildings and spaces would you use?

9. In this edition of the book, a new story about the Marquis de Carabas, ?How the Marquis Got His Coat Back,? is included. Does this glimpse at the Marquis satisfy your curiosity about the character or make him all the more mysterious? How does his desire to get his coat back mirror Richard's desire to get his normal life back?

10. If you could pick one other character to read more about, who would it be and why?

11. What do you imagine Richard's life in the Underside will be like? What does he give up, and what does he gain in his choice to return?

12. How do you define ?fantasy? in literature? What about ?horror? or ?adventure?? Does this book fit neatly into any of your definitions? How so?

Author Bio

Neil Gaiman is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling A VIEW FROM THE CHEAP SEATS, THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE, THE GRAVEYARD BOOK, CORALINE, NEVERWHERE and the *Sandman* series of graphic novels, among other works. His fiction has received Newbery, Carnegie, Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy and Will Eisner Awards. His novel AMERICAN GODS will be a TV series airing in 2017. Originally from England, he lives in the United States, where he is a professor at Bard College.

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