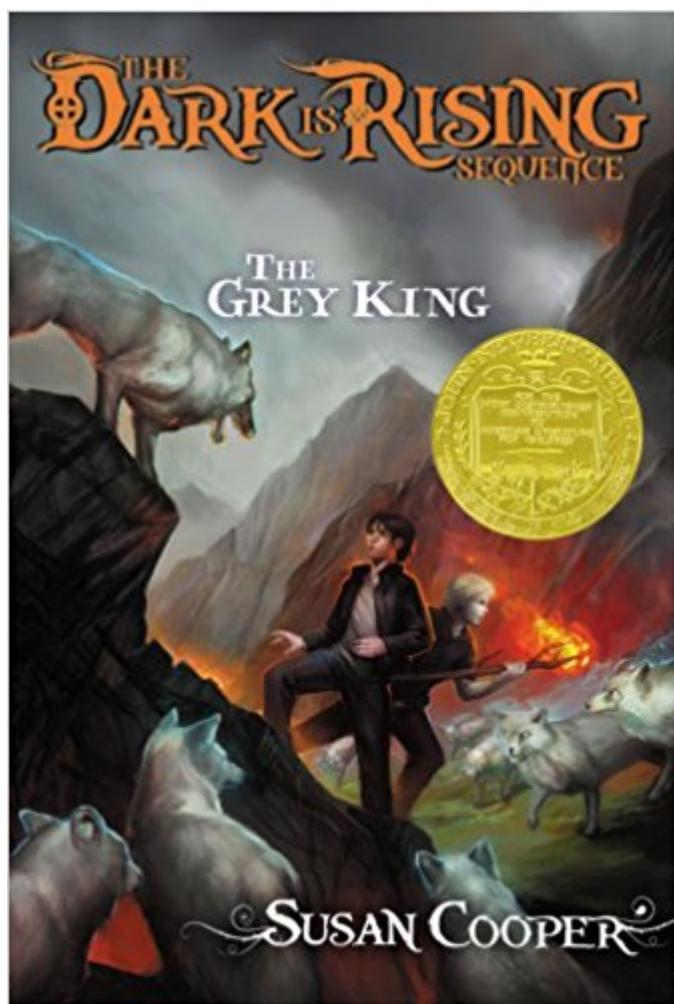


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# The Grey King (The Dark Is Rising Sequence)



## **Synopsis**

There is a Welsh legend about a harp of gold, hidden within a certain hill, that will be found by a boy and a white dog with silver eyes -- a dog that can see the wind. Will Stanton knew nothing of this when he came to Wales to recover from a severe illness. But when he met Bran, a strange boy who owned a white dog, he began to remember. For Will is the last-born of the Old Ones, immortals dedicated to saving the world from the forces of evil, the Dark. And it is Will's task to wake-with the golden harp -- the six who must be roused from their long slumber in the Welsh hills to prepare for the last battle between the Dark and the Light.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Gr 5-8-While recovering from hepatitis, Will Stanton is sent to a farm in Wales where he is soon caught up in the battle against "the Dark." He struggles to recall the prophetic lines he once memorized and gradually, as he learns the local place names of the geographic features around him, the meaning of the lines becomes clear to him. Through Bran, a young boy with mysterious origins who becomes Will's friend, Will fulfills the prophecies and once again defeats the Dark. This fourth book of Susan Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* series (S&S Childrens, 1975) won the 1976 Newbery Medal. Twenty-five years later, it is still as powerful and mesmerizing as when it was first published. Richard Mitchley's reading is excellent and heightens listeners' enjoyment of Cooper's prose. His ease with Welsh pronunciation and the distinctive cadence of Welsh English adds greatly to the authenticity of the story's setting, which is an essential element of this book. He gives the

characters distinctive voices without actually doing voices for each. Children not familiar with the earlier books in the series may find the basic premise a bit confusing since Will's status as an "old one" and the conflict between the light and the dark are not given much explanation. However, this audiobook is so well done that those who enjoy fantasy will relish it. It will also be a good choice for older children with reading disabilities when they need to "read" a Newbery title. Louise L. Sherman, formerly Anna C. Scott School, Leonia, NJ Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Psychology Today "Susan Cooper is one of the few contemporary writers who has the vivid imagination, the narrative powers, and the moral vision that permit her to create the kind of sweeping conflict between good and evil that lies at the heart of all great fantasy. Tolkien had it. So did C.S. Lewis. And Cooper writes in the same tradition."

I adore this book and this series! It's been one of my favorites since I was in grade school. The story itself is rooted in old legends from Wales, and the whole series seems to take in old legends from England, Cornwall, Wales, etc. to make a cohesive story. The series is for youth, much like the Harry Potter books, but equally enjoyable for adults. I love this book in particular because I have always liked linguistics, and this book gives some basic introduction into Welsh. I've read this book at least 10 times and listened to the audio version at least 5. The narrator helps bring the book to life.

"The Grey King" is the fourth volume in Susan Cooper's The Dark is Rising Sequence, and in the opinion of many, the best of that series. (The fact that it won the Newbery Medal doesn't hurt the claim.) In this book, Will Stanton is on his own, recovering from a severe illness that has suppressed the knowledge of his powers and duties as an Old One. Sent to a relative's farm in Wales to recuperate, it is not long, however, before he is set upon the path of another quest - and meets a strange, white-haired, white-skinned local boy named Bran. Will and Bran face the might of The Grey King - one of the most powerful Lords in service to the Dark - whose hold over the Welsh countryside is both powerful and terrifying. They must find the mythical Golden Harp and use it to wake The Sleepers - soldiers in service to the Light who have lain in slumber for centuries, waiting to be called to do final battle against the Dark. As is true with each successive book in the Sequence, author Susan Cooper seems increasingly comfortable and confident in her writing, and in "The Grey King," she gives us a many-layered story filled with the fantastic, but also shot-through

with elements of loneliness and sadness. Will's growth as a character is central to the plot, and the role of Bran and his deeply tragic origin make this volume a high point in one of the most deservedly-beloved story arcs in young adult fiction.

I love this series probably more than any other I've read. It could be because my fifth grade teacher read part of this series to us and it was what got me truly interested in reading. This particular book is gorgeous. The imagery and romance of Wales! I remember after reading this I wanted to learn the language and go visit! :). This one is mainly about Will and Bran, though you see a few of the other characters a bit. Later everyone returns to this same setting for the final battle. It's a wonderful story about a budding friendship, growing up and of course battling the Dark.

I've posted this review, in basically this form, for all five of the "Dark is Rising" CD audiobook sets, because there aren't many other reviews of the CD sets. I have all five sets and have been uniformly pleased with the audio quality. I'll skip any summary of this book or of the series; dozens of reviewers have done that quite well. I assume that you are familiar with these books, probably have read this volume, (likely more than once), but now wish to have the book available as an audio CD. Perhaps a long car trip is in the offing? Good for you. I am happy to report that, at least for me, this audio version gets high marks across the board. First, I can hear it and understand it. No mushy sound recording. No odd imbalance in volume that requires you to keep turning the volume up and then down. All of the spoken words are crisp and clear. Second, there are no sound effects or such folderol. Third, there is a single reader. This is not a play for voices and is not read by a number of different character actors. Fourth, Richard Mitchley is an effective reader. There are a lot of Welsh characters in this book and Mitchley gets that across without being so authentic in his accents that he becomes hard to understand. His approach is flavorful but not overly dramatic. Much like Alex Jennings, who read the other four books, he is not coy or arch, and does not ham up any of the big scenes. He succeeds in establishing a distinct and recognizable identity for each character. Finally, the reading is very respectful. By that I mean the book is not read as though it were just some silly children's book. It is treated as the triumphant work that it is and this adds greatly to its weight and impact. Please note that like all of the CD books this reading is unabridged. There are 5 compact discs. Runtime is a bit over five and a half hours. Enjoy.

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