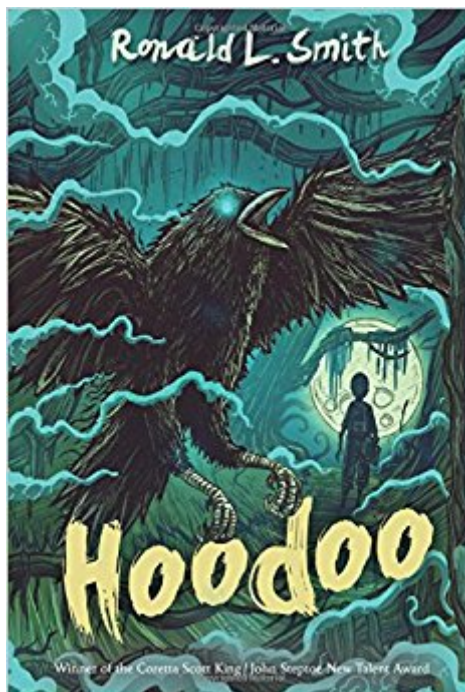


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# Hoodoo



## Synopsis

Twelve-year-old Hoodoo Hatcher was born into a family with a rich tradition of practicing folk magic: hoodoo, as most people call it. But even though his name is Hoodoo, he can't seem to cast a simple spell. Then a mysterious man called the Stranger comes to town, and Hoodoo starts dreaming of the dead rising from their graves. Even worse, he soon learns the Stranger is looking for a boy. Not just any boy. A boy named Hoodoo. The entire town is at risk from the Stranger's black magic, and only Hoodoo can defeat him. He'll just need to learn how to conjure first. Set amid the swamps, red soil, and sweltering heat of small town Alabama in the 1930s, Hoodoo is infused with a big dose of creepiness leavened with gentle humor.

## Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: HMH Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (July 18, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0544935616

ISBN-13: 978-0544935617

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.6 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 49 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #180,017 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #23 in Books > Teens >

Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Fairy Tales & Folklore > Country & Ethnic #111

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 5 "When I got born, Mama Frances took one look at me and said, 'That child is marked. He got hoodoo in him.' That's how I got my name." But, for all that his dead daddy was known as a powerful mojo man, at age 12, Hoodoo Hatcher is the only one of his family who can't do any kind of conjuring or even cast a simple spell. Mama Frances assures him that his time will come, but Hoodoo worries that his grandmamma is just trying to make him feel better. Then the Stranger comes to town—dark-cloaked, red-eyed, and cold—and fearful things begin to happen: swarms of flies, screams in the distance, and corpses in the graveyard dug up with all their hands chopped off. "I saw your daddy, boy. He owes me a debt and I come to collect."

Mandagore. The Hand That Did The Deed," says the Stranger. Hoodoo discovers an old folk magic spell book, and learns what the demonic visitor is seeking—•not "Mandagore" after all but "Main de Gloire." The Stranger wants the secret of the Hand of Glory, left hand of a man hanged for murder, with which an evil magician can call and control the dead. When Mama Frances at last tells Hoodoo the tale of his father's terrible death, the boy realizes that it is his father's hand that the Stranger wants. Worse yet, the old curse is reaching out to Hoodoo himself as he notices that his own left hand is growing unaccountably strong. For the first time, he experiences the tempting thrill of occult power—and knows that the Stranger wants his soul as well as his father's. But can Hoodoo find the strength—and the courage—to defy the Devil himself? The chilling supernatural Southern Gothic plot action is enhanced by atmospheric description of rural life in Depression-era Alabama. There are dark hints of racial tensions and the hardships of poverty, balanced by strong family and faith relationships. Readers will particularly enjoy Hoodoo's authentic and engaging narrative voice. The author takes some liberties with historical details and with the obscure but very real folk magic texts that Hoodoo uses, although few readers in the intended audience will be aware of it. VERDICT Reminiscent of the adult horror fiction of the late Manly Wade Wellman, this debut novel will appeal to thoughtful middle grade fans of the supernatural. —Elaine E. Knight, formerly at Lincoln Elementary Schools, IL --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

"The horror element is just as vividly drawn, with the terrifying Stranger rivaling Barraclough's Long Lankin in his creepiness. The straightforward plot makes this accessible to younger readers, and the atmospheric setting will certainly leave them with a chill." —The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books "The action of the novel moves swiftly, and readers should be easily drawn into its dark, supernatural ambience." —Publishers Weekly "What a splendid novel. Reader, be prepared to have your foundations shaken: this is a world that is deeper, more wondrous, more spiritually charged than you may have ever imagined." —Gary D. Schmidt, two-time Newbery Honor medalist and author of *The Wednesday Wars* "Oh, wow! Hoodoo may just be the perfect book for a rainy day. Find a dog that will sit with you . . . and read on to your heart's content. What a fun discovery!" —Nikki Giovanni, poet and award-winning author of *Rosa* "I loved this book. Told by a narrator you won't soon forget, it is filled with myth and legend, danger and bravery. Hoodoo is pure folk magic, if you didn't know." —Keith Donohue, New York Times best-selling author of

The Stolen Child"

The authenticity of Hoodoo's voice and this distinctive mashup of genres make Smith one to watch. Seekers of the scary and "something different" need look no further."

•Kirkus "The chilling supernatural Southern Gothic plot action is enhanced by atmospheric description of rural life in Depression-era Alabama...Readers will particularly enjoy Hoodoo's authentic and engaging narrative voice."

•School Library Journal "Hoodoo's first-person narrative, which flows beautifully, has an appealing and natural cadence...Through his protagonist, Smith demonstrates an eye for detail and a knack for evocative imagery as well as for telling a riveting story with a dollop of southern gothic appeal."

•Booklist "Filled with folk and religious symbols, this creepy Southern Gothic ghost story is steeped in time and place. Hoodoo's earnest first-person narrative reveals a believable innocent who can 'cause deeds great and powerful."

•Horn Book Magazine

Loved this, but it was actually pretty dark and quite scary. I think some kids will love this, others might find it too frightening.

I'll be honest, I misread the author's name and thought I was getting something new from Roland Smith. Unfortunately, Ronald doesn't have the writing chops of Roland. I found this book disappointing and a bit dull.

Great little story for middle graders who love ghost stories.Hoodoo Hatcher is born into a family full of hoodoo practitioners, be he is unable to perform a lick of magic. Then he starts to have omen-filled dreams of a dark stranger he met in town, and the adventure begins. Can Hoodoo figure out how to defeat this stranger before he harms his family?

What a great book! The voice, the characters, the story -- everything about this novel is outstanding. Can't wait to read The Mesmerist, Ronald Smith's next book!

I bought this book to read to my students, but after reading the preview, I read the whole thing in one sitting...without my students. Awesome story. Awesome characters. Fantastic book from a debut author. I am absolutely in love and can't wait to share this story with my kiddos!!!

I am reading the book now and I believe my students will enjoy this book. It is a mystery that will have the students considering plots and ideas as the storyline moves along.

This book is very creative and has a specific genre, unlike most books. The genre is Southern Gothic, which is not a very common genre used today. It takes place in Alabama in the 1930s. This book is an imaginative interpretation of southern culture, specifically a folk magic called Hoodoo. The main character, who is actually named Hoodoo, struggles to unlock his family's hobby of Hoodoo. The novel follows Hoodoo Hatcher's quest to stop the Stranger from destroying his life and to get his father unstuck from the crossroads. Hoodoo is an African-American boy with a heart-shaped birthmark on his cheek. The Stranger is a person that shows up in his town looking for Hoodoo. Hoodoo starts to figure out his father's past and that he, Hoodoo, is the only one that can stop the Stranger. Along the course of the book, Hoodoo interacts with new characters like, Bunny, Miss Snuff, and others that help him complete his quest. The characters compliment each other extraordinarily. An example of this is the friendship between Hoodoo and Bunny. The relationship between these characters develops as Bunny continues to motivate Hoodoo through the book. The supporting characters were well thought out, such as Ma Frances, who shows a motherly figure throughout and teaches what's right. On a side note, this book also uses Hoodoo to tell definitions of words that were used in the '30s in Alabama that are not used much anymore. Overall, this book deserves a very good rating and it is very descriptive and detailed. It also engages the reader and establishes a link with the character(s). I am looking forward to Ronald L. Smith's next book.

A great book to read.

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