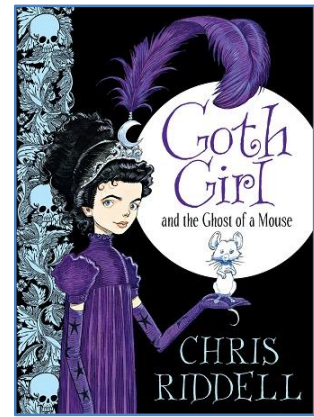


Title: **Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse**

Illustrator/author: **Chris Riddell**

Publisher: **Macmillan Children's Books**



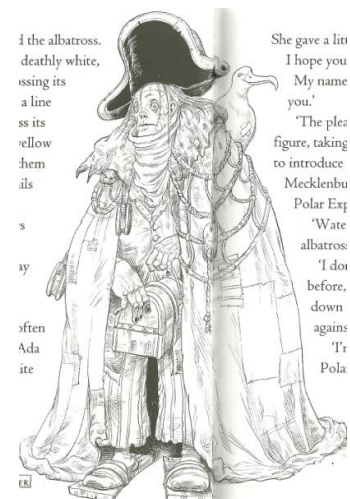
First look

- Try to ensure that each shadower is given a chance to read *Goth Girl* to themselves before working on the book with the group.
- Look through the book together at all the images, decorations and invitations. Ask them to point out to each other anything that strikes them as interesting about the artwork.
- Chat in pairs or as a group about whether they enjoyed *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse*. What did they like or dislike and why?

Look again

Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse is a very special sort of book. The illustrations are essential to the unfolding narrative yet the book is neither a graphic novel nor a picturebook. Every aspect of its production adds to its overall quirky brilliance - from the shiny purple-edged pages to the smallest drawn embellishment. Chris Riddell is both the author and illustrator. It would be interesting to find out whether he does pictures or writing first? Or perhaps both alternatively?

- Look at the drawings of the strange characters – Mrs Beat'em, Rupert Von Hellsung, Metaphorical Smith, Lucy Borgia, The Polar Explorer and Charles Cabbage. *These cartoons are not purely to show what they look like. What else can you tell about each person?*
- Can you guess which characters are based on real people and those that Chris Riddell has 'borrowed' from famous books? E.g.: Mrs Beat'em is the cook. *A lady called Mrs Beeton (1836-1865) was one of the first cookery writers in England. In the picture of Mrs Beat'em, what is she holding?*
- Read about the Polar Explorer (from page 25 to 29). He is also known as the Monster of Mecklenburg; does he remind you of a famous fictional monster? (If possible, have copies of *The Ancient Mariner*, *Frankenstein* and any other relevant texts for reference).
- Why are the colours black, white, silver and purple used throughout the book? Does it have anything to do with the name Goth? Find out the origins of the term Gothic. How do people who call themselves Goths dress now?
- There are several references to fashion in *Goth Girl*. Ada's outfit is set out for her every day with some very odd combinations of clothes. Look at the illustrations of Lord Goth's guests on pages 158 to 162. Check in the library or online what clothes were in fashion in 1799.



Talk about any visual aspect of the book that interests you, i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. How do these 'extras' to the story contribute to the overall impact of the book?

Interpreting the texts

It is always beneficial, when studying a book, to use tasks which require imaginative response to encourage students to engage fully with the text. The following suggestions may help the group of young readers to become engaged in the book.

Writing

Write a short review of *Goth Girl and the Ghost of a Mouse* which does the following things:

- explains whether you enjoyed the book or not and why
- commenting on the humour in both the writing and the illustration
- recommending which age group of readers would enjoy it most

Drama

There are several scenes in this story that could be the starting point for a dramatic improvisation.

For example, the dinner the night before the indoor hunt (look at the picture on page 172).

Art

Drawing

Use a pencil, or black pen, to draw a cartoon character; it can be either one you make up yourself or copy one already illustrated in the book.

Fashion design

Design two Goth outfits - one for men another for women - using only the colours black, white, silver and purple.

Research

1. Use books or search the internet to answer these questions:
2. In the book Lord Goth is described as 'mad, bad and dangerous to gnomes'. Who in reality was known as 'mad, bad and dangerous to know'? (hint: put the quote into a search engine.)
3. Find out what the fictional character had in common with the real person:

Fiction

Mrs Beat'em
Metaphorical Smith
Charles Cabbage
Mary Shellfish

Reality

Mrs Beeton
Capability Brown
Charles Babbage
Mary Shelly

4. There are many stories about vampires but the most famous is *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. The governess, Lucy Borgia, is a vampire but her name is based on a woman called Lucretia Borgia. Find out who Lucretia Borgia was and what she was like.

Read more

Remember to read the *Memoirs of a Mouse*. It is part of the artistic work that completes the book.

