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In a Glass Grimmly

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Media type:

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In his first book, **A Tale Dark and Grimm**, Adam Gidwitz introduced his readers to a fairy tale world that was both familiar - and unfamiliar. As the omniscient narrator, he took great pleasure in confounding expectations. The result was witty, enjoyable and somewhat anarchic as Hansel and Gretel progressed through a number of well known and less well known stories to a happy ending. Here Gidwitz offers us a second helping. Taking the traditional rhyme of **Jack and Jill** as his core, he starts with two different stories - **The Princess and the Frog** and **Jack and the Beanstalk**, bringing the hero and heroine of each together via **The Emperor's New Clothes** and **Snow White**. The reader is then taken on a journey through a range of tales both familiar and less familiar, including a nod to Rosetti's **Goblin Market** and **Humpty Dumpty**. The central theme is a quest for the magic mirror, the Seeing Glass, but as with all fairy tales this is really a quest to find oneself - as Jack and Jill discover in the end. Throughout Gidwitz interrupts his narrative by directly addressing his audience, commenting on the action, offering advice and challenging young readers to turn the page, drawing them in. The stories as a result remain stories, enchanting and enchanted, that do not require 'reality?', the characters do not have to be rounded - they have to engage and be recognisable; and they are. There are horrors; Gidwitz remains true to his sources in this, and modern audiences brought up on more sanitised versions could find themselves in for a shock. But the result is a narrative that moves along briskly carrying the reader with it.

A Tale Dark and Grimm was a fresh voice. Gidwitz repeats his success. Indeed, *In a Glass Grimmly* is a more satisfying read, since the quest format provides real structure and focus for the often anarchic and seemingly random fairytale events. Intelligent young readers will enjoy recognising the tales, for those who sadly may not know them, it is a lively read in which action and dialogue carry the story rather than description, while adults have the added interest of the author's notes at the end. Ideal for those topics built around traditional tales.

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