



Shiverton Hall

Emerald Fennell

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They slowed as they reached the gate; two stone columns, each with its own crumbling angel perched on top. The angels held up a rusty, wrought-iron arch that read, in curling, serpentine letters: SHIVERTON HALL.

Arthur Bannister has been unexpectedly accepted into Shiverton Hall, which, as it turns out, is an incredibly spooky school, full of surprises. And it is just as well that Shiverton Hall has made its offer, because Arthur had a horrible time at his previous school, and was desperate to leave. Timely indeed . . .

But Arthur has no time to worry about the strange coincidence. He is too busy trying to make head or tail of Shiverton Hall, dogged as it is by tales of curses and bad fortune. At least there are a few friendly faces: George, who shows him around; also Penny and Jake. But not all the faces are friendly. There are the bullying Forge triplets for starters. And then there is the acid tongue of the headmistress, Professor Long-Pitt, who seems to go out of her way to make Arthur's life a misery.

Luckily Arthur has his new friends to cheer him up. Although there are some friends that you don't want to have *at all*, as Arthur is soon to find out.

Shiverton Hall Details

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From Reader Review Shiverton Hall for online ebook

Betelgeuse says

Wanted to start October with a spooky read and oh, boy! "Shiverton Hall" is a boarding school with a sinister past. From time to time, chapters from the past are introduced in order to explain present events and better understand where the story is going.

I enjoyed to read a new perspective regarding imaginary friends. I also enjoyed how the author used ghosts in this context.

The characters were not out of ordinary and the final plot twist was something I've seen coming as it was quite obvious. I was expecting it to be more spooky than it was and maybe a bit longer. The chapters were short and full of action, making the book fast and easy to read.

Overall I was happy with it but I feel the need for a continuation. I know there is a second volume but the author said nothing about a third one. Considering the story is not yet over, I am not sure if I want to read more from a series/trilogy that may never be completed.

Lucy says

More like 3.5. Emerald Fennell doesn't skimp on creepiness, or how awful schoolyard bullying can be, and there were more than a few times when I was genuinely unsettled and felt I ought to stop reading otherwise I wouldn't sleep. The twist at the end was something I never saw coming, and she makes really good use of omniscient narration - I didn't even notice that the POV kept switching until about halfway through the book, that's how seamless it was. I really enjoyed reading it, and I'm looking forward to the second one.

I would ordinarily have given this four stars but I pulled the rating down because this book makes a point to explicitly tell us that certain characters are mentally ill, and I'm just not sure that their portrayals are positive ones. (Plus, would you call it mental illness when someone is seeing a phantom but the phantom is actually there??) At one point a character calls another character "mad" and is told by a third character to say "mentally ill" instead, so that was good, but overall all of the portrayals of mental illness left me a little uneasy, although that could perhaps be related to the way the other characters perceived those who were mentally ill, as opposed to the way Emerald Fennell wrote them. Something to think about, and maybe be aware of if you're thinking of reading this.

BookLoversLife says

Really enjoyed this. It was a quick creepy book.

Kate Neilan says

I love a bit of YA and was a big Point Horror reader, back in the day, so I was really intrigued by Shiverton Hall, the debut from Emerald Fennell. There've been comparisons to the Harry Potter series but really the trope it emerges from is much older than that - the boarding school adventure going back to Tom Brown's

School Days, as well as female favourites like Mallory Towers. Also, I think it's a shallow likeness because at Hogwarts, the students are living in a fantastical world of wizards and magic, whereas Shiverton Hall is home to normal, everyday young people facing terrible spectres and paranormal goings-on.

Straight away, I found Fennell's prose open and accessible, while still very capable of creating a tone of menace and danger. After a brief introduction, we head off to Arthur's new school, with its imposing buildings and archaic traditions, not to mention some rather terrifying ghost stories about its past. Fennell uses the idea of a book of historical ghost stories written by the grandfather of Arthur's friend George to share with the reader the ominous past of the Hall. I felt this worked very smoothly where, dealt with in a different way, it might have been contrived. George is keen to share the ghost stories with Arthur, so we learn at the same time that he does the horrible fates of the previous residents.

Some of the ghost stories are really quite scary, or at least surprising, for an adult reader. They all result in some sort of death or disappearance and some are particularly grim and gory. The book seems to be aimed at children of 9 or 10 and over, but some might find these scenes a little much. Slightly older readers will no doubt relish them.

I enjoyed the range of characters in the book. Fennell certainly draws on the idea of meathead bullies and oddballs sticking together, but there's a reason these are such popular ideas - they're often true - so again, what could seem repetitive is fresh and enjoyable because the characters are very believable and sympathetic.

My only real criticism of Shiverton Hall is that there are a couple of 'bloopers' which I felt could have been easily sorted out and which seem to have been missed. At one point, a character uses the phrase "beyond reproach" to mean 'so awful that there's no point in criticism' when it means 'so perfect as to be beyond criticism'.

There are also a couple of points which seem inaccurate, historically. One of the ghost stories mentions the owner of Shiverton Hall (supposed to be somewhere in the north of England) beating his slaves viciously in 1799. While the slave trade wasn't abolished in the UK until 1807 and slavery throughout the Commonwealth until 1833, no one in the UK had been permitted to have their slaves in this country since 1772, even if they could still trade and own slaves for 'use' abroad. I had a feeling it was wrong when I read it, and a quick Google showed my feeling was right. Something else which jarred was a nouveau-riche character, who'd made his money from textiles, described as wearing "a foot-high powdered wig" in what must have been the mid-1800s. Really - a Victorian new-money mill owner in a powdered wig? Those sort of wigs were a phenomenon of the late 1600s and 1700s, and fell out of fashion in the UK with the French Revolution (and probably in France too, as the sort of people who wore them didn't keep their heads anyway). Even if the character is supposed to be a bit ridiculous, it seems unlikely he would have been wearing something 50 years out of date.

Perhaps I'm being really picky here; generally I very much enjoyed Shiverton Hall, reading the whole thing in a couple of hours, and it's quite possible that most people wouldn't notice these things. I suppose, I just think, if something's worth doing, it's worth doing properly. Having just read Wolf Hall, it's emphasised to me the importance of doing your historical research thoroughly, even if it is just about a wig! Even so, I would certainly recommend this to young people and their parents, as well as grown-ups who enjoy a bit of adventure, and I'm hoping there'll be a follow-up in the not-too-distant future.

Iris says

[they almost drowned him?! (hide spoiler)]

Mehsi says

Welcome to Shiver-ton Hall, a place full of spooooooooky going-on's.

Last week I was cleaning out some things and discovered a big pile of books that I had meant to read, but totally forgot about. Oopsie! Included in this pile was this book (and thankfully also its sequel so I can now continue reading this amazing series), and of course I had to try it out for the new year.

Our boy, Arthur, gets a mysterious acceptance letter to Shiver-ton Hall. He never signed up, he never did anything, it was just there, and he decided it would be OK to try it out. At first he is quite unsure about the place, and it doesn't help we have some bullies (thankfully, very thankfully, they don't get much screen time), but then he makes quick friends with the boy who is supposed to help him around the first days, George. Then we quickly have some other people join Arthur as his friends. Plus he has a girl that is infatuated with him (and she reminded me a bit of Luna from Harry Potter with how she acted/and based on the descriptions also looked).

Quite quickly things take the turn for the creepy as Arthur's friends have their imaginary friends pop up in the night. Only their imaginary friends aren't so nice and kind this time round. Instead it is quite clear that these Friends have some things planned. *shivers*

I just adored the creepy stories that filled this book. Well, OK, maybe it wasn't such a good idea to read about gore, death, and spooky things in the late evening/night, but eh. I just couldn't stop reading. I had to know what happened at Shiver-ton Hall before Arthur arrived. What set the curse in motion and what kind of spooks and ghouls are attracted to this curse and the evil that surrounds Shiver-ton Hall.

I quite quickly figured out what happened to Arthur before he got to Shiver-ton, though for the full story (and the confirmation) we have to wait until almost the end. Poor Arthur. What he did was wrong, but I can understand that it happened. After so much torment, so much hurt, and then the idea they would go after his brother? Anyone would have snapped. :| I do hope that people are a bit kinder to him though, and don't judge him too harshly on what happened.

I was NOPING a lot while reading. I mean, ghosts, sure. Creepy things go bump in the night? Why not. But dolls, big as human dolls... with broken faces? Eh. Clowns? Without arms? Yeeeeeeep, I was NOPE NOPE NOPING, making my fiance wonder what was going on. :P

The ending? Oh, man, it was amazing. Yes, I was a bit disappointed that the whole Friends thing ended so easily, it just felt like it could go on for much longer. But then we get some revelations, and some twists, and I was delighted again. Man, I hadn't seen that one coming. And I thought I had figured out most of the going-on's but it seems I missed this one. Wonderfully done! *applauds*.

All in all, this was just amazing, I had so much fun reading it and I couldn't stop reading. I would highly recommend it if you are looking for a book full of creepy things. Be warned at times it may get a bit too creepy!

And I am going to be reading book 2, I need to know more about Shiver-ton Hall, and I want to know what will happen in this new book.

Review first posted at <https://twirlingbookprincess.com/>

Vanessa says

3.5 stars.

This book honestly surprised me! Although the cover is definitely striking, it also looks very overwrought and cheesy, and I had no idea what to expect from it. I'm very glad that I gave this a shot though because I would never have picked it up otherwise!

Shiverton Hall is a middle-grade/YA fantasy/horror set in a creepy English boarding school. It follows Arthur, a scholarship student who has moved to start at the school after an incident that he would rather forget about. But strange things are afoot at Shiverton Hall, which has a spooky reputation, and danger lies ahead.

This book definitely gave me *Harry Potter* vibes at points, particularly with the central friendships and the extra-curricular visit around the halfway point. I don't think the book is written particularly well, with some quite bizarre turns of phrase and overdone metaphors (although maybe I was being a bit too critical). However, what really made this for me were the stories littered throughout of Shiverton Hall's past, which were incredibly entertaining and at times surprisingly gruesome!

I thought the central storyline was a little bit vague, but this didn't bother me at all. I thought the pacing worked well and I enjoyed all the characters and the 'friends', which embodied everything I find creepy/scary in horror movies, so it worked well for me. I'm not sure I'd continue with the series (I think there is a second book), but I'd definitely recommend it if you are into horror and middle-grade fiction, as this was great fun!

Kribu says

Rating: probably around 2.5. I can't quite decide, but I'm leaning far more towards the "it was OK" than "I liked it" rating as far as GR stars go.

It's not a .. *bad* book. It's really a perfectly serviceable children's boarding school horror/fantasy, with some almost surprisingly chilling bits mixed in (well, chilling for a children's book, anyway). But, eh. I'm not sure what it lacked. Originality? It's not like you *cannot* write a good, original, solid story set in a boarding school in an old gargoyled castle-ish building, in the modern world, with some supernatural thrown in, and with a *special* main character...

Harry Potter this is not. (To its credit, I don't think it tries to be, either, any obvious parallels aside. *Shiverton Hall* goes straight for the creepy and scary, not so much for the magical.)

So. Hmm. I can't really even put my finger on what bothered me. There was a plot of sorts, and the mixture of current day events and the old tales of Shiverton Hall's past was fairly okay, if a bit clunky, but it just lacked something. Spirit? It kinda felt like a story going through the motions; wanting to be a story but ending up feeling like something quickly thrown together from various bits. And the characters just didn't really come to life for me, not even Arthur - they were all just ... *there*. Necessary props for the stringing together of the story, rather flat.

On the plus side, it was a fast read in which stuff happened and it did keep me reading! Also, I'm hoping that with the back story out of the way, the second book - often a stumbling block in series - might actually work better.

Sarah says

A very enjoyable read. I liked how spooky it was. The ghost tales about Shiver-ton Hall, that were every few chapters, were great - they added more creepiness that slowly built up through out the book. I also enjoyed how dark it was for an older children's book, it didn't mince matters about how certain supernatural things can pray on negative thoughts and feelings.

I enjoyed the characters and the writing style. The pace was very well done, the plot details and hints to the 'twist' were subtly created. After the ending, where things were revealed about the main character, I want to read the second book.

I read this book as part of my 2015 Reading Challenge, this weeks category was a book set in a school.

Ardelle Xiu says

After school today (yes I finished the book in an hour) I went to the library to pick up some books for my weedend read. Now I take a lot of time to choose my books and this time it was unfortunatly interrupted by my big sister. She was made I was wasting my time and should have donw this and recess of lunch... blah blah blah. But I had to pick out a book in less that 5 minutes. That is and incredibly short amount of time to pick out a book if you ask me.

Anyway, with my sister breathing down my neck, I picked up this and I was bustled out of the library. I started readig as soon as I could and it turns out, I have to thank my sister for rushing me. This book is fantastic! Phantoms and ghost stories with mystery and an old curse ran thick in this book.

It was short, and although I felt like it could have extended to another book, I was glad it could read it all in one sitting. With the book's fast pace and exciting new mystery around each corner and the history at he start of every chapter, it was a joy to read.

It is fun and quick read I would definitely recommend to anyone who isn't afraid to get a little spooked out. I myself felt shivers down my back. Oh, rule of thumb, DON'T read this and night, unless you plan to stay up all night.

Ria says

I read this book when I was younger-around 13 years old and absolutely loved it. I remember being genuinely scared to turn each page!

It was exactly the book I was looking for and definitely exceeded the expectations I had when I read the blurb.

The whole idea of the characters' creepy imaginary friends was unique and turned out to be very frightening and chilling. It worked very well with the overall storyline and worked well within the genre of the story-horror. It makes you look at and think about imaginary friends completely differently and really makes you see them in a creepy, ghostly way.

There is a small plot twist that u find out near the end that I didn't see coming when I read it which tied the storyline together nicely but if you are a young adult who is used to guessing plot twists and second guessing motives I wouldn't say that it's impossible to figure out.

Overall I really enjoyed this story when I read it but reading it as a young adult now, it would probably feel a little childish and unfulfilling. As a child though, I loved it and it stayed on my mind for a while after I had finished it and it genuinely managed to scare me as I read it, therefore if you are a bit of a scaredy cat with books or if you are a young child I wouldn't recommend.

Bruce Gargoyle says

Ten Second Synopsis:

Arthur-with-a-past receives mysterious scholarship to creepy Shiver-ton Hall. All hell breaks loose. (Figuratively, then literally, speaking).

What a creepy, creepy read. Loved it! The characters and pacy writing had me hooked from the beginning and the stories of the exploits of past residents of Shiver-ton Hall really did have me moving towards the light while I was reading. While the plot does follow a bit of your now-standard boarding school/fantasy novel arrangement, the back story behind Shiver-ton Hall and the characters themselves are original enough to suck you straight in.

I'm happy to have found a new series that I can eagerly anticipate. I'll tuck this series away in my head for the next time I'm in a book slump and need to be vaulted out with a surefire winning read.

Highly recommended for fans of spooky stuff.

Mel says

I enjoyed this all the way to the end, but the ending was rushed and there was so much crammed into 20 pages! Parts of the ploy were extremely predictable, but it was still a good read.

Darren Hartwell says

This review first appeared on The Book Zone(For Boys) blog

Warning... for reasons I will explain in the next paragraph, this review may contain spoilers.

I am struggling to work out where to start with this review, so forgive me if it comes across as a little rambling (more so than usual, at least). The problem I am having is that Shiver-ton Hall, the debut children's book by Emerald Fennell, is actually rather good, but at the same time it has a plot that contains elements that are similar to one of my all time favourite children's horror series - Barry Hutchison's Invisible Fiends. And whilst Shiver-ton Hall is a chilling and atmospheric horror story, it just does not quite match up to Barry's brilliant series in my humble opinion.

The similarity between the two books is a fundamental one - both involve the return of the characters' childhood invisible friends, but with a demonic and bloodthirsty mentality. Some might call that a spoiler for Shiverton Hall, but having read it and then gone back to skim read parts of it for this review, I'm not so sure. Young readers who have not yet discovered Barry's series will be able to judge this book far more objectively than I can, and any of them who love creepy ghost stories that invade their dreams will find this story a real treat. Unfortunately though, those who have like me read Barry's books may see the twist in the story coming from a mile away. However, that's where the similarity ends, as the reason for their coming back differs between the two books.

I'm glad I've got that off my chest, and I will now strive for objectivity as I tell you a little more about Shiverton Hall. Main character Arthur Bannister has 'won' a scholarship to the mysterious and isolated school that is Shiverton Hall. Not that he can remember applying for such a place - he just received a letter in the post one day. Very early in the story the author drops enough hints to suggest that Arthur had to leave his previous school under somewhat of a dark cloud, and so this letter heralds a new start for Arthur, even if he is quite nervous about going to a boarding school. Once there, he quickly makes a few friends, whilst also managing to upset his house's resident thugs, the Forge triplets. So far, so like any other start to a new school. However, Shiverton Hall has a particularly gruesome history, and this is gradually revealed throughout the book by a series of ghostly anecdotes, told by Arthur's new friend George, whose grandfather just happens to be an expert on the bloody history of Shiverton Hall. I found George's stories really added to the story, rather than distract from the main plot, and they helped keep the tension building.

Shiverton Hall is a well written debut novel, and the author particularly excels at creating an atmosphere of creeping dread. Shiverton Hall itself can be seen as an extra character in the plot, and as the first book in the series I feel that there will be a great deal more menace heading in the direction of Arthur and his friends in the future. I am very much looking forward to reading a further instalment, as the invisible friends strand is brought to a conclusion in this story, and I would like to see what the author does with her spooky school next. It is being marketed as a book for 9-11 year olds, and this is about right, although fragile readers who are new to horror may find it a little too scary. However, there isn't even a hint of gore, so if you like horror but gallons of blood tend to turn you away from books, then this is one for you.

Emma says

I can't help but think I am getting softer as I grow older, this was a surprisingly chilling read and Emerald Fennell happily pushes the boundaries of fictional horror for children. The narrative flows beautifully, broken apart by some campfire style horror shorts that contribute to the looming and horror stricken atmosphere of Shiverton Hall, some of which are even more chilling than the main story that runs through the novel. Every aside relates to a supernatural, vicious happening in the long, plagued history of Shiverton Hall, the image of a man throwing up his guts, lungs and various other organs has left me with some slow healing mental scars, this is not one for sensitive readers that's for sure.

The core story is relatively predictable, but only because I was trying to second guess the author constantly, I do love a good supernatural thriller and take great pleasure in digging out the plot twists before they occur, this just added to my enjoyment in reading Shiverton Hall.

The characters are a little patchy in places, but this is not a long book, so character development is not essential, and they are memorable, which is all that really matters when you are reading this fast moving tale of woe in a cursed boarding school. Arthur, the lead, is the best character of the lot, his inner turmoil driving him relentlessly to unusual and unbelievable conclusions. I also grew fond of Xanthe, in spite of a somewhat fleeting presence, if Fennell revisits Shiverton in later novels I expect more page time for this bubbly,

slightly crackers teen with a penchant for journalism!

This is a great read, worthy of shelf space for any youngsters drawn to horror novels filled with ghastly, ghostly goings on, just don't expect a good night's sleep once you've finished it!
