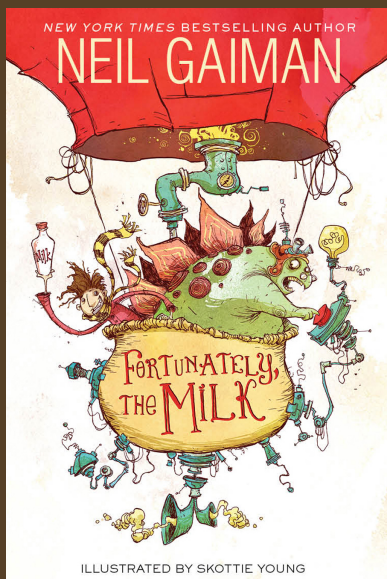


Fortunately, the Milk Reading Guide



Questions and Ideas for Consideration

Intertextuality and Expectation: How does Gaiman utilize intertextuality and/or rework aspects of other texts? In what ways does he play with readers' expectations related to these tropes or conventions, and for what purpose?

Fathers: Describe the father of the story, and consider what messages this sends about fathers more broadly. How does this differ from other representations in children's literature with which you are familiar?

Gender: In what ways does the text rework gender roles? What was your reaction when the father realizes that Prof. Stegg is actually a "Madam" (when he has used the pronoun "he" throughout, assuming the stegosaurus was a male)?

Storytelling and Childhood: What commentary on the telling of a story and the role of storytelling in adult/child relationships does the book offer? Why might Gaiman think this an important element of childhood to explore.

The Milk: Why focus on the milk? What role does it play, and why choose "milk"?

Illustrations: Comment on Skottie Young's illustrations. What do they add to the story? How do they shape and contribute to the reader's understanding?

Daybook Possibilities

- Choose one of the tropes Gaiman engages in the story (pirates, aliens, vampires, etc) and list at least five other stories that use this convention. Compare Gaiman's use of the trope and consider the effect of the changes he implements to tell his story.
- Create a timeline for the story to help explain and track the movements through time the father takes with Professor Stegg.
- Collection information on some of the other works (for children and adults) by Neil Gaiman, who writes a variety of different kinds of literature and film.
- Add an adventure to the story by composing a few pages that could be inserted had the father encountered yet another fantastical adventure on his way back to his children with the milk.
- Check out Neil Gaiman's journal and paste a few entries in your daybook, noting how it changes your perspectives: <http://journal.neilgaiman.com/>.
- Consider the comedy of the story and look for other stories in children's literature that are described as similarly funny. How does Gaiman's work use humor in innovative ways? What makes it funny?
- Write your own outlandish tale to explain something that has happened in your life (perhaps being late for class).

Suggested Critical Reading

- "Something Very Old and Very Slow": *Coraline*, Uncanniness, and Narrative Form" by Richard Gooding
- "An Eye for an I: Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Questions of Identity" by David Rudd
- "A Juvenile Miscellany Hatching Their Wolfish Schemes: Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's *The Wolves in the Walls*" by P C Crawford
- "What the [very bad swearword] is a children's book anyway?" Neil Gaiman's Zena Sutherland Lecture

Background and Context

Published in 2013, *Fortunately, the Milk* is Neil Gaiman's most recent children's text, following notable texts like *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. The novella, illustrated by famed comic artist Skottie Young, chronicles a father who runs into a host of fantastical characters and adventures attempting to bring a bottle of milk back to his children. Gaiman is a Newbery award winning British author who writes in many genres and mediums, including children's, YA and adult fiction, graphic novels, film, short stories, & picture books.