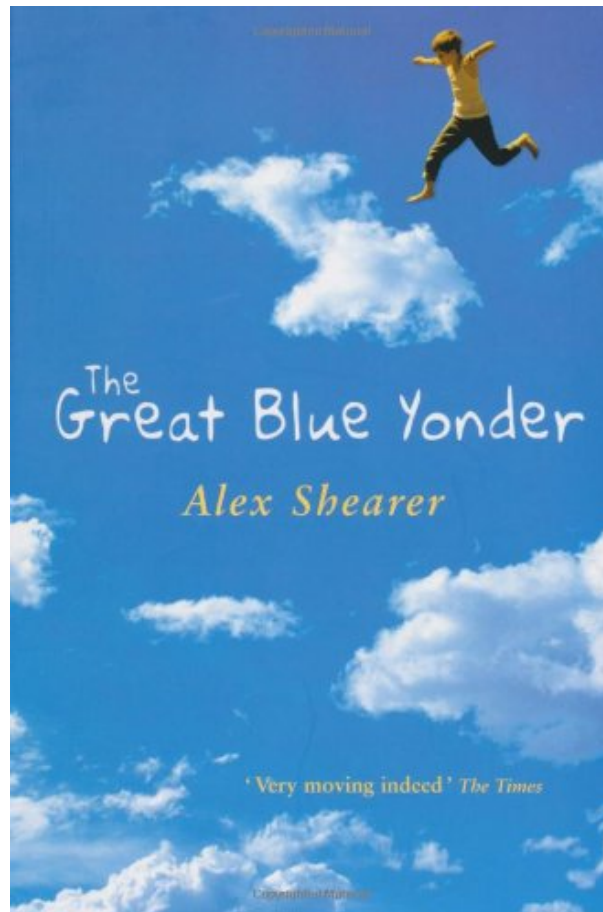
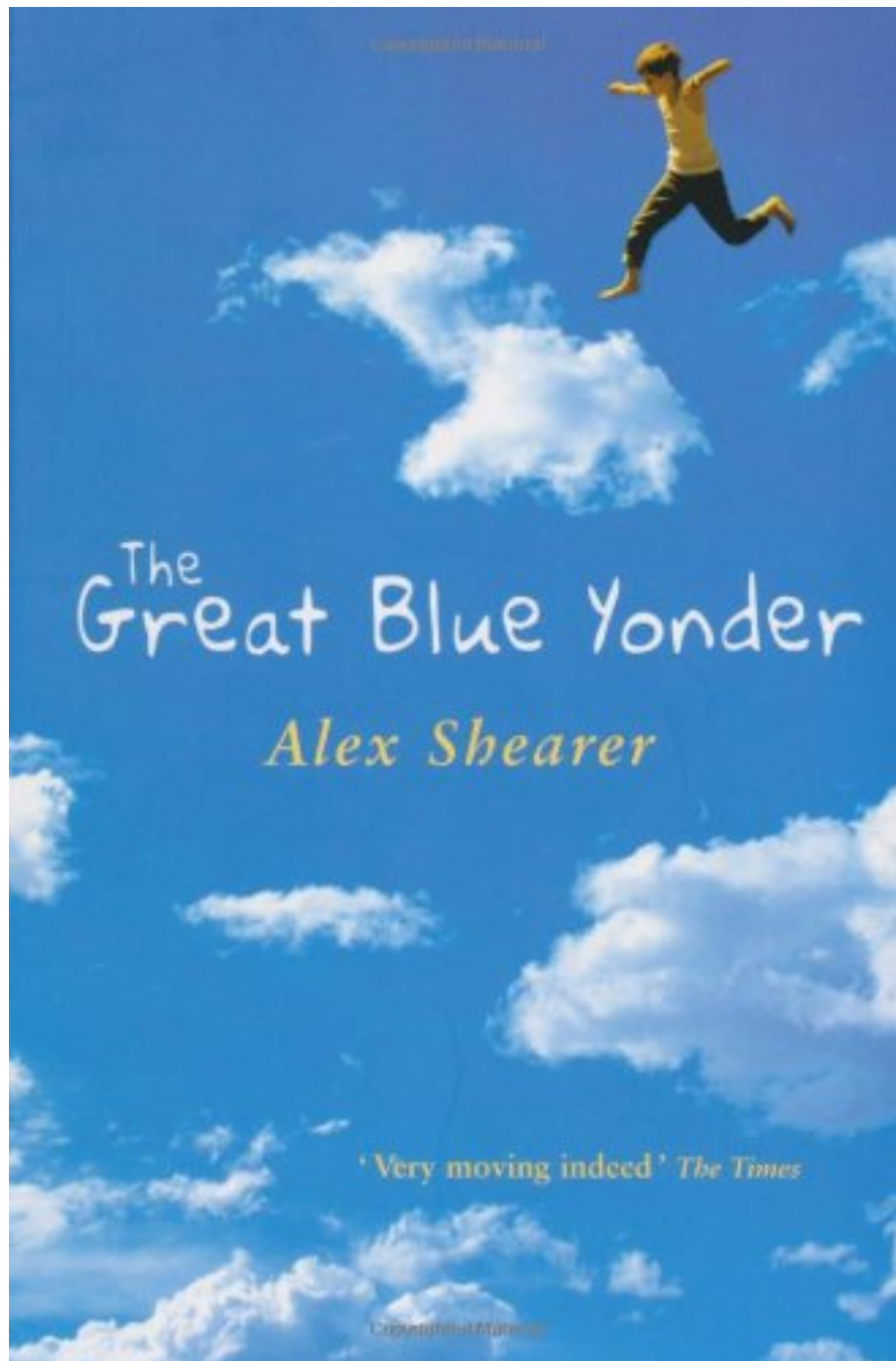


# THE GREAT BLUE YONDER BY ALEX SHEARER



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From School Library Journal

Grades 5-8--"People seem to think it's an easy life when you're dead." With that attention-grabbing first line, this unusual and compelling novel tells the story of Harry, killed in a bicycle accident. Initially confused by his new existence in the Other Side, the flippant 12-year-old realizes he cannot move toward the peace of the Great Blue Yonder until he has addressed the unfinished business in his life. On the day of the accident, he and his sister had a fight in which he told her she'd be sorry when he was dead. Knowing she must be feeling tremendous pain over their parting words, he resolves to make amends. With the help of a Victorian-era lad named Arthur, he goes back home as a ghost. He sees many things he didn't expect and gains an understanding of his actions when he was alive. His death has had a devastating impact on his family, fulfilling every kid's fantasy of his family being sorry when he's gone. By now, however, Harry has grown up enough to be upset by the depth of his family's sorrow. He is able to communicate with his sister, gaining closure for her and a newfound maturity for himself. The book ends with Harry asking readers to wish him well as he heads toward the Great Blue Yonder. Sound strange? It is. It is also amusing, poignant, and deeply moving. A great main character and unusual topical matter combine to make a unique winner of a book that will leave readers laughing through their tears.

B. Allison Gray, South Country Library, Bellport, NY

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School Library Journal, Starred

About the Author

Alex Shearer lives in Somerset with his wife and two children. He's written lots of books for both adults and children, as well as many successful television series and radio plays. This is his first novel for Macmillan.

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'You'll be sorry when I'm dead.' That's what Harry said to his sister, before the incident with the lorry. And now he is just that - dead. And he wishes more than anything that he hadn't said it. He wishes he could say sorry. And say goodbye to everyone he left behind - his mum, his dad, his best friend Pete, even Jelly Donkins, the class bully. Now he's on the Other Side, waiting to move on to the Great Blue Yonder. But he doesn't know how to get there - until he meets Arthur, a small boy in a top hat, who's been dead for years, who helps him say goodbye...

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## Most helpful customer reviews

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Great in any language!

By A Customer

I am from Salt Lake City, Utah, but because of my dad's job I live in Japan. I love going to the library and reading books that have been translating into Japanese from English. I found this book at my school library just barely translated from English. I borrowed it right after it came and read it in 1 night! It was the best book! I had always felt bad for people who had things left unfinished before they died, but after reading this book it made me feel better. It is funny, creative, and great for kids. It is not inappropriate at all. It also taught me to always be nice to my siblings because anything could happen to them at anytime. I love this author who also wrote the book "The Stolen". I recommend it too!

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

anyone can find the way to the Great Blue Yonder...

By Olivia Chou

This story is not only about death, it is a book which teaches you how to live. The Great Blue Yonder is a book that reveals solemnity in changes using an interesting teenager's voice, creating one of the most enjoyable novels in my book list. A boy in the age of 11 to 12 dies in a bike accident with his last words to his sister, "you'll be sorry when I'm dead." With regrets of the words he said, he comes to a land for after-life, and this land is completely different from what he expected. It is said that when one's done with the passage of life, one goes through death, and when one is ready to let go, then one can emerge to the Great Blue Yonder. Yet the boy, Harry, and the friend he made during his "death period," Arthur, both struggle to let go of their "unfinished business." To resolve, Arthur and Harry came back to the Land of the Living and become ghosts. During their visit, Harry is shocked and disappointed at how fast people have forgotten his existence for only a few weeks, and in the end, he happily finds that it isn't so. Harry sadly but successfully resolves his problem with his sister, and then feels the relief he longs for. With the heart of readiness and satisfaction, Harry moves on to the Great Blue Yonder.

Many people see the book as a story with the imagination of after-life and the discussions of death. I see this story as a metaphor for the changes everyone faces in life. If one ignores the fact that Harry dies, and views it as if he just left the town, the story still has the same effect. What touches me the most in the story is how Harry feels so forgotten, so insignificant, and so unbearably hurt when he sees his friends move on with life. The same way people feel after they move or change schools, they think less and less about their classmates, likewise, their friends think less and less about them. As much as people want to keep the spirit with their old friends, distance and time do not allow it, and it is effortless in trying, for it is a fact that cannot be changed in life. Even though I am still alive, I am as helpless as Harry is, life goes on. Harry may be dead, but he still succeeds in resolving his problem with his sister; I believe in some ways, the author is saying "resolve your anger and sorrows with the one who caused it, that is how one can move on". By forgiving and forgetting, anyone can find the way to the Great Blue Yonder;K

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Matters of Death

By A Customer

In The Great Blue Yonder, Alex Shearer uses a boy named Harry as the main character to challenge readers into thinking about what life might be like after death. The book starts with Harry dead and on the "Other Side", a place that the dead inhabit. It is here that Harry meets another important character Arthur, a young boy who has been dead for over one hundred years. Both Harry and Arthur have some unfinished business to tend to. Prior to Harry's death, he and his sister got into a fight resulting in the two never wanting to see the other again. As for Arthur, he has been searching for his mother on the "Other Side" since his arrival. His mother died at his birth, and he has had nothing but one of her buttons off a blouse to remember her by. The

two's journey results in the eventual escape of Harry out of the "Other Side." It is back in the land of the living where Harry gets an opportunity to visit his friends at school, and then his family at home. Harry is heartbroken when he finds that his friends have been able to manage life without him. This is very hard for him to deal with. When Harry goes home he realizes that he has the ability to communicate with the living, and he uses this opportunity to apologize to his sister. When Harry returns to the "Other Side" he finds Arthur and his mother have reunited. The book ends with Harry, Arthur, and Arthur's mother passing from the "Other Side" to the "Great Blue Yonder", a place where the dead who have found closure are able to go.

In *The Great Blue Yonder*, Shearer writes from a first person perspective. Through this method of writing, Shearer is able to effectively aid the readers in imagining what it might be like to look at the world after one has left it. This method is successful in getting the readers to think about some very realistic thoughts one might have after death. Some interesting aspects of death Shearer deals with in the book are communication with the living and the dead, the process of mourning and healing, and the dwelling place of the dead. Because this book was written from a first person perspective, Shearer is able to connect his readers with the main character in a way that uniquely challenges readers to imagine their own "life" after death. Another unique aspect of this book is the fact that the character dealing with death is a young boy. In reality, very few young boys and girls think about the idea of death and what may follow. By using Harry as the main character, adolescents may be encouraged to think about death for the first time and realize it doesn't just come to the elderly. I also think it encourages readers to look at life with the ever-present possibility of death. For example, the fight between Harry and his sister, and having to leave the world without apologizing might persuade readers to deal with hard feelings and grudges between loved ones.

Many readers, because of their faith, may be troubled by the idea of afterlife that is portrayed in this story. For example, as a Christian, I believe that when an individual dies they remain lifeless until given new life by our Heavenly Father. My beliefs of death, like many others, oppose the viewpoint in which Shearer writes from. But even Mormons, Atheists, Muslims, and any number of other viewpoints might also find the perspective disconcerting. While some may not take the story completely seriously and use it to confront certain issues, others could be offended and concerned with the ideas presented to young adults reading it.

Overall I think that Shearer deals with the idea of death in a tactful though unrealistic way. He uses humor to bring to light a serious matter, and would make any reader think about important issues whether they thought Shearer's story was realistic or not. Although I disagree with many of Shearer's points throughout the book, I appreciate the challenges he provides for the reader. I believe that children at some point need to be exposed to serious issues such as death, so Shearer's writing could be productive in challenging an older audience to think critically about death and all that surrounds it.

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From School Library Journal

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