



School of the Dead

Avi

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From Newbery Medalist Avi comes the spine-tingling story of Tony Gilbert, who must solve a mystery surrounding the ghost of his uncle Charlie.

For most of Tony Gilbert's life, he always thought of his uncle as "Weird Uncle Charlie." That is, until Uncle Charlie moves in with Tony and his family. He's still odd, of course—talking about spirits and other supernatural stuff—but Uncle Charlie and Tony become fast friends. Between eating ice cream and going to the movies, Tony is having more fun with Uncle Charlie than he ever could have imagined.

So when Uncle Charlie dies suddenly, Tony is devastated. So sad, in fact, he starts seeing Uncle Charlie everywhere! Tony recently transferred to the Penda School, where Uncle Charlie went as a kid. The school is eerie enough on its own without his uncle's ghost making it worse. On top of which, rumors have been circulating about a student who went missing shortly before Tony arrived. Could that and Uncle Charlie's ghost be related?

Full of twists and turns that get spookier by the chapter, School of the Dead is a fast-paced mystery that Avi's fans will devour!

School of the Dead Details

Date : Published June 21st 2016 by HarperCollins

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Author : Avi

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Genre : Childrens, Middle Grade, Mystery, Paranormal, Ghosts, Fantasy, Horror, Fiction

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From Reader Review School of the Dead for online ebook

Heather says

For kids who want a somewhat creepy but not really scary ghost story (5ht-6th grades)

Pop Bop says

Double-Barreled

Avi's particular appeal to me is that he often manages to produce books that have sophisticated and mature content, but still work well for his middle grade audience. I think that's exactly what you get here. And this time out we're in ghosty/horror territory.

On the supernatural side we get ghosts, a hero in peril, people who need to be saved, a creepy old building, conspiracies, twists and turns that keep us guessing about whom to believe and whom to trust, and then a socko ending full of suspense, danger and thrills. The book does start a bit slowly, mostly because our hero, Tony, is a pretty grumpy and sour pill. But, peril focuses his mind and draws out the hero within, so the jerky-at-first part makes a certain amount of sense. And once the book gets going it races along, with revelations and twists on almost every page.

And that's where the middle-grade-friendly aspect comes in. This book is scary. Villains are evil and people get hurt and are in real supernormal danger. But, we don't get explicit, visceral, or graphic violence. What harm there is occurs offstage or occurred in the past. That makes the danger manageable for a younger reader.

And, here's another important consideration. Avi is very good at slipping exposition, lots of exposition, into his stories. Here, there are at least six points at which someone grabs the hero and fills him in on the backstory and the action to date. Sometimes that someone is unreliable and trying to fool Tony, but usually that someone is a classmate or teacher, (or old newspaper article), who needs the hero to be up to speed. Now, I get those adult ghost tales that are ambiguous and understated and loaded with suggestion. But it seems to me that a good middle grade horror/ghost tale has to have a crisp, clear plot, (twisty though it may be), and a clean resolution. That's what you get here, and that especially is what makes me think this is an excellent find for middle grade thrill seekers.

So, you get dire peril, eevil, quick-thinking, skulking and lurking, derring-do, a plot that unfolds nicely, and a hero who grows up a little as the tale proceeds. That's a nice pay-off.

(Please note that I received a free ecopy of this book without a review requirement, or any influence regarding review content should I choose to post a review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)

Jamie says

Avi's newest is engaging, truly mysterious, and kind of terrifying. I always love characters in children's books who are just KIDS, nothing fancy, and Tony - admittedly braver than most - is just a normal everyday

kid in extraordinary circumstances. I saw the twist coming but I imagine the target audience will be properly surprised - and a little grossed out - but even though I was expecting it Avi does a great job of still keeping the reader on your toes regarding who to trust. I must say the ending sort of just... Happens. Needs a little more payoff. And why is this book about starting a new school and Halloween releasing in June? But it should be a strong addition to our middle grade arsenal.

Samantha says

As a kid, I loved Avi's books and I still do. That's why I'm giving this 2 stars-- because I think he really dropped the ball here. His novels *The Man Who Was Poe* and *True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* both held up well when I read them recently as an adult, so I tried one of his new publications. This book read like one of the lesser *Goosebumps*. The plot was thin and required far too much suspension of belief. Even some of the smaller details, like how a slack line could be affixed across a bedroom to a door without breaking the door/knob (??) gave pause. The ghosts couldn't decide whether they were zombies or spirits-- an ambiguity that made very little sense to me. This struck me as very odd considering 1) his successful use of ambiguity and ghosts in his *Poe* book and 2) the Gothic tradition of horror that uses monsters has a different origin to that of terror (which claims ghosts). The end of the story was also confusing. Why did Tony run back in only to be immediately unable to save the boy ghost and then chased to the tower? I couldn't figure it out except that the author seemed to really wanted to make that slack line detail count in the ending, so he needed his main character to be in the building while it collapsed. Again, that felt forced. The idea that he would be betrayed by the uncle who cared for him required more suspension of disbelief that I was capable of. Why would Uncle Charlie do that when he stated he was ready to die? Why would he want to kill his great-nephew when he clearly cared the boy? That makes about as much sense as Tony's parents shrugging off the cost of a cross-country move and private school at the insinuations of a deceased relative. I also didn't enjoy how fueled this book was by in-school cliques, bullying, and heterosexual desire. It added very little to the story, except to imply that people who have an interest in the Occult are weirdos, and pretty young women might be magical hags who want to live forever. It felt like a very sexist switch from *Charlotte Doyle* to me and extremely cliché. Maybe that's how Avi interprets Gothic horror, but he would've written more interesting/original female characters in this book if he'd emulated some *Female Gothic*. A disappointing read overall.

??Hannah?? says

I wasn't sure how I was going to feel about this book but I ended up enjoying it. It was a nice quick read. They consider this horror but since it's middle grade it wasn't scary. Which was nice. I'm not into scary books.

Heather Adkins says

This eerie ghost story isn't about some happy-go-lucky haunting. These ghosts are creepy, and they don't have your best interests in mind. Don't read this in the dark!

Emily says

[There are two female characters Tony's age - one, who clearly has to crush on him, is a damsel in

Dale Safford says

This book was a little creepy, and didn't make me feel real good while reading it. I wouldn't want a young teen to immerse themselves in this kind of thinking. The ending is just too, too strange. For my first book by Newberry-award winning author Avi, I wasn't too impressed.

Tony Gilbert becomes very close to his Great Uncle Charlie, and when he dies Tony can't stop thinking about how he misses him. He and his parents move to California, where Tony can attend the Penda School where Uncle Charlie had gone. Immediately Tony sees the ghost of the Penda Boy who the school was named for and eventually his uncle's ghost too, and he is sought out by another 7th grader, Jessica to join their Weird History Club. But he starts to suspect that the club members are going to use him for some awful purpose. Can he find out what is up before the dreaded Halloween night comes?

Jennifer says

Holy guacamole, I don't care how old you are, School of the Dead will have you hooked. I was not prepared for how intense this book was. I thought I knew what to expect from Avi, but I was wrong, I did not expect this.

To me, the best part of the book is that like the main character, Tony, you don't really know who is telling the truth. In this case, trusting the wrong people could prove deadly. I appreciated the books POV. It wouldn't have had the same feel if the narrator had been all knowing. The reader needs to learn everything with Tony to keep the suspense and mystery going. Knowing who Tony should trust from the beginning would have made the book flat and difficult to finish.

Author: Avi
Publisher: HarperCollins
Publication Date: 2016

Samantha says

3.5 stars. Cute and clever but definitely aimed at a middle-reader audience. For that age, I'd call this at least a 4-star book. For adults, it's charming but a bit thin.

Heidi says

Meh. I expected more from Avi. The storyline is intriguing (plenty of ghosts and a mysterious school) but the execution and writing aren't great, especially coming from a Newberry award winning author. I listened

to the audiobook while exercising and started making myself stop and do 20 squats every time the narrator read the words "there was fear in her eyes." I had a sore butt by the end--someone had fear in their eyes every 30 seconds or so.

Pat says

Tony Gilbert's strange great Uncle Charlie moves in with the Gilbert family and Charlie develops a strong attachment to him. Uncle Charlie talks constantly about ghosts and spirits and the Penda School in San Francisco that he attended as a child. After Uncle Charlie's death, Tony's family moves to San Francisco. When Tony attends the Penda School, he sees a ghost in the window which leads him to discover other weird happenings at the school. Tony, his classmates, the faculty, and his parents are fully developed as characters. The pacing of this ghost story builds throughout and makes for a marvelous read. Highly recommended.

Sophie says

This book has a very cool, fun story line. I would recommend this to anyone who wants to read something fun, a little scary, and really exciting.

Donna says

A modern day ghost story with a twist a bit of creepiness. Tony was lucky to spend some fun time with his "weird" Uncle Charlie before he dies. After passing, Tony and his family move to San Francisco so Tony can attend Uncle Charlie's alma matter - The Penda School. The school is creepy and full of strange things, including sightings of dead Uncle Charlie. Tony meets Jessica - whom many do not like and as he figures out, many are scared of . As he sets out to solve the mystery of the school, strange things happen. Tony starts wondering if he will survive all of this.

Tony is a realistic character, typical middle school boy who is trying to make friends in his new setting and trying not become one of the "losers." He doesn't know who to trust as he collects various versions of what happened to a former student. He gets some support from his parents, but not much. Avi keeps the tension and suspense going throughout - so you are quite sure how it will all end.

Jane says

I feel like Avi just phoned this one in. The characters are so flat and their reactions to frightening situations is lame and unbelievable. Just didn't like it.
