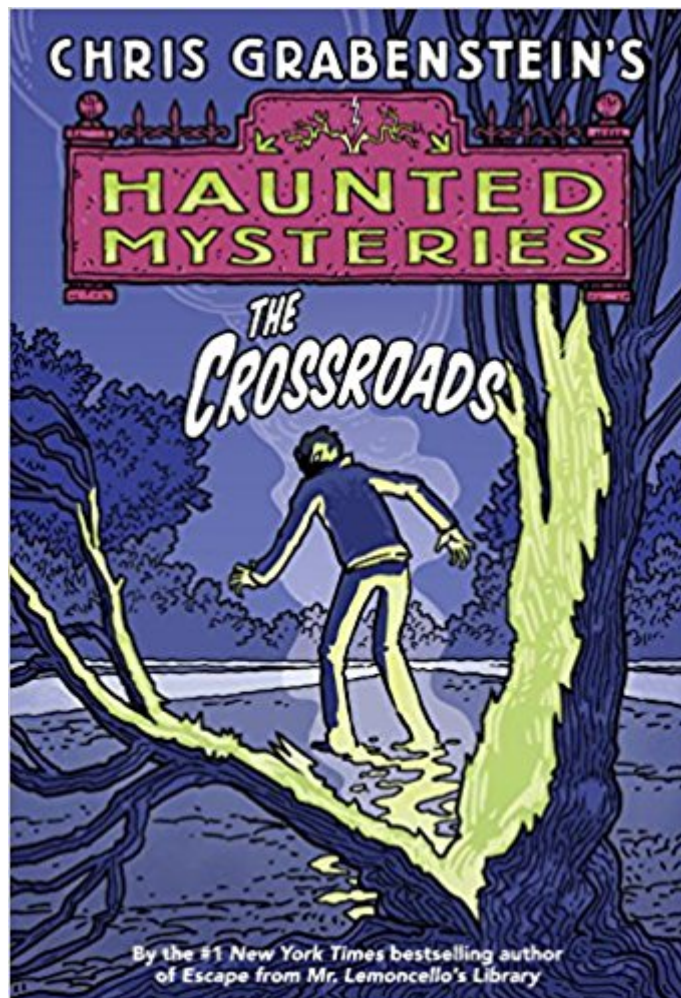


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# The Crossroads (A Haunted Mystery)



## Synopsis

Perfect for Halloween! From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Escape From Mr. Lemoncello's Library* and coauthor of *I Funny* and *Treasure Hunters*, comes a series of spine-tingling mysteries to keep you up long after the lights go out. Zack, his dad, and new stepmother have just moved back to his father's hometown, not knowing that their new house has a dark history. Fifty years ago, a crazed killer caused an accident at the nearby crossroads that took 40 innocent lives. He died when his car hit a tree in a fiery crash, and his malevolent spirit has inhabited the tree ever since. During a huge storm, lightning hits the tree, releasing the spirit, who decides his evil spree isn't over . . . and Zack is directly in his sights. Award-winning thriller author Chris Grabenstein fills his first book for younger readers with the same humorous and spine-tingling storytelling that has made him a fast favorite with adults. *A rip-roaring ghost story.* •Booklist, *Starred*

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0620 (What's this?)

Series: A Haunted Mystery (Book 1)

Paperback: 329 pages

Publisher: Yearling; Reprint edition (May 12, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0375846980

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Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 43 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #141,523 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #35 in *Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Stepfamilies* #80 in *Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Moving* #369 in *Books > Children's Books > Holidays & Celebrations > Halloween*

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Grade 5 *A well-told ghost story with plenty of twists and chills. Eleven-year-old Zack believes that his mother, who died from cancer, haunts his New York City apartment,*

continually disapproving of his behavior. He is immensely relieved when Dad marries Judy, a kind woman, and they move to Connecticut. Unfortunately, Zack cannot seem to escape the dead. Shortly after arriving in North Chester, they meet Gerda Spratling, the last survivor of the town's founding family. The abrasive woman mourns the loss of her fiancé, making a weekly pilgrimage to the crossroads outside Zack's yard where a massive oak marks the spot where Clint died almost 50 years ago. When Zack sees this tree, he fears that something evil is trapped within, and after the oak is split open by lightning, it soon becomes apparent that a malevolent spirit has been set free. With the help of Judy and a new friend, Zack takes on the menace that is plaguing their town and riling up a plethora of ghosts. This riveting tale is written in short, easy-to-read chapters, making it a good choice for reluctant readers. Throughout the story, the main characters grow closer to one another and gain heroic traits while the "bad guys" reveal greater depths of wickedness and insanity. Readers will relate to Zack and enjoy the book's scare factor and adventure.

— Jessica Miller, New Britain Public Library, CT Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** If Grabenstein's first YA book were to receive a one-word review, the word would be Cooooool, a term that applies in a variety of ways from the book's cover image (a face peering out of the bark of a tree) and its hitchhiking, hot-rodding ghosts to its creepy atmosphere, believable story, and suspense that engulfs readers from the very first page. Even the characters are cool, including contemporary, doo-wop, and even Dickensian types. Grabenstein, who has won the Anthony Award for his adult mysteries and whose writing career encompassed writing for television and work for the Muppets, brings a great sense of timing to this mysterious fright ride. Zack Jennings, a kid uprooted after his mother's death and his father's remarriage, sees a leering face in a gnarled tree in the park near New York City's American Museum of Natural History. A move to Connecticut doesn't extricate Zack from evil apparently lodging in trees. Readers soon learn that at a crossroads just behind Zack's new home there's an oak tree capable of branching out into murder and a number of dissatisfied ghosts that prey on passing motorists. An absorbing psychological thriller (the ghost of Zack's malevolent mother plays a part), as well as a rip-roaring ghost story, this switches points of view among humans, trees, and ghosts with astonishing flair.

— Ian. Expect lots of requests. Grades 5-8. --Connie Fletcher --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

If you know a young reader who's been interested in exploring ghost stories and tales with a spooky bite, I've got the perfect book for you. Chris Grabenstein's *The Crossroads* is an excellent entry vehicle for these young readers, especially reluctant ones who get bored reading. There's nothing boring about this book. It starts off with a bang and keeps the hits coming as the young hero and his stepmom untangle all the intricacies of the supernatural mystery that lies at the heart of this book. There are some deaths that occur during the unveiling of the tale, and some genuinely creepy twists and turns, so this isn't an entirely bloodless read. The eleven year old hero, Zack, is a great kid that young readers and the parents of young readers will enjoy. He's a fun, shy kid with hang-ups that a lot of young readers will empathize with. The bits and pieces when he hears his dead mother talking to him sarcastically hurt and will win over readers. The most surprising character in the book is Judy, Zack's stepmom. Usually the adults in a juvenile novel take backstage to the action, but Judy stays right at the heart of it and often tripped across reveals all on her own. In fact, Grabenstein uses Judy to build up all the suspense and tension that surrounds Zack. Other characters step on stage as well, including Gerda Spratling, the weird old widow that maintains a grave marker at the crossroads where her fiancé was killed. She evokes sympathy at first, but Grabenstein twists and warps her to expose the darkness within. The story's pacing is excellent. Short, bite-sized chapters create a momentum from page one that sweeps the reader through the narrative. This would be a perfect read-aloud book for teachers to share in the classroom, or to read to your kids at night. I'm planning to take this one to read to my twelve year old the next time we go camping because it's a perfect ghost story for out in the wilds. Grabenstein has written a sequel detailing more adventures for Zack and Judy. I can't wait to pick up *The Hanging Hill* and see what happens next.

In this thrilling ghost story for middle-graders, 11-year-old Zack Jennings, who has quite an active imagination, is moving from New York to North Chester, Connecticut, with his dad and his decidedly unwicked new stepmother, Judy, who writes the "Curiosity Cat" children's books. When they arrive, Zack finds, to his surprise, that he also has a new dog, a Jack Russell terrier named Zipper. The titular crossroads is an intersection where a fatal bus crash occurred 50 years earlier, on June 21, 1958. The accident has resulted in an abundance of local ghost legends. At the crossroads is a gigantic oak tree, on the Jennings' property, that's haunted by a malevolent ghost. An unpleasant woman named Gerda Spratling brings fresh roses there every Monday to adorn a roadside memorial to her long-dead fiancé, Clint Eberhart. The book begins with many seemingly separate story lines that are all eventually linked together. There are lots of interesting characters, alive and

dead, good and evil, likable and unlikable. Among the likable ones are a boy named Davy, who becomes Zack's first local friend, and the helpful librarian, Mrs. Emerson. There are quite a number of deaths in this story, and it may possibly be too dark for some young readers, but kids who go in for scary stories will love it. And the darkness is lightened by plenty of humor. I certainly enjoyed this book, and I expect many other grown-ups will too.

Loved this book! Perfect reading for anyone over the age of 10! My granddaughter recommended it to me and she is 10. Schools should assign this for Summer reading curriculum.

Chris Grabenstein is a superb writer! I don't know many writers who can write in multiple points of view and pull it off, but he does a masterful job in *The Crossroads* doing just that. I found this book to be one of the best middle grade books I've ever read. I thought it should have won a Newberry. The book held my undivided attention from start to finish. I had to buy my own copy so I could read it again and again. Chris Grabenstein really knows how to write books that grab readers. I'm a huge fan!

I could not put the book down. Going to read the next book. Hope it is as great as this one.

thank you

A wonderful, chilling story young readers will delight in!

If you like ghosts, kids, and books that keep you turning the page, this one is for you. I read this to my sixth grade class and they begged for more each day. Lots of twists and turns and a ton of ghostly characters.

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