



# The Blood List

Books Reviewed:

[The Blood List](#) [1]

Issue:

[206](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Nicholas Tucker](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

The year is 1646 and 16 year-old Barnaby, still oddly referred to as a child at a time when childhood ended much earlier, is up against Abel, his villainous half-brother who now works for the infamous Witch Finder General, Matthew Hopkins. Melodrama beckons, but the writing here is good enough to make up for the occasional stereotype or over-familiar plot device. Instead, eschewing cod 17th century language characters talk to each other with the easy familiarity of today. 'Oh I don't know?', Barnaby's mother opines at one stage, 'I just wonder whether Abel's interest in the Bible is becoming rather unhealthy? It is so harsh. So simplistic.' But other parallels with modern day life come over as less cosy. Accused of being a witch, Barnaby is interrogated with all the pitiless intensity of the so-called enhanced interrogation techniques currently favoured by the CIA. Conditions in the Norfolk jail where he is being kept are stomach-turningly revolting, and life outside for those who are poor and weak remains unremittingly grim. Starting out as a pleasant but thoughtless rich kid, Barnaby has to make a traumatic journey towards discovering the truth about others as well as himself. But fortunately there is always Naomi to turn to, his maid and also his somewhat severe conscience. By the end of this compulsively readable novel, they are both shown to have richly deserved the love that grows between them whatever the hardships they still have to face. Britain has a wealth of good historical fiction aimed at the young and this novel represents an excellent addition to a proud heritage.

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