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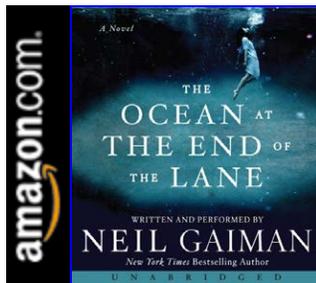
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The Ocean at the End of the Lane - Neil Gaiman

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Timothy Nunes



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I've always thought of my [childhood](#) as pretty average. When I turned seven, there were no friends at my birthday [party](#), I didn't get along with my sister, I was occasionally picked on at school, and I often found solace in books. In all those ways, I was just like the [young](#) protagonist in the audio version of the book I just finished. Unlike me, however, the book's protagonist could [escape](#) to, or through, *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*.

In Neil Gaiman's sometimes charming, occasionally terrifying, and thoroughly poignant tale, I was reacquainted with the boy I was and introduced to the boy I now wish I'd been...or perhaps not. *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* tells the [story](#) of a young boy growing up in suburban Sussex, England, in a suburban house with suburban parents and a suburban sibling. It's a story of absolute normalcy, the epitome of average life...until the day when a South African opal miner arrives, precipitating a tragedy that leads to a friendship, an open door, and a small duck [pond](#) that's actually an ocean more expansive than the universe itself.

The Ocean at the End of Lane is a book that not only resists easy description, it also resists convenient categorization. At the story's beginning, the now middle-aged protagonist is dealing with common adult situations: divorce, doubt and uncertainty, fear of the future, nostalgia for the past, a loved one's passing. Nostalgia for the past (or something else, perhaps?) draws him back to the place where he grew up and then down the lane to the farm where a little girl once lived—a little girl named Lettie Hempstock, who had a small duck pond in back of her family's farmhouse that she called "an ocean."

Returning to that "ocean" causes memories to come flooding back, memories that become a story of childhood, coming of age, supernatural horrors, friendship, and [epic](#) fantasy. It's a tale that, at times, is so fantastical that it defies both comprehension and reason. But, in the end, that's okay—brilliant, even. Because, through the eyes of a seven-year-old boy, anything is possible.

The finale of *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* left me in tears—not because of the story itself but, rather, because it ended. For, you see, I never wanted it to end. I wanted Gaiman's beautiful tale to go on and on, forever and ever, like a pond that is an ocean that is a universe that is the incomprehensible. But, as Gaiman's young protagonist learns, endings and other changes are inevitable...which isn't always a bad thing.

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