



## Coraline

By Neil Gaiman  
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### Introduction

Coraline's parents are too busy to play with her. She's on her own, and when she goes exploring in her new apartment she unlocks a door that leads to a different world. At first it looks familiar, even intriguing, but Coraline quickly learns that evil lurks there. Soon, Coraline is caught in a life or death challenge—to save herself, her family, and three lost children. It is an experience that will forever change her.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Describe Coraline. What kind of a person is she? How does she like to spend her time?
2. How is Coraline treated by her parents? Who are the other adults in Coraline's life and how do they treat her? What is the difference between how she is treated in the real world and the other world?
3. Before entering the other world, Coraline receives ominous warnings about her future. What are the warnings and from whom does she receive them? What do the messages mean?

4. When Coraline unlocks the door to the neighboring flat she knows she is doing something she is not supposed to (pp.26). But she does it anyway. Why? What are the consequences? Have you ever done something you knew you were not supposed to? How did this make you feel? What were the consequences of your actions?

5. When Coraline discovers her parents are missing, she calls the police (pp. 54-55). What does she tell the officer? How does he respond? Why? How would you respond if you were the officer? Why? What would you have done if you were in Coraline's situation?

6. How does Coraline define bravery (pp. 58-59)? In what ways does Coraline demonstrate bravery? What is your definition of bravery?

7. The other mother tells Coraline: "We're ready to love you and play with you and feed you and make your life more interesting." (pp. 60) How is Coraline's life with her other family different from life with her real family? What does Coraline find appealing about life in the other world? What family would you choose? Why?

8. Coraline's other mother tells her that if she wants to stay in the other world there is one thing she must do. What is it? What effect will it have on her?

9. Why does the other mother want Coraline? What does the cat think about this (pp. 65)? Why has she taken the other children and Coraline's parents?

10. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible give Coraline a special stone (p. 21). Why? What does the stone look like? What special power does the stone have? How does Coraline use it?

11. What challenge does Coraline present to her other mother (p. 91)? What will happen if she loses? What will happen if she wins? What makes her think winning is possible? Do you think this challenge is wise? Why or why not?

12. Do the mirrors Coraline encounters in the real world and the other world reflect reality or illusion? How do you know? What is the significance of mirrors in Coraline?

13. When Coraline finds her other father in the basement he tells her to flee (p. 112). When she refuses he turns on her, and tries to harm her. How does Coraline respond? What happens as a result?

14. Coraline explains to the old man upstairs, "I don't want whatever I want. Nobody does. Not really. What kind of fun would it be if we just got everything we wanted? Just like that, and it didn't mean anything. What then?" (p. 120) Do you agree or disagree with Coraline? Explain your thinking. How would you respond to her question?

15. How does Coraline's life change when she returns to the real world with her parents? What does Coraline learn from the experience of being in the other world?

16. After Coraline returns to the real world she receives clues that the other mother's work is not done. What are they? How does Coraline foil the other mother once and for all?

### About the Author

Neil Gaiman is the author of the *New York Times* best-selling children's book *Coraline* and of the picture books *The Day I Swapped My Dad for 2 Goldfish* and *The Wolves in the Walls*. He is also the author of the critically acclaimed and award-winning *American Gods*, *Neverwhere*, *Stardust* (winner of the ALA's Alex Award as one of 2000's top ten adult novels for young adults), and the short fiction collection *Smoke and Mirrors*. He is also the author of the Sandman series of graphic novels. Among his many awards are the World Fantasy Award, the Hugo Award, the Nebula Award and the Bram Stoker Award.

### About the Illustrator

Dave McKean has created illustrations and photographs for hundreds of CD, book, and comic covers as well as publishing projects with John Cale, Stephen King, and the Rolling Stones. He is probably best known for his graphic novels, including the best-selling *Arkham Asylum* and Neil Gaiman's Sandman series. He also illustrated Gaiman's children's books *Coraline*, *The Wolves in the Walls* and *The Day I Swapped My Dad for 2 Goldfish*. He is the author and illustrator of the graphic novel *Cages* which won the Alph-Art, Pantera, and Harvey Awards for best Graphic Novel, and *Pictures That Tick*, which recently won the V&A Museum Illustrated Book Awards Overall First Prize. He has written and directed several short films and has contributed production designs for the second and third *Harry Potter* films.