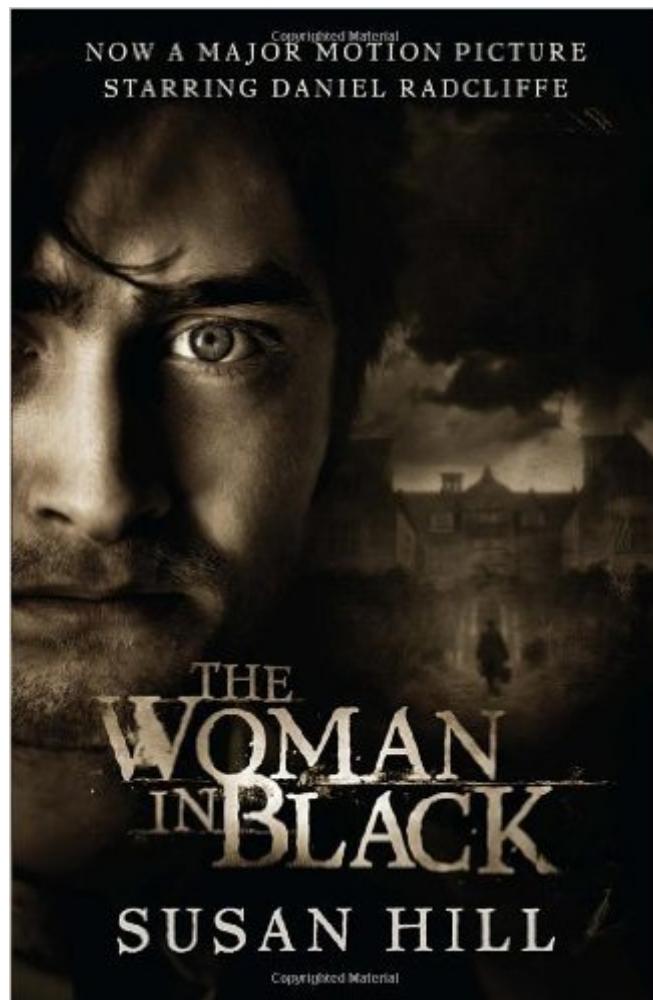


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The Woman In Black: A Ghost Story



Synopsis

A classic ghost story: the chilling tale of a menacing specter haunting a small English town. Arthur Kipps is an up-and-coming London solicitor who is sent to Crythin Gifford--a faraway town in the windswept salt marshes beyond Nine Lives Causeway--to attend the funeral and settle the affairs of a client, Mrs. Alice Drablow of Eel Marsh House. Mrs. Drablow's house stands at the end of the causeway, wreathed in fog and mystery, but Kipps is unaware of the tragic secrets that lie hidden behind its sheltered windows. The routine business trip he anticipated quickly takes a horrifying turn when he finds himself haunted by a series of mysterious sounds and images--a rocking chair in a deserted nursery, the eerie sound of a pony and trap, a child's scream in the fog, and, most terrifying of all, a ghostly woman dressed all in black.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The most similar book I can compare this to is The Haunting of Hill House by Shirley Jackson. Like that book, The Woman in Black starts peacefully and builds up to a frightening crescendo that will "haunt" you long after you put the book down. Another similarity in the books is the tremendous sense of atmosphere. Eel Marsh House, where the haunting takes place, is set off by itself in flat, bleak, marshy wetlands and is connected to drier land by a single causeway, which becomes completely covered by water when the tide is high. When the protagonist, the young and foolishly stubborn lawyer Arthur K., sets off to spend a few days sorting out old documents by himself in the isolated mansion, you just want to scream, "Are you crazy? Don't stay there overnight, you idiot!" I particularly liked the way the spectral happenings were presented. There is no blood, no gore, just a

brooding sense of evil and mystery. I also enjoyed the relationships Arthur establishes with the kindly Samuel Daily, a local landowner, and the little dog Spider that Samuel lends to him to keep him company in his ill-advised sojourn to the haunted house. All in all, a wonderfully-written ghost story that would appeal to those who find Stephen King's more lurid and less subtle books a bit distasteful.

I discovered this really disturbing, truly scary ghost story just in time for Halloween. Shirley Jackson's "The Haunting of Hill House" is probably the only other novel that terrified me as much as "The Woman In Black" by Susan Hill. Set in Victorian England, this atmospheric, supernatural tale of evil, terror and revenge sent chills down my spine on more than one occasion. Ms. Hill begins her well-written narrative happily enough in the home of Arthur Kipps, who is surrounded by his loving wife and family for the Christmas holidays at their country home, Monk's Piece. Kipps is a full partner at a prestigious London law firm. Esme is his second wife. He lost his first love as a very young man. It is Christmas Eve and the grandchildren are all in bed. Their young parents, the Kipps' grown children, gather around the fire for a cozy ghost story session. At one point Kipps, obviously agitated, gets up, leaves the room and goes outside. He has hidden something significant about his past from his wife and family for years now - a tragically real ghost story of "haunting and evil, fear, confusion and horror" - of which he was a part. These events will certainly effect him all the days of his life. Kipps realizes that for his own peace of mind it is time to write his experience down and exorcise the demons, at last. He had hoped this inextricable part of his life would never have to be consciously recollected...but it is time. He decides that, at least during his lifetime, the tale will remain for his eyes only, and so he begins to write. He is our narrator. At the very beginning of his career, many years before, Arthur Kipps, an energetic, idealistic junior solicitor was sent by his employer to attend the funeral of an elderly widow woman, Mrs. Drablow, one of the firm's former clients. As the deceased owned property, including her home on the salt marshes near the town of Crythin Gifford, and had no heirs, no children or extended family, Kipps was asked to go and sort through her papers, and generally tidy-up the old woman's affairs. The Drablow manse, called Eel Marsh House, is quite isolated, situated in the middle of an estuary, connected to the mainland only by the Nine Lives Causeway, a small pathway barely visible through the marshes and quicksand, and only navigable a few hours a day. The road is underwater the rest of the time due to the strong tides. It was at the funeral that Arthur Kipps first saw the tall, emaciated woman dressed in black. Despite his many questions to the locals, they refused to discuss the woman or address his concerns surrounding the Drablow house, although they were extremely amiable and ready to

speak out on every other topic. Suffice it to say/write that at the funeral, Kipps was the only one to see the woman in black. No one else even glimpsed what was so apparent to him. Obviously, as his work led him to spend time at Eel Marsh house, (What a creepy name!), there were to be many more surreal episodes, each more frightening and dangerous in nature. Although these encounters are really scary, there is a mystery here also. Who is this mysterious woman...and if she is a ghost, why can she find no peace? The puzzle and ultimate denouement really left my mouth hanging open - after I let out a small scream! Good stuff, if you like to be scared...REALLY scared! The author packs this novel with twists, turns and the unexpected at almost every turn of the page. The description of the brooding countryside, the house and surrounding marshes is at times beautiful, but always spooky. There were a few occasions when I wanted to shut my eyes - but unlike a scary movie, if one shuts one's eyes while reading, well it gets too dark to continue. Arthur Kipps is an intelligent, level-headed man, not much given to drama or a belief in the supernatural. Thus the outright terror he experiences causes more consternation than it would coming from another character. At one point he reflects back, "It was true that the ghastly sounds I had heard through the fog had greatly upset me but far worse was what emanated from and surrounded these things and arose to unsteady me, an atmosphere, a force - I do not know exactly what to call it - of evil and uncleanness, of terror and suffering, of malevolence and bitter anger." An excellent ghost story - little blood and gore, lots of fright. Highly recommended! JANA

No neat and tidy endings here, folks. Just strap yourselves in for a great ghost story, complete with nighttime hauntings galore. This is one of those stores that might keep you up at night, just envisioning everything again and again. The author does a great job of making the reader feel like he or she is there with this young attorney - suffering through the whole thing. Enjoy! I'm now looking forward to the movie next year - shame they couldn't have released it around Halloween...

I first saw this as a Broadway play, and it has been to this date the only theatre piece that gave me nightmares. I could not wait to read the novel, and just as the play was, it scared me senseless. The novel plays heavily on atmosphere and mood. Susan Hill brings the black moors surrounding the Eel Marsh House to life with vivid imagery. It's a "beautiful" setting for the frightening ghost that lives there. The characters are incredibly realistic and interesting to follow. You feel for Arthur Kipps in his trials and tribulations dealing with the Woman in Black in Eel Marsh House. All in all, a wonderful ghost story that seems as if it should've been written by Jane Austen.

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