

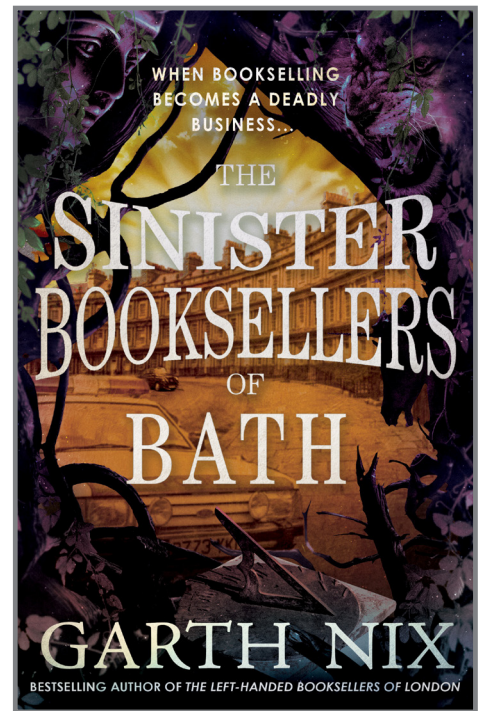
The Sinister Booksellers of Bath

AUTHOR
GARTH NIX

SCIS: 5438563

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Secondary
(Language, Violence)



SYNOPSIS

There is often trouble of a mythical sort in Bath. The booksellers who police the Old World keep a careful watch there, particularly on the entity who inhabits the ancient hot spring. Yet this time it is not from Sulis Minerva that trouble starts. It comes from the discovery of a sorcerous map, leading left-handed bookseller Merlin into great danger. A desperate rescue is attempted by his sister, the right-handed bookseller Vivien, and their friend, art student Susan Arkshaw, who is still struggling to deal with her own recently discovered magical heritage.

The map takes the trio to a place separated from this world, maintained by deadly sorcery performed by an Ancient Sovereign and guarded by monstrous living statues of Purbeck marble. But this is only the beginning, as the booksellers investigate centuries of disappearances and deaths and try to unravel the secrets of the murderous Lady of Stone, a serial killer of awesome powers.

If they do not stop her, she will soon kill again. And this time, her target is not an ordinary mortal.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Garth Nix has been a full-time writer since 2001, but has also worked as a literary agent, marketing consultant, book editor, book publicist, book sales representative, bookseller and as a part-time soldier in the Australian Army Reserve.

Garth's books include the Old Kingdom fantasy series: *Sabriel*, *Lirael*, *Abhorsen*, *Clariel*, *Goldenhand* and *Terciel and Elinor*; SF novels *Shade's Children* and *A Confusion of Princes*; fantasy novels *Angel Mage*; *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London* and sequel *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath*; and a Regency romance with magic, *Newt's Emerald*. His novels for children include *The Ragwitch*; the six books of The Seventh Tower sequence; The Keys to the Kingdom series; and *Frogkisser!* His short fiction includes more than 60 published stories, some of them collected in *Across the Wall* and *To Hold the Bridge*.

He has co-written several books with Sean Williams, including the Troubletwisters series; *Spirit Animals Book Three: Blood Ties*; *Have Sword, Will Travel*; and *Let Sleeping Dragons Lie*.

More than six million copies of Garth's books have been sold around the world, they have appeared on the bestseller lists of *The New York Times*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The Bookseller* and others, and his work has been translated into 42 languages. He has won multiple Aurealis Awards, the ABIA Award, Ditmar Award, the Mythopoeic Award, CBCA Honour Book, and has been shortlisted for the Locus Awards, the Shirley Jackson Award and others.

STUDY NOTES

- Read the prologue of *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath* and consider the following:
 - What tone did the prologue create?
 - Were you hooked to continue reading the story?
 - How did the prologue help you understand the world in which the events of the story take place?
- Take note of the epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter. *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London* featured poetry, while *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath* opens each chapter with an excerpt from the 1907 edition of *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. What role do the epigraphs play in the story and did they enhance your reading of the novel? If so, how? If not, why not?
 - The most recent edition of *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* is 2018 so do you think it is relevant that Garth Nix used a 1907 edition?
- The author, Garth Nix, very effectively creates a character's personality—quirks and all—by detailing the clothes they wear. Choose a character, other than Susan or Merlin, and describe what their clothes told you about them.
- Garth Nix masterfully combines the world that we know with the fantastical world of *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath*. Do you agree that fantasy can only make sense to readers if there is some degree of reality in it? Does the setting of a slightly alternate 1980s London change the sense of realism here?
 - Compare the worlds of *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath* and *The Hobbit* in terms of how close to our world they are. Do you think that fantasy novels teach us about the real world? If so, what do you think you learned from reading *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath*?
- The word 'demesne' is used throughout *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath*. What is its literal meaning, and in what context does it appear in the novel? Why do you think Garth Nix chose to use this word rather than the more modern word, domain? Can you find other words in the novel that serve a similar purpose?
- Would you agree with the author's description of *The Left-Handed Booksellers of London* and *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath* as a 'thriller/fantasy hybrid'? Detail the core elements of both genres and find examples of those elements within the latter novel to support or discount this description.
- Albert Einstein famously said that 'Time is an illusion.' How does Garth Nix explore this idea in *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath*? In your answer consider the Alphabet House and its gardens, Frances Gibbons, Susan's visits to WWII and Great Fire of London, and the bargain she makes with her father at the end of the novel.
- After reading *The Sinister Booksellers of Bath* turn to the cover of the novel. Consider the title and cover design. Why do you think the designer and publisher decided to use that particular mix of font, colour, illustration and composition? What mood is evoked by the cover and is this an appropriate mood for the novel that follows?