



Shades of Simon Gray

Joyce McDonald

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Simon Gray is the ideal teenager — smart, reliable, hardworking, trustworthy. Or is he? After Simon crashes his car into The Liberty Tree, another portrait starts to emerge. Soon an investigation has begun into computer hacking at Simon's high school, for it seems tests are being printed out before they are given. Could Simon be involved?

Simon, meanwhile, is in a coma — but is this another appearance that may be deceiving? For inside his own head, Simon can walk around and talk to some people. He even seems to be having a curious conversation with a man who was hung for murder 200 years ago, in the branches of the same tree Simon crashed into. What can a 200-year-old murder have to do with Simon's accident? And how do we know who is really innocent and who is really guilty?

Shades of Simon Gray Details

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Amanda says

"His fear was replaced with a sense of wonder, a sense of absolute freedom. He felt himself being lifted right into the air.(13)" This quote gives you a sense of what Simon Gray was thinking before he crashed. It makes you wonder if it was his intention or not to go into The Liberty Tree. Simon is left in a coma, and his friends begin to freak out. Simon is a very smart high school student. His friends and him, begin to hack into the school computer systems. They found out how to get tests early, and other things that could lead them to trouble. When Simon is in the hospital with a coma, his friends are scared that he didn't cover up all the things they've done. They worry about getting caught, and they wonder if Simon did this on purpose. The theme of this book is to show that you never really know what is going to happen in the future, and who is really going to be there for you. It is written in third person because it gives the descriptions and thoughts of all the characters, which makes it very easy to follow along and understand. Overall I really enjoyed this novel, and would recommend it to any high school student to read.

nimrodiel says

This was an interesting story premise. On a night with an insane uprising of peeper frogs, Simon Grey crashes his car into the "hanging oak" a massive oak tree where according to local legend a murderer was hanged the day after committing a crime. He ends up in a coma at the local hospital.

However he is not exactly the nice and perfect boy everyone thinks he is, he has with several friends who are seniors hacked into the school's server. This allows the students involved to access tests that their teachers are going to be giving and getting good grades in order to get into prestigious colleges. When the police confiscate Simon's computer after a test is printed to the school secretary's desk printer the three friends involved in the cheating ring start to become worried that their involvement in the "project" will come to light.

Meanwhile, Simon is still in a coma, and finds himself outside of his body. His experiences take him more often to the massive oak tree where he has conversations with the shade of the hanged man. While he converses with the man who died 200 years earlier he is faced with the idea that this man might not have deserved to die.

But how can he share the idea that the local legend might be wrong? Will he survive and come out of his coma? Will he and his friends escape the notice of the police in regards to the computer hacking?

Alexa Fulk says

Wow wow wow! This was honestly one of the most interesting and fascinating books I have ever read! The way Joyce McDonald moves the plot with even the trendiest little details like crows and goldfinches, and how she twists in their underlying meaning. I also loved the evolving parallel plot between Simon and Jessup. Such a beautiful story!

Andersreads says

This book does a nice job of two things: raising questions about the ethical dilemma of cheating and the use of symbolism. Simon Gray drives into an old tree (on purpose? accidentally?), wrecks his car, and winds up in a coma. Simon was behind a "project" that allowed several of his friends to get good grades in school through access to tests, etc. This then allowed these friends to be accepted into Ivy League schools. But while Simon is in a coma, the school begins investigating who was behind an accidental printing of a teacher's test, which leaves the other kids involved in a panic.

A parallel story revolves around a 2 century old murder in the town which has become town lore. I will recommend this book to my students next year.

Rose Lawrence says

This book is atmospheric, haunting, and has good messages about academic integrity. Simon is a computer whiz, so he helps his "friends" find the passwords of their teachers to ace all their high school tests. Then, one day, the streets are suddenly covered in frogs, and Simon can't see where he's going, so he runs into a tree and goes into a coma. In addition, Kyle overhears that their cheating was discovered. Without Simon to help them, they have to make it on their own when a criminal investigation into the cheating starts. The town becomes plagued with misfortunes, like frogs, crows, snow, heat waves, and even West Nile Virus.

Meanwhile, Simon goes out of his body during the coma and speaks with Jessup Wildemere, a man hanged for murder 200 years ago. What will Simon and his "friends" do? What will Simon discover about Jessup Wildemere? Will Simon ever wake up from his coma? Read this engrossing book to find out!

Salsabrarian says

Simon Gray is in a coma after his car slams into the Liberty Tree. His uncertain status stresses Devin, Kyle and Danny who recruited Simon and his computer expertise to help them cheat for good grades and ultimately be accepted by good colleges. When the police come around to question them they worry even more about being found out and whether Simon knew to conceal the evidence. Also bound up in the story is the background and true story of Jessup Wildemere's tragic hanging from the tree by city officials back in 1798. Simon finds his spirit traveling beyond the hospital where he meets Jessup at the tree.

Anna says

4.5

In all honesty, I didn't expect to like this book. I had to read it due to an English class, and didn't expect much out of it. This book was amazing. The beginning was a bit slow and lost you at some points, but once you begin filling in everything to solve the mysteries, you saw just how much this book had roped you in. There were so many fantastic elements thrown into it that just made you really think about everything around you. Simon Gray related to me in many ways characters in other books hadn't even touched on. It really

portrayed the message of not giving up and that there is still such a thing as second chances.

Jane Neill-hancock says

phenomenal book - listed as a young adult book but I believe any adult could benefit from reading. A strange mystery-fantasy with plenty of loose ends that point in some tantalizing directions. History, mystery, question of what happens to a person's consciousness when they are in a coma, right and wrong choices and consequences.... My sister is a high school English teacher and I at the time I read this recommended it to her as a book to use with her students.

Borun Sun says

this book is about a guy named Simon who hacks into the school's computer system and helps his firends get into the schools they want to until he gets into a coma and the school finds out that someone is hacking into the system and Simon's friends are hoping he deleted all the evidence

craige says

I bought the book because it was written by the woman I took a writing class from this January. I marvel at her ability to craft a captivating story and I'm sure that as a teen I would have thoroughly enjoyed the book. I remember adoring a book as a kid in which there was out of body travel. Perhaps it's just that I'm not much into YA fiction these days or that it's not written for adults, but I found things to be massively over explained and that took away from my enjoyment of the book. Anyway, it was a quick read and a good insight into how my teacher writes. And yes the cover is way cool

Pyrate Queen says

When smart, honest, hard-working Simon Gray crashes into an ancient oak tree in town, everyone believes that it's the work of a curse. After all, they have been experiencing extremely warm weather, a rash of frogs and a swarm of birds. But what could the curse be?

As Simon lies in coma, he begins to communicate with a man from the 1700s who was hung for a heinous crime. Meanwhile, his friends, or so-called friends, discover that someone has leaked their secret and suddenly find themselves under scrutiny.

Could it be that Simon's accident wasn't an accident after all?

Sarah Nagy says

I really enjoyed this book and think advanced middle school or early high school students would like it too.

It deals with high stakes cheating in a high school as well as issues of friendship and guilt that surround the group of students involved in "the project" of cheating continuously. The characters are well developed gradually throughout the book through an omniscient third person narrator. While I get the symbolism of relating Simon to the young man who was wrongfully hanged because he loved the wrong woman in the 1800s I do not feel that the storyline of Simon and Jessup meeting at the hanging tree throughout Simon's coma was as powerful as it could have been.

Catie Klub says

There was nothing interesting about this book. Nothing about it kept me going and wanted me to finish reading.

Julia says

Shades of Simon Gray by Joyce McDonald is a fantastic young adult read. I would recommend this book to ages 14 and up. My favorite thing about this novel is the amazing description. If you are interested in reading this book you should be aware that it is a difficult read, and it also switches from different points of view (who is actually telling the story). To read a full summary of Shades of Simon Gray follow this link:

<http://www.amazon.com/Shades-Simon-Gr...>

Brendan Linwood says

I hated this book in high school, but reread it as part of an exercise in giving books a second chance. I am glad I did! In retrospect, this is probably the first modern YA novel I read (besides Harry Potter I suppose). Before I discovered John Green and Patrick Ness and Maureen Johnson, I was made to read this book in my Grade 9 English class. As with any book that I was forced to read and analyze in school, I disliked it at the time. Reading it now, it has hallmarks of so many of the things I later came to love about YA fiction - a good mystery, layered characters, complicated morality. It is far from amazing, but I don't regret revisiting it a bit.
