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### Abhorsen

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Nix, Garth. *Abhorsen*. HarperCollins, 2003. ISBN 0060278269. \$18.89. 358 pp.

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Adventure stories;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; Good and evil--Juvenile fiction; Death--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

The gripping Old Kingdom Trilogy, which started with *Sabriel* and continued with *Lirael*, now concludes with *Abhorsen*. Nicholas Sayre, an old friend of Prince Sameth, son of Sabriel and Touchstone, has been tricked by an evil necromancer named Hedge. Their quest is to assist in the exhumation of the Destroyer, who will annihilate all life if released from the divided hemispheres where he is trapped. Lirael, Sameth, Mogget, and their magical companions the Disreputable Dog and the White Cat, try to save Nick and prevent the Destroyers resurrection.

Meanwhile, Sabriel and Touchstone are in Ancelstierre where they are trying to prevent thousands of refugees from crossing the wall into the Old Kingdom. The refugees think the Old Kingdom will offer them free land but in truth they will only find death and enslavement by Hedge. When Lirael and Sameth's attempts to stop the Destroyer are thwarted by Hedge and his dead minions, it is up to Lirael to travel into the past to discover how the Destroyer was first defeated and try to recreate that event.

Starting this action-packed adventure trilogy at the beginning is imperative since without the previous background readers will not be able to understand the revelations about the history of the Old Kingdom and the Charter magic that are contained in *Abhorsen*. But even if you have to start at the beginning readers will be greatly rewarded in reading these outstanding works by Australian Garth Nix. Dark and often violent, the Old Kingdom Trilogy is fast paced, heart pumping reading. The character of Lirael is especially endearing as she grows from a reclusive Second Assistant Librarian of the Clayr to a strong Abhorsen-in-Waiting. The magic is wonderful and the world believably drawn.

Established fans and fantasy lovers who have not yet discovered the Old Kingdom will be very pleased by the conclusion to this dazzling trilogy.