



Brighton Rock

Author: Graham Greene
Genre: Literature
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Ever been to sunny 'London-by-the-sea'? It's one of my favourite places. But having read this book I don't think I'll ever be able to see it in the same way again...

Gangs: a sign of our times. Read any newspaper today and in it somewhere you'll probably find a reference to gang crime, be it a stabbing, shooting, beating, robbery or whatever else. But despite the best efforts of the venerable *Daily Mail* to convince us that we're all going to Hell in a handcart because of the abandonment of traditional values (blah blah blah), the fact is that groups of arrogant men of all ages have been wandering around the streets of our towns and cities for as long as they themselves have existed. This, then, is Graham Greene's story of a war between two gangs in 1930s Brighton, and of the 'civilians' who inadvertently get caught in their crossfire. But most of all, *Brighton Rock* is the story of protagonist Pinkie Brown, the role that a young Richard Attenborough made his own in the black-and-white film adaptation of the 1940s.

So: to the book itself. *Brighton Rock* is technically a sequel, though it certainly does not rely on the reader having read the previous story, and easily stands alone. It opens with 'Fred' Hale, a journalist, being hunted by 'Kite's Mob' a gang named after their leader, who is now dead after being betrayed by Hale to his rivals the Colleoni gang. The opening scenes where Hale is hunted through Brighton is one of the most intense, gripping and indeed chilling sequences I have ever read. Yet despite the bravado of Pinkie, Hale's murder certainly does not go smoothly. Rose, a young waitress, becomes the one person who can finger the gang, and the story boils down to a three way-chase with Rose being chased by Pinkie, and Ida, a friend of Hale's who is determined to discover the truth of his death, desperately trying to protect her.

Though I knew this story to be very famous – I imagine most people have heard the title at least – before I picked it up, I had virtually no knowledge of the plot itself and so had no idea how good the story actually is. As well as the original 1947 film that made Attenborough a star, the 2010 remake starring Helen Mirren, John Hurt and Andy Serkis (this time set in the 1960s) has also proved very popular, and has a heart-warming ending which is left open in the book. Overall, then, this is great writing in any format and well worth investigation.

9 sausages out of 10

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