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**Pedagogical aspects in the literary work of Neil
Gaiman**
Diplomová práce

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Prohlašuji, že jsem závěrečnou práci vypracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedení pramenů a literatury.

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Introduction

I chose the topic *Educational Aspects in the literary work of Neil Gaiman* because I enjoy reading fantasy books and I have been a fan of Neil Gaiman for a long time. The books *The Graveyard Book* and *Anansi Boys* by this author provide good material for comparison what concerns relationships, educational themes and psychology and I therefore decided to analyse , interpret and compare these books in my final project.

The aim of the thesis is the analysis and interpretation of the fantasy books *The Graveyard Book* and *Anansi Boys* by Neil Gaiman from the point of view of relationships, education, psychology and symbolism. The thesis strives to prove that even in spite of an unusual environment, one can establish healthy social relationships and get a proper education thanks to good teachers and mentors and that it does not matter that they are supernatural beings and also that it is never too late to learn, re-evaluate your life and most importantly, that even when there is a functional family, thanks to misunderstandings the relationships in it can be damaged. The thesis then compares these two books and sums up the conclusions based on the analysis of these.

The thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the fantasy genre in general. It describes the features of fantasy, the history of fantasy. It compares fantasy and science-fiction and points out the differences between these two genres. It provides my point of view and advantages and disadvantages of these genres from the educational point of view. It also tells us why children should or should not read fantasy and how the public perceives fantasy. The last part is a biography of Neil Gaiman, an explanation why I chose *The Graveyard Book* and *Anansi Boys* and typical features of his books are provided.

The second chapter deals with the book by Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*. It provides the synopsis of the book. It mainly describes and analyses the relationships between the main character and his family and other characters in the book. It is also primarily focused on the learning and studies of the main character. It provides a description of his mentors and tutors and their features and pedagogical skills. It also tells how I found the educational methods used by the teachers and also my appreciation of the teaching methods used by one of the teachers. In the end it provides an interpretation of symbolism and points out the things representing the typical features of Neil Gaiman's writing style.

The third chapter is concerned with another book by Neil Gaiman, *Anansi Boys*. It describes the synopsis of the book. It analyses the relationships between the main character and his father and the rest of his family and the other characters in the book. Then it provides the educational values of the attitude of the main character's father. The last bit of this chapter points out the symbolism, explains the supernatural elements in the book and again alerts us to the elements typical for Neil Gaiman's works.

The fourth chapter will evaluate whether I proved the points I wanted to prove or to what degree I managed to prove them. It will also sum up with what I was dealing in my thesis, what I was analysing, how I was analysing and interpreting and finally, what conclusions I can therefore draw from the analysed and interpreted.

In my thesis, I want to prove that even if you live in an unusual environment milling with supernatural creatures and people, you can establish healthy relationships and friendships and that you can have a fairly normal life. The second point I want to prove is that you can get a proper education even though your environment is morbid or macabre. The third point I want to prove is the importance of friendship, cooperation and keeping calm even in the most stressful situations. The fourth point I want to prove is that you might be completely mistaken in your own father, hate him and yet you learn to appreciate him even though too late. The fifth point I would like to prove is that you should let go of relationships when you recognize that they do not have a perspective anymore. The sixth point I want to prove is that family is important even when you are a self-sufficient young adult. The last point would be that it is never too late to learn something new and to re-evaluate your life and change it so you actually enjoy it.

1. Fantasy and Neil Gaiman

I will describe fantasy in general, history of fantasy, typical features of fantasy and I compare it with science-fiction and I provide my point of view. Then I talk about how public perceives fantasy, why children should or should not read it. I also provide a biography of Neil Gaiman.

1.2 What is fantasy

It is very difficult to describe this genre precisely. I agree with Clute and Grant in their definition that: '*Fantasy is one big umbrella term under which many subtypes of this genre fall and thus it is hard to define this genre precisely.*'¹

The most standard description of fantasy and opinion on fantasy formed thanks to the books by J.R.R. Tolkien, J.K. Rowling or C.S. Lewis. Thanks to them many readers have a stereotypical opinion that fantasy is about wizards conducting magic with the help of staves or magic orbs, heroes and heroines wielding swords, axes and other weapons; and about dwarves, elves, fairies, dragons and other supernatural creatures residing in secondary worlds like enchanted forests, cities floating in the sky, cities hidden beneath the ground and so forth. However, there are a lot of fantasy books taking place in primary world with supernatural elements; for instance the *Harry Potter* (1997) series by J.K. Rowling. As we know, it is set in partly in London, but then the platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ appears between the platforms 9 and 10 and takes us to Hogwarts, the school where magic and sorcery is taught.² The primary world is therefore intermingled with magic and spells and a another part of reality existing within the real world and this is why the book is considered a fantasy one.

The best way how to describe the genre of fantasy is that it is concerned with things which are unlikely to happen and to be real and which are described and expressed with the help of the supernatural and magical, but keeps a big distance from everything technological and scientific.³

¹ See CLUTE, John and GRANT, John. *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1st UK edition). London: Orbit Books, 1997. ISBN 978-1857233681.

² See ROWLING, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Bloomsbury. ISBN 0-7475-3274-5.

³ See <http://litreactor.com/columns/what-is-Fantasy>

Yet as there are always exceptions, there are books which are clearly categorised as fantasy, but still have a scientific element in them. A fine example is Philip Pullman's novel *Northern Lights* and its sequels. The magic, sorcery and spells were prohibited and systematically eradicated in order to make way to science, but thanks to the discovery of the magic powder everything turned out differently. The scientific element are the experiments conducted in the book and the gadget which can determine whether you speak the truth, called 'the Alethiometer'. The magical and supernatural element is that the whole story takes place in another plane or to be precise, a dimension of reality. It is similar to the primary world, but as there are tremendous differences between the two worlds and the future existence of the portal between them is considered thanks to the magic powder. The speaking animals such as Yorek Birnisson, the king of armoured polar bears and the Daemons, representing the souls of the people, are also a proof of the fantastic element.⁴ The book can be therefore classified as fantasy.

Fantasy is therefore a genre dealing with the impossible and supernatural elements, the characters are people with unusual abilities with which they solve their problems and issues and there are supernatural creatures which do not inhabit the real world.

1.3 The typical features of fantasy

Like every literary genre, fantasy has its typical features. I will now list these. The reader can discover the past, present and future and worlds which exist simultaneously in time the story is told. Then there are usually characters with supernatural abilities such as sorcerers, witches, fairies, angels, demons, ghosts, superheroes; but also speaking animals or even objects which usually are not alive, for instance trees. The stories can take many forms. For example, stories where someone gets enchanted or a spell is put on them or stories where animals or objects act as humans would, therefore this can be considered a personification. In fantasy stories, the impossible and unreal blends with reality. Fantasy stories deal with issues appealing to many people, such as social issues, political issues. In contrast they can also deal with the values of a person, their emotions and motivation, which is usually unselfishness

⁴ See PULLMAN, Phillip. *Northern Lights*. Scholastic Point, 1995. ISBN 0-590-66054-3.

and sacrificial nature of the main character. Another contrast very often occurring in fantasy books is a battle of life and death. These very often result in a battle of good and evil. Either between worlds, nations, or in one certain character who does not necessarily have to be the main one. The very last feature is the importance of friendship, cooperation and no hesitation to sacrifice your life for a greater good.⁵

The features of a fantasy what concerns the plot, setting, issue and characters. The major events could not happen because they cannot be explained scientifically. The story plays in the present and in a realistic place on the earth; for instance a forest, a city, and so on. The problems, issues or conflicts are solved in impossible ways, i.e. using spells, sorcery or some kind of super-powerful weapon or superhuman strength. The characters might act in a untypical or unconventional way, but it makes perfect sense in the situations happening in the book.⁶

1.4 History of fantasy – a brief overview

Clute and Grant tell us that: ‘Modern fantasy in English speaking Countries started to be perceived in 1850’s thanks to George McDonald’s books *The Princess and the Goblin* and *Phantastes*.’ (Clute and Grant 1999: 338) *Phantastes* can be perceived as the very first fantasy novel for adults. McDonald is very significant because he influenced many future authors of the genre, namely J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis.

Other significant works of fantasy from the 1850’s were certainly *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll. These were a perfect depiction of the Victorian society. The books described mainly how the children were perceived in this time.

Fantasy did not gain popularity until the beginning of the 20th century. What was interesting, fantasy for children was more accepted by public than fantasy novels for adults. The most significant author of this period was undoubtedly Lord Dunsany. His most significant works were collections of short stories. They were published in 1905 as a collection called *The Gods of Pegāna*. Another two collections followed. The first one was *A Dreamer’s Tales*, published in 1910. *The Book of Wonder* followed in 1912. Lord Dunsany is considered to have influenced the works of Ursula K. Le Guin and H.P. Lovecraft.

⁵ See <http://litreactor.com/columns/what-is-Fantasy>

⁶ See <http://www.k12.hi.us/~mkunimit/MKt3/fantasy3.htm>

Another significant author was J.M. Barrie and his novel *Peter Pan and Wendy*. This novel was important because it was adapted many times. For instance a cartoon adaptation was made Disney and so were many movies. Barrie's novel was followed by *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum.

In 1923, the very first magazine about fantasy was published. Its name was *Weird Tales*. This magazine was very significant because it enabled a broader audience to get to know the genre of fantasy and it thus increased the popularity.

In 1950's is when fantasy had the most popularity. In this time the typical 'sword and magic' fantasy began to reach the audience. The most popular book was Robert E. Howard's book *Conan the Barbarian*. This book was adapted into a movie with Arnold Schwarzenegger depicting the main character.

By the 1960's the notoriously known books such as J.R.R.Tolkien's *Hobbit* and the *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, C.S. Lewis *Chronicles of Narnia* series or Ursula K. LeGuins *Earthsea* series established the popularity of fantasy for good.⁷

The contemporary fantasy in English speaking Countries is ruled by the literary works known all over the world⁸ such as *Harry Potter* (1997) series by J.K. Rowling, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* (2005-2008), Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) trilogy, the books dealing with the Ryhope wood, *Mythago Wood* (1984), *Lavondyss* (1988) and *The Hollowing* (1993) by Robert Holdstock and of course number of works by Neil Gaiman, for instance *The Sandman* (1989-1996), *American Gods* (2008), *Anansi Boys* (2005), *MirrorMask* (2005) and many other authors and books.

1.5 The differences between the genres fantasy and science-fiction

As Turco states: '*These genres are very often confused with each other because the boundaries between them are usually thin and very hard to define.*'⁹ These genres can therefore sometimes blend together.

⁷ See CLUTE, John and GRANT, John. *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1st UK edition). London: Orbit Books, 1997. ISBN 978-1857233681

⁸ See

http://us.macmillan.com/torforge/categories/General/ScienceFictionandFantasy/ContemporaryFantasy/top_sellers/topsellers

⁹ TURCO, Lewis. *The Book of Literary Terms: The Genres of Fiction, Drama, Nonfiction, Literary Criticism, and Scholarship*. University Press of New England, Hanover, 1999. ISBN 0-8741-955-1

Generally speaking, the main differences between these two are: In fantasy, the unreal, imaginary and unexplainable occurrences that are unlikely to happen in reality are explained and described with the help of magic, sorcery and spells. The past, the present and the future are intertwined, but everything happens in the present and there are two or more worlds coexisting simultaneously. In science-fiction the described events are very likely to happen in the future because the development of technology is taken into consideration. The events are described and clarified thanks to technology and science and everything happens in the near or distant future.

The characters in fantasy usually are people with superhuman abilities who are wielding weapons or using magical spells, whereas in science-fiction the characters are normal people who are no heroes and have no special abilities. They might also use powerful weapons or be able to fly, but everything happens thanks to some kind of very advanced technology and thus not with the help of spells or willpower.

In fantasy there are supernatural creatures who reside in some other realm or a distant part of the world, but not another planet or solar system. They are just there and it is not explained how they developed as a species, or how they got to their habitat, they are just placed somewhere. In science-fiction, there are aliens from other planets or solar systems and there are always broad descriptions how the characters got to know them, with what technology they established the contact with them or when they established the contact. A thorough description of their evolution and even anatomy is usually provided, along with their historical and cultural background. This is of course similar to fantasy, but in fantasy books we never get to read a medical chart of a character, whereas in science-fiction these are very often provided by the author. Science-Fiction is therefore thoroughly based on medicine, science, Physics, Chemistry and other scientific areas and fields, whereas fantasy is based on alchemy, magic, spells and sorcery.¹⁰

The conclusion is therefore that science-fiction draws from real and reliable scientific disciplines and fantasy is based on the occult and paranormal, which are not scientifically reliable. Both genres thus have different features, sometimes even opposite ones. These enable us to recognize the differences between these genres and to determine the boundaries between the genres of fantasy and science-fiction.

¹⁰ See TURCO, Lewis. *The Book of Literary Terms: The Genres of Fiction, Drama, Nonfiction, Literary Criticism, and Scholarship*. University Press of New England, Hanover, 1999. ISBN 0-8741-955-1

1.6 My point of view concerning fantasy and science-fiction

Frankly speaking, I am a very big fan of this genre and I really enjoy reading fantasy books. In my opinion these provide a good means to relax after a long day of work because you can escape into another reality; you can slip into shoes of a sorcerer, swordsman or an elf and so on. Fantasy stories also provide a good opportunity to stimulate your imagination even though you are already a grown-up, but of course, this is more beneficial for children. Children should not be afraid to let their imagination take over from time to time, but of course everything should have boundaries and one should not lose their touch with the reality. Fantasy books are undoubtedly a great means for getting inspiration when you are stuck on some project and do not know how to carry on, what you should do next. Here is where the fun part comes because you might end up wondering how a favourite fantasy character of yours would act in this situation and should you come up with some original idea, it most likely will give you the necessary drive and motivation to go on. But of course, you have to keep reality and fantasy strictly apart.

Concerning science-fiction, this genre does not actually interest me as much as fantasy does. To me it seems like too far-fetched fantasizing what might come in fifty years, two hundred years and so on. I do not agree with authors making theories about how the technology might advance, how people might live, how they could look, and so forth because nobody knows how the technology will develop, even when we could draw conclusions from how the technology develops; meaning with what speed it develops, how often there is a higher level of the same piece of technology and so forth; it is still only guessing how things will be. Of course, we have to give credit to the authors of science-fiction books for their immense amount of imagination and ability to make assumptions and to create whole worlds, planets with their unique inhabitants and their ability to invent completely new technology. Nonetheless, the authors have such big amount of imagination and are able to speculate so well that when reading a science-fiction book, we might believe that this is how it might indeed look in the future and it leaves us thinking and pondering whether this is how our offsprings will once live and whether this is how Earth will look like in hundreds of years in the future. Sincerely speaking, I am glad that I will not live anymore when that time comes and that these things are only fiction in the present. Even if I had the means to get to know, I would not want to know because that will be

not our time anymore. I doubt anybody would feel comfortable having to get used to everything new and to blend in with the other in order not to be an outsider, but of course there are people who love science-fiction and would give everything to be able to experience this.

1.7 Advantages and disadvantages of fantasy and science-fiction

Each of these genres has its undeniable advantages and disadvantages. One of the main advantages of fantasy is that there is much room for imagination and visualisation. We can visualise everything because there are usually very graphic descriptions of characters and the environment. Another advantage is that a fantasy book very often inspires the reader, be it a child or adult, to draw their favourite character or a place from the book in order to introduce them to someone or to do research about the background of the book. I agree with Hučínová that this can in case of children undoubtedly contribute to development competences like problem-solving, technological competence; information retrieving, evaluation and sorting.¹¹

A major disadvantage of fantasy is that it is in most cases not based on reality. The characters have abilities which are not real and they always do things that are impossible for a normal human to achieve. This could have very negative consequences if the child with a too vivid imagination would decide to imitate the events of the book or the deeds of the character. This may end tragically provided the child has a distorted perception of what is real and what is not due to lack of explanation from an adult or the violence present in the books. As Řezáč states: '*The impact of violence in media like television, the Internet, newspapers or book on children is immense.*'¹² Which is plausible since books are perceived as a printed medium. A disadvantage of fantasy can also be that the child depends on the fantasy books as a means to escape the reality, which is another extreme.

Science fiction has its advantages and disadvantages too. The main advantage is undeniably its use of reliable sciences. The reader can therefore apply or develop their knowledge of Biology, Zoology, environmental science, Chemistry, Physics and other

¹¹ See HUČÍNOVÁ, Lucie. Klíčové kompetence v RVP ZV. *Metodický portál: Články* [online]. 19. 10. 2005, [cit. 2012-02-29]. Dostupný z WWW: <<http://clanky.rvp.cz/clanek/c/z/335/KLICOVE-KOMPETENCE-V-RVP-ZV.html>>. ISSN 1802-4785.

¹² See ŘEZÁČ, J. *Sociální psychologie*. Brno: Paido, 1998, 268 s. ISBN 80-85931-48-6.

subjects learnt at school, which is very beneficial in case of children. Another advantage can be that the author can provide a fairly accurate description of the future. This can arouse the curiosity of the reader and make them want to develop new technologies themselves and thus creating new engineers or architects. A big disadvantage is that if the future described is not too optimistic, frustration or depressions by sensitive children or adults might occur. Another disadvantage is the sometimes too idyllic cooperation of humans and aliens in some Science-Fiction books. It might leave the impression that aliens are cute and friendly while in fact they can be unfriendly and wanting to enslave the humans.

The conclusion therefore is that both genres each have their own advantages and disadvantages. An advantage of both are the development of competences necessary for school, imagination, both inspire the readers and they can make readers have certain aspirations for their future jobs. A shared disadvantage is that both can have negative impact on children or sensitive adults.

1.8 How the public perceives fantasy

In conclusion, fantasy is received by the audience very well. It is liked by many people throughout the world, however, fantasy books are aimed at a certain group of readers and other people might not enjoy them. A typical reader of fantasy books is an open-minded personality, who very often likes the occult and the supernatural and has also a vivid imagination. Such reader can therefore appreciate all the supernatural, unreal and magic elements in fantasy books, whereas some other person who rather likes reading about fact and dates will completely bash fantasy because they will find it unreal, childish and way too far-fetched.¹³

The people who like this genre enjoy fantasy because it provides an alternate reality they can escape to in order to relax and let their imagination go wild, but it can also provide immense inspiration and motivation to go on when stuck with some problem because when we imagine what our favourite character would do in your situation. I agree with Řezáč that we actually ‘identify with the character’ and therefore see the problem with different eyes.¹⁴

¹³ See chapter 1.3

¹⁴ ŘEZÁČ, J. *Sociální psychologie*. Brno: Paido, 1998, 268 s. ISBN 80-85931-48-6.

1.9 Why Children should or should not read fantasy

Children definitely should read fantasy because it allows them to let their imagination to get the the better out of themselves. Children can also get inspired thanks to fantasy books. These also increase the visualisation ability of the children a lot, enabling them to supplement the already acquired knowledge from Biology, Zoology and other subjects and also to develop all the competences needed at school.

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Why children should not read fantasy. When the child has a wrong perception of what is real and what it not, they should not read fantasy books. A child should also not read fantasy books when they are too sensitive or tend to be shocked when some kind of violence occurs or tend to be aggressive afte they were exposed to violence because this might have very negative consequences.¹⁶

1.10 The biography of Neil Gaiman

As it is stated on Neil Gaiman's official website, Neil Gaiman was born in Hampshire, United Kingdom. He discovered the love for books and reading already at a young age, starting with the books of big and famous writers like Edgar Allan Poe, J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Ursula K. LeGuin and many others. Neil Gaimain himself proclaims as a 'child raised in libraries'. He even epxresses his appreciation for books, librarians and their hard work: 'I wouldn't be who I am without libraries. I was the sort of kid who devoured books, and my happiest times as a boy were when I persuaded my parents to drop me off in the local library on their way to work, and I spent the day there. I discovered that librarians actually want to help you: they taught me about interlibrary loans.'¹⁷

His writing career began, interestingly enough with a Duran Duran biography.¹⁸ The second work he produced was a biography of Douglas Adams, *Don't Panic: The Official Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy Companion* (1988). Gaiman claims, that he was good at taking the voice of the author, while writing the biography and pestering or parodying it.

¹⁵ See chapter 1.7

¹⁶ See chapter 1.7

¹⁷ See http://neilgaiman.com/p/About_Neil/Biography

¹⁸ A famous British Alternative Rock band, formed in Birmingham

His writing of graphic novels and comics began when he started working with Dave McKean and their very first cooperation resulted in the graphic novel *Black Orchid*. Yet his most famous graphic novel was to come. We are speaking here of *The Sandman*, which won numerous awards; firstly, the *Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards* (2004) and secondly, *Three Harvey Awards* (2004). As the very first comic ever *The Sandman* got the *World Fantasy Award for Best Short Story* (1991).

Neil Gaiman is being credited as the creator of the modern comics and on top of that an author, whose work surpasses genres. Most importantly, it reaches the audience of all ages, ethnicities and nations and to top it off, he already has a cult status. He also has almost constant attention of the media.

Neil's fanbase are mostly the audiences of sci-fi and fantasy literary genres. He also as one of not many writers uses social media to communicate with his readers. He was the first to establish a blog in 2001, which now has many regular readers and followers, me being one of them. Another services Neil uses are Facebook and Twitter which I also regularly follow.

Gaiman's books are either for very young readers, adolescents or adults. It is very typical for his books that they do not exactly fit in the genre they are supposedly classified as, speaking of *Coraline* (2002) which was said to be too frightening for the children. There is even a movie adaptation of *Coraline*, made in early 2009 and directed by Henry Selick. It got a *BAFTA* award for Best Animated Film and was nominated for *Oscar* in the same category.¹⁹

Not only *Coraline* was adapted by the film media. Also, the story *MirrorMask* (2005) by Gaiman and McKean, was adapted in 2005, Gaiman wrote the screenplay himself and McKean was the director.²⁰ Another book adapted was *Stardust* (1999). Screenplay was written by Jane Goldman and Matthew Vaughn, while Vaughn also being the director.²¹

It is no surprise that Neil Gaiman was consulted while the screenplays were written and was the one of the producers too. He does not like when someone adapts his works without consulting him because he thinks that it is important to keep the movies, series, etc. faithful to the books. It is an 'unwritten rule' that Neil himself chooses the

¹⁹ British Academy of Film and Television Arts

²⁰ See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0366780/>

²¹ See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0486655/>

actors to depict the characters, when producing or consulting the people wanting to adapt his works.

The most recent adaptation being pondered to be made by the *Warner Brothers Studios* is his comic book series *The Sandman*, very loosely based on the *DC Comics*' previous edition.²² It is known that *Warner Brothers Studios* were told by Neil that it would be great to make the adaptation and he would be delighted about it, but that they should not adapt one of the books as a whole, but make a series based on *The Sandman*.

Neil was told when he was asked to remake *The Sandman*:

'Do whatever you want and please with the story, the characters, and so on. Only keep the name 'Sandman.'²³ The original edition features the story about a man wearing a gas mask on his face wearing a long coat and a hat, putting villains to sleep with the help of some sort of sleeping gas and leaving them tied up for the police to pick up and arrest.²⁴

To sum up, Neil has an interesting and inspirational background providing him with good material for his literary work. In my opinion, his most significant works aimed at young and teenage readers are *The Sandman*, *The Graveyard Book* and *Coraline*. All the three books were published in Czech and many other languages. *The Sandman* was edited and published as *Absolute Sandman* in four volumes. The volumes collect chapters from all the ten books, *The Sandman* consists of and there is some other material included, mostly lost chapters; chapters which were left out, and so forth.²⁵

²² See <http://www.warnerbros.com/#/page=company-info/>

²³ See GAIMAN, Neil. *Sandman : Preludia a Nokturna*. 1. vydání, Praha 3 : Crew, 2002. ISBN 978-80-87083-13-0.

²⁴ See http://www.dccomics.com/vertigo/graphic_novels/?gn=1656

²⁵ See GAIMAN, Neil. *The Absolute Sandman, vol.1* (hc, 612 pages, 2006, ISBN 1-4012-1082-1); *The Absolute Sandman, vol.2* (hc, 616 pages, 2007, ISBN 1-4012-1083-X); *The Absolute Sandman, vol.3* (hc, 616 pages, 2007, ISBN 1-4012-1084-8); *The Absolute Sandman, vol.4* (hc, 608 pages, 2008, ISBN 1-4012-1085-6)

An analysis and interpretation of *The Graveyard Book* and *Anansi Boys* by this author will follow. I chose these books mainly because they provide a good material for analysis of unusual relationships, educational themes, interesting symbolism, unusual environment and most importantly because they are fantasy books. And as the main character of *The Graveyard Book* is a young boy and the main character of *Anansi Boys* is a young adult, these books also will provide good material for comparison.

What concerns *The Graveyard Book*, I want to prove the fact that no matter in how extraordinary environment you live and no matter how unusual the people around you are; you still can establish healthy relationships and get all the necessary education you need because the people care about you and perceive you as a normal person with need for learning and discovering and having friends.

With *Anansi Boys*, I want to confirm that it is never too late to forgive, that it is never too late to learn something new, to do what you always wanted; that it is not good to suppress your feelings and that it is crucial for every person to pursue their dreams and that it is sometimes important to re-evaluate your life and change it.

Neil Gaiman's books are hard to compare to any other books because they are very unique. They have the features of Fantasy books, but Gaiman always adds something which makes the book blend into another genres and thus we have to be open to everything when we read Gaiman's books.

Gaiman uses typical British humour, but is also not afraid to be sarcastic. Gaiman's books have trademarks which are typical for Gaiman's style of writing. Every character in his books has a colour, object or a symbol typical for them. In every book there is some ominous character who wants to harm others and lastly there are many characters with whom the reader can identify.

Every book contains a deep philosophical message or some moral, which is very important for the very young readers, young readers, teenagers and adolescents and therefore, as a teacher-to-be, I found his books appropriate to look at from the point of view of education, psychology and relationships.

2. The Graveyard Book

2.1 Introduction

The first book by Neil Gaiman I will analyse and interpret will be *The Graveyard Book*. *The Graveyard Book* was first published in the year 2008 in the United Kingdom. It has won firstly, the UK's *Booktrust Prize for Teenage Fiction* (2008) and secondly, the *Newbery Medal* (2008), the highest honour given in the US' literature for children and teenagers. We can therefore assume that this book is very appreciated by not only children, but also adults.²⁶

Let us briefly talk about what inspired Neil to write this book. Gaiman claims that the inspiration for this book was his son and his adventures in the early childhood. Interestingly enough, all began with his son and a nearby graveyard. He and his family once lived in a house opposite a graveyard and his son used to happily toddle among the graves and later playing and having fun there. Therefore Gaiman used this experience as an idea and a base for this book, which became very successful and popular not only among children but also their parents and teachers.²⁷ The popularity of the book and the attention of readers were confirmed recently, for a film adaptation is being worked on. So far only the script for the movie is being written, by Neil himself.²⁸ Neil Jordan is supposedly rumoured to be the director and producer of the movie. Though Jordan was complaining that Neil's draft of the script was too faithful to the book. To which Neil opposed: 'What's wrong with making a movie faithful to the book? And is there really such a thing as being too faithful?'²⁹ This proves that co-working on a movie adaptation based on book can be sometimes difficult because the opinions of the writer and director may differ and there are voices of Neil's fans that the adaptation should be as faithful to the book as possible.

²⁶ http://neilgaiman.com/p/About_Neil/Biography

²⁷ http://neilgaiman.com/p/About_Neil/Biography

²⁸ <http://neilgaiman.com/works/Books/The+Graveyard+Book/>

²⁹ <http://geektyrant.com/news/2010/5/27/neil-gaiman-gives-an-update-on-the-graveyard-book-movie.html>

2.2 The synopsis of *The Graveyard Book*³⁰

The whole story takes place in a graveyard. It is set in the primary world, but supernatural creatures such as ghosts, vampires, werewolves, mummies, ghouls and so forth are involved. The implied readers are primarily children aged 9-12, but the book can be certainly attractive for older children or adults.

The first characters we come across are parents of a toddler, the toddler himself and an evil man called Jack Frost, who was determined to kill this toddler but had failed to do so. The first main point of the plot is that the toddler escaped from his parents' house and therefore saved himself by crawling up a hill into a graveyard. Luckily, there were people who stood up for the little child, the other significant characters, the mysterious Lady on Grey, Mr. Owens, Mrs. Owens and Silas, who became the child's guardian. Thus they were more than happy to accept the little toddler as their own son and becoming his foster parents. They did a significant thing, giving the toddler a name, Nobody Owens. His nickname was Bod from that point on. Since that night Bod was a resident of the graveyard, living in the Owens' grave as their son.

After some time Bod is meeting a girl called Elizabeth Hempstock, who claims to have died in a witch trial. Besides the friendship with Elizabeth, there was Scarlett Perkins, who once wandered through the graveyard and spotted Bod. She at first got scared of him because he was wearing a funeral robe. Yet Scarlett decided to return and investigate about the mysterious boy she saw in the graveyard. This resulted into Bod and Scarlett becoming friends.

Bod showed Scarlett around the graveyard and they had discovered a very old, ugly and scary creature Sler hidden in the oldest tomb in the graveyard. Sler was waiting for his master. Most likely the person who created him and it did ask Bod whether he is his master. Unfortunately this fragile friendship was ended abruptly, for Scarlett and her mother moved away again, only to return some years later. This put Bod into a bad mood and he was really sad too, but he knew he could not affect such events. There was still hope that Scarlett would come back again some time later so Bod had put up with these events and accepted them.

Bod became of age to begin his education, so Silas taught him the alphabet and reading with the help of tombstones and then Mr. Pennyworth was to teach Bod all the

³⁰ See GAIMAN, N. *The Graveyard Book* (hardcover, 320 pages, HarperCollins, 2008, ISBN 0-0605-3092-8)

more advanced schoolwork. Mr. Pennyworth was a deceased university professor. Then Ms. Lupescu took over. As much as Bod did like to learn new things, this was not that satisfying for him and he wanted to experience something new in education.

Bod wanted to experience the 'real' school and how the normal living children learnt. He begged Silas and his foster parents to let him go to elementary school. Surprisingly, they agreed that Bod could go to elementary school located in the same town as the graveyard. He was delighted about this and was really grateful to his authorities.

After this incident Bod got a new teacher, Ms. Lupescu. She was a friend of Silas from long ago. Long ago is a relative term, though, since vampires and werewolves are able to live for centuries. Being a werewolf, Ms. Lupescu was a perfect guardian for Bod for the time when Silas was resting.

Another plot twist occurred immediately after this. There was a tragic event which ended Bod's relation with Ms. Lupescu abruptly. Luckily, Silas and Ms. Lupescu found out that Bod had disappeared and arriving at the gravestone, they knew right away what had happened and they set out for a rescue operation, along with another very old friend of Silas, a winged mummy Kandar and with an ifrit Haroun. In the end they found Bod safe and sound in a duffel, being carried on a ghoul's back. Bod also discovered that Ms. Lupescu was a werewolf. These events unfortunately ended tragically for Ms. Lupescu, for she died in the fight with ghouls in order to make Bod's escape successful.

As Bod had predicted, Scarlett returned along with her mother and she has not forgotten about Bod. She went to visit him and they renewed and refreshed their friendship. They had no idea what was to come upon them, namely the evil man Jack. Jack Frost and three other Jacks went to the graveyard, for they now knew where to find Bod. Bod managed to get rid of the two other Jacks with help of Scarlett and Elizabeth, but Jack Frost had found Sleer's chamber and held Scarlett hostage. Bod kept his head cool because he remembered Sleer and had prepared a masterplan. The plan was to trick Jack into becoming Sleer's master. Which meant being taken away somewhere by Sleer and spending the eternity with it. The plan worked out and Jack Frost got tricked into saying: 'I am your master!' to Sleer. It was excited to have a new master and it wanted to 'embrace' its new master and it snatched Jack Frost and it took him somewhere beyond a wall. Thus this dangerous event was a happy end for Bod and Scarlett.

Scarlett moved later again, leaving Bod behind, because Silas had erased her memories of Bod and the previous events with his vampiric abilities and he put the urge to move away again into the mind of Scarlett's mother, claiming it will be only for the good of the two. The following day Silas had a passport for Bod, the name in it being Nobody Owens. Then Bod bid his farewells, causing many of the female ghosts to break into tears, Elizabeth and his mother being no exception and he ventured into a completely new life, in the normal world of the living.

2.3 The analysis and the interpretation

2.3.1 Relationships

I will describe and analyse the relationships of Bod with the other characters in the book. The psychological impact of these relationships will also be included and discussed.

2.3.1.1 Introduction

I will try to analyse the relationships in the graveyard and mainly the ones of Bod and the others. From this point of view I will try to answer and prove or disprove how Bod was making friends, therefore that he was not completely socially isolated or deprived as Mrs. Vágnerová explains, or in any other way.³¹ Also the relationships with the other people living in the graveyard, namely his foster parents, Silas, his possible love interests Scarlett Perkins and Elizabeth Hempstock and lastly his teachers; Silas, Mr. Pennyworth, a poet whose name we do not know, Silas and Mrs. Lupescu. I will sum up my conclusions and assumptions at the end of the chapter dealing with relationships.

I will be concerned with the question how Bod might have felt in terms of social contacts. All in all, he was not happy about not being able to leave the graveyard on a regular basis. He often expresses his disgust about having to be there constantly and thus not being able to make friends in order to cope with his occasional loneliness. Because of these circumstances the reader might come to the conclusion that Bod is experiencing isolation. We might disagree since he does have friends in the graveyard, but what are ghosts to him? The answer is that they are his only companions, for he did not get to know other people until approximately 10 years of age. I do not think that this is good for a child. I agree with Mrs. Vágnerová that children need contact with other children in order not to be socially deprived.³²

A proof that Bod was not passive and that he indeed was craving for contact with other children is that he wanted to visit an elementary school. He indeed went to the

³¹ VÁGNEROVÁ, Marie. *Psychopatologie pro pomáhající profese*. Vyd. 3., rozš. a přeprac. Praha: Portál, 2008. ISBN 978-80-7367-414-4.

³² VÁGNEROVÁ, Marie. *Psychopatologie pro pomáhající profese*. Vyd. 3., rozš. a přeprac. Praha: Portál, 2008. ISBN 978-80-7367-414-4.

elementary school, but things did not work out well for him. There was a major issue. It was his experience with his classmates. They at first ignored him. Later on they actually noticed Bod and tried to talk to him, but Bod was told by Silas not to speak to living children so he did not even attempt this at first. Then he got bullied by a boy in the class, but Bod scared him. This ended up with the children getting unsettled. Mainly because they found Bod scary due to the fact that he acted like he actually was not there at all and this made the other children anxious, not to mention the fact that he dealt with the aggressor in an unconventional way. Let me explain. Bod performed Dream Walking on the boy. This meant that Bod penetrated the dreams of the boy and he was able to be in them and to change them into the nightmares. The aggressor left Bod alone since this incident, but the others did not. The result was that the parents of the children dealt with this radically, which meant chasing Bod out and almost finding out that he lives in the graveyard. This might have resulted in them calling a social worker and I am sure you can imagine what disaster this would trigger. To top these events off, Bod's guardian Silas got very strict with Bod. The events at the school only made Silas think even worse of the normal people. He could not stand the fact that they ostracize people who are only a bit different from the 'norms and standards' of the society. Vágnerová states that defining of a norm depends on how often and with what intensity a certain occurrence happens.³³ (Vágnerová 2004: 21) Silas might have scolded Bod, but he understood Bod's longing for to be a part of normal society and wanting to explore the world beyond the graveyard gates. To sum up, Bod wanted to be a member of the normal society, but there were obstacles in his way he could not overcome at this point and Silas' attitude did not help to solve this either. However, Bod visiting the elementary school proves that he was desperate to get together with another children of his age.

It is also vital that we get to know how all the relationships started. The inhabitants of the graveyard, ghosts, spirits and spectres, at first promptly refused to even want Bod there.³⁴ They had a voting whether Bod can stay or not. Almost, the voting resulted in that he will not stay, but the mysterious Lady on Grey expressed her worries and pity for the child who just had lost his both parents and she convinced the

³³ VÁGNEROVÁ, Marie. *Psychopatologie pro pomáhající profese*. Vyd. 3., rozš. a přeprac. Praha: Portál, 2008. ISBN 978-80-7367-414-4.

³⁴ 'But' Josiah Worthington objected. 'But. A human child. A child who is alive. You have to understand! I have in mind; I mean, I want to say... This is a graveyard, not a kindergarten for God's sake!' (Gaiman 2008: 26)

other graveyard inhabitants to reconsider all the pros and cons. In the end Bod could stay because all respected the opinion of the Lady on Grey. Put short, Bod was certainly born under a lucky star and I completely agree that he was one lucky child.

2.3.1.2 Bod and parents

Bod's relationship with his late parents and mainly his foster ghost parents were very loving and warm. There is not much to tell about Bod's deceased parents because he lost them when he was toddler. This means that he was approximately 1 to 3 years old, as Hajn tells us in his book.³⁵ They knew about the danger of a murderer coming round, for Gaiman tells us in the book.³⁶ This is a proof that Bod's mother wanted to protect her son and she put him somewhere safe, not being aware that her little son actually witnessed the murders and was afterwards on his way into safety, not detected by Jack. One can therefore ask themselves how Bod actually managed to escape out of the house. It might as well have been an immense will to live on in order to avenge his parents, but also maybe he somehow remembered that he would be save in the graveyard, for there are no living people. The evil man Jack may have killed the toddler's mother and father, but he did not find the little boy, which made him furious and he vowed to find the child, even if it would take many years. So diligent, patient, determined and eager to finish his awful job was this cruel and cold-blooded murderer.

Did being a witness of his own parents' murder have impact on Bod? My opinion is that it indeed affected Bod. He did not remember his parents, but his striving to get to know who is responsible for their death. This is an argument which confirms that he must be still affected. Bod might also end up having some psychical problems. These events might also somehow determine how Bod was as a personality, but we cannot tell for sure since children have the ability to completely force out negative things they went through as very young, as Plevová tells us, and furthermore, he was raised by nice and kind people.³⁷ I agree with Petrová that this also affects the shaping

³⁵ HAJN, V.: *Antropologie II*. Olomouc: Vydavatelství UP, 2001, 206 s.

³⁶ 'The man raised his knife against the woman's chest and put it down again for a moment; so he could look into the crib, only to find a teddy bear under the blanket. The child was not there.' (Gaiman 2008: 13)

³⁷ PLEVOVÁ, I.: *Kapitoly z obecné psychologie II*. Olomouc: Vydavatelství UP, 2004, 76 str.

of our persona and character traits.³⁸ The author does not give us any information on this and Bod's inner monologue does not tell us either, but the question is whether there were negative effects on the development of Bod and his learning abilities. This certainly did not affect his learning ability. (see chapter 2.2.3.2) Yet he was negatively affected by the fact that he knew that his parents were murdered and he wants to avenge them by any means necessary. Whether getting revenge is a good way of solving this problem is for everyone reading the book to speculate about. My opinion is that it might not be the best solution, but I came to the conclusion that it mainly is a matter of honour and wanting to resolve ones past.

Another important element is a description and analysis of the relationship between Bod and his foster parents and also how they lived in the graveyard. Hajn emphasises the importance of the environment and its impact on us.³⁹ Bod's relationship with foster ghost parents is really not different from the relationship he would have with living parents. It is a usual parents-child relationship with its negatives and positives. The negative was that the Owens couple was sometimes way too overprotective where the positive side was that they were kind parents; no matter what kind of pranks and mischief Bod did. I can therefore draw the conclusion that Mr. Owens and Mrs. Owens are sometimes maybe too kind with Bod, but Silas' authority and occasional strictness does put a balance to their disability to be strict with their son.

The next important aspect is the atmosphere in the home of the Owens family, the home and how Owens raised Bod. In spite of living in a grave there was a warm family atmosphere. Bod's relationship to his parents is full of respect and love. Bod's parents tend to be overprotective. Firstly, because they could not have their own children due to dying at a relatively young age before they actually could have any. Secondly, it might be that they still saw that little toddler needing protection, help and care in their son. He was actually their gift from heaven, if you want it put in a poetic manner and when the reader goes through this part of the book, they certainly understand that the Owens couple is now delighted due to the fact that they were now able to have a child. Post mortem, but better late than never. The Owens couple was

³⁸ PETROVÁ, Alena a PLEVOVÁ, Irena. *Kapitoly z obecné psychologie I.* 2. vyd. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2008. 114 s. Skripta. ISBN 978-80-244-2140-7.

³⁹ HAJN, Václav. *Ekologie člověka.* 3. dopl. a přeprac. vyd. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 1999. ISBN 80-7067-963-8.

really happy to be able to accept Bod as their son and their joy was great when they were able to have Bod staying with them for good as a new member of the graveyard society. We might object that Bod suffered from hunger or lack of hygiene and such, but he did not. The Owenses always made sure that Bod had eaten or washed himself and so on. Yet they sometimes forgot about this because of their nature, but that what Silas was there for because he was alive, so he did keep in mind to make Bod eat etc. Even when the Owens couple are ghosts, they still are a mother and a father figures for Bod and more importantly the only family he ever had apart from his long time ago deceased parents. It does not take too much effort to be able to figure out that Bod respects them a lot and would never do anything to upset them. Summing up, the relationships in the Owens family were healthy and full of respect and understanding. Being home in a grave and living in a graveyard might seem morbid or macabre to some people, but we must keep in mind that this are the only surroundings Bod knows and knew from at about 2 years of age. It does not seem strange to him and I assume that when we see things from his point of view it will not seem like this to us either.

The Owenses treated Bod as if he was a child of their own. They died in the 1800's. It is therefore most likely for Bod to be raised according to the typical Victorian virtues, meaning Bod being considered an imperfect adult. Although this might be relative in Bod's case because the Owenses did not have previous experience of raising a child in the 18th century. What might surprise the reader is that Bod's foster parents never insisted on Bod believing in God or visiting a church as every other child would. It might have been maybe because of the fact that Bod now knows that ghosts exist and linger on the Earth and therefore do not go to heaven or hell, so it would be pointless to be telling Bod that there is an invisible man in the sky always watching over him and making sure that Bod behaves how he is supposed to and such disciplinary statements. Having such parents can be a burden. Or a blessing because Bod could get the best principles of the period instilled, such as helping your parents, treasuring them, helping the others in time of need, being patient, timid and studying a lot; therefore not even thinking about neglecting education, even in spite of the difficulties which Bod sometimes faced. All in all, the Owense were strict only in some aspects of raising Bod and the other things they tended to neglect due to their kindness and protective nature.

2.3.1.3 Bod and Silas

The next important relationship I will be analysing is the relationship between Bod and Silas. Firstly, I will elaborate how they got to know each other and how their relationship started. Secondly, how Bod saw Silas and how he saw Silas as an authority. From the approximate age of two Silas was Bod's guardian. The book tells us exactly how Silas became Bod's guardian⁴⁰. Silas was a guardian in the literal meaning and a bodyguard; therefore being responsible for Bod's safety. We never get to know what kind of supernatural creature this mysterious gentleman exactly is. We only know that he goes by the name Silas and that he was one of the people who supported Bod at the moment when the others voted if Bod stays or not. If you view the situation from a child's point of view, who had a 'normal' childhood, you somehow might come to the conclusion that Silas might have been the only father or uncle figure for Bod. The reader can also suspect or come to a conclusion that Silas might be a vampire due to his pale, ghastly and mysterious appearance and mainly being around only after dusk. To top it off, Silas lives in an old, abandoned and half-fallen apart church or rather remnants of a church.

I will back this theory of mine up with some lines from the book which prove that Silas was a vampire.⁴¹ This definitely gives us a crucial hint about Silas being a vampire. Of course, 'one kind of nutrition' can be vegan, vegetarian and so forth, but it rather implies to one certain 'meal', which was blood in Silas' case. If this did not convince you, the following lines will.⁴² This is a proof of Silas not being awake during the day and that was active during nighttime as it is usual for vampires. Of course a sceptic could counter this proof with an objection that Silas might only have an irregular sleeping schedule. Or he could be suffering from the symptoms of a blood disease called Porphyria.⁴³ Yet Neil would disagree with this because he is into the traditional vampire myth stemming from Vlad Tepes and not this recent vampire craze. The

⁴⁰ 'Alright. If Mr. and Mrs. Owens will be his parents, I will be his guardian. I will stay here and shall I have to leave, I will find someone to be taking care of the child and supplying him with food. We can use the crypt of the chapel to store the food.' (Gaiman 2008: 26)

⁴¹ 'Silas handed him a banana. Mrs. Owens was observing Bod while he was eating. 'Ba-na-na' she repeated hesitantly. 'I never heard of this fruit. Never. How does it taste?' 'I do not know at all' said Silas who consumed only one kind of nutrition and it did not include bananas.' (Gaiman 2008: 30)

⁴² 'Bod always went to ask Silas when the answers provided by the others were not correct or contradictory. He waited for him when the sun was about to set, a moment before Silas would wake up.' (Gaiman 2008: 39)

⁴³ <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/porphyria.html>

following information from the book will for sure convince any sceptic. Neil Gaiman wrote: '*You go out. You leave the graveyard every night.*' 'I am endlessly older than you, boy. And nothing will happen to me wherever I am.' (Gaiman 2008: 39) This is the last and in my opinion the watertightest argument speaking for Silas being a vampire, for vampires can live on for centuries. In conclusion, Silas is a vampire living for hundreds of years and having immense amount of life experience necessary for being not only Bod's guardian but also a mentor who taught Bod what the other teachers could not.

Another thing worth mentioning is that we can figure out that sleeping at daytime bothers Silas because he cannot protect Bod all the time and also because he knows of the threat from years ago waiting eagerly to find Bod. The man who murdered Bod's parents was to come to finish his awful job or as hitmen say, his hit.

We also have to take into consideration how Bod felt about Silas. Firstly, as an authority and secondly, as a father or uncle figure and a friend. The question is whether Bod perceived him only as a friend, guardian and authority or also as father or uncle figure. Speaking of Silas being the friend or uncle for Bod, we get to know this because there are long dialogues between Bod and Silas about most various things you can imagine and that Silas had immense patience, as the book tells us.⁴⁴ Silas was for sure entertained, but he had a face to keep before Bod. He therefore did what seemed appropriate in that situation. This meant acting like a reasonable adult.

Let us now discuss the topic of Silas being the friend, uncle or father figure. Silas from time to time took Bod out for pizza, fries and such unhealthy meals. Why Silas agreed to do such inappropriate things might shock the reader or the parent reading the book to their child.⁴⁵

Silas indeed was a person for Bod to vent to when he felt upset, depressed, angry about something or fed up with someone's behaviour or when someone mocked him in return and so on. I can thus say that Silas was a perfectly balanced type of authority for a child and actually the most 'normal' authority Bod ever had in the graveyard. Although being sometimes a bit too overprotective, which might be rooted in the fact

⁴⁴ 'After all, you have the Freedom of the Graveyard', Silas always said to Bod. 'And so, the graveyard takes care of you. As long as you are here, you can see in the dark. You can walk the paths never touched by the feet of the living. The eyes of the living will not see you. Even *I* have the Freedom of the Graveyard, but in my case it is only the right to be at home here.' 'I want to be like you!' said Bod while making a grimace displaying that he meant it. 'No, you don't.' was Silas' abrupt response ending the conversation about this matter.' (Gaiman 2008: 40)

⁴⁵ See chapter 2.3.1.4

that Silas still might have been seeing the little helpless toddler in Bod. The conclusion I came to is that; firstly, Bod rather saw Silas as a mixture of a friend and uncle, which meant that Silas cared about him a lot since the very beginning of Bod's residence in the graveyard and that; secondly, Bod perceived Silas as an authority, but Silas also acted as an uncle or a good friend towards Bod, but he had to be strict from time to time. The following piece of information proves it. Bod wanted to visit an elementary school. He does so, but this does not end up very well. Not only his peers do not like him very much; they also somehow feel that there is something not right about Bod and treat him accordingly. This 'experiment' of Bod's actually results in almost endangering the inhabitants of the graveyard which angers Silas very much and results in Silas being angry with Bod for a relatively long time, which is the worst punishment for Bod. We cannot blame Silas, for he knows of the danger lurking for Bod. There was also a moment when Bod did not share Silas' opinion and Silas had to act in a very authoritative way. The following confirms that Silas was a strict person, but that he also had a heart. In fact, Silas expressed his concerns about Bod, when he realised that the man Jack somehow managed to find out where Bod resides. Silas absolutely refused to kill the man. I am certain this left many of the readers astonished, for it was logical that this would solve all the problems for once and for all. If you ask me, it did not surprise me at all that Silas refused to abuse his strength and vampiric abilities. Put short, he did not want to kill any living being just because he needed to kill it or had the urge to do so in order to prevent some minor troubles or danger.

Bod was grumpy because of this. Most of his grumpiness and anger were rooted in the fact that there was a high probability that the evil man Jack might find him and therefore his trips out of the graveyard were strictly prohibited. Bod even accused Silas of being a lazy and cowardly person. He stated that Silas with his strength, reflexes and all the abilities would be far too much of an opponent for the evil man Jack. When Silas said he just will not kill the evil man Jack Bod got very angry with him. The reason was that he thought that if Silas killed the evil man Jack all the problems would just perish and he would be able to go away from the graveyard again. To Bod's displeasure Silas does not even think about killing the hitman. He thought that it just will be better to keep Bod in the graveyard because the friendly ghosts would be able to protect him by making him invisible or some of other ghost tricks and magic to conceal Bod's presence in the graveyard. As impulsive as Bod is, he just ran away from graveyard in a moment of Silas' unawareness just to rebel against the circumstances. Which was not very

clever, because Bod got into a dangerous situation, where the evil man Jack almost found out where he is. This was the very first and also the last time he ever defied Silas' authority.

2.3.1.4 Bod and Ms. Lupescu

Bod's relationship to Ms. Lupescu was also very crucial for him. We are not provided many information about her. Although we get to know that she is an old friend of Silas. She does not have a boyfriend or lover, nor is she divorced or widowed. The spinster cat lady prejudice is also out of the question because of Ms. Lupescu being a werewolf and therefore hating cats. She is to take care of Bod during the day while Silas is sleeping and so he could leave the graveyard from time to time, but her main purpose is to be Bod's tutor. Ms. Lupescu was a strict, uptight, diligent and consistent woman, which are undoubtedly perfect qualities for a teacher/tutor. Strictness and tutor attitude aside, there are also hints that she had a weak spot for Bod and that she actually had a soft core under her rough, distant and cold surface. Their relationship did not start in the best way because Bod did not like her because she had a bit too cold and distant attitude at first, but everything worked out nicely in the end. Their relationship had an abrupt and sad end. Allow me to elaborate what happened. Bod, ready for every adventure and mischief unknowingly gets into a dangerous situation. He touched a gravestone which warped people into the kingdom of ghouls, Ghulheim, which is of course not a very safe place to dwell, since the ghouls feast on the flesh of the living. Silas and Ms. Lupescu knew right away what happened and set out for a rescue operation. Bod could in the end get away unharmed, safe and sound. Unfortunately this event ends tragically and Ms. Lupescu dies in the incident, which shatters both Bod and Silas for a quite a long time.

Let me prove that Mrs. Lupescu was a werewolf and that she had friends in spite of her condition in this paragraph. As the name suggests, Lupus = wolf. A smart and aware reader almost right away realises that Ms. Lupescu is indeed a werewolf. Her name also implies that she comes from Romania, which is a land milling with vampires, werewolves and other supernatural creatures. It is therefore evident when we have a thorough look at this fact; and the book also provides us with evidence.⁴⁶ This confirms

⁴⁶ 'And through the desert of Ghulheim a huge grey animal was approaching them at a fast pace, looking like a large grey dog. It spoke in Ms. Lupescu's voice. 'Is that you, Ms. Lupescu?' bod asked. 'Who else

my assumption. We can thus confirm that Ms. Lupescu was a shapeshifter and therefore not a very typical werewolf. A shapeshifter means exactly what the word says: a person being able to change their shape, but only into one certain animal; not only into a wolf but also a cat, dog, snake, bird and so forth.

Ms. Lupescu was not so distant as Bod thought. I will produce a proof that she was actually a warm-hearted person. She eagerly cooked for him. According to her, he was underfed and always looked hungry. The hidden meaning to this has to be that Ms. Lupescu did not have any children of her own and her biological clock was ticking mercilessly. She was thus therefore feeling motherly love towards Bod. The undernourished Bod thing was indeed the bitter truth because the ghosts of course did not have to eat and have not eaten for a very long time and therefore certainly lost the sense when one is hungry or how often a child should actually eat. Ms. Lupescu even expressed her concern that the food the others provided for Bod was not enough for a child in development. Frankly speaking, even when food was stored well, it had to make a do for a long time. It thus ended up being rotten very often, and therefore not being edible anymore. As good as Ms. Lupescu meant her act of charity and provided food for Bod, thinking it was healthy and therefore good for him; which it actually was, but is not too much from everything a bit too overdone? In my opinion, too much from anything does not do any good. She was making a lot of salads and other meals based on vegetable ingredients, which indeed was healthy and in her opinion also very good for Bod to eat in order to develop and grow up well and properly, but Bod did not like it and in the beginning had just tossed the food. After some time he thought it over and found it reasonable to eat the food. He would otherwise end up being hungry because there was nothing else he could eat, since Ms Lupescu got rid of all the food stock in the graveyard. This of course would not stop him from secretly going for a pizza and Coca Cola or some fries with Silas, who actually did pity Bod for having to eat sometimes way too healthy food. Due to being a vampire Silas usually ordered a salad which he did not eat and left for Bod, who of course always refused, for he was sick of all the healthy things he had to stomach from Ms. Lupescu. A funny fact was that Ms. Lupescu never found out about Bod's and Silas' junk food rampages which I found amusing because she really had guarded Bod well; sometimes even too much, I would say. She might as well have known, but did not express her opinion about this or out of sympathy for Bod

should I be, Bod?' 'Oh, so you are a werewolf?!' 'Not exactly, I am a Hound of God.'" (Gaiman 2008: 92)

she let it slip as she provided him only with healthy food. This could be easily explained. As Ms. Lupescu was a werewolf, she did have to disappear at nights when there was a fullmoon in order to do what werewolves usually do. Therefore Silas and Bod had their opportunities to sneak away. To sum everything up, Ms. Lupescu was an authority for Bod, but she also acted motherly towards him, so she let him go with Silas and pretended not to know about their trips to the diner even when she was not pleased about this.

2.3.1.5 Bod and Elizabeth Hempstock

I will focus on Bod's friendship with Elizabeth Hempstock. Bod met Elizabeth in the graveyard during one of his explorations. He wanted to see the gravestone of a real witch. Yet he did not know that the witch was a cheeky girl who was 15. Let me briefly provide some information about Elizabeth. She was indeed a witch. A good witch, but the inquisitors did not care. Once someone tagged a certain person as a witch; their lives would come to an abrupt end after months of torture in hands of executioners hired by the church to practice this horrible means of forcing a confession. Therefore Elizabeth died in a witch trial. A witch trial included being thrown into the water with a weight on your body or your hands cuffed. Either you drowned and were therefore innocent or you emerged from the water, which led to the conclusion that you have to be in league with the devil and you got killed. Thus the result was always your death. This fact has to be mentioned because Elizabeth describes this procedure to Bod who was curious about the cause of her passing. Afterwards they established a firm friendship. Bod gave Elizabeth the nickname Liz. Elizabeth helped Bod out of dangerous situations. One was when he got locked up in a cellar by a greedy man. Bod wanted to sell him some precious jewelry he found in an old tomb. The reason for getting money was that Bod wanted to get Elizabeth a gravestone because she did not have any; which is very touching, if we think about it. Luckily, Bod was able to bravely run away, but without the money for the gravestone. This left him sad, but Elizabeth was happy that he actually put effort into getting her the gravestone. Another situation was when Bod injured his ankle. Elizabeth could not help him directly, but she got a doctor to help him. Doctor is a doctor, even when he passed away long ago, is he not? The doctor took a look at Bod's ankle and stated that it only was sprained. It was therefore nothing too serious and the injury healed quickly.

Elizabeth was not only Bod's friend. She was also there for him when he needed to talk to somebody who was not adult. I will briefly talk about this topic. In the following paragraph. She also was explaining to Bod what it meant to be older. In her case it was the time of puberty. Her attitude might therefore have been rooted in the fact that she died at the age of 15, which, as Hajn describes, is the beginning of adolescence. (Hajn 2001: 52) She would speak to Bod about growing up to this age. Of course, she could not describe what happens to a male, but she was able to tell him that it is normal, and I agree with Hajn in this, to grow up rapidly, that your voice is changing, and so on. (Hajn 2001: 50 – 52) Bod also could tell her what he could not speak of with Silas or his parents. It was certainly good that he could discuss with Elizabeth topics he could not with the adults. When Bod was leaving the graveyard, Elizabeth got the promised gravestone. It was only a usual paperweight with her name on it, written with a marker which does not smudge, but it for sure does imply that he cherished Elizabeth's friendship a lot and wanted to bid her a nice goodbye. As Gaiman wrote: 'E. H.' under it were the words 'we will never forget'. (Gaiman 2008: 137) The conclusion we can draw from this is that Bod had a person only a bit older than him he could vent to, which is vital for a child at Bod's age.

2.3.1.6 Bod and Scarlett Perkins

A description of the friendship between Bod and Scarlet is also necessary. It started in an interesting way. Bod met Scarlett for the first time when he was approximately 8. Scarlett would have never met Bod had she not wandered off too far into the graveyard. When spotting him for the first time, she basically fled away in panic because she found Bod scary, for he was wearing grave clothes. To be honest, I am certain that many of us would be also unsettled by such appearance. As we know children, they are curious. Scarlett therefore returned to the graveyard and befriended Bod. From then on she was a frequent visitor there. The residents of the graveyard approved of Scarlett being there, but she had to face an big amoun of hostility coming from Elizabeth. Fortunately, things worked out well between the girls thanks to Elizabeth acting reasonably. Therefore Bod had company and was glad, but this came to a swift end because Scarlett's mother felt the urge to move away again and move away they did. This left Bod in despair, but he still was hoping for Scarlett's return. He was right, for Scarlett appeared again in 5 years time. She did not forget about Bod and went

to the graveyard to reunite with him. Bod was delighted and happy again. Yet this was again a relationship bound have an abrupt end.

I will answer why and how this friendship ended. This was preceded by a dramatic event. The evil killer Jack Frost found out where Bod resided because he forced himself onto Scarlett's mother and he therefore could keep an eye on Scarlett. It was only a matter of time when he would find out that Bod is indeed in the graveyard and set out with two other hitmen to finish his task from decade ago. With the help of his abilities and fellow ghosts Bod got rid of the other two men. Yet Jack Frost was smart and took Scarlett hostage in Sleer's chamber, knowing Bod would rush to her rescue. Luckily, this dramatical event was a happy end because Bod tricked Jack Frost into being Sleer's master and thefore Sleer took grip of Jack Frost and vanished with him beyond the wall of the chamber. Scarlett was safe and sound. All were happy. Except Bod, because Silas said it would be best to erase Scarlett's memories of Bod all the events and to make her mother feel the urge to move away. At first, Bod refused this, but after thinking things over he agreed, for he knew it would be the best thing to do. Thus Silas used his vampiric abilities to do so. Bod was depressed because of this, but he did not despair for too long, for he left the graveyard not so long after these events and there still was hope that he might meet Scarlett again someday. Summing up, Scarlett was the prototype of a girl who is a tomboy and she was therefore the perfect peer to set out with for adventures. It was a pity that the friendship between Bod and her did not have a longer duration, for it would surely develop into love.

2.3.1.7 The social activities of the graveyard's residents

The following information I will provide should prove that the graveyard was not cut off from the world of the living. What concerns the community activities of the graveyard's residents: there was one, to which a whole chapter of the book is devoted. It is called *Dance Macabre*. (Gaiman 2008: 138 – 157) It was a very interesting event indeed. Mainly because it involved the living people of the town where the graveyard was located. It was an annual event. Every winter, the inhabitants of the graveyard would clean and sweep their graves and tombs and prepare for the celebration and the event itself. If we read carefully about the concept of the event; we figure out that this is a reference to 'Dance Macabre', also known as the dance of the dead with the living or the dance of Death with the person it was about to take away from the world of the

living. This is what the event literally was. The inhabitants of the graveyard danced with the living in the town square and had fun, all were happy and celebrating. Even Bod participated and danced with the Lady on the Grey. This could as well mean that Bod by this act was showing his gratitude to this mysterious woman. We never get to know who she is; but while reading I suspected her to be Death. This would mean that she would not fit in the typical Grim Reaper, i.e. a skeleton in black cloak swinging a scythe, image. She also does not wear any dark colours, she wears white.

2.3.1.8 My conclusions, remarks and interesting facts I noticed

I will now elaborate and sum up some interesting facts I noticed and also characteristic features of Neil Gaiman's literary work I found in this book. Firstly, the Lady on the Grey. A nicely dressed lady on a grey horse is certainly a more pleasant personification of Death than the typical shady black-cloaked skeletal figure. We can therefore agree that such a pleasant embodiment of Death does not make us so afraid of dying. This indeed might be a trademark of Neil's. In the first *Sandman* book Gaiman also portrays Death as a post-teenager with dark, gothic look.⁴⁷ Such looks is very appealing to the younger readers nowadays because they like to label themselves. The Emo lifestyle is not about cutting yourself, but about clothing and attitude to life.⁴⁸ The Gothic style is also about attitude to life, clothing and other people.⁴⁹ Death's looks is not the only reason. It might be because of her easy-going, kind, friendly and pleasant personality. To be Death herself is certainly an unusual job. She therefore must have some unusual hobbies. Thus we would try to come up with something macabre, morbid or weird. She has perfectly normal hobbies such as watching movies and other activities we are most likely do to in our spare time. She claimed to love the movie about Marry Poppins. In the first *Sandman* book it is described how a young man wants to invite her for a lemonade and she answered 'Do not worry, you will be able to do that soon.' (Gaiman 2007: 13 – 15) She was right. Not long after that the young man got hit by a car. As it is said in one of the descriptions of the first *Sandman* book, 'someone you

⁴⁷ GAIMAN, Neil. *Sandman: Preludia a Nokturna*. 3. rev. vydání. Praha 3: Crew, 2007. ISBN 978-80-87083-13-0.

⁴⁸ <http://www.soemo.co.uk/emo%20lifestyle.php>

⁴⁹ <http://www.gothicsubculture.com/origin.php>

would die for' or 'someone you are dying to meet'.⁵⁰ This only confirms that Neil is a master of puns and references. While reading Neil Gaiman's books we have to be open-minded and ready to think about the things he is writing about and consider them from different points of view. He can mean them as he writes them, but mostly does not and here is where the readers are asked to come up with their own opinions; they are encouraged to do the thinking, pondering. Which is what a good and avid reader always does while reading and I wholeheartedly agree with this.

Another thing I found interesting was Neil's take on the eternal vampires vs. werewolves fight. This paragraph will briefly point out what Neil's opinion on this might be. Silas was a vampire who refused to kill any living being and had a friendly and kind attitude. Therefore he does not fit into the usual vampire image of slimy bloodthirsty creature lurking in the dark. Ms. Lupescu, a werewolf who is actually a teacher and a mentor and likes children, but does not hesitate to fight when needed. It was no wonder that I felt sympathy for Ms. Lupescu while going in depth what concerns her character because I could identify with her. She had to feel lonely, since she could not let many people close to her because she might go berserk and turn into a huge, furry killing machine with the worst instincts of a canine predator. Yet she was not alone. She had some friends, one of them being Silas. Vampires are actually a logical choice as friends because they are able to withstand a werewolf assault and they would be able to protect themselves. The conclusion therefore is that the vampires hating werewolves and vice versa is only a propaganda thing. Of course there has to be some amount of rivalry, since both races are 'children of the night', but I am certain they get along well in spite of their differences.

This paragraph will briefly sum up what is so special about *The Graveyard Book* in terms of the main character. Firstly, as a parent, you do think about how Bod might have felt in a certain situation or how he would react, for you know how children act at certain ages. Yet as there can be exceptions, Bod surprises us many times. Secondly, as a child, you can identify with Bod's mischievous and rebellious nature and attitude and laugh at his pranks. Also feel scolded and timid when he got scolded or fear and the adrenalin rush in dangerous situations, get dragged into his adventures. On the ending

⁵⁰ GAIMAN, Neil. *Sandman: Preludia a Nokturna*. 3. rev. vydání. Praha 3: Crew, 2007. ISBN 978-80-87083-13-0.

note, this book is very suitable for children of age 9 and older. I dare to call Bod the Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Fin of the 21st century.

2.3.2 Education

2.3.2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I would like to describe who taught Bod, how they taught him, what methods they used. At the end of the chapter I will point out and sum up how I found the methods of the different teachers, my remarks, objections and what advantages and disadvantages the teaching methods might have.

This paragraph will contain information about Bod's respect for authorities. The following information provided will for sure make Bod look as a badly raised child. I am describing this for the purpose of contrasting it with how Bod behaved in the following paragraph. As we know children who are Bod's age, 7 – 12 (Hajn 2001: 43 – 45), they love to do mischiefs, pranks and jokes on behalf of others. Even more than that, they are constantly looking for the most exciting adventures. For Bod, this was exploring the most distant corners of the graveyard and by chance annoying or pranking someone who was not careful enough. Most of the ghosts had a laugh at themselves when caught unawares and being a victim of a prank. Some of the other ghosts were not this laid-back. This would turn out to be as much of an adventure because some of them were actually almost hostile and did not act friendly at all. They did not tolerate any disruption or disturbance of their 'eternal slumber'. When we think of some reasons why they behaved this way; they actually did not necessarily have to be angry, hostile or unfriendly. We can therefore draw some conclusions from this. Firstly, they only might be taking the meaning of the letters R.I.P engraved on their tombstones way too literally. Secondly, they are unfortunately not very used to children running around and playing. Thirdly, their hostility might as well have been based on the fact that they could have minded that Bod is actually alive and as such can do things they cannot because of their state as ghosts or if you prefer, spirits or spectres. When I thought about this for a while, I came to a quick, abrupt conclusion that they were just simply plain jealous of Bod because he was alive and therefore they were so hostile towards him. To sum up, all of us can agree that they were not used to children being in the graveyard and playing there and that they liked to have their peace.

This paragraph will tell us that Bod actually was not without authorities and that he was being raised properly by his parents and mentors. The only people Bod never dare to prank, or talk back to were his parents, Ms. Lupescu and Silas because he

treasured and respected them so much. He would never do anything to upset them or make them angry. This implies what authorities these people must have been to Bod. What concerns the raising methods of Bod's foster parents and the ones of Silas, these were not any different to the ones of living people. Bod had rules to abide by and there were boundaries set that he must not overstep. In case he did, punishment from either his foster parents or Silas followed to remind him that rules are there to be followed. Summing up, Bod's foster parents and Silas cared about how Bod would be raised, they did not let him do what he wanted and they wanted him to be a good, a reasonable and a reliable person.

2.3.2.2 Early Education

This chapter will describe how Bod learnt the alphabet, reading and writing. I agree with Penny Ur that these are crucial for language learning. (Ur 2004: 138, 140, 141, 162) It will be no surprise that Silas was the very first person to teach Bod. When Silas realised that Bod does not even know the alphabet yet, at the age of 6, he took action. He got Bod crayons and ABC books. That was certainly nice of Silas, however, Bod could not make use of these, for he could not read yet. Therefore Silas had to teach Bod the alphabet so Bod could learn from the ABC books. No matter how boring this basic thing was to learn, Silas put effort into how to make it exciting for Bod. We have to give Silas credit for such creative approach to teaching. Silas told Bod that he will give him a 'detective task'. This task was to find all the letters of the alphabet around the graveyard. As a proof of finding the letter, he had to make an imprint of it onto a sheet of paper with the crayons. When Bod was done, he returned to Silas and eagerly presented Silas the whole alphabet. Silas, knowing how important is to motivate learning children, did not hesitate to praise Bod for the hard work. To sum up: Even though Silas did not have any methodological background; thanks to his immense amount of experience he knew what children have to learn at the age of 6 and as Ur states, that it is indeed important to provide children with exciting and challenging tasks⁵¹ (Ur 2004: 16 - 17). In my opinion, Silas would make an excellent teacher, for he had such a creative approach to such a usual and boring task and had he had the necessary education, he would be for sure a valuable addition to the teaching force.

⁵¹UR, Penny. *A course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press 2004. ISBN 978-0-521-44994-6

2.3.2.3 Mr. Pennyworth's Compleat Education System for Younger Gentlemen with Additional Material for Those Post-Mortem ⁵²

This paragraph will be dealing with Mr. Pennyworth's educational programme. After Silas taught Bod the alphabet and the basics of other things, Mr. Pennyworth picked up with Bod's education. Interestingly, even though Bod lived in the graveyard, he had the usual school utensils such as pencil case, exercise books, papers, and a schoolbag. Mr. Pennyworth was indeed qualified to be Bod's teacher. He was a spirit of an old university professor. The reader could have their concerns about the amount of things Bod had to learn and about the 'classroom language'⁵³ used, but there is no need to worry. Mr. Pennyworth was always adjusting the amount and difficulty of schoolwork accordingly to Bod's age and previous knowledge and experience and I agree with Penny Ur in this matter. (Ur 2004) In spite of having died approximately two centuries ago, Mr. Pennyworth has modern methods of teaching⁵⁴. They might not have been very usual, but because of having to adjust them to the environment of the graveyard, he had to make a do with what he had at his disposal. However, Mr. Pennyworth used what he had at his disposal to the fullest. For teaching Bod Maths, he used dates of births and deaths of the graveyard residents. This confirms that Mr. Pennyworth was also a creatively thinking teacher who was able to prepare creative tasks even when he had only limited props. Bod learnt the other sciences from textbooks which Silas brought him, so they were not outdated. Therefore Mr. Pennyworth had to update his knowledge too, in order to be able to teach Bod well and effectively. We can be therefore certain about Mr. Pennyworth's dedication to his task of tutoring Bod. Mr. Pennyworth always sent Bod afterwards to Silas, so Bod could tell his guardian what he learnt, the purpose being repetition of things Bod had learnt that day. Which is another one of the good qualities of a teacher, for teachers have to be always up to date with what concerns the subject they teach. In summary, Mr. Pennyworth was a great example of having good features a teacher ought to possess. Firstly, being up to date with the subject you teach. Secondly, not being discouraged to teach even with only a small amount of supplementary material. Lastly, being good at improvising and making do with what

⁵² Compleat is not a spelling mistake, it is the official name of the educational programme of Mr. Pennyworth.

⁵³ http://esl.about.com/library/beginner/bl_commonphrases.htm

⁵⁴ Which proves that even after death, a teacher does educate him or herself in order to be up to date with what concerns trends of teaching.

you have or what you make by yourself. Frankly speaking, this indeed is what teaching is about.

2.3.2.4 Bod learning literature

Information about Bod and his studying of literature are scarce, but I consider these important. What concerns the subject of literature, Bod was taught the basics by a ghost of a poet, who claimed to have known William Shakespeare. We do not get to know the identity of this poet, for Neil made him anonymous. He taught Bod the basics well and he made Bod repeat what he learnt last time. We might think that repetition is not necessary, but it actually is. We need to recall things we learnt in order not to forget. When he noticed that Bod was bored, he always recited some funny poem. Either some of his own or a spontaneous poem created in the heat of the moment. The poems were usually mocking a certain resident of the graveyard, but excluding Silas and the Owenses. This was because of Bod of course had keep all the respect for his parents and guardian. Summing up, the poet was also a good teacher. Maybe not the most ideal one, but he knew the importance of repetition. In my opinion, he had a nice, funny way of keeping Bod concentrated and amused so he had fun learning, which is very important.

2.3.2.5 Ms. Lupescu's extraordinary way of teaching

In this paragraph I will elaborate about Ms. Lupescu's teaching methods and what was unusual about them. When Ms. Lupescu started to teach Bod, he was not very pleased with this because her teaching methods were very orthodox and classical, but she had surprises in store for Bod. Ms. Lupescu was a very strict and tradition-based teacher, but this did not stop her from venturing outside the usual curriculum. Indeed, she was teaching Bod facts about supernatural creatures such as werewolves, vampires, Night-Gaunts, ghouls and so forth. We might think that the facts about the Night-Gaunts might not be interesting or important to know, but they will be of value to Bod, because those birds are residing in Ghoulheim and they played an important part in saving his life. Another extraordinary element was that Ms. Lupescu taught Bod how to call for help in all languages possible. This was also of importance, for not only Bod, but also normal people as us can find ourselves in a situation we would have to call for help. Thus it is vital to know how to do so in every language possible. There should also be mentioned the fact that Bod had no clue about Ms. Lupescu being a werewolf and thus

she was speaking from her own experience while she was telling Bod about werewolves. However, Ms. Lupescu was really strict about Bod studying new things and she always made sure that he was doing his homework, had she asked him to do some. At first, Bod did not see Ms. Lupescu as much of an authority and he expressed this directly. From Ms. Lupescu's point of view, she did not show any signs of being upset or angry because of this. A lot of time had to pass until Bod learnt to appreciate her way of educating and teaching him.

In this paragraph, Bod's conclusions about Ms. Lupescu's teaching will be mentioned. After Ms. Lupescu's death, Bod came to the conclusion that she was the best teacher from all the ones who taught him so far. This was not only thanks to her strict methods and her punishment and reward system, but also mainly due to her fairness. She never would punish Bod just because she was in a bad mood or reward him for doing almost nothing. To sum up, Bod as well learnt to appreciate what she taught him and why she taught him the way she did. This might have had to do with the fact that she wanted to see what he had learnt so far, which is vital when a teacher picks up where another one ended his work, if you ask me. Maybe Bod realised too late, but better later than never.

2.3.2.6 My conclusions about Ms. Lupescu's teaching

Ms. Lupescu indeed taught Bod the most of all the teachers. Firstly, because she was the most strict but also took into consideration that Bod had to have some fun. Secondly, she thought of possibilities how she should help Bod not to be bored out of his mind while studying and so he could keep his focus on studying and on what he was being taught by her. Mrs. Lupescu was a very strict teacher. She indeed did not accept any disturbance or disruption while Bod was studying or working on some things she asked him to do, be it homework, exercises or reading. She was also a very fair and just person. She would never punish, reward or praise Bod without a reason. He always had to earn the rewards. Ms. Lupescu never hesitated to give Bod a praise if he did things well and properly. As I took a closer look on the concept of Ms. Lupescu's teaching methods, I concluded that she in fact was the best of all the teachers Bod had had. In my eyes, she was just as a good teacher should be. Meaning that on one hand, when there is to be worked and studied, one has to be focused and concentrated without any distractions which might be the cause of being sidetracked from working or studying;

resulting in her being very strict when the situation deserved it. She did not delay with reprimanding or scolding Bod when he was daydreaming too much or showing his disinterest with the things he was doing. Nevertheless, she also never delayed with praising Bod when he had finished his work or when he had everything done correctly, in order to make him feel he indeed accomplished something and that he was successful and has learnt a lot. More importantly, also having the feeling of being somehow rewarded for his hard work. Put short and simple, that all the effort he had put into studying and learning did not go to waste.

2.3.2.7 Special abilities Bod had acquired in the graveyard

In this paragraph I will speak about what other abilities Bod acquired in the graveyard except the usual schoolwork. Bod actually should not get into dangerous situations because he acquired the main skills, which are described on www.shmoop.com and which a good and proper ghost should possess⁵⁵. Firstly, Slipping, which allows Bod to ‘slip away in the shadows’. Secondly, Fading, a skill enabling Bod to ‘fade away from a place and from awareness of the others’. Lastly, Dreamwalk⁵⁶, thanks to which Bod could enter a person’s dream and turn it into a nightmare or to just scare the person. It is thus evident that having ghosts as parents, friends and teachers has its undeniable benefits and advantages, waiting to be abused for various mischiefs and the funniest pranks and there sure were a lot of opportunities for these to be done in the graveyard. Bod likes to scare the graveyard visitors the most, but he also never hesitates to mock the other residents of the graveyard. We are thus able to conclude that Bod had acquired some exceptional abilities on top of the usual schoolwork. Whereas the usual schoolwork remained in Bod’s head, these special abilities faded away when he hit puberty at the age of 13. This fact enables us to agree on two facts. Firstly, what we learn and repeat often, we remember for a long time. Secondly, unusual skills are nice to have, but they do not necessarily make our life easier. Lastly, these extraordinary skill slowly vanishing are a premonition for the reader that Bod indeed is growing up and that he will be leaving the graveyard sometime soon.

⁵⁵ Shmoop Editorial Team, "Nobody "Bod" Owens in The Graveyard Book," *Shmoop University, Inc.*, 11 November 2008, <http://www.shmoop.com/graveyard-book/nobody-owens.html> (accessed March 5, 2012).

⁵⁶ Dreamwalk is an ability to enter a person’s dream and scaring them, which Bod did in order to stop a classmate of his from bullying Bod and the others.

2.3.2.8 My objections to certain aspects of Bod's education and his bringing up

This paragraph will sum up my objections about Bod's education and bringing up. In order to be objective, I also have to mention the negative things I noticed. Negative, I found only few, but crucial ones. None of the graveyard's residents has taught Bod how to use modern technology, for instance how to phone someone or how to act in the presence of the living people, for the ghost society was a bit different. We cannot blame the teachers, though. They were only ghosts, with the exception of Ms. Lupescu and Silas, and as such they only interacted with their fellow ghosts. The Owenses as his foster parents should have taught Bod how to, but they did not. This disappointed me because as we all know according to many authors, and I agree with Podlahová that the family is the elementary unit of the society⁵⁷. (Podlahová 2008: 17) We cannot blame them either, since they were stuck in the 1800's and their language was outdated. Therefore Bod had to teach himself while being on his secret exploration 'missions' in order to get to know more of the world outside the graveyard. On summary, Bod had to teach himself some of the things needed for survival in the normal world of the living, which is in my opinion very important, for he could not venture into the world outside the graveyard unprepared.

2.3.2.9 My opinions and remarks concerning the teaching methods used by Bod's teachers

In this paragraph, I will express my remarks and opinions on Bod's teaching from the point of view as a teacher-in-training. As a teacher-to-be I found the methods the teachers used for teaching Bod actually very good. In my opinion this is how a child should learn the things needed and required for functioning properly as a member of society and in order to have the knowledge needed. With Bod having to explore and figuring things out for himself only having only a couple of hints from the teacher, who functioned as some sort of a counsellor, is in my opinion the best means how to learn

⁵⁷PODLAHOVÁ, L a KOL. (ed.) *Žák sekundární školy 1* (ed.). Olomouc: VUP, 2008. 79 s. Distanční opora. ISBN 978-80-244-3.

various things. When we explore something on our own, we do remember it much better, much more of it and distinctively longer than under the circumstance of being forced to learn in a certain manner, and I agree with Ur that this is not exactly the best learning strategy for a child. (Ur 2004) As we as teachers-to-be know, every child is an individuality and needs to be taught differently and according to his or her age and previous knowledge. What is most crucial, choice of topics which can attract the attention of the pupil, meaning that they should be about what the child is interested in. Although this of course cannot be always made justice, since there are things to be learnt whether you are interested in them or not and to make the pupil interested is what is the most difficult thing for a teacher to be able to do. It does signalise a good teacher, for a good teacher is able to make you interested into the things which are not that interesting for you and make you hooked. As Podlahová says, also aptitudes, talents, hobbies and interests should be taken into consideration, so the pupil (Podlahová 2008: 1 - 2) can learn efficiently and effectively; and what is most important, having a lot of fun while learning and not getting too bored. Also to enable the child or pupil to bring the most and the best out of him or herself and ideally that they do it on their own only with a slight amount of help of the teacher or mentor.

3. Anansi Boys

3.1 Introduction

The second book I would like to analyse and interpret is *Anansi Boys*.⁵⁸ This book is Neil Gaiman's modern take on mythology, mainly the Western African one. It features an ominous prophecy, it tells us how gods behave in modern times, meaning that they adjust to the flow of time. Even our neighbour could be a god and we live next door being completely unaware that the person next door could be a deity.⁵⁹ It also features a lime which is a very interesting and random element in the book and this can be considered as another trademark of Neil's. This will be explained in a latter chapter including symbolism.

This book has won: Firstly, *The August Derleth Award* (2006), secondly, the best book for young adults: *American Library Association (ALA)* (2006). As it is stated on Neil's official website, this book got positive feedback from the critics, magazines and newspapers:

"Ebullient . . . The Gaiman faithful will devour it gratefully." --*Sacramento Bee*

"Ebullient . . . ingenious . . . enormously entertaining throughout." --*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

"Another lovely story as only Gaiman can tell it; necessary and recommended." --*Library Journal*

"[Gaiman is] the folksy, witty, foolishly wise narrator to perfection." --*Booklist* (starred review)⁶⁰

⁵⁸ See GAIMAN, Neil. *Anansiho Chlapci*. 2. vyd. Frenštát pod Radhoštěm: POLARIS, 2009. 300 s. ISBN 978-80-7332-144-4.

⁵⁹ See <http://neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Anansi+Boys/>

⁶⁰ See <http://neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Anansi+Boys/>

The reason why I chose this book as the second one to be analysed is because it is the very opposite to *The Graveyard Book*. Not only what concerns the age of the main character, but also the circumstances in the family, which means that the main character Fat Charlie had a father, but he almost hated him because of Mr. Nancy's attitude and behaviour.

3.2 The synopsis of *Anansi Boys*

The story takes place in Great Britain and partially in the United States of America, in Florida. It is set in the primary world and partially in the secondary world that is inhabited by deities and anthropomorphic personifications of animals. The implied readers are mainly teenagers and young adults but even adults would certainly enjoy this book.

The story begins with the death of Mr. Nancy who is the incarnation of the African spider god Anansi. This name is mentioned many other times throughout the story. Charlie always blamed his father and his behaviour for having brought his mother to the hospital. She was diagnosed with cancer and Charlie was certain that his father is to blame for his mother's sickness.

Mr. Nancy's son Charlie was living in Great Britain. He had to return to Florida where his family was previously living and where his mother was in a hospital because of his father's funeral. Charlie visited his mother in order to check how she was doing only to get to know she does not have much time left. He was welcomed by Mrs. Higgler, who is an old friend of the Nancy family. Charlie unfortunately did not manage to arrive in time for the funeral of his father because he by mistake attended a funeral of someone else.

A flashback from Charlie's childhood is provided and he then also reflects on why he hated his father so much and why he did not have that much respect for him as an authority. Charlie also remembered the embarrassment when his father had tricked him into dressing up as a president of the US. Mr. Nancy said that it is a tradition to dress up as a president on the first day of school.

After this flashback Charlie gets to know from Mrs. Higgler that his father actually is the incarnation of the African spider god Anansi. Charlie did not want to believe it at first. He thought that if he is a son of a god that he should have inherited the powers gods have from his father. Here is when Charlie gets to know that he has a

brother and that his brother Spider did inherit all the godly abilities from his father. In fact though, Charlie never got to know that Spider is actually his dark side which was separated from him with the help of a spell cast by Mrs. Dunwiddy who was another neighbour and friend of the Nancy family.

Charlie also gets to know that his brother was forced to leave by Mrs. Higgler because of some incident which happened when both Charlie and Spider were small. Spider broke a glass ball which was on Mrs. Higgler's fence and she got angry so she drove Spider out. He had to go because Mrs. Higgler knew voodoo. Mrs. Higgler said to Charlie that should he want to see his brother, he only would have to invite Spider. This was a shock for Charlie. He then had to spend the night in the house they were living in in the past, which was very frustrating for him.

Afterwards Charlie returned to England only to get to know that Rosie's mother would like to see him. Rosie's mother was really reluctant to accept Charlie as a part-of-family-to-be and she did not miss any chance to humiliate or mock him. Charlie really hated her. Little did she know that she would get even a worse son-in-law-to-be, but this was to happen later on in the story.

Then Spider came to see Charlie one evening. Charlie unknowingly said that he has a fiancée called Rosie. Spider had already a plan in mind. With the help of foul spells he made Charlie not being able to find the way home while he was occupied with Rosie. To top things off, Spider went to work in guise of Charlie. He had managed to find out about Charlie's boss', Grahame Coats, foul practice with money. He discreetly said to Coats he found out and that he fixed everything so noone would find out, but Coats already had other plans and did not care that much about this.

After this, Daisy Day appears for the very first time in the story. Daisy Day is a police woman who had met Charlie before while he was in the karaoke bar with Spider, but Charlie did not remember anything, for he got terribly drunk that night. Daisy is in charge of the murder on Mrs. Livingstone.

Charlie used the vacation to go back to Florida so he could go to Mrs. Higgler's place and make her do voodoo spells in order to get rid of Spider. Charlie had to ask the Bird Woman who was a deity ruling over birds for help and she agreed to help him with his problem, but under one condition.

Charlie afterwards decided to forgive Spider when he realised that Rosie is really happy with Spider. He also knew that Spider is a better man for Rosie anyway,

thanks to his attitude. Rosie was also a lot happier with Spider and Charlie therefore had no problems with them being together.

Charlie then went back to Florida in order to cancel the deal with the Bird woman and to bring his life to normal, but there was one major obstacle. Charlie got to know that Mrs. Higglar has just gone for a vacation on the island called Saint Andrews which was located in Carribean. Daisy went after Charlie when she found his traces. What is more, Coats took Rosie and her mother hostages in a cellar in his villa on the island.

In the meantime, Charlie managed to find Mrs. Higglar and to convince her to conduct the voodoo spells again with the help of her eccentric friends. Under these circumstances he could manage to cancel the deal with the Bird Woman and also to find and save Spider from Tiger's claws. Surprisingly, Charlie met his father again along the way and his father gave him his green fedora.

Spider afterwards helped Charlie to save Rosie and her mother. Although Charlie and Spider had to face Tiger once more, for he had managed to appear in reality. This was possible for him because he possessed Coats and he was then threatening to kill both Rosie and her mother. Luckily, Maeve appeared, defeated Coats and then left to be reunited with her husband.

In the very end the brothers managed to resolve their relationship. Charlie ended up being a singer, he married Daisy and they had a son. Spider and Rosie married too. They did not have any children. Spider, Rosie and her mother moved to an island where they ran a restaurant and a bar. Everyone therefore found luck, happiness and love in the end. ⁶¹

⁶¹ GAIMAN, Neil. *Anansiho Chlapci*. 2. vyd. Frenštát pod Radhoštěm: POLARIS, 2009. 300 s. ISBN 978-80-7332-144-4.

3.3 The analysis

I will describe and analyse the relationships of Charlie with his family and other characters in order to prove that even when you have a complete family it does not necessarily mean the relationships can be idyllic. Another point I want to prove is that you sometimes should let go when you realise that some relationships do not have a perspective anymore. Psychological impact on the relationships will be also described and discussed.

3.3.1 Relationships

3.3.1.1 Charlie and his father

For the book is centered around Charlie reflecting on his father and how he behaved towards his family, the first relationship described will be between Charlie and his father. It is important to provide details about Mr. Nancy's attitude towards his family and life and how he went on with his wife and Charlie. The most important fact to be mentioned is that Mr. Nancy was an incarnation of an African deity, the spider god Anansi. His attitude to life can therefore be sometimes distorted because of his almost eternal life span and this resulted into slight neglect of his duties towards his family. 'He was older than them. Much, much older, but he was charming. As if he would come from ancient times when good manners and being a gentleman were still values.' (Gaiman 2006: 8)

From Mr. Nancy's point of view, he certainly was a loving and caring father towards his son Charlie and also a loving husband to his wife. Nonetheless, he had immense charisma and was a true ladies' man which might result into him being unfaithful to his wife, but this never happened.⁶² This proves that, even though he wanted to be free from time to time, he was aware of his duties as a husband and a father. His wife, Mrs. Nancy, always patiently waited for him to come back. She was

⁶² 'Then the old man came into the bar and made his way to the table standing at the improvised stage. A group of blonde girls with fresh tans was sitting at the table. He greeted them by pinching into his hat because he had a hat, a green spotless fedora. He also had lime green gloves. He approached the girls. They laughed. "Are you having a good time, ladies?" he asked. They giggled and answered that they are great and thanked him for asking. And he told them that this is only the beginning and that he will rock the bar.' (Gaiman 2006: 7-8)

therefore a very kind lady and she had an immense amount of patience and willingness to make compromises. The conclusion therefore is that the marriage was a harmonious one and that the family was warm and loving regardless of Charlie's negative attitude towards his father.

Mr. Nancy's personality was an interesting one. Mr. Nancy loved to mock others and he did not care about who the target was. He never took life too serious and did things he enjoyed and he did them with pride. It was also important for him that he could make fun out of somebody and thus have fun himself. Yet more than that, he loved to provide fun to other people around him so he was certainly a pleasant and loveable person to be around. Yet this was not enough to make Charlie like him and respect him as an authority or a role model. The conclusion we can draw from is therefore that, even though Mr. Nancy was a good role model for Charlie, his son did not appreciate him.⁶³

Charlie was not happy at all with how Mr. Nancy managed the family affairs. He was home very rarely and when he was at home, he did everything possible to annoy Charlie and it is therefore not any surprise that Charlie did not respect his father.⁶⁴ He did not understand that Mr. Nancy was doing this for a certain reason. The conclusion is that Charlie did not recognize his father's educational methods well and thus failed to appreciate his father's wisdom and the valuable things his father wanted to teach him about life and its difficulties.

Charlie's attitude towards his father was actually contradictory. Charlie did appreciate and love his father but he did not want to admit it to himself. Charlie might have claimed to have hated his father but he actually appreciated him a lot and his father was indeed a role model for him. Although the alcohol and women are a disputable part of the role model, the freedom was what Charlie was envious of and what he had always admired about his father. Charlie adored how free and careless his father felt at all times.

From Mr. Nancy's point of view we can conclude that he was glad he had a family and he loved his wife and son but he also loved to have his freedom and feeling

⁶³ 'Of course parents are embarrassing. They embarrass you with their existence and there is a time when every child is twitching with embarrassment when the parents even talk to them on the street. Charlie's father perfected this torture and he loved it. He also loved pranking people. Charlie will never forget how he had laid onto an apple pie hidden in his bed.' (Gaiman 2006: 9-10)

⁶⁴ ' " And what did you father say when you got home? " " He roared with laughter." He giggled, roared and so on. Then he told me that it might not be a tradition anymore. And what if we went to the beach in order to search for mermaids.' (Gaiman 2006: 11)

of not being bound at some times. The conclusion we can draw from Charlie's point of view is that Charlie would never admit that he loved and admired his father, the way his father lived and that Charlie was afraid that if he lived a life like his father and acted in such a way, he would never settle down. The overall conclusion is that the relationship between Charlie and his father was one full of love from both sides, but it was spoiled by misunderstandings stemming from both Charlie and Mr. Nancy.

3.3.1.2 Charlie and his mother

The relationship between Charlie and his mother was the opposite to the one with his father. Charlie loved his mother with all his heart but he did not approve of her putting up with his father's attitude. He was really getting frustrated by how his father behaved and that he barely was at home but his mother did not really mind Mr. Nancy's absences. She was used to the attitude of her husband and was therefore not upset with his behaviour. She therefore understood why Mr. Nancy acted this way and she was happy with how the things were in the family and she did not care much about what Charlie thought about the circumstances and she loved her husband. Her husband also went to visit her in hospital.⁶⁵ She actually defended her husband when Charlie was having an outburst of making accusations against his father. It is not bad, but she should have told Charlie in what aspects he was right. She also should have said to Mr. Nancy that he ought to tell Charlie why he behaved the way he did and that he by no means meant to offend Charlie or hurt his feelings and that he actually wanted to show Charlie that it is important to live with honour, live your life to the fullest and not being concerned about the judgement of other people. I agree with Šimičková and Čížková that this undoubtedly had a bad effect on Charlie's self-esteem and his perception of himself.⁶⁶ Charlie had been impacted really much by this. The book tells us. ' "Well... " A display of humiliations and embarrassments was flashing before his eyes and by every single one he got goosebumps.' (Gaiman 2006: 10)

⁶⁵ 'A little jazz band was approaching through the corridor. "Yellow Bird. They are playing Yellow Bird." said Mrs. Nancy. There was a huge man playing a saxophone and another man was playing the drum. In front of this strange procession was Mr. Nancy dressed in a checkered suit along with his green fedora and lime-coloured gloves. He did not play any instrument but he was doing his trademark shuffly dance.' (Gaiman 2006: 14)

⁶⁶ See ŠIMÍČKOVÁ-ČÍŽKOVÁ, Jitka et al. *Přehled vývojové psychologie*. 3., upr. vyd. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2010. 189 s. Studijní texty. ISBN 978-80-244-2433-0.

In conclusion, Mrs. Nancy loved her husband and her son but she had to be tired of constantly having to calm Charlie down and having to put up with his attitude towards his father. Mrs. Nancy had to have immense patience to be able to calm the neverending disputes of Charlie and his father. The harmony was therefore damaged thanks to Charlie not understanding his father.

3.3.1.3 Charlie and Spider

Let us now have a look at how Charlie got to know that he has a brother, Spider; what Spider was like and how the relationship between them looked like. The relationship between the brothers started in the most interesting way. Charlie got to know that he has a brother from Mrs. Higgle. ⁶⁷ This was the first shock Charlie had to put up with. The second unsettling thing was that Charlie had to come to terms with was the fact that his brother came to visit him. Spider did not bring his personality to display at first. We get to know that he will turn out as a malicious, smart person willing to use even foul spells in order to get what he wanted; no matter how big obstacles or hurdles were in the way.

Charlie and Spider were brothers so they loved each other as brothers usually do. Indeed. When they met for the first time, they really got along exceptionally well. This might be because they did not know about each other and now were delighted that they found each other. We could as well compare this to twins separated after birth, who find each other after a really long time. Thus their relationship was a loving one in the beginning, but it changed drastically due to events which were to come.

I will try to explain what Spider was because there are hints and references that he might not be real. The proof is Mr. Nancy's statement from the book *American Gods* that he has only one son, though Spider was real; and here is where we can speculate and make assumptions. ⁶⁸ My deduction is that on one hand, Spider is real, for he developed a personality, but on the other hand, he represented feelings which do not have any shape or form. The conclusion can therefore be that he is a personification of feelings and abilities.

⁶⁷ ‘ ‘ Your brother inherited all the godly. ’ ’ ‘ ‘ But I don't have any brother! ’ ’ ‘ ‘ It's you and your brother in the picture! ’ ’ ‘ ‘ Of course you had a brother. Not that I miss him... You were the good one. You don't remember because he went when you were small. Mrs. Dunwiddy banished him because he gave her the creeps. ’ ’ (Gaiman 2006: 33)

⁶⁸ See GAIMAN, N. *American Gods* (hardcover, 480 pages, William Morrow, 2001, ISBN 0-3809-7365-0)

An important fact to be mentioned is that Spider was actually a dark side of Charlie's personality. This part of Charlie was separated from him and banished by Mrs. Dunwiddy long ago. She thought there would not be anymore troubles. Yet as life is full of coincidences, the troubles meant to be avoided had emerged anyway because the dark part of Charlie had grown self-aware and became real, incarnated as Spider. We can therefore from this draw the conclusion that Spider represented what Charlie was to learn from his father and how his father wanted him to be.

There are questions which came to my mind while reading this. The first one was whether Spider is 'only' a dark side of Charlie. The second one is if he was Charlie's incarnated suppressed dark thoughts. The third one is whether Spider was a personification of the brother Charlie always wanted to have because he did not have anyone to vent to when he was small. There is also a possibility that Spider was a materialization of how Charlie really wanted to be, deep in his heart. Charlie indeed might have wanted a life of freedom, alcohol, singing and womanizing, but he never admits this directly. We can certainly conclude that Charlie suppressed his feelings and abilities he inherited from his father because they were tainted by his hatred towards him and even though he wanted to get rid of them, they came back to him with full force.

Charlie, deep in his subconsciousness, indeed wanted to be like his father. This startled Charlie. We can thus agree that he was scared of what he was holding back for so long. More importantly, that everything has come to display in the form of Spider. To sum things up, Spider really might have been the perfect display of what Charlie wanted to become and that is why Charlie was so terrified when Spider revealed his attitude and also a proof of this is that Spider looked so similar to Charlie that Rosie almost did not notice that it was not her fiancé she slept with.

Let us consider the opinion whether Spider was evil or not. The first impression of Spider might be that he is pleasant, nonchalant, free, careless and knows how to have fun. This certainly resembles Mr. Nancy but Spider was a lot cheekier and more malicious than his father which implies that he had indeed something dark in him. Compared to his father Spider was an unfaithful womanizer. He laid his eyes upon Rosie, which resulted into a disaster. He took her away from Charlie. We can therefore conclude that this event almost put an end to the brothers' relationship, resulting in Charlie abhorring his brother more than everything and what is more, being his arch enemy and wanting to get rid of him for good. This has a reason. Shall we see Spider as the incarnation of Charlie's dark side, this might represent Charlie's urge to get rid of

all these negative things. Charlie was determined to get rid of Spider for good and he made arrangements to do so, but he at the last minute decided not to, which proves that, even though Charlie was scared of these abilities, he came to terms with them and needed them a supplement to his character. As Charlie stated: “ I’ve always wanted a brother. Someone I could play with. ” (Gaiman 2006: 35)

There are also hints that Spider wanted to reconcile with Charlie. Spider in fact told Charlie that he is really sorry for all what he has done. Charlie reconsidered his hostility towards Spider and thought that it would be reasonable to get along with his brother because of Rosie. Charlie was also certain that Spider’s death by Tiger’s claws would break her heart and his too, for blood is thicker than water. Another conclusion is that Charlie by saving Spider wanted to save this side of his and that he was ready to accept it in his life as his brother. This actually means that Charlie and Spider would be supplementing each other; together forming a ‘perfect’ being.

Due to these circumstances Charlie sets out on a journey to Saint Andrews, a small island in the Carribean, because Mrs. Higglar went there for a vacation. Finding her was vital because he needed her to perform the necessary voodoo spells so he would return to the Bird Woman and reverse the deal. He succeeded and he also saved Spider from Tiger and all these dramatic events ended with the brothers’ relationship being resolved. To sum up, thanks to Rosie and Charlie completely accepting Spider as his brother and therefore the relationship between them got mended.

3.3.1.4 Charlie and Rosie

I will be concerned with the relationship between Charlie and Rosie. Charlie was indeed getting along with Rosie really well. Their relationship was a loving one, but there was one big hurdle, namely Rosie’s mother who had completely other expectations of her son-in-law-to-be. The second obstacle was that Rosie did not want to have sex with Charlie until their wedding night, even though she was not religious. As she says in the book: “ Charlie, we will have the time for sex after we get married. ” (Gaiman 2006: 41)

This belief of Rosie was ended abruptly, for she fell in love with Spider and became his lover. We can therefore conclude that even nowadays there are girls who protect their virginity but when they feel that there is a man worth of taking their virginity, they are happy to get rid of it.

Charlie did not ditch the relationship to Rosie completely. Mainly because he loved her too much to go on in the beginning and he had still hope that she would come back to him. She got to know what Spider really is like and stayed with him anyway. However, this did not happen. Rosie did not return to Charlie and she stayed with Spider. Even though Rosie did not belong to Charlie anymore, he wanted her to be safe, happy and satisfied.

The conclusion is therefore that Spider's appearance made Charlie and Rosie realise that their relationship did not have a perspective anymore. Even though it was hard to part ways, it was better for both of them to break up.

3.3.1.5 Charlie and Rosie's mother

Charlie did not go along with his mother-in-law-to-be. She did not approve of Charlie being Rosie's fiancé. She never hesitated to show him that she thought of him as something disgusting, greedy and low, she even stated that Charlie is like a cockroach who wants to steal her wealth which Rosie would inherit after her death. (Gaiman 2006: 40)

Rosie's mother was an uptight, strict lady who worked hard and a lot, even though she did not have to. She was also very strict with Charlie. He had to earn her appreciation. She was not easy to please, for she wanted her daughter to marry well and not such person as Charlie, but she approved of him because she saw his qualities, but she never expressed this for the sake of making sure Charlie was the right man for Rosie to spend the rest of her life with.

We can thus draw the conclusion that their relationship was very distant and cold because of the hostility of both of them, however, it could have changed after Charlie would marry Rosie because then her mother would be certain that Charlie was the best husband for Rosie.

All in all, their relationship could not develop into this phase because it was ended abruptly thanks to the 'Spider affair'. This is very ironic because Spider was worse than Charlie in certain aspects. He did not have a job, he was lazy, and he loved partying.

The overall conclusion is therefore that Charlie was happy to be free from having to put up with this lady's presence in his life.

3.3.1.6 My conclusions, remarks and objections concerning the relationships

I would like to discuss whether Mr. Nancy was actually a cruel person. Why did he call his son Fat Charlie? The answer is that Mr. Nancy wanted Charlie to be a singer and Charlie would therefore sing some 'fat tunes'. Mr. Nancy never wanted to offend Charlie in any way or make him upset. He only was encouraging Charlie not to take life too seriously, not to be judgemental and doing what he considered worth doing and doing it with pride and honour. This therefore proves that Mr. Nancy was not a cruel person.

It is undeniable that Spider changed Charlie's life. If it was positively or negatively that is to be argued about and I will provide points which speak for both alternatives.

Spider and Charlie went to a karaoke bar to get drunk and sing some karaoke to celebrate their father which indicates Spider's attitude towards life. This confirms that Spider brought fun into Charlie's life, thus changing it to better.

There are of course also negative changes. Spider stole Charlie's fiancée Rosie from him and he occupied a room in Charlie's house.

There are also things Charlie could learn from his brother. Spider was the one who inherited the most of Mr. Nancy's attitude, personality and abilities. Charlie could therefore learn how to use his potential to the fullest. Spider wanted to be his father's son and was therefore a complete opposite to Charlie. As Spider seemed to know a lot about their father, Charlie had the opportunity to get to know more about his father but he did not use it. Spider actually woke Charlie up and confirmed that we should not take anything in our lives for granted and that our lives should not become routine-based because routine is really demotivating. The conclusion is therefore that our lives should not consist of too much routine, but we also should not act impulsively.

The relationships in the Nancy family might seem very unconventional, shall someone observe them. Anansi did not care about how his children are doing because of his attitude towards life. This seemed completely normal to him. As we know, what is normal for one person might be completely appalling, gross and weird for another one, but for Mr. Nancy, Mrs. Nancy and Charlie the relationship was normal and they considered it as such. Yet as we got to know, Charlie had his objections. Mr. Nancy never meant to hurt anybody, but he managed to unintentionally humiliate and embarrass

people, including his family. We can draw the conclusion that Mr. Nancy wanted his children to be like him to at least some degree, but only Spider turned out how Mr. Nancy wanted his sons to be.

Let us have a look at the consequences of Anansi's behaviour. Anansi's behaviour was bound to have very negative consequences. The legend of Anansi is based on the Western African folklore and myths. He was well known for his pranks and deceiving other people, which actually was Mr. Nancy's specialty. It was not any different in this book. This sort of behaviour made him a lot of friends, who loved to laugh at things too. Of course Anansi made also numerous enemies wanting him dead for good, even holding a grudge not only towards him but also towards his children, which is very ridiculous since we should not sort out our disputes and arguments through our children or other people but straight out with the person we have the argument with. Even less using the fact that the children of the person you are holding a grudge against are in a desperate situation to resolve the old grudges and taking revenge, which was the case of Tiger.⁶⁹ He was an anthropomorphic incarnation of the animal he was named after.

Tiger was deceived by Anansi a very long time ago. He still has not forgotten. He took Spider hostage, hoping that Charlie would come to rescue his brother and that he would therefore be able to erase Anansi's bloodline for good as a perfect act of a for long time planned vendetta. Tiger's behaviour is really ridiculous. Why dwell in the past and not have a laugh at oneself? This is what I never understood what concerns Tiger's behaviour. The conclusion is therefore that some people just need to do these things in order to have something to live on for and having something to do.

Charlie indeed went through immense dangers to rescue his 'beloved' brother Spider. We might agree with this, but it was significant because it put an end to their arguments, disputes and hatred. Charlie even took a risk of using voodoo magic to get to the Beginning of Everything.⁷⁰ This was a risky business since there was a high probability that Charlie might get killed or not return back into the real world.

We can therefore conclude that brothers always should stand up for each other, even though their relationship is going through a crisis.

⁷⁰ Since the book is based on western African myths it is no wonder that voodoo was involved. For a further explanation on voodoo and its origins see chapter 3.5

3.3.1.7 How I found the fact that Charlie learnt to appreciate his father so late

I found the fact that Charlie appreciated his father so late not very good. I did not approve of Charlie's hostility towards his father at all. We can certainly say that it was caused by Mr. Nancy's personality, but I dare to say that Charlie's hostility was actually rooted in the fact that he could not laugh about himself and was not able to make fun out of himself, therefore being too serious. This is what Charlie's father indeed wanted to change about Charlie.

Mr. Nancy also wanted to teach Charlie that it is important to have fun while you are doing something for a living because when we do not enjoy our job we are most likely to be upset because of this. The fact that Charlie appreciated his father so late implies that Charlie could not stand even thinking about becoming like his father because he hated his father's attitude towards life. If you ask me, Mr. Nancy's attitude was maybe not the best alternative, but we can agree on that it was a good one to have if we do not want to become insane due to all the stress which life undoubtedly inflicts upon us at times. The conclusion is therefore that Charlie might have found appreciation and respect for father too late, but as a proverb says: 'Better too late than never.'

3.4 The valuable things Charlie learnt from his father – educational aspects

This chapter will describe and try to prove that it is never too late to learn from your parents and that there actually is a high possibility that you get to know something new from your father even though you are already an adult, which can be explained as andragogical. Andragogy is the teaching of adults⁷¹.

3.4.1 What Mr. Nancy wanted to teach Charlie about life and how Charlie adapted these life lessons

Mr. Nancy wanted Charlie to be like him. This has to be explained. It meant that Charlie would also have such freedom but this does not imply that Charlie should become a womanizer or an alcoholic. Mr. Nancy only wanted Charlie to experience and enjoy the freedom he always had and his son was mainly to inherit his carefree attitude. Thus Charlie would not care about the opinions of the others and that he would do what he pleased and most importantly, having fun while doing so, doing it with pride and feeling accomplished with whatever he did.

It took Charlie a good while to realise what he wanted to do in life and what he actually wanted to do for a living, even though it was what his father did only for fun. On summary, Charlie learnt important life lessons from his father, even though he was already a grown-up. These were: It is important to have a feeling of freedom. Do what you want to do, but do it with pride. Have lots of fun while doing it and do not give the slightest damn about what others think about you, even if they would spread gossip about you.

In the end Charlie appreciated his father and he did what his father would want him to do: being a professional singer and making money for doing so, enjoying it endlessly and therefore changing his life completely and most importantly, having a great, lovely wife Daisy and a cute little son who appreciated his father Charlie.

This therefore concludes that Charlie became what he did not want to, he did for a living what he previously abhorred and to top it off, he was proud that he re-evaluated

⁷¹ See BENEŠ, Milan. *Andragogika*. Praha : Eurolex Bohemia, 2003. 216 s. ISBN 80-86432-23-8.

and changed his life so radically and what is more, he could give all the credit to his awful, embarrassing father.

3.4.2 My remarks, opinions and objections

There are things I would like to mention which caught my attention and which I found intriguing. Mr. Nancy or if you prefer, Anansi, the spider god was an unusual personality. He was cunning, a prankster and sometimes cruel towards some people, but not his family, only so he could laugh at some things and have fun because someone else suffered. It is to be argued why Mr. Nancy is an incarnation of a spider, but it certainly has to have to do something with the nature of a spider. Spiders are really patient and wait until an opportunity comes for them to strike. In case of Anansi, this is more than valid and true. He always waited for the right moment to crack a joke or to pull a prank. Thus I can conclude that this explains why Mr. Nancy was an incarnation of a spider deity.

Another interesting thing is how a reader could find Mr. Nancy. I am certain that if you would ask a male reader they would say that they found Mr. Nancy cruel and unpleasant, but they would give him props for his good singing skills and his laid-back clothing style. His trademark piece of clothing was a green fedora. Charlie found his father's clothing embarrassing and inappropriate for a man of his father's age. I found this ironic because the lime which Charlie had upon arriving on Saint Andrews indicated that he is Anansi's son due to being as green as Mr. Nancy's fedora.

I will now provide more examples from another book by Neil Gaiman which prove that this is a trademark of Gaiman's literary work. What is most interesting, these characters symbolize every emotion which Charlie felt throughout the book. I therefore found important to mention these characters and provide background on what their trademark items were because they have important symbolism. Death is what everything begins with because the book begins with Mr. Nancy's death. Despair was what Charlie felt when his life changed so drastically. He desired Rosie from the bottom of his heart. Destruction of the old was important because it gave way to new things, people and events. Thanks to giving his destiny a course, Charlie could pursue his dreams.

Neil Gaiman always assigns some trademark character trait or an item to the main character or characters of his books. Perfect examples of this are to be found in *The*

Sandman.⁷² The main characters of the book also have their trademark items and they are anthropomorphic personifications of the character traits and parts of life and most importantly, they symbolize everything what Charlie went through in the story. In *The Sandman* Dream has his helmet, a pouch with sand and a ruby. Death has an Ankh around her neck.⁷³ Destruction was wielding a sword. Desire's item was heart. Delerium's item would be a fish-shaped balloon or a piece or some kind of jewelry shaped like fish or frog. Destiny has a book chained to his wrist.⁷⁴ Therefore I can from this draw the conclusion that Mr. Nancy being given a trademark item and colour implies that he can be considered a significant character of Neil's and that this colour associated with Mr. Nancy proves that Charlie could not escape his father at all even after Mr. Nancy passed away.

The most interesting and intriguing thing was the fact that even though Charlie tried really hard not to be like his father, he ended up being just like him, but adjusted this way of life to his needs. He lived how he wanted, he enjoyed it to the fullest and he had lots of fun, however, he never left home for too long at a time. As an opposite to his father, he was earning money with singing. He also never pranked anyone or was cruel to anybody. I can thus from this draw the conclusion that even though Charlie was pushed into this lifestyle, he had the freedom of adapting what he found best and adjusting it according to his needs and most importantly, he did not neglect his son and wife Daisy.

I also have some objections. Mr. Nancy should have behaved better towards Charlie. He should have been home more frequently. He should have made clear that he wants Charlie to be like him and what Charlie should have learnt from him. What about Charlie? He took life too seriously, which I did not like about him at all. My opinion is that life should not be more serious than necessary. His life was very based on routine, which I think is not very good either because it was dull and grey. He also should have fought more to get Rosie back when Spider took her from him, but he did not, which annoyed me because I think that when you love someone you ought to fight for your love. The conclusion is therefore that every character has their negative and positive character traits to them which made them unique. Charlie, Rosie, her mother and Spider

⁷² See GAIMAN, Neil. *Sandman: Preludia a Nokturna*. 3. rev. vydání. Praha 3: Crew, 2007. ISBN 978-80-87083-13-0.

⁷³ See SCHIRNER, Markus. *Talismany a Amulety*. Frýdek-Místek: Alpress, 2006. Klokan. ISBN 80-7362-182-7.

⁷⁴ See chapter 3.5 for a further explanation on the symbols.

worked hard to surpress the negative ones and they succeeded. Tiger and Grahame Coats had not and gave the way to the worse within them. Everyone therefore did what they considered important.

The most important conclusion which can be drawn from the analysis is that Mr. Nancy was only considered dead. He did not pass away. This is proved by the presence of his astral body in the Beginning of Everything where he meets Charlie and at last clarifies things to him and encourages him to pursue his dreams.

3.5 Symbolism and background to karaoke, voodoo, astral body and astral travelling

In Gaiman's books symbolism is really important. I found a nice example in his other book called *The Sandman*. The characters are embodiments of the things and emotions Charlie felt and went through. It is therefore important to provide more information on their symbolism.

Dream has a helmet, a pouch with sand and a ruby. The helmet allows him to travel between dimensions. The pouch with sand is a reference to Sandman, a being who supposedly puts us to sleep. The ruby contains Dream's magical power. Dream is also called Morpheus, which means that he can shape dreams.⁷⁵ Death is a personification of dying or passing away. Her symbols are Ankh and the Eye of Horus. Ankh comes from ancient Egypt. It means eternal life, which is an important symbol of the afterlife which is a significant feature of death. The Ankh also symbolizes a stable energy flow. Death's right eye looks like the Eye of Horus thanks to the makeup she put on it. The Eye of Horus is also a symbol of the afterlife but also a symbol of healing, which implies that Death does not want us to die earlier than necessary.⁷⁶ Destruction is wielding a sword. A sword is undoubtedly a symbol of destruction and war but also intelligence and immense willpower.⁷⁷ Desire is a materialisation of this emotion and her symbol is a heart. This is obvious because all the wishes and desires come from within our hearts.⁷⁸ Delerium represents madness and insanity. Her trademark item would be a fish-shaped balloon or a piece of jewelry shaped like fish or frog. She even wears eye makeup with looks like fish. These creatures are her trademark symbols because she likes the creatures residing in water.⁷⁹ Destiny is an embodiment of fate. He has a book chained to his wrist as to have it with him at all times because in the book the past, the present and the future are written and he therefore knows all the secrets.⁸⁰ Despair is the anthropomorphic embodiment of despair and hopelessness. Despair has a ring with a hook with a sharp tip which she uses to hurt herself when she

⁷⁵ See GAIMAN, Neil. *Sandman: Preludia a Nokturna*. 3. rev. vydání. Praha 3: Crew, 2007. ISBN 978-80-87083-13-0.

⁷⁶ See SCHIRNER, Markus. *Talismany a Amulety*. Frýdek-Místek: Alpress, 2006. Klokan. ISBN 80-7362-182-7.

⁷⁷ See SCHIRNER, Markus. *Talismany a Amulety*. Frýdek-Místek: Alpress, 2006. Klokan. ISBN 80-7362-182-7.

⁷⁸ See GAIMAN, Neil. *Krátké Životy*. Praha 3: Crew, 2009. ISBN 80-87083-68-0.

⁷⁹ See GAIMAN, Neil. *Krátké Životy*. Praha 3: Crew, 2009. ISBN 80-87083-68-0.

⁸⁰ See GAIMAN, Neil. *Sandman: Údobi Mlh*. Praha 3: Crew, 2005. ISBN 80-86321-88-6.

is upset or sad.⁸¹ This is actually interesting because she herself feels the emotion she represents.

3.5.1 What is karaoke

Karaoke is an important element in *Anansi Boys* because it is closely connected to two crucial events in the book. It preceded the death of Mr. Nancy and then when Charlie first go to know Spider, they went to a karaoke bar and finally, thanks to singing in a karaoke bar Charlie got to know his future wife Daisy. Therefore it is important to provide further information about this form of entertainment.

Karaoke originates in Japan. Its origins go back to 70's. Kara means empty and oke or okesutora means orchestra. Generally speaking, the 'empty' means that there is no voice of the song interpret, but there are lyrics on the screen and 'orchestra' means that the background music is provided. Karaoke is therefore a form of entertainment for people. The concept of karaoke is that people read the lyrics off the screen and sing them along to the music playing in the background. The music used is usually notoriously known pop songs. Not only Japanese, but also foreign songs. Thus the people have no difficulty while singing the songs. Audiences are usually small, but the club might be crowded so the number of the people in the audience may vary from place to place.⁸²

3.5.2 What is astral body and astral travelling

Astral body and travelling is important in *Anansi Boys* because it actually proves that Mr. Nancy is only considered dead because Charlie meets him at the Beginning of Everything. This was definitely the astral body of Mr. Nancy. As it will be more broadly mentioned below, the astral body cannot exist without the real body.

Generally speaking, the astral body is an immaterial manifestation of our mind and subconsciousness. When we are in a deep state of relaxation and when we are trained to do this, our mind will wander off and our subconsciousness will take the form of our real body, but it is usually shaped as we want our body to look and not accurately to how our body looks for real. The astral body looks like our spirit or soul, but it is not.

⁸¹ See GAIMAN, Neil. *Krátké Životy*. Praha 3: Crew, 2009. ISBN 80-87083-68-0.

⁸² See www.coolestkaraoke.com

It is connected with our sleeping body with a thin astral 'rope' which has the ability to extend itself to any length possible. When we are in this deep relaxed state we are completely aware of what is happening. When the astral body walks we feel that we are walking, when it flies we feel that we are flying, and so forth. We even see our real body underneath when we are in this state. When our astral body bumps into something we feel the pain or when it falls, it basically falls back into the real body and it wakes us up like after having a nightmare.⁸³

Some people are so trained that they can do this anytime at their will and as many times as they want, but this is very exhausting for the real body. Some people use just relaxation techniques to do this, some use drugs or some listen to affirmations inducing this state or simply listen to their breathing and thus become very relaxed.⁸⁴ Most important is to get relaxed and feeling light and without any worries on our mind. The most people train themselves to do this by learning how to become deeply relaxed within a very short period of time, mostly minutes. The most interesting fact undoubtedly is that the astral body can cover big distances in very short periods of time, sometimes even only seconds. So for instance while our body sleeps in the Czech Republic, our astral body can be in Japan.

When the human body dies the astral body does vanish too, for it cannot be connected to the body and thus it cannot draw the energy necessary for its materialisation, existence and for being able to move or do anything else. This is one theory. Another theory is that the astral body just gets cut away from the dying body and then can roam the world on its own. Here is where the rumours about spirits might have emerged.⁸⁵

Summing up, the astral body is a manifestation of our subconsciousness which can act on its own under the condition that it can draw energy from the deeply relaxed real body and it is connected with the real body. The astral body can therefore travel on its own while covering long distances within seconds or enabling us explore completely unknown places and it is an indicator that we are still alive.

⁸³ See <http://www.skeptdic.com/astralbody.html>

⁸⁴ Affirmations are repeated phrases supposed to make us subconsciously act in a certain way.

⁸⁵ See <http://www.skeptdic.com/astralbody.html>

3.5.3 What is voodoo

Voodoo plays an important role in *Anansi Boys*. It helps to resolve the relationship of Charlie and his brother Spider. It also made Charlie realise that he cannot exist without Spider. Most importantly, it enabled Charlie to meet his father once again, which gave them the opportunity to talk and clarify things between each other. It will be therefore interesting to provide a background on what voodoo is and where its origins are.

Voodoo is a mysterious religion or a kind of magic worshipping many good or evil spirits. Voodoo is based on magic powers. The knowledge of these is passed on from generation to generation. As in every kind of magic, there is black voodoo and white voodoo. White voodoo is used by hougan, a male voodoo priest; or a mambo, a priestess, whereas the black voodoo is used by a priest called bokor. No matter what kind of voodoo, the priests use rituals to connect with the gods and spirits. During these rituals, the priest or priestess is supposedly possessed by the entity being worshipped in the ritual. The priest or priestess usually uses magical spells and dances in order to get into the state of a trance, so the deity or entity could possess them and either help or harm people directly or suggest how to do this. The sign of the entity or deity being present is change in voice of the priest or priestess. The priest or priestess does not remember any of this, someone has to write down or remember what the deity or spirit said through them.

A lot of rumours are connected with voodoo and these are generally known all over the world and there were many documentaries made about this topic. The first most known one is that voodoo uses dolls for rituals. The doll represents a certain person and it usually has the hair of the person in it or another part of the body, such as a fingernail or even sweat, sperm or menstrual juices of the person the spell is aimed at. The doll is then used in a ritual. It again depends whether white or black voodoo. In white voodoo, the doll representing the person is supposed to heal the person with the help of a magic ritual; in black voodoo the doll is supposed to harm or even kill the person it represents. The second rumour is that the voodoo priests, using the black voodoo, can revive the dead. The revived person is then called a zombie. This means that the person does not have their own will and is a servant of the priest or priestess. Zombies are expendable, for they are continuously decaying. The question is whether this is true. This rumour is so spread, that even the people who are familiar with voodoo priests,

believe in this and make many precautions so their deceased beloved ones cannot come back from the dead. These precautions are usually cutting of the head or limbs of the deceased one, so they cannot heed the call of the priest or priestess. This is obviously a part of the black voodoo. It is to be speculated, whether the people really come back from the dead or if the voodoo priest just gives them some strong mind-controlling drug and then proclaim them dead, so the family would bury them and the priests then only had to get the person out of the grave while they were still alive and make them their servants.

Summing up, voodoo is a religion and a kind of magic used for either harming or killing people or helping them. Various objects can be used to conduct the rituals or spells, such a dolls, but they are not completely necessary, the presence of the person is enough. The magic is conducted by a priest or priestess, hougan or a mambo. There is a white or black branch of voodoo.⁸⁶

3.5.4 The origins of voodoo

Voodoo originates in western Africa. Voodoo might be connected with Africa, but thanks to transport of slaves into the Carribean, North America and other countries, voodoo spread immensely and the main branches settled in Haiti and in Louisiana. Whereas the Haitian branch does not use dolls, the louisianian one does give them big significance.⁸⁷

Voodoo does not come only from western Africa. Spells similar to voodoo were used even in ancient Greece and Rome.’ The kind of spells used might make us smile, but it was significant. The women usually wielded these spells or used services of a witch or priestess. Mostly the spells were to harm someone, but there were also spells which were to make someone fall in love with us. Yet this kind of spells dates back even further into history. There is an assumption that it dates back into ancient Egypt or even the rumoured disappeared continent Atlantis.

All in all, voodoo belongs to the group of spells using creating images of the person, object or situation we want to influence. The main thought of these spells is that

⁸⁶ See ANTOŇ, Stanislav. *Voodoo: Zabijí vražedný rituál na dálku?. ENIGMA SPECIÁL*. Praha 10-Michle: RF HOBBY, 2010, č. 2, s. 44-45. ISSN 1802-7105 MK ČR E 17703

⁸⁷ See ANTOŇ, Stanislav. *Voodoo: Zabijí vražedný rituál na dálku?. ENIGMA SPECIÁL*. Praha 10-Michle: RF HOBBY, 2010, č. 2, s. 44-45. ISSN 1802-7105 MK ČR E 17703.

we can influence everything with help of magic, if we concentrate hard enough and visualise perfectly what we need to affect.⁸⁸

The most interesting personality connected with voodoo is Marie Laveau. tell us a lot about her life. On summary, she was significant because she was a self-sufficient, very emancipated woman who had an import business, but also made voodoo dolls and other objects connected with this religion. She was way ahead of her time. There was even an assuption that she could make the police leave her bussines alone. She was known for her voodoo rituals and many world leaders sought her advice. She was therefore a very revolutionary woman. The rumour is that she never died and that she is responsible for every supernatural happening in New Orleans and its surroundings. This proves how respected this woman was and how people even in modern times believe in urban stories and are connected with their heritage.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ See KABELÁČOVÁ, Lenka. *Odkud pochází smrtící voodoo?. ENIGMA*. Praha 10-Michle: RF HOBBY, 2012, č. 3, s. 60-62. ISSN 1802-7105 MK ČR E 17703.

⁸⁹ See http://www.voodoo-museum.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15&Itemid=18 for further information on Marie Laveau.

4. Summaries of *The Graveyard of Book* and *Anansi Boys* followed by a comparison

4.1 A summary of *The Graveyard Book*

The story takes place in a graveyard. It is set in the primary world which is intertwined with supernatural elements and creatures. The implied readers are children aged 9-12 and up. The main character of *The Graveyard Book* is a boy called Nobody 'Bod' Owens. His parents were killed by Jack Frost when he was still a toddler. Jack Frost, not being able to find Bod, swore that he would find the toddler and finish his shady job up. He saved his life by crawling to a graveyard where Mr. and Mrs. Owens took him up and became his foster parents. The relationship between Bod and his foster parents was warm and full of love and respect, but they at times were not a proper authority for Bod. The person who actually was respected by Bod was Silas. He is a vampire who agreed to be Bod's guardian. He can be perceived as an uncle figure for Bod. Silas was the one who was a role model for Bod and who was respected as an undeniable authority by Bod. The relationship between Bod and Silas was important because even though Silas acted as a role model, he sometimes let Bod do what he wanted and to be improper at times. He was also a person to whom Bod could vent to anytime. Silas would always listen to what Bod had to say and if there was a problem Silas always came up with some alternatives how to solve the issue. When Bod was in danger Silas would hurry to Bod's rescue. What is more, Silas was also Bod's very first mentor and he taught him the alphabet and reading with the help of detective games. Their relationship was therefore not only the one of a caretaker and his ward or uncle and nephew but also the one of mentor and his pupil; however, Bod did not have only relationships with adults.

Bod befriended Scarlett Perkins who once wandered off too far into the graveyard and even though she ran away when spotting Bod for the first time, she then grew close to Bod and they became good friends. This relationship was very important for Bod because Scarlett was a good companion to set out with on adventures. However, this relationship was hard to maintain because Scarlett moved away and then came back, but due to dramatic circumstances, it had an abrupt end because Silas erased her memories of Bod and the dramatic events they witnessed together claiming that it

would be the best for her. Bod was reluctant to accept this but he knew that it indeed was the best solution and he let Scarlett go, hoping that he might see her again one day.

Bod also got to know Elizabeth Hempstock, a good witch, who was also very important for Bod because she was the one he was venting to when he needed a break from conversations with adults. She also helped him to master the abilities Dreamwalk, Fading and Slipping. She was also the one who encouraged him to try his hardest to do a good Fading in order to escape when he was locked up in a cellar. Bod treasured Elizabeth's friendship because she was also the one who told him what it is like to be older, which was undoubtedly valuable for Bod. Bod showed Elizabeth his appreciation by getting her a gravestone which she did not have. It was only a usual stone with her name on it and saying that nobody would ever forget her, but it definitely showed that Bod liked Elizabeth very much.

Then there were teachers and mentors who taught Bod all the necessary schoolwork. Mr. Pennyworth was the one who taught Bod all the basics of elementary schoolwork and also how a gentleman should behave. He was a typical and strict Victorian teacher and to top things off, he was a late university professor; however, he always adjusted the schoolwork for Bod accordingly. Worth mentioning is a poet who taught Bod a brief overview of literature. Since he knew how boring literature can be he always had some funny poem prepared in order to motivate Bod to go on.

The most significant teacher was Ms. Lupescu. She was a werewolf. From all the teachers, she got the closest to Bod. Their relationship did not start out very well, but in the end Ms. Lupescu managed to win Bod's heart by showing her soft side. She had to like Bod very much because she cooked for him. Her cooking was too healthy and so Silas sometimes took Bod for fries and pizza to a diner in the town where the graveyard was located. Even though she knew of this, she always let it slip which indicates that she had a weak spot for Bod.

As a teacher, Ms. Lupescu was a strict and uptight person always sticking to the rules and curriculum but this did not stop her from spicing up her lessons with unusual schoolwork. After she had taught Bod the necessary schoolwork, she overstepped the boundaries of the elementary schoolwork and taught Bod unusual things. These were for instance how to call for help in all possible languages or she also was teaching him facts about supernatural creatures like vampires or werewolves.

Unfortunately, this relationship ended abruptly thanks to Ms. Lupescu's tragic death. Bod got kidnapped by ghuls who wanted to eat him. Ms. Lupescu, Silas and his

friends went to rescue Bod. They succeeded in finding him safe and sound but Ms. Lupescu had to sacrifice herself in order to provide Bod, Silas and the others a smooth escape.

After Bod got rid of Jack Frost for good he was ready to leave the graveyard and venture into the world of the living. Thanks to his parents, guardian, mentors, teachers and friends he was more than ready to start a life on his own.

4.2 A summary of *Anansi Boys*

The story plays in Great Britain and partially in the United States, Florida. The implied readers are teenagers, young adults and adults. The story is set in the primary world with magic elements and partially in the secondary world called the Beginning of Everything. The main character is a young adult Fat Charlie or Charlie. The Fat before his name is a nickname given to him by his father Mr. Nancy who is the incarnation of the spider god Anansi. Charlie's mother is Mrs. Nancy, the wife of Mr. Nancy. The family was harmonious, but thanks to Charlie's displeasure with his father's behaviour the harmony was at times not there. Mr. Nancy and Mrs. Nancy had a marriage full of love, understanding, patience and respect; however, Charlie did not approve of his mother's tolerance to Mr. Nancy's absences at home. Even though Charlie did not have the best attitude towards his father, in the end he learnt to appreciate his father and his teachings about life.

From the educational point of view, Charlie could learn a lot about life from his father, but he refused to because he did not respect his father as an authority. Mr. Nancy wanted to teach Charlie that it is important to have fun while doing something for living, that it is vital that one does it with pride and honour and that you should not care about the judgements of other people. This is what Charlie did not understand and he therefore had to learn it the hard way and too late.

Charlie suddenly got to know that he has a brother Spider. Spider came to visit Charlie after Mr. Nancy passed away. The brother's relationship was an interesting one because it can be argued whether Spider is not an embodiment of Charlie's dark side which had developed a personality and consciousness; however, Charlie accepted Spider as his brother. They got along well at first, but when Spider stole Rosie from Charlie the relationship almost ended with a disaster; however, thanks to dramatic circumstances the brothers resolved their relationship and it turned out well in the end.

Charlie had a fiancé Rosie. Their relationship was full of warmth and love but it was being spoiled by Rosie's mother who did not approve of Charlie being Rosie's fiancé. The relationship between Charlie and Rosie was ended when Spider came into their lives. Rosie fell in love with Spider because she felt Spider is the one she should be with. It was hard for Charlie to let go of Rosie but in the end he was reasonable and when he saw that Rosie is happy with Spider he happily let her be with Spider.

In the end every relationship gets resolved, even though some had to end as to make the people realise they want something or someone else. Charlie also finally understood what his father wanted to teach him about life and he changed his life, but he adjusted his father's teachings according to his needs and he could therefore then lead a happy fullfilled life with Daisy and their son.

4.3 A comparison of *The Graveyard of Book* and *Anansi Boys*

The main character of *The Graveyard Book* is a small boy called Nobody Owens, whereas the main character called Charlie in *Anansi Boys* is a young adult. The age of implied readers is also different. *The Graveyard Book* is aimed at small children to children in their early teens, whereas *Anansi Boys* is aimed at teenagers and young adults. Whereas *The Graveyard Book* can be perceived as a 'bildungsroman', *Anansi Boys* is rather a story of self-discovery. Although there is magic involved in both of the books, *Anansi Boys* uses one kind of magic thoroughly, namely voodoo.

Relationships: In *Anansi Boys* there is a functional family, but it is not harmonious thanks to the main characters attitude towards his father. The relationships of Charlie with his fiancé Rosie, her mother, his mother, his father and his brother Spider do not end abruptly or tragically, but he sometimes does not cherish them and takes them for granted. His relationship with Rosie ended, but it was his decision when he saw that she will be better off with Spider. His relationship towards his father gets resolved after Mr. Nancy passed away, whereas Bod has a nice relationship with his foster parents from the very beginning.

Although Bod's foster parents provide a warm and loving family environment, he sometimes does not appreciate it. The relationships Bod has with the other characters are more stable than the ones of Charlie. Bod knows most of the people from an early age and he therefore knows how they will act towards him. Good examples of such relationships are the ones with his guardian Silas, the one with Elizabeth Hempstock or

his friendship with Scarlett. Whereas Charlie did accept Spider's sudden appearance with warmth and love, Bod did not accept Ms. Lupescu at first but he then admitted that he appreciated her and her teaching after she passed away. This is what both books have in common. Another common thing about the relationships in both of the books is that people important for the main characters die. In Bod's case it is Ms. Lupescu and in Charlie's case it is his father. Both Charlie and Bod have to let a person they care about go. Charlie had to break up with Rosie so she could be happy with his brother Spider. Bod had to let Scarlett leave because it was safer for her to move away again and forget about everything what happened with Bod.

Education: The books are completely different what concerns the educational themes. Whereas Charlie is a young adult and therefore already has finished his education, Bod has to go through all the schoolwork for elementary school. However, Charlie still had things to learn. Not schoolwork, but valuable things from his father. Bod appreciated all the things and the schoolwork he was learning and he also accepted advice from his guardian and mentor Silas and from his most significant teacher Ms. Lupescu. Whereas Bod had more teachers and mentors, Charlie had only his father who wanted and tried his hardest to teach Charlie, but a major hurdle was Charlie's attitude. Charlie did not want to accept his father's teachings at first, but he in the end had to accept them in order to make his life better. Bod wanted to learn and was eager to learn and he therefore was enjoying studying, but there were moments when he had to be put back onto the right track and reminded that he should be grateful for the education. Whereas Bod accepted all the education, teachings and advice, Charlie refused to and it had negative consequences. A crucial difference is that even though Charlie was an adult, he learnt something new and important for his future life. What both Charlie and Bod have in common in education is that they appreciated the valuable things they learnt from their mentors after the mentors died.

Psychology: Charlie was negatively affected by his father's behaviour towards him. Mr. Nancy's innocent pranks and jokes had a negative impact on Charlie's self-confidence and self-esteem. Mr. Nancy was also frustrating Charlie with his absences. Charlie was also depressed because his mother accepted his father's lifestyle and she put up with it thanks to her immense patience. Such family environment therefore had an overall negative impact on Charlie. Bod was neither negatively affected by his late parents' death, nor was he affected by the shady environment of the graveyard. Thanks to his foster parent's attitude, he was able to develop well as a personality. He had a

healthy self-esteem and he was self-confident. However, the loss of Ms. Lupescu was shocking for him and it affected him for a long time.

The last thing what Charlie and Bod have in common is swearing revenge. Charlie swore revenge against his father and Bod swore revenge against the killer of his parents, Jack Frost. Charlie swore revenge against his father because he accused his father of making his mother sick. Bod wanted a revenge on Jack Frost because he wanted a normal life and not a life of having to fear for his life.

The conclusion is therefore that even though *The Graveyard Book* and *Anansi Boys* are very different, there are themes, things and elements which these books have in common. The books have most similarities in relationships between the main characters and other characters in the books. Another big similarity is the appreciation of a person after they passed away preceded by refusal of the person as an authority. The biggest difference is the psychology of the main characters. The main characters are a complete opposite of each other. On an ending note, the nicest similarity between Bod and Charlie is that they in the end have their lives changed by certain circumstances.

Conclusion

The thesis was dealing with the fantasy genre in general. It included the history of the genre and its typical features. Then it provided a comparison with the science-fiction genre and my point of view concerning these genres and told us why children should or should not read fantasy books and what impact can fantasy books have on children.

It was then describing, analysing and interpreting relationships and the educational aspects in the fantasy books *The Graveyard Book* and *Anansi Boys* by Neil Gaiman. The thesis as follows compared these books from the point of view of relationships and educational aspects.

In both chapters dealing with the books, it described and analysed the relationships between the characters and drew conclusions based on the analysis of the relationships. In *The Graveyard Book* there was a functional, warm and loving family in which the main character, Nobody 'Bod' Owens, lived and therefore it also provided good base for later establishing of other relationships and friendships. The only unusual things about the education and the relationships were the environment of a graveyard and a constant danger lurking for the main character which at times were spoiling the relationships and education and made some of the characters of the book act impulsively or hasty which also had a negative impact on the relationships and education of the main character because he was distracted because of these negative circumstances.

In *Anansi Boys* the family was functional too but the harmony and peace was spoiled by the regular absence of Mr. Nancy, the father of the main character 'Fat' Charlie. A misunderstanding of the behaviour and educational concept of his father led Charlie to hate and not to respect his father, which undoubtedly had a negative impact on his self-esteem, self-confidence and self-perception later on. Charlie also learnt that some of his relationships did not have a future anymore and that it was crucial to end them in order not to prolongue the agony of both people. Important was also that dramatic circumstances made Charlie finally understand what his father wanted to teach him about life but Charlie did not adapt these completely. He adjusted them according to his needs and he learnt from his father's mistakes and as follows re-evaluated and changed his life as to enjoy it at last.

The thesis was then focused on the educational aspects in both of the books. In the chapter devoted to *The Graveyard Book* it therefore described the stages of

education of the main character, Bod Owens. A description of the personalities of the teachers or mentors followed and then thesis also described their attitude towards teaching and the methods they used to teach Bod along with a description of what schoolwork each teacher or mentor taught the main character and included a description of what type of teachers or mentors they were.

Based on the analysis of *The Graveyard Book*, the following conclusions can be made about education and relationships: Even though you live in a macabre and morbid place, you still can get a proper education as long as you have good mentors and teachers. It also does not matter that they are supernatural beings provided that they use proper educational methods and adjust the schoolwork to the needs of their pupil. Yet this did not ensure that the main character was able to visit elementary school and that he could make friends there. It actually was a failure. Relationship-wise, the main character could establish healthy social relationships and friendships in spite of living in a graveyard.

Bod had therefore a loving and warm family, a guardian who taught him much about life, teachers and mentors who taught him all the necessary schoolwork. The graveyard provided a stimulating environment. Thus he was not devoid of education. He also made friends and thus he was not socially deprived. The overall conclusion is therefore that even though Bod lived in a graveyard, all his needs were satisfied.

Conclusions based on the analysis of *Anansi Boys* are that: misunderstanding of your father's educational concept can damage the family relationships. Another conclusion we can draw from the analysis is that it is indeed sometimes good to put an end to relationships which do not have a perspective anymore and give way to completely new ones. The next conclusions are that you are never too old to learn something new and that a routine-based life is not a happy one and makes you depressed. The last conclusion is that you should not take anything in your life for granted because coincidences which can turn your life around can always happen.

The overall conclusions we can make are therefore that you should listen to your parents more as to prevent misunderstandings, that nothing in life is to be taken for granted because dramatic events can shatter everything and that when the times comes you have to be ready to let go of what puts you in distress in order to give way to new and better things which are to come.

There are also conclusions which are valid for both of the books. The first one is that you never should give up hope. The second one is that family is important and even

though it does not function so well, you never should cut off the contact with your parents once you leave home. The third conclusion is that cooperation is vital when you are to succeed in something what you cannot conquer on your own, however, the most important conclusion draw from both books is that you need to learn from your mistakes and you need to forgive because nobody is perfect.

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Resumé

Diplomová práce se z věnuje pedadogickým aspektům v dílech *The Graveyard Book* a *Anansi Boys* Neila Gaimana a vztahům mezi hrdiny knih. Tyto vztahy popisuje, analyzuje a dodává psychologické aspekty těchto vztahů. Ve své první části se zabývá fantasy obecně.

V následující části práce popisuje a analyzuje vztahy hlavních hrdinů s ostatními, dále popisuje jak se učili a co se učili. Následně jsou knihy shrnuty a srovnány.

Anotace

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Rok obhajoby:	2012

Název práce:	Pedagogical Aspects in the literary work of Neil Gaiman
Anotace:	<p>Diplomová práce se z několika úhlů pohledu věnuje pedadogickým aspektům v dílech The Graveyard Book a Anansi Boys Neila Gaimana a vztahům mezi hrdiny knih. Tyto vztahy popisuje, analyzuje a dodává psychologické aspekty těchto vztahů. hrám ve výuce anglického jazyka. Ve své první části se zabývá fantasy obecně.</p> <p>V následující části práce popisuje a analyzuje vztahy hlavních hrdinů s ostatními, dále popisuje jak se učili a co se učili. Následně jsou knihy shrnuty a srovnány.</p>
Klíčová slova:	Vztahy, fantasy, psychologie, výchova, Neil Gaiman
Anotace práce v anglickém jazyce:	The diploma thesis describes the genre of fantasy in general and then it focuses on relationships and education of the main characters and compares them.
Klíčová slova v anglickém jazyce:	Relationships, fantasy, psychology, education, Neil Gaiman.
Přílohy vázané práci:	
Rozsah práce:	88 stran
Jazyk práce	Anglický