



[Home](#) > [Breathe: A Ghost Story](#)

---

# Breathe: A Ghost Story

Books Reviewed:

[Breathe: A Ghost Story](#) [1]

Issue:

[161](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Huw Thomas](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

?A Ghost Story? is the simple pitch made for the story on the cover of Cliff McNish?s Breathe. The description conjures up thoughts of stories where the eerie is more important than the horror. McNish manages to push that very button in a way that, these days, is somewhat rare.

The heaviness of the remote, misty setting is unbroken throughout the book, as Jack settles into a new house with his recently widowed mum, only to find they are not alone. Spirit children haunt the place, but they in turn are terrorised by a Ghost Mother, who feeds off the life left within them. It?s an astoundingly creative story, with some truly scary moments, for McNish?s tale is not just about things that go bump in the night. It plays with the truly horrific notion of a mad parent, beyond trust, smothering children. The character of the Ghost Mother is truly scary, but we are also drawn to her. She carries a secret past, that even the ghost of her own child is slow to disclose. Abusive parents are not entertaining, and any author tackling such matter must do so with care, but this is also a deeply redemptive tale, with various stories from the past converging in the present resolution.

Add to this the remarkable way in which McNish develops the theme of breathing, including an acutely well drawn representation of Jack?s chronic asthma, and you find yourself with a multi-layered story that will genuinely unnerve the reader, in a way so many ghost stories fail to do. HTh

Running Order:

72

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Sep '20):** <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/161/childrens-books/reviews/breathe-a-ghost-story>

**Links:**

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/breathe-a-ghost-story>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/161>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/huw-thomas>