



Gabriel's Gift

Hanif Kureishi

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Gabriel's father, a washed-up rock musician, has been chucked out of the house. His mother works nights in a pub and sleeps days. Navigating his way through the shattered world of his parents' generation, Gabriel dreams of being an artist. He finds solace and guidance through a mysterious connection to his deceased twin brother, Archie, and his own knack for producing real objects simply by drawing them.

A chance visit with mega-millionaire rock star Lester Jones, his father's former band mate, provides Gabriel with the means to heal the rift within his family. Kureishi portrays Gabriels' naive hope and artistic aspirations with the same insight and searing honesty that he brought to the Indian-Anglo experience in *The Buddha of Suburbia* and to infidelity in *Intimacy*. *Gabriel's Gift* is a humorous and tender meditation on failure, redemption, the nature of talent, the power of imagination--and a generation that never wanted to grow up, seen through the eyes of their children.

Gabriel's Gift Details

Date : Published October 8th 2002 by Scribner (first published 2001)

ISBN : 9780743217132

Author : Hanif Kureishi

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Fiction

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From Reader Review Gabriel's Gift for online ebook

Jaimie says

A child's view of the world makes ordinary occurrences and typical family drama seem new and exciting, and it is clear that Kureishi has drawn upon this technique to drive his story of a torn family. The parental figures are typical washouts from 1960s-era London whose surprise at finding how mundane and unsuccessful their lives are makes them bitter and self-loathing, but through Gabriel's eyes they are just his parents. He may not fully grasp why they are such children, but he knows that he must not be like them at all costs. He must find his passion and utilize his talent so that his life doesn't default to somewhere boring and unfulfilling. Overall, this was a very interesting read, but I'm still not quite sure how old Gabriel is, since people treat him like a young child, but he acts and thinks like a much older teenager.

Mariele says

I started to read this book not knowing anything about the author or what the story would be about (the blurb was very formulaic). I chose it mainly because it was short, and it took me only three days to finish it. I am now going to ramble a bit, collecting my thoughts on the book.

Reading along, I wondered where the book was meant to be going. Gabriel, the eponymous main character is a London teenager, an only child whose parents, washed up 70s hipsters, have just separated. In the second chapter, Gabriel meets an uber pop star that his father used to tour with back in the days. It was fairly obvious that this musician is supposed to be David Bowie.

At around the same time I was reading this book I noticed that David Bowie has a new album out; there has been advertising for it flashing up on my Amazon page. I thought, well, I am probably going to buy it, most likely as soon as it goes on sale. And I went to my CD shelf, pulling out some of my old Bowie CDs. I also wondered how he might be these days, "he is getting old, isn't he", I thought. The first time I came across David Bowie was in his guise as Jareth, the goblin king. That was in the late 80s, and I was maybe ten when I saw it for the first time, on videotape at a friend's house. Nevertheless, with that film, David Bowie would forever define "sexy villain" for me. In the 90s, I listened to a lot of his music, both old and recent. And I always liked him as an actor. Let me just drop the key word "The Hunger" - one of the best vampire films ever.

Doing some research, I found out that both Bowie and Kureishi went to the same school in south London (possibly not at the same time though, as Kureishi is 8 years younger).

What I didn't realize was that David's new CD was released on his 69th birthday, January 8 (Friday). I finished the book on Sunday. Monday morning, before I left the house, I heard it on the news that David Bowie was dead. Sometimes coincidences can be so eerie. I have to admit that I cried quite a bit that day. I don't remember a time when the death of someone I have never met made me feel such a personal loss.

But back to the book. So not worth reading. The David Bowie character is a mere ploy who remains unimportant for the remainder of the story. More importantly, what exactly is Gabriel's gift? There is one scene in which he draws a pair of shoes and in a flicker of magical realism makes them thereby appear. This, however, remains unexplained, understated and stays unmentioned for the rest of the book. Further vaguenesses accumulate. Gabriel has conversations with his dead twin, who died as a little boy. This, too, stays underdeveloped and stale, it remains a faded idea of the invisible friend type that some kids have. In the

end, it's a generic story about a kid whose parents split up, a story that has very little to say and that ends with a foreseeable happy ending. Seriously, what was Kureishi thinking when he wrote this? This was my first book by this author, and now I wonder whether I can take him seriously as a writer. Are any of his books worth reading?

To me, this book seemed like such a waste of time.

Eli says

This is an intriguing, well-paced read (though it could've used about 50 more pages - never thought I'd say *that*), but I'm not wild about it. Things move too quickly; we see cause or effect but seldom both; everything seems slightly off-kilter. Gabriel reads too young for me, especially if he grew up surrounded by musicians and their groupies. Other characters - and the narrator - kept telling me Gabriel is precocious, but I never saw it.

I was also depressed by the narrowness that surrounded "dreaming big." For Kureishi, you aren't "dreaming big" until you're dreaming of being a famous (not even necessarily good) film director, or a famous musician, or a teacher of famous musicians, or the owner of a restaurant catering to famous musicians and movie stars - the usual starf*cker crap. Kureishi *wants* to espouse chasing ambitions beyond the ordinary, but he defines worthy ambitions so narrowly for his characters that they end up seeming more trapped than the "losers" they leave behind. If this were a conscious authorial decision, I would think it was great, but it comes off the page as honestly the way the author feels: either you're a big pop or film star, or you're nobody at all. By that definition, he wouldn't even consider himself to be "someone."

Augustine George says

An excellent book to read if you are down on confidence, its full of positive energy and hope. More or less like a fairy tale where good things happen to good people, yet Kureishi has brought in themes of racism, immigrants, homosexuals and such into the story, which is pretty good. Its full of wonderful passages, one I personally liked: "Talent might be a gift but it still has to be cultivated. The imagination is like a fire or furnace: it has to be stoked, fed and attended to. One thing sets another ablaze. Keep it going."

zespri says

So much to like about this book for me.

References to '70's music and pop culture

Quirky adolescent boy narrator who has a massive imagination

Very funny dialogue that had me smiling as I read

And a happy ever after ending

What more could you want??

Shamim E. Haque says

It is a good book, but like me if you have read the earlier outputs- *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) and *Intimacy* (1998)- *Gabriel's Gift* will appear quite boring at times. The fun, the intelligence, and the bon mot that make those works so endearing is conspicuously absent in *Gabriel's Gift*. The novel nevertheless deals with an interesting theme, and will often treat you with lucid insights on family life, creativity, discipline and the angst to which young adults and their middle aged parents are often prey to. Hanif Kureishi is an original voice, and that is why I gave this novel 4 stars.

Frank says

I liked this short novel about how a young man eventually brings his parents back together after it looked like there was little hope for the parents or the family as a whole. Gabriel is a talented artist and wants to be a film maker. His father is a washed up guitar player who once played with one of the greats in the 1970s (Lester Jones) until he broke his ankle by falling off his platform shoes! At a chance meeting with Lester, Gabriel is given a drawing by Lester which turns out to be a turning point for the family. Along the way, Gabriel's father turns to teaching guitar and pulls himself from the bottom. The background of the story includes a lot of rock and roll nostalgia and British pop society which I thought was fascinating at times. Overall, I enjoyed this one and would recommend it.

Tracy Lynch says

Hanif kureishi is one of my favourite authors. This is my second reading of this book and personal experience since my last reading enhanced my enjoyment of it. Family life, dysfunctional as it usually is, is told through the eyes of fifteen year old Gabriel. Humorous but not hilarious and realistic characters.

dete says

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Absolutely loved Kureishi's writing. In a matter of a few sentences the reader is whisked into the mind and heart of an adolescent boy trying to understand the rollercoaster which is life. At the core of this novella is the question of how to hold onto imagination? How to hold onto losses...a twin, a marriage, the truth, ideals? Wonderfully crafted, this book is a gem!

I found Gabriel's Gift to be an interesting story. Gabriel is a 15 year old boy who is left at home with his mum when his parents spilt up. As Gabriel gets to grips with his new life he turns to the support of his dead twin brother who speaks to him and guides him through a number of situations. Gabriel's father turns to drink while his mum goes slightly wilder, starts working in a bar and inviting all sorts of men back to the house.

It isn't until a chance meeting with an old rock star that life begins to make sense again for Gabriel's family and helps Gabriel to unlock his gift. This is a really interesting novel which takes a snapshot of family life and explores what happens when things break down. I think my only problem with this was I felt that Gabriel's didn't seem to be 15 I found it hard to imagine him as that age, to me he seemed younger, however maybe this was the point as by the end of the

Beritan says

??????? says

Alex says

The writing is fine, the plot vapid, and the main character unconvincing (he's supposed to be fifteen, but thirteen would be more like it). The device of the ghost of the deceased twin is downright silly. The female in the tale, the mother, doesn't jell. All in all, read Hornby's *About a Boy*: it's better.