

susan cooper the dark is rising

Susan Cooper The Dark Is Rising

The Dark Is Rising is a renowned fantasy novel written by Susan Cooper, published in 1973 as the second book in her acclaimed The Dark Is Rising Sequence. This series has captivated readers worldwide with its richly woven mythology, compelling characters, and intricate plot that blends British folklore with classic fantasy elements. Susan Cooper's masterful storytelling has cemented The Dark Is Rising as a cornerstone of children's and young adult literature, inspiring multiple generations to explore themes of heroism, good versus evil, and the enduring power of ancient magic.

Overview of Susan Cooper and Her Literary Contributions

About Susan Cooper

Susan Cooper is a British author born in 1935 in London. She gained international fame through her fantasy series, which skillfully combines elements of British folklore, mythology, and legend. Cooper's writing is characterized by its lyrical prose, detailed world-building, and deep respect for cultural traditions. She has received numerous awards, including the Newbery Honor and the Carnegie Medal, recognizing her significant contribution to children's literature.

Her Literary Legacy

Cooper's work extends beyond The Dark Is Rising Sequence. She has authored various novels, short stories, and anthologies, often emphasizing themes of mythology, history, and the importance of storytelling. Her influence can be seen in modern fantasy literature, inspiring authors to explore mythic

themes and incorporate folklore into their narratives.

The Dark Is Rising Sequence: An Overview

Series Structure and Books

The Dark Is Rising Sequence comprises five books, each contributing to the overarching narrative:

1. **Over Sea, Under Stone** (1965) – The first book introduces the Pendragon family and their discovery of ancient magic in Cornwall.
2. **The Dark Is Rising** (1973) – The second book, which centers on Will Stanton's awakening to his role as a Light-bringer.
3. **Greenwitch** (1974) – Focuses on the mystical Greenwitch and the power of the sea.
4. **The Grey King** (1975) – Set in Wales, this installment explores Celtic mythology and introduces new characters.
5. **Silver on the Tree** (1977) – The concluding volume where the struggle between Light and Dark reaches its climax.

Themes and Motifs

The series explores themes such as:

- The eternal battle between good and evil
- The power of ancient magic and myths
- The importance of courage, wisdom, and sacrifice
- The protection of sacred traditions and knowledge
- The journey of self-discovery and heroism

Motifs include symbols drawn from Celtic, Norse, and British folklore, such as the Old Ones, the Rising, and the significance of ancient stones and artifacts.

Focus on The Dark Is Rising (Book Two)

Plot Summary

The Dark Is Rising follows Will Stanton, a twelve-year-old boy who discovers on his birthday that he is one of the Old Ones, mystical beings tasked with battling the forces of Darkness. The story takes place over a few days, during which Will learns about his destiny and the importance of the Signs of Light. As the Dark attempts to gain supremacy through the Rising, Will must gather the Signs—powerful symbols and artifacts—to prevent the Dark from triumphing.

Will's journey involves solving riddles, engaging in battles of wit and courage, and understanding the ancient legends that underpin his world. The narrative intertwines real-world locations in England with mythic elements, creating a seamless blend of fantasy and reality.

Major Characters

- Will Stanton: The protagonist, an ordinary boy who becomes a hero.
- The Dark: The malevolent force seeking to dominate the world.

- The Old Ones: Mystical guardians who guide and support Will.
- The Rider: An agent of the Dark, attempting to thwart Will's efforts.
- The Signs: Symbols of power that Will must protect and understand.

Significance of the Title

The title, "The Dark Is Rising," signifies the impending encroachment of evil forces and the urgency for the Light to rally and counteract this darkness. It reflects the cyclical nature of mythic battles and the idea that darkness periodically resurges, demanding renewed vigilance.

Mythology and Folklore in The Dark Is Rising

Incorporation of British Folklore

Cooper's series draws heavily from British legends, including:

- Arthurian legends, with references to King Arthur and the Pendragon lineage
- Celtic myths, especially in the Welsh setting of The Grey King
- Norse mythology, with references to the Old Ones and runes
- Local folklore, such as legends of stones, fairy beings, and mystical symbols

Symbols and Their Meanings

The series employs various symbols that carry deep mythic significance:

- **The Signs:** Representing the fundamental forces of Light.
- **The Greenwitch:** A symbol of nature's magic and resilience.
- **The White Rider:** An avatar of hope and renewal.
- **The Circle:** Signifying unity, eternity, and protection.

These symbols serve as narrative devices and thematic anchors, emphasizing the importance of tradition and the enduring power of mythic archetypes.

Impact and Reception of *The Dark Is Rising*

Critical Acclaim

The series has been praised for its lyrical prose, imaginative storytelling, and deep incorporation of mythology. Critics have lauded Cooper for her ability to make ancient legends accessible and compelling for young readers.

Influence on Literature and Popular Culture

The Dark Is Rising has influenced numerous authors and has been adapted into various media, including radio plays and a planned film adaptation. Its themes resonate with fans of fantasy and myth, inspiring a renewed interest in folklore-based storytelling.

Educational and Cultural Significance

Cooper's work is often used in educational settings to introduce students to British folklore and mythology. The series encourages exploration of historical legends and promotes appreciation for cultural heritage.

Legacy of Susan Cooper and The Dark Is Rising

Continued Relevance

Decades after its publication, *The Dark Is Rising* remains a beloved classic. Its themes of heroism, tradition, and the struggle between light and dark continue to resonate with new generations.

Honors and Recognitions

- Newbery Honor for *The Grey King*
- Carnegie Medal nominations
- Inclusion in various "best of" fantasy lists

Inspirations for Future Works

Many contemporary fantasy authors cite Susan Cooper as an influence, particularly in how she seamlessly integrated mythology and folklore into engaging narratives.

Conclusion

Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* stands as a testament to the enduring power of myth and storytelling. Through her richly crafted world, memorable characters, and profound themes, Cooper has created a series that not only entertains but also educates and inspires. Her work continues to influence the fantasy genre, reminding readers of the timeless struggle between darkness and light, and the importance of preserving ancient legends in our modern world. As long as stories are told, the magic of *The Dark Is Rising*—and Susan Cooper's storytelling—will endure.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is Susan Cooper in 'The Dark Is Rising' series?

Susan Cooper is one of the main protagonists in 'The Dark Is Rising' series, a young girl who becomes involved in the battle between the Light and the Dark and plays a crucial role in fighting against the forces of evil.

What is the significance of the 'Dark is Rising' in the series?

The 'Dark is Rising' refers to the increasing power of the Dark forces that threaten the world, and it also signifies the awakening of the Dark's influence during a specific time, which the protagonists must combat to restore balance.

How does Susan Cooper portray the battle between good and evil in the series?

Susan Cooper depicts the battle as a timeless struggle between the Light and the Dark, emphasizing themes of courage, wisdom, and the importance of ancient magic and myth in overcoming evil.

What are some of the key themes explored in 'The Dark Is Rising' series involving Susan Cooper?

Key themes include the conflict between good and evil, the importance of courage and wisdom, the power of ancient myths and magic, and the journey of self-discovery for young characters like Susan Cooper.

Has Susan Cooper's 'The Dark Is Rising' series received any notable awards or recognition?

Yes, Susan Cooper's series has received critical acclaim and numerous awards, including the Newbery Honor for 'The Grey King' and recognition for its contribution to children's fantasy literature.

What role does Susan Cooper play in the overall plot of 'The Dark Is Rising' series?

Susan Cooper is a central character whose knowledge of ancient myths and her bravery help the protagonists to understand and harness the powers needed to combat the Dark and prevent its rise.

Are there any recent adaptations or reprints of 'The Dark Is Rising' series featuring Susan Cooper?

While there haven't been major recent adaptations, the series remains popular, with new editions and reprints available, and there is ongoing interest in adapting the series for film or television projects.

Additional Resources

Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* is a seminal work in the realm of modern fantasy literature, capturing the imaginations of readers with its rich mythic tapestry and timeless themes. As the second installment in Susan Cooper's acclaimed *The Dark Is Rising* sequence, this novel continues the

journey of Will Stanton and introduces readers to a complex universe where ancient powers clash between good and evil. In this detailed guide, we explore the story's themes, characters, mythic influences, and its enduring significance in children's literature.

Introduction to Susan Cooper and The Dark Is Rising Series

Before diving into the specifics of *The Dark Is Rising*, it's essential to understand Susan Cooper's background and the context of the series. Cooper, a British author, is celebrated for her ability to weave folklore, mythology, and history into compelling narratives aimed at young readers and adults alike.

The series, beginning with *Over Sea, Under Stone* and culminating in *The Grey King*, chronicles the struggle between the forces of Light and Dark. *The Dark Is Rising*, published in 1973, stands as the pivotal middle installment, bridging the initial exploration of mythic worlds and the climax of the series' overarching conflict.

Overview of The Dark Is Rising

Plot Summary

The Dark Is Rising introduces Will Stanton, a twelve-year-old boy who discovers on his birthday that he is an Old One, a guardian of the Light destined to oppose the rising darkness. As Will grapples with his newfound identity, he learns of the ancient powers and artifacts that can tip the balance of good and evil.

The narrative weaves together multiple storylines:

- Will's awakening to his powers and responsibilities.
- The gathering of the Dark, led by the sinister Rider and the sinister forces aligned with the rising darkness.
- The quest for the Signs, mystical symbols representing the powers of the Light.

Throughout the novel, Cooper explores themes of courage, destiny, and the importance of knowledge rooted in history and myth.

Major Themes

- Good vs. Evil: The central conflict portrays the eternal struggle between the Light and Dark forces.
- Myth and Folklore: The novel draws heavily from British and Celtic mythology, embedding ancient symbols and legends into the story.
- Growth and Self-Discovery: Will's journey symbolizes maturation, as he learns about his identity and responsibilities.
- The Power of Knowledge: Wisdom and understanding of the past are portrayed as vital tools in confronting evil.

Key Characters and Their Roles

Will Stanton

The protagonist, a boy who unexpectedly becomes a key defender of the Light. His journey from an ordinary child to a powerful guardian exemplifies themes of potential and heroism.

The Rider

An ominous figure representing the Dark, the Rider serves as the primary antagonist, seeking to conquer and enslave the world through darkness.

The Old Ones

Ancient beings and guardians who assist Will, including the mysterious and wise figure of Merriman Lyon, who guides and trains him.

The Signs

Symbols and artifacts of power—such as the Staff, the White Horse, and the Oak—that embody the Light's strength and serve as rallying points in the battle.

Mythic and Cultural Influences

Celtic and British Folklore

Cooper's narrative is deeply rooted in Celtic legends, incorporating elements such as:

- The Green Man and oak trees representing natural forces.
- Symbols like the White Horse, a recurring motif in British mythology.
- Mythical creatures and spirits that embody elemental powers.

Arthurian Legends

References to King Arthur, Merlin, and the quest for the Holy Grail appear subtly, emphasizing themes of destiny and spiritual enlightenment.

Other Mythic Sources

- Norse mythology influences, particularly in the depiction of ancient runes and warriors.
- Christian symbolism, such as the concept of light versus darkness, redemption, and divine

guardianship.

Structural Elements and Literary Devices

Narrative Style

Susan Cooper employs a third-person narration that shifts perspectives, allowing insights into Will's internal struggles and the collective effort of the Old Ones.

Use of Symbolism

The novel is rich with symbols such as:

- The Signs representing different facets of the Light.
- The Staff as a conduit of power.
- The Dark as a tangible, corrupting force.

Pacing and Tension

The story balances moments of introspection with action-packed sequences, building suspense as Will's powers grow and the threat of the Dark intensifies.

Critical Reception and Legacy

The Dark Is Rising has been highly praised for its lyrical prose, depth of mythic integration, and compelling hero's journey. It has won numerous awards, including the Newbery Honor in 1975, and remains a staple in children's fantasy literature.

Its influence extends beyond books, inspiring adaptations, stage productions, and a dedicated fanbase. The novel's themes of courage, wisdom, and the importance of history resonate universally, making it relevant across generations.

Why Read The Dark Is Rising Today?

In an era where stories often focus on technological worlds or dystopian futures, Cooper's work offers a refreshing return to mythic storytelling rooted in cultural history. It encourages readers to:

- Explore ancient legends and their relevance today.
- Reflect on the importance of knowledge and tradition.
- Recognize the hero within themselves, regardless of age.

Conclusion: The Enduring Power of Susan Cooper's Narrative

Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* exemplifies the timeless appeal of mythic storytelling fused with modern themes of heroism and self-discovery. Its richly woven tapestry of folklore and allegory continues to inspire readers, reminding us that the fight between Light and Dark is ongoing, both in stories and in our own lives. Whether you are a seasoned fan or new to Cooper's work, *The Dark Is Rising* offers a compelling adventure into the depths of myth and the heights of heroism.

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the six great signs -- wood, bronze, iron, water, fire, and stone -- before the Dark begins its dreadful rise.

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