



The Crossroads

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ZACK, HIS DAD, and new stepmother have just moved back to his father's hometown, not knowing that their new house has a dark history. Fifty years ago, a crazed killer caused an accident at the nearby crossroads that took 40 innocent lives. He died when his car hit a tree in a fiery crash, and his malevolent spirit has inhabited the tree ever since. During a huge storm, lightning hits the tree, releasing the spirit, who decides his evil spree isn't over . . . and Zack is directly in his sights.

Award-winning thriller author Chris Grabenstein fills his first book for younger readers with the same humorous and spine-tingling storytelling that has made him a fast favorite with adults.

The Crossroads Details

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Author : Chris Grabenstein

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From Reader Review The Crossroads for online ebook

Mallory says

Awards Won: Agatha and Anthony

Have you ever wondered if one action can set off a series of events? This book uses imagination to address such a question. The Crossroads does contain some passages that may not be suitable for younger readers.

Bonnie Thrasher says

Brilliant horror story for pre-teens. Absolutely ADORED this one. Eleven year old Zack Jennings's abusive mother has just died of cancer. He still hears her berating him, and feels fault on many levels. His father works out of town a lot, but just married a cheery woman, Judy, who is eager to be a nurturing step-mother to Zack. They move back to Mr. Jennings's hometown to a new construction at the crossroads of Hwy 31 and Hwy 13. This crossroads and the enormous Oak tree is the center piece of the story. Enter Gerta Stratling, an ancient spinster who still grieves for her fiance, dead fifty years. Her roadside memorial at the crossroads is kept fresh each week with roses; the memory kept fresh with prayers in the chapel in her home between visits. From there, the tale unwinds, leaving the reader turning pages as fast as possible. Short chapters add to the magic of this tale, making it easy to race forward. Bravo!

Zahra says

The book was a fascinating tale, a mix of horror and mystery. In the story a young boy called Zack lives with his dad and step mom Judy. As a beginning, Zack moves to a house by the cross roads. This place has a lot of history. Zack has this special ability were he can actually see ghosts. It's been bothering him since his mom died. Zack thinks he is finally rid of this, but maybe he wasn't so right.

As Zack moves to this new house, were an old tree captures the evil spirit of Clint eberhart (I'm not really sure of the family name). Sudden deaths of several people start rocking this town after the old tree was struck by lightning and split up. When this happened the evil spirit of Clint came back in order to finish some unfinished business. Zack ended up responsible to fix all that chaos and end clint's evil spirit.

Kimberly says

Humorous, fun filled writing is abundant in the novel "The Crossroads", while still dealing with some serious topics. Zack, our new boy in town, is suspicious about that old tree that stands at the corner of the intersection in his large backyard. Mysterious things have been happening and Zack and his best friend Davy, who talks charmingly as a boy from

Kentucky, investigate to find out why. Meanwhile, we have step mom named Judy who is also investigating and trying to find her footing in this new family. Well done Mr. Grabenstein for creating Judy, a smart, funny, sweet woman who is NOT an evil step-mom. Refreshing. And for allowing Zack's recently deceased real mom to be the dark baggage the main character has to deal with.

Why does the old tree look so evil? Why is the cross there? What does this have to do with clocks and the 1950s? And who is that crazy old lady?

The mystery unfolds

delicately, and every time new information is given, I yelled, A-HA! (perhaps not aloud but you know what I mean) thinking I knew where this was going. But after reading further down the line, I realized no, I did not see that coming. And Grabenstein does a great job keeping the reader guessing. The surprises and revelations keep coming all the way to the end of the book. I was surprised by how much I liked this well thought out ghost story, and how well it was done. I'll be reading the rest of the series.

Rebecca says

Here's a good tween ghost story with a lot of plot twists and some creepy/somewhat-violent moments. It took me a while to get used to the main character Zack's shyness and introversion after just having read the confident, cocky narration of the boys in "Frindle" and "Swindle." Also, I read this one in spurts, and lost track of some of the characters and their...state of being living. So you might want to read this uninterrupted. I liked that there was an evil old lady, but NOT an evil stepmom.

The simplicity of the writing and Zack's young age, alongside the spooks and a couple deaths, occasionally made me wonder about the intended audience. Nonetheless, this is a great standalone book for Goosebumps fans who have read through R.L. Stine, or, gasp gasp, are looking for some less formulaic writing.

Also...best. cover. ever.

Kathleen says

I have finally found the book that satisfies my craving for good, old-fashioned, creepy ghost stories! This would be the perfect campfire read this summer! But a word of caution...do not read it alone at night, especially if your house is surrounded by trees (like mine).

Zack, his dad and new step-mom have moved to a small town in Connecticut. And it just so happens that their new property includes a tree that designates the site of this community's worst accident in which 41 people died. And while their bodies may be at rest, their spirits are not.

With the help of his new friend, Davy, Zack hatches a plan to help the victims and put them at rest once and for all. But one spirit isn't going down without a fight, he has a score to settle and Zack is in his way.

This fast paced story had twist and turns that kept me at the edge of my seat the entire time I was reading it. Crossroads captured me right at page 1 and the only time I stopped reading was to get up for bathroom breaks! I especially loved the "tributes" (for lack of a better word) to The Wizard of Oz throughout the story.

Maybeline Tay says

I enjoyed Escape from Mr Lemoncello's Library, so I did a search on more of Chris' books and decided to read this. This book did not disappoint. However, I'm not sure I will recommend this to the young ones. I think it a wee bit too intense. Firstly, this is a ghost story with suicide, murder and violent intents thrown together. Secondly, there's a backstory of how a mom (with serious emotional and perhaps mental health issues) who died could still affect her son. It didn't feel directly relevant to the plot but definitely made me curious as to why Chris added this layer to Zack's story. Perhaps to point out that not all step moms are evil?

This book is a page-turner with lots of plot twists. The characters are well drawn. I love many of Zack and Judy's interactions. How she was kind and gentle towards him. I love it that in the process of the adventure, Zack gained confidence. Another great read from Chris.

Roxanne Hsu Feldman says

This proves that one cannot judge a book until one has finished reading the story in its entirety. I so loved the first 3/5 of the book -- it's dark, it's sinister, it's mysterious. The short chapters with many surprising or cliff-hanging end-sentences work really well. It's also fun to have an adult who acts somewhat child-like and who helps with solving the issues but not in a condescending way. And then, the story becomes loose at the resolution part. First, there are simply too many quick deaths -- two people are scared to death; one young man died with a single shot; the old lady's car flipped and exploded so she died quickly, too. It does not leave lingering problems or tantalizing dilemmas. The scenes with Gerda Spratling attempting to aid Clint and to do away with the two boys simply do not ring true. They read like some second rate TV cop show scenes, lacking the careful crafting of atmosphere and emotions in the first part of the story. Too bad. I've never read anything by this author, but I can see that he has quite a bit of talent in telling a great yarn! Wish that he could have sustained that talent all the way through. It will still be something that young readers enjoy, for sure. And I'm buying multiple copies for the library just because we all need solid ghost stories and this one is quite good, despite my complaints!

Ranger Jones says

Very good!

I have had to stop myself from reading this in class because I loved it.

This is a good horror/mystery book that I would recommend it to anyone except young kids.

There is a lot of death and gore but this was an amazing book.

I have not read many horror and mystery books like this.

Highly recommended!

jv poore says

This is exactly the type of book I searched for when I was in Middle Grade. I loved this fast-paced, spooky, suspenseful story which was sweetened by a pretty amazing step-mom who inherently trusted her 10-year-old step-son, in spite of his tendency to weave wild tales.

Sheila Becker says

I am not a horror fan but really like the other books I've read by Chris Grabenstein, so I found this series at the library. Still not a fan of the genre, but also really like these books. Way to confuse myself. Suspense is about as far as I usually go and since this is a kid's book, I can live with it, though I still had to be a little careful about when I read it.

Jordan Connell says

I'm not going to lie, this book got me back into reading. it wasn't an amazing, life changing story but it had a great plot that made just want to keep reading. I finished it in two days and started reading more. I had been in sort of a book funk where nothing I was reading was getting me excited. Thank God for The Crossroads.

Courtney says

Review to come.

Jennifer Wardrip says

Reviewed by Jaglvr for TeensReadToo.com

There's a tree that stands watch over the crossroads of County Route 13 and Connecticut State Highway 31. There's a memorial on the tree. Someone leaves a dozen fresh roses there every Monday. And the tree is at the back edge of Zack Jennings's new yard.

Zack, his father, and his new step-mother have left the city and moved to Connecticut. Zack lost his mother to cancer, and now that his father has remarried, the family is making a new start in Zack's father's hometown. They have a brand new house, Zack got a new dog, Zipper, and things with his step-mom might actually be okay.

But there's something strange going on in the town. Zack has a new friend, Davy. They have great adventures together, but it always seems like Zack is the one doing the hard work while Davy comes up with the plans. Judy, Zack's step-mom, gets a flat tire on the deserted highway and a Greyhound employee comes to offer aide. Though like with Davy, he can tell her how to fix it but he just can't do the work himself.

At the same time, the 50th-anniversary of a horrific bus accident at the intersection is about to occur. At the heart of the accident is Clint Eberhart. Trying to finish business with his first wife, the bus goes off the road and bursts into flames. The Thunderbird that Clint was driving smashes into the same tree that now holds a memorial dedicated to him.

Through the shrine that is kept at the tree, all the participants of that awful night fifty years ago are kept bound to the earth. It seems Zack has been the one chosen to help them release their souls. The only problem -- Zack doesn't know he's been chosen, nor does he even know that the spirits exist. At least he doesn't in the beginning...

THE CROSSROADS is a heart-pounding, page-turning ghost story that will keep even the strong-willed awake long after the last page has been turned. Clint Eberhart is pure evil, and the spirit and perseverance of one young boy is all it takes to face off against him. The book flows quickly with short chapters to keep the action constantly moving. The book is easy enough for most readers, but because of the ghosts and some of the scary content, I selected the older age group as a recommendation for readers.

Heidi says

What a unique story with fun twists and turns.
