



Dust

Arthur Slade

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SEVEN-YEAR-OLD MATTHEW DISAPPEARS one day on a walk into Horshoe, a dust bowl farm town in Depression-era Saskatchewan. Other children go missing just as a strange man named Abram Harsich appears in town. He dazzles the townspeople with the promises of a rainmaking machine. Only Matthew's older brother Robert seems to be able to resist Abram's spell, and to discover what happened to Matthew and the others.

A Governor General's Award for Children's Literature

An ALA Best Books for Young Adults

From the Hardcover edition.

Dust Details

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From Reader Review Dust for online ebook

Pheebz says

What a fantastical journey of the strength and soul of Robert Steelgate 11 yrs old the brother of Mathew younger who had disappeared along with other children in town after a strange man Abram comes with promises of rain and prosperity in a Dusty Canadian town during the Depression era, is where we see the story unfold.

Robert Steelgate is an unusual hero, he has an insight or talent that allows him to see what others don't if it be threw the omen of blood eggs or the ability to see through what others want him to believe about their good intentions and helpful nature.

He is the only one who can find his missing little brother, there are strange forces taking over the town's people if it be a form of mesmerizing or dark forces, they seem obsessed over one thing and seldom remember that there are children missing.

Other than Robert the only other adult that has not bought into Abram is the Monty Sargent Ransom.

This story was fantastical in both the events that unfold and the vocabulary used to tell the story. The ending leaves just the right amount of mystery for the reader to continue what was going on in the end. The narrator did a great job with this story and I think it will be a book that schools could use in Middle grade to further language and vocabulary skills of their students.

Martin says

I only read this as I am currently borrowing my little sisters kindle to test it out as I am thinking of buying one.

She reads books like Tracy beaker etc so I decided to have a quick look though the free books on offer and came across this one.

First off it is a nice quick read, I read it in about an hour or so while relaxing at home. I know the book is aimed more at young teens but it still interested me from start to end.

The pacing of the story is great, from one chapter to the next you are introduced to another part of the mystery surround the stranger in town and other such puzzle pieces as disappearing children. Not once did I feel the story was dragging on just to fill a couple extra pages and found myself putting off doing anything productive with my time, such as the ever growing pile of coursework I have to do, to find out what would happen next.

I connected completely with Robert and found it very easy to get into his mind set, it's not really too long ago in which I felt the pain of going from child to adult and finding a whole new world of responsibility.

The thing I like most about the story is the fact it doesn't completely answer all questions it put forward; yes you know about the traders but it is never fully explained who they are etc. I find to many great stories are ruined by the author decided they want to tie up all loose ends, a book needs a little mystery left over to keep you thinking long after you are done reading.

A nice, easy read that offers an enjoyable story that doesn't let you down all the way through. Would recommend (especially if you have a kindle in which case you can load it free.)

Susan says

Dust by Arthur Slade Set in a dry, dusty Canadian town during the Depression Era, young Robert Steelgate is missing his young brother Matthew. Yet the disturbing thing is that he seems to be the only person missing him. A stranger comes to town promising rain and that is the same time kids start disappearing. Coincidence, or not?

This book was like a really good episode of The Twilight Zone. Things start off so plain, so dried out, so matter-of-fact. Then young Matthew, who insisted he be allowed to walk to town that day (instead of riding in the cart with his mom), meets a pale stranger (Abram Harisch) on the road. Meanwhile, Robert is left at home to read his science fiction story (The Warlock of Mars) that his uncle lent him. Reluctantly, Robert sets his book aside to see to the chickens like he promised only to find some scared chickens and some nasty blood eggs. Yuck! That's when Sargent Ramson and Officer Davies show up to take Robert to town to be with his family as they begin the search for Matthew.

With a blend of historical fiction, mystery, and science fiction, the author spins a tale of a town hoping too hard for good rains, of good people willing to let their memories of lost children slip from them, and of how one boy with a strong, questioning imagination may be the only one to save them. Quite frankly, it was those scared chickens and their blood eggs that sucked me into the story. It was spooky and yet the biologist in me wanted an egg to examine. But I couldn't have one of those eggs, but I could examine this story. From there, I wasn't disappointed.

Abram with the odd eyes (I think he's an albino) sets up a movie screen and the town gathers to see the attraction. Once the stranger has gained some small amount of trust with the town, he starts setting in his motion his bigger plan: promise the rains & happiness, take their wealth & memories, keep his end of the bargain with an unknown entity (which means more children disappear). At one point, Abram confides a bit in Robert because Robert has this innate ability to see through Abram's charms. That was an eerie scene! The ending reveals the master plan of Abram while also keeping some things up to the reader to decide. I liked that there was a little mystery left over at the end. We have everything resolved that counts, but the exact how and why of it may never be fully understood. Also, there is some wonderful imagery involving butterflies and moths. It's a recurring small touch that kept me hooked. I was quite pleased with the ending. Not everything ended in rainbows but enough did for me to say it was a happy ending for our main character, Robert.

I received a copy of this book at no cost from the author with no strings attached.

Narration: Arthur Slade was pretty good as a narrator for this story. He had distinct voices for each person and decent female voices. I especially liked his voice for Robert's uncle who was always giving him SFF books that his mom might not approve of.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

A science fiction story with a slow buildup of the bizarre, reminding me of some of William Sleator's books. It would make a great movie!

Elizabeth says

Why is eleven-year-old Robert the only person in Horshoe, Saskatchewan to remain impervious enough to the dazzling visitor and his promise of a rainmaking machine to wonder where all the town's missing people have gone, including his brother? Who can resist the premise of a spellbinding mystery man and a rainmachine in a horrible prairie drought?

Melki says

"Do you like being young?" the man asked.

Matthew didn't understand the question. He examined the stranger's smiling face. After a moment's thought he answered, "Yes."

"I was never young," the man said. He tipped his hat back, showing glistening white hair. "Do you believe me? I was never young."

Seven-year-old Matthew is pleased to be walking to town alone. He's busy envisioning how he will be waiting on the corner when his family finally pulls up with their horse and wagon. *"See, Mom, I made it. My legs aren't too short,"* he'll proudly yell.

He's surprised as can be to hear a strange truck pulling up behind him.

Matthew never makes it to town that day. Only his hat is found.

His eleven-year-old brother, Robert, is stunned. Could Matthew have been swallowed by the wind or adopted by a coyote? Sometimes he's even forced to admit, *"He's not coming back. Not ever. He's probably dead, okay? Dead. Like a little sparrow that falls out of the nest."*

Then, a mysterious stranger arrives in town to reopen the decrepit old movie theater. He offers visions and promises that tease and tempt the townsfolk. Only Robert and his Uncle Alden seem resistant to the man's charms. *"What a snake-oil trick, all smoke and mirrors,"* scoffs Alden.

Soon, people are forgetting things...things like Matthew's disappearance. Only Robert remembers, and he is determined to find out the truth.

Robert is a great character...a boy in love with books and reading (particularly forbidden titles by Robert E. Howard) and a fondness for new vocabulary words, like *dessicated* and *cacophony*.

The sinister stranger, Abram, is another memorable creature, and his scenes with the doubting Robert are electric.

"You are on the cusp," Abram explained, "between boy and man, the dreaming and the reality. You must have had a million great dreams in your lifetime. Of armies and swords, candies and milkwhips, wizards and unicorns. The cusp." His lips curled into a soft, sad, smile. "I have never had a dream. Not once. I feel sorry for you. One morning you will get up and your dreams will stay in your pillow."

While not exactly a horror novel, there is a terrific,creepy Something Wicked This Way Comes vibe about this book. It was suspenseful, well-written, and I really enjoyed the unusual setting of Depression-era Saskatchewan for a fantasy novel.

Stephanie says

The story of a young boy whose little brother goes missing.

I liked Arthur Slade's Hunchback Assignments series. He's got a great way of building a world around his characters. In this book, we are taken back to early 1900s Saskatchewan to a small farm community that is struggling with the drought conditions of the dust bowl era. A stranger comes to town and promises a way to make rain using his "rainmill" and all who help him build it will be rewarded with all the rain they need for their crops.

Robert suspects something fishy about this guy and when the adults actually start forgetting about his missing brother, and then more children turn up missing, Robert realizes he is the only one who can do anything about it.

Rebecca says

Meh.

This YA novel reads like a poor man's "Needful Things", with a teenage protagonist in Canada during the Dust Bowl. Slade has a nice writing style, but he never really engages the reader with the characters, explains the motivations of the bad guy, or the alien threat.

Not recommended.

Suzette says

What a great YA read. As a former middle school literature teacher, I highly recommend this book. Evil vs good is played out with the lives of the town's children! Any reluctant reader, boy or girl will be drawn to the mystery and magic of Arthur Slade's words. The last few chapters had me spellbound. Well done and hypnotizing. Skillfully crafted sentences, well chosen imagery create the basis. Well deserving of the awards it has won. Teachers and librarians mark this one down and a winner. Enjoy.

Stephanie says

A young boy accepts a ride to town with a stranger and never makes it into town. He is declared missing but the townspeople, although concerned for him, are more concerned about the lengthy drought. A new man arrives at the town and promises to bring rain to their county. The missing boy's older brother senses something dangerous about him, especially when more and more children go missing. The feeling intensifies when he realizes that no one, not even the parents, care about the missing children.

I mostly enjoyed this book up until the end. It has a dreamlike quality about it that is oddly interesting. However, I did not really enjoy the ending too much. I'm okay with supernatural and I'm okay with the inexplicable and I'm even okay with stuff that comes out of left field. But the ending here was just a little too odd for me.

I did really enjoy the older brother and how guilty he feels about his brother's disappearance. That felt very real to me. The way the town slowly starts changing and becoming indifferent to what has happened to their children was intriguing. It had a subtly creepy quality that builds throughout the story. Overall, I'd give it a shot.

Harry Sahl says

It's the Great Depression in a prairie town in Saskatchewan. A young boy named Matthew disappears. Robert, the older brother is plagued with guilt. A stranger comes to their town which is suffering through a serious dry spell. This stranger claims he can help by building a "rainmill" (huh?). The town believes him. (double huh?) All, except Robert and his uncle.

Soon, more children disappear and the town doesn't seem to notice or care. Adults and children soon forget about the missing. All, except Robert. Why Robert is immune to the stranger's power is never explained. His classmates and he begin to have dreams of magical butterflies (ooh...scary) which adds nothing to the story. Near the end, new characters called the "Traders" are added to the mix. This made for a rushed ending. While the author has a way with words and sets up nice descriptions, the story line was too weird. Was this horror, mystery, supernatural?

I got this for free through Pixel of Ink so, it didn't cost me anything. It is a short story at under 200 pages, was a quick read and had good reviews on amazon. This means it just might not be my cup of tea. But, for me it was a really bad episode of The Twilight Zone.

Rachel (TheShadesofOrange) says

4.0 Stars

Creepy and unsettling, this is one of those stories that is so hard to classify by genre. Whether you call it magical realism, historical suspense or a piece of light horror, this book is fantastic. Despite the length and age of the main character, this book is written for all ages, not simply young adults. Slade is a skilled writer with well developed characters. Set during the Great Depression era, the Canadian prairie drought was vividly described, becoming another character in the story. I highly recommend this unique and memorable story to a wide range of readers.

Kayna Olsen says

In the first chapter of this book Robert's younger brother Matthew is kidnapped by an odd sounding man who claims he never had a childhood. The reader and Matthew are the only ones who know what happened. A short while later Abram Harsich shows up and wows the town with his "Mirror of all things" that shows people just want they want most. This story is placed in Saskatchewan, Canada during the dust bowl. After this spectacle the people start to go somewhat loopy and behave as though everything is better than ever. They even start to forget that Matthew was even taken. Robert and his Uncle Alden are the only ones to see right through Harsich and know that he is bad news. It takes a courageous young boy to save an entire town. I really enjoyed the story line of this book and the witty humor that is seen mostly in the uncle. There are a few things that I felt should have been described more; I felt like I had to guess or assume a few things that I logically should have been told. The beginning and the ending are awesome, but in the middle where I thought there would be more mystery involved, I was let down. I really did enjoy the book though. It gave a really interesting twist to the dust bowl; an interesting story that keeps you wondering what is going on.

Danylle DuPris says

I read the book Dust by Arthur Slade. I would recommend this book to everyone who likes a little mystery and old time in their reading. I think it was really good. I can relate to how Robert is feeling when someone new comes in his life, especially after he just lost someone who was important to him. Robert did not realize how important his brother was to him until he was gone. Dust kind a has a twist in it also, you really would not expect it to happen but it goes very well with the story. In the end it really teaches you how important family is and what someone will do to have one.

Rebecca Mckenzie says

This is the type of novel you would expect to study in school. The motif of good vs evil and all the imagery are well put together. It's not a book that I would pick up to read (it was a book club pick) and I can't say that I loved it or would recommend it. That being said, I did really like the character of Robert - and 11 year old boy who laments over his younger brother's curious disappearance and is immune to the mesmerizing of a man who comes to town to build a rain tower that will put an end to the drought. Children continue to go missing as the mans' project progresses and the townspeople are under a trance and seem to forget about the missing children - Robert holds fast and eventually discovers what happened to his brother Matthew and the other children.

BOB: In which award winning Canadian book does Robert try to find out what happened to his younger brother Matthew who went missing on his way into town to buy gum?
