

WHISPERS IN THE GRAVEYARD by Theresa Breslin

Notes re Fantasy element:

In *Whispers in the Graveyard*, the main character, Solomon, is on a journey. As in many fantasy stories where the main character has to choose between different paths, Solomon is faced with difficult choices. Caught up in the awakening evil of the newly opened grave in a derelict graveyard, with his own personal life becoming more troublesome, he could go for the easy way out - ignore what he knows is happening and leave.

Like many of the protagonists in this type of tale, Solomon character is flawed, he is capable of human weakness, and this is, I think, why many people find fantasy stories so appealing. They see the hero as being similar to themselves, liable to make mistakes, prone to weakness.

Solomon's problem is his illiteracy, and the deceit he employs to keep the fact hidden.

The story is essentially a quest, like tales of fantasy, a voyage of discovery, but also of self discovery, where heroes and heroines are put to the test, finds out things about themselves, and ultimately win through. There is the struggle of evil against good, and all that stands between evil triumphant is Solomon. *Whispers in the Graveyard* explores the concept of evil within the imagination, and how people's emotions can be manipulated by circumstances and events. The boy's struggle in the graveyard becomes a gripping metaphor for his relationship with the world in general.

Within each of us there lies the capacity to do right or wrong, we all have opportunities to choose between good and evil. Sometimes it is not an obvious or straightforward choice, sometimes good is the harder path to take. But Solomon opts to stay and attempt to deal with the situation. He fights to regain Amy's soul, confronts his father, and begins to deal with his own learning challenges. And Solomon's character is altered, strengthened. He comes through the test and decides to face up to his problems. At the end of the book he refers to the mirror which he had held up to confront the evil in the graveyard.... which disintegrated because there was nothing there to see... the absence of light, the absence of hope.

And then Solomon asks the question... How many others, every drab day, avoid their own reflection? In a moment of self-realisation he knows that... Ultimately it is yourself you face. If you can.

And finally, as his own breath condenses on the glass in front of him, he traces out the letters and he writes his name.

First, the curved letter, slithering from top to bottom.

S.

Next ... a circle.

The sun by day, and the moon by night.

Now I have to cross my bridge.

I make the letters.

Carefully and complete.

Solomon, my name.