



The Gruesome Book | Peter Davison's Book of Alien Planets | Ghosts that Haunt You | Haunting Tales

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The new collection of nasties from Piccolo will be widely read. Some are gruesome --- and some adults would say gratuitously so. Kids won't worry though and its cover, slimness and effective illustrations will pull them in. Teachers should check out Nigel Kneale's **The Pond**, Bloch's **Hobo**, Brian Lymley's **The Deep-Sea Conch** and Matheson's **Long Distance Call** for reasons of style or form. Kids always enjoy **Kuttner's Graveyard Rats** and the editor's own story plus the original **3.47 AM** from David Langford will be popular, too - though all horror stories make few linguistic concessions and some are over-flashy, as if to compensate for their other crudities.

Peter Davison's (?) new collection is more conventional collection for a kids' book list. Two originals - from Stephen David and Mary Gentle - are OK but not exceptional and the six others are standard stuff for SF anthologies, with a couple from Clarke and a less-well-known Bradbury. Presumably the Davison appeal is to top juniors and lower secondary kids but these stories are only for the sophisticated among them, or for older kids - who might prefer a different package. Less appropriate than Davison's **Alien Monsters**; one hopes that any future anthologies in this series are given little more thought-young kids like action, not ideas.

Aidan Chambers' collection is much worse. Anyone who knows anything about ghost stories could put together a better one in an hour - maybe thirty minutes. Apart from two from his own **Ghosts 2** (Topliner) there are dreary old standards from Agatha Christie, Bradbury (The Emissary, again, Chetwynd-Hayes, M.R. James (**Lost Hearts**, totally unsuitable for children), Manly Wade Wellman and, worst of all, the openers from August Derleth and Pamela Hansford Johnson. By comparison, an Armitage story from Joan Aiken is a relief! Poor illustrations, quite good cover; ignore unless you're desperate.

Haunting Tales (The Haunted and the Haunters in Bodley Head hardback) is another one to avoid. Beaver push out a lot of these collections so presumably they must sell despite the fact that most kids would be bored to tears by what they offer. This has the usual names - M.R. James, de la Mare, Blackwood - plus some less common, but no more readable, offerings. Older kids who can cope with slow, literary style and who dip into it here and there might enjoy parts --- provided they're not too suave for a book with this kind of cover.

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