



# The Rest of Us Just Live Here

Books Reviewed:

[The Rest of Us Just Live Here](#) [1]

Issue:

[214](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Patrick Ness's new novel relies somewhat on the same conceit as Tom Stoppard's **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead** or the John Smith's bachelor party sequence in **Austin Powers, International Man of Mystery**, where usually unregarded peripheral figures in a story are given their own tale to tell. The clue is in the title of the novel. Italicised paragraphs beginning 'In which?' precede each chapter. But, contrary to the usual practice, they don't summarise the action that follows. Instead, they tell a different but connecting story. And the story that's in the background here is the one that's in the foreground in other teen novels, in which young people are visited by Vampires, Gods or other otherworldly beings and become involved in apocalyptic struggles for the souls of humankind. In the foreground are Mikey and his friends in their last year at High School, preoccupied by the perhaps more mundane but equally stressful adolescent problems of love, family, friendship and passing exams. This could be played entirely for humour but Ness's account is mostly straight faced, with only the odd wink here and there at his readers. Instead, through Mikey's eyes, we see how the ordinary might live with the extraordinary and treat it as only one of the pressures that complicate this time of life. Ness is collapsing two familiar forms of writing for teens. Perhaps, too, in passing, he may be commenting on how all our otherwise private lives are, in these days of instant news, led side by side with scenes of suffering and devastation. Scenes which, can, with shocking suddenness, like on a beach in Tunisia, affect some of us more directly. Perhaps? But the enjoyment in the story comes from Ness's facility with character, action and, particularly, dialogue. We are presented with characters and situations that we have seen in one form or another in many novels and films for young people. And the author consistently draws our attention to it. Nevertheless, this accomplished and intriguing novel is entirely convincing in itself.

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Dec '21):** <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/214/childrens-books/reviews/the-rest-of-us-just-live-here>

**Links:**

[1] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-rest-of-us-just-live-here>

[2] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/214>

[3] <http://w.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/clive-barnes>