



Cirque Du Freak

Darren Shan

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In the tradition of Ray Bradburys *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and Stephen Kings *Salems Lot*, New York Times bestseller *Cirque du Freak* is the first title in the popular *Saga of Darren Shan*. Darren Shan and his best friend, Steve, get tickets to the *Cirque du Freak*, a wonderfully gothic freak show featuring weird, frightening half human / half animals who interact terrifyingly with the audience. In the midst of the excitement, true terror raises its head when Steve recognizes that one of the performers *Mr. Crepsley* is a vampire! Steve confronts the vampire after the show finishes but his motives are surprising! In the shadows of a crumbling theater, a horrified Darren eavesdrops on his friend and the vampire, and is witness to a monstrous, disturbing plea. As if by destiny, Darren is pulled to Mr. Crepsley, and what follows is his horrifying descent into the dark and bloody world of vampires. This is Darrens story.

Cirque Du Freak Details

Date : Published 2010 by BMI Educational Services (first published February 29th 2000)

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Author : Darren Shan

Format : 2880 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Paranormal, Vampires, Horror, Fiction, Young Adult

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From Reader Review Cirque Du Freak for online ebook

Molly says

While most people in my generation grew up with Harry Potter, I grew up with Cirque du Freak. This was one of my favorite series in middle school and high school. I've gone through it twice, and would gladly go through it again. It has adventure, mystery, drama, humor, death, plot twists, and several characters return after not being seen for some time. They are never forgotten. Things get tied up pretty well, without loose ends.

It has compelling and well-rounded characters, and raises a lot of moral dilemma questions without doing it in a preachy way. It gets you thinking, to the point where you sometimes understand why even the villainous characters or unlikeable characters sometimes do what they do. There's a little bit of good and bad in everyone.

This series came out before the vampire craze in YA, and is highly underrated. Shan's vampires here are a nice mix of traditional (they burn in sunlight, are not super attractive, live for centuries, etc.) and his own twist on it (half-vampires can go in sunlight but can't when they become full vampires, the vampire transfers blood into the fledgling, there are some who kill and some who don't, etc.). I personally find these vampires more fascinating than a lot of others, both old and new.

If it were all one book, or even just three or four books, it would probably seem like too much. Vampires, a traveling circus, a second type of vampires, humans that somehow get tangled up in the mess, animals, time-traveling...but since it's spread out over twelve books, it worked out well. It's actually hard to say which is my favorite book or trilogy out of the series (since it's four trilogies that all go together). Everything fits together perfectly. Truly an epic read.

My two favorite characters are probably Evra Von and Harkat Mulds. Darren is a great protagonist though, and I enjoyed reading through his perspective. The books are each pretty short, and the writing is simple, in a good way. They always get straight to the point, and occasionally they even manage to break the forth wall.

This is a great series for younger people, and I enjoyed it again even as an adult. It's good for anyone who likes fantasy, horror, coming-of-age tales, complex characters, and adventure.

Callista Chan says

In this book "Cirque Du Freak", Darran has a hard time trying to let his friend trust him. His life is about to change, and if makes a wrong decision everything will go wrong. He has to sacrifice his life in order to save his friend's. On pages 185-188, Darran talks with Mr.Crepsley (the vampire), and makes a deal with him. Darran is willing to become Mr.Crepsley's assistant for life, in order to give Steve (his best friend) the serum which will save his life. This book demonstrates the theme, strength and love. What I think the message Darran Shan is sending out to readers, is that even though you go through hard times, you still have to hold on to the people you love, to the people that supports you and helps you. Underneath are my explanations on why these songs represents and shows the theme.

The first song that I chose is called "A Long Down" by One direction. I chose this song because it demonstrates the theme love. In the beginning of the book, Darran and Steve are best friends. After all that they've been through it has been crashed just by one decision.(view spoiler) In the song it says " We made a fire/ went down in the flames/we sailed the ocean/ and drowned in the waves/ built a cathedral / but we never prayed/ we had it all/ but we walked away". These lyrics connects very well to the theme love, it shows a powerful tone of sadness and how love can crash and burn. Which is exactly what happened to Darran and Steve.

The second song I chose is called "Heal" by Tom Odell. I chose this song because it shows how desperate the author wants to heal a love. Which is what Darran wants, more than anything else, to heal the bond between him and Steve. How badly he wants to become friends again with Steve. (view spoiler) That is why I chose this song. It's because Darran wants to heal the love and friendship between them. The lyrics "heal heal heal/ take my past and take my sins/ like an empty sail takes the wind/ and tell me some things last" which shows the desperate feeling of how the artist wants to heal something. Which is what Darran wants, how he wants to mend the bond between him and Steve.

The third song I chose is called "Keeping Your Head Up" by Birdy. I chose this song because it shows how much one wants to help and support another. In this story, before Darran chooses to go and join the vampire, and forever leave his normal life. He starts to realize things, things around him he never saw before. How his family supported him, and how much he loves his sister. This connects to the theme strength, it's because he appreciates the strength he got from his family and he realizes how much they kept his head up. (view spoiler) The song shows a clear powerful connection of his family's support, his friend's support towards him. That moment when Darran realizes everything. This song demonstrates what Darran realized, that his family was keeping his head up this whole time. It connects to strength, because of the strength he got from his family. The lyrics " Times that I've seen you lose your way/ you're not in control and you won't be told/ all I can do to keep you safe/ is hold you close hold you close/ til you can breath on your own" These lyrics show the strength his family gives him, and that moment when Darran realizes it. The tone and harmony Birdy adds to the song makes the song even more powerful, like how the amazing sadness and thankful feeling Darran gets when he realizes it.

The fourth song I chose is called "Stand By Me" by Tracy Chapman. This is a simple song of a guitar background. It just shows how simple it is, just stand by him. This shows a strong connection to the theme strength. This song just represents the every scene of the theme strength in the book. Every moment in the book can be represented by this song. The lyrics "stand by me/ if the sky we look upon/ she tumble and fall/ oh the mountains/ she crumble to the sea/ I won't cry/ I won't shed a tear/ just as long as you stand by me". These lyrics shows that the strength and support that one person gets. How Darran gets that from his family and friends.

The fifth song I chose is called "Hold Me Up" by Conrad Sewell. I don't really think the tone of this song fits the support Mr.Crepsley gives Darran. It's because in this story, Darran kind of hates Mr.Crepsley for making that deal, and hates him for making Steve mad, that he has bad blood. In this song, it shows complete trust and love towards that person, but Darran does not show complete love towards Mr.Crepsley. But in this book, Darran looks for Mr.Crepsley for much help, to save Steve's life. (view spoiler)The lyrics in this song "till you came and saved my life, in the lonely hour, in the lonely hour/ oh im praying for some help/ I can't do it by myself/ I need you now/ need you right now" These lyrics show that one needs support desperately and needs strength. This song relates to the theme strength, because Darran needs support from Mr.Crepsley in order to save Steve's life. Although I do not quite agree with the tone and the beat of this song, because it's a little too fast and it doesn't really show the complete emotion towards the person that he wants support from.

The sixth song I chose is called “Start Again” by Conrad Sewell. I think this song fits perfectly with the scene where Steve shows up and finds Darran. Then the part where Darran is left to figure out the rest on his own, the desperate feeling on how he wants to start again with Steve. The lyrics “There’s a hole in the middle of a heart again/ can we start again/ can we start again/ there’s a hole in the middle and it never mends/ it never mends/ can we start again”. These few lines, lyrics from the song fits perfectly to what Darran wants to say. It connects to the theme love. To mend the bond between Darran and Steve.

The seventh song I chose is called “Revival” by Selena Gomez. This song is mainly about reliving one’s life, and being reborn in every moment, one’s revival. I think this fits the book *Cirque Du Freak*, because after Darran decides to become a vampire, he has to relive his life. The lyrics “I’m reborn in every moment/ so who knows what I’ll become”. These lyrics I’ve just listed connects to what Darran was thinking about during the last scene. When Steve left, he had these own thoughts going through his mind, like I have to start a new life. A new life where I will follow Mr.Crepsley and I won’t have any children, I will be lonely forever. The last sentence of the book stated “as we walked deep into the woods, into the dark night”. Just sounds like he is starting a new life, he is reborn. Yet the song says “it’s my time to butterfly”, it doesn’t really connect to the book. It’s because being a vampire is a burden for Darran, not a relief.

The eighth song that I chose is “Sorry” by Justin Bieber. When Darran spends his last day in his normal life. I put my shoes in his, and I imagine what he wants to say to his family and friends. He’s sorry, sorry that he has to do this. Sorry that he has to leave them and make this decision. At the same time, he says thank you, thankful for their love. The lyrics “It it too late now to say sorry/ yeah i know that let you down/ is it too late I’m sorry now?” These lyrics link to the words that Darran wants to say to his family on his last day of his regular life. This relates to the theme, love, sorry for the love that he can’t give back to.

The ninth song that I chose is “Home” by Michael Buble. This song doesn’t really relate to this book of the whole series. It’s because the last section of *Cirque Du Freak* is when Darran leaves with Mr.Crepsley, yet this song is connected to what I think Darran will think after a while with Mr.Crepsley, he wants to go home. This connects to the theme, love, because he misses everything, his home, his friends and family. The lyrics “but i wanna go home/ maybe surrounded by a million a people i/ still feel alone/ let me go home”. These lyrics shows the sadness in one’s tone, and music is slow and steady. It clearly shows the understanding of wanting to go home. I think this is what Darran will want after a few series, he wants to go home.

The last song I chose is called “Stand By You” by Rachel Platten. This song is about a person standing by and supporting another. Just like what I stated before, how his family and friends stood by him and supported him. This connects to the theme strength, how they give him strength when they stand by him. The specific part from the book, is where his dad said I’ll be there for you when you want to talk, then in Darran’s mind he said “but I won’t be there,” when he knows he will be gone. That part tells me clearly that his parents stands by him, and supports him whenever he needs them. The lyrics “hey if your wings are broken/ please take mine so yours can open too/ cause I’m gonna stand by you”. These show a strong tone of support and love.

Spotify Playlist: <https://open.spotify.com/user/callist...>

Effy Weasley says

i started to read this series when i was about twelve and the last book came out when i was 20. it made me crazy waiting about six months for the next book to come out but it was definitely worth it!

those books are really captivating - everytime i got a new one i read it in one or two days. you just can't put them out of your hands.

the story is very original, with a lot of twists, dramas, humour etc. it simply has everything one wishes for in a good book.

shan's writing style is easy-to-understand, nothing too complicated - but you can't expect something too complicated for a teenage-book.

all in all: excellent books that you can't compare with anything else, they're just awesome!

Alba Rossana says

One of the best books I've read! The characters, the plot, the twists... everything.!!

Darren Shan made me love fantasy books, first I thought they were so childish, but, after give them a chance I started the 1st book... and I loved it..!

My favorite quote of the whole saga: " *Even in death may you be triumphant* "

Si bien es cierto que el tema de los vampiros no es nada novedoso (hay taaantos libros por ahí), Darren Shan les otorgó un sentido de originalidad bastante bueno. No es una historia de amor, ni tiene el clásico final donde todos viven felices por siempre.

Y eso es lo que realmente engancha.

Los vampiros son personajes llenos de actitud, valores y creencias, seres honorables. Darren se ve envuelto en este mundo, y aunque al principio no le gusta para nada, se va dando cuenta que es en donde pertenece.

Personajes bastante originales, y algo " *creepys* ."

La saga entera alberga momentos divertidos, hilarantes, tristes (mucho, muy tristes) y giros en la trama que sinceramente yo no me esperaba.

Hay personajes que simplemente amas y otros que odias hasta la médula (si... me refiero a STEVE)

Y el final! wow! de diez!

Una lectura rápida y obsesiva (no puedes dejar de leer hasta que acabes)

Sin duda las 5 estrellas se quedan cortas...!

Y mi frase favorita de toda la saga: *Hasta en la muerte saldrás triunfante.*

Courtney Juneau says

Cirque Du Freak is one of my favorites series. It's different, but I truly believe if you just give it a try, anyone can like it. I actually just watched the movie a few days ago, and got me back into my post-cirquedufreak

depression. All books add something new, so you aren't just reading the same old plots like in other series. The last book adds something that is so unexpected, just thinking about it is making me want to open it up and read it now. Unfortunately, the cover throws all my friends off, and none of them have read it, so I have no one to talk to about the final book, The Sons of Destiny. I read this series about two years ago, and am excited to read them again and see if they have the same affect!

Corndog says

I loved this book series with a burning passion, and it is probably one of my all time favorite series. It is just very nicely put together and I really enjoyed how the author managed to tie himself into the story. The gore and overall writing was magnificent, I would recommend this series for anyone to read.

The thing that really got me though was the movie. It was rubbish. I don't understand how a director and/or screenwriter could butcher and completely change a story line as much as they did. Why would Darren Shan allow his work to be turned into a complete disaster? It truly makes me want to cry.

Aimee Pata says

Ok, Ok... Let's just calm down a little... This series... is amazing. I've read it three times and it's still good. It's like one of those songs that you can listen to fifty times and it never gets old... Yeah... Um... That's a good simile.. ANYWAYS! I finally got the series for Christmas and I'm very much planning on reading it again but I piled up on books that I need to read. For example, Maximum Ride has slowed me down, Skulduggery Pleasant I'm in the process of reading, and there's also the Raising Dragons series that i started before all of these. Oh and Divergent, etc. people want me to read. So CDF is going to have to wait, sadly.

Colin .d says

The book was very slow then it just goes on and on and on. It was not as good and other books that I have read. If I could recommend this I would suggest read the whole series which is 8 or 9 books.

EveLyn says

a beautifully written,absolutely wonderful and fast-paced book series.

I'm a HUGE Shanster and I'm hooked!!

Jackie says

The Cirque du Freak series by Darren Shan are one of the best book series I've ever read in my life: it's right up there with the Harry Potter, The Last Apprentice, and Escape from the Furnace series. I've read many books, and book series, and not many have touched me quite like this.

The Characters:

Vampires:

Darren Shan: Darren Shan is the main character of the series, and, basically, it's about him becoming a half-vampire (later, a vampire) and having to prove his worth as a vampire. I like how, in the series, his character changes: not just in that he was once human, then half-vampire, then a vampire; but his personality and way of thinking. He grows and matures as the series continues, and is a well-rounded character.

Larten Crepsley: Darren Shan's vampire mentor, fatherly-figure and my favorite character in the whole series. Admittedly, when I first read *Cirque du Freak* (before reading *The Saga of Larten Crepsley*) I wasn't a big fan of him. I didn't love him, but I certainly didn't hate or dislike him. I felt like I didn't know enough about him to be a huge fan or anything. And when he died later on in the series, I felt sad because of his death, but mostly because of how depressed Darren got. But, after reading *The Saga of Larten Crepsley*, he officially became my favorite character in the whole series. His back story is shocking and tragic, and, I have to say, while he and Darren had both been through a lot of crap in their lives, I personally think he had an overall harder life. Before he became all stuffy and serious in *Cirque du Freak*, he was rebellious and a lady-killer. He also had done some shady things in his life that would haunt him years later (like killing those people on the ship), and witnessed things no boy should see (Vur's death, for example.) And he was betrayed by two characters I consider some of the worst in the series (Webster and Tanish.) Since they don't appear in *Cirque du Freak*, I'll go more in depth later. After re-reading the series, I found myself liking his character more. He had a great personality (he was sarcastic and witty) smart... I could go on. Bottom line, my favorite character in both *Cirque du Freak* and *The Saga of Larten Crepsley*.

Kurda/Harkat: I. Hate. Kurda. I'm sorry for all of you Kurda fans, but I really don't like him. I understand he wanted to do what he thought was right, and he had good character traits, but the way he went about it made me feel a deep hate for him that would be nearly impossible to change. I know he didn't want the vampires and vampaneze to go to war: I understand that! Des Tiny's prophecy for one, the fact there would be losses on both sides, I get it! But, the turning point for me was when he killed Gavner Purl. Was that really necessary, Kurda? Was that really necessary?! That was when you officially became a traitor, when you killed one of your own kind, practically in cold blood! But it gets worse: he planned not only to sneak the vampaneze in the vampire mountain to use the stone of blood to force an alliance, but he planned to *kill all of the vampire princes* so he could do it! If he went about trying to make an alliance between the two clans in another way, I probably wouldn't hate him. I know he thought he was doing all of this for the greater good. But the way he planned to do it... just made me feel so furious! He was willing to *murder pretty much anyone* for the vampire/vampaneze alliance. And he succeeded in killing poor Gavner! And he would've killed the princes (Paris, Arrow, Mika...). He was a traitor. *He was well meaning, but the way he went about it almost made me nauseated.* I feel that strongly about it. *On a side note, I don't think his death was Darren's fault. I believe at some point either Des Tiny or Evanna even told Darren it was unavoidable* While it was honorable he became re-incarnated as Harkat to protect Darren, knowing that in a way he'd be helping with his death, I still couldn't bring myself to forgive him after what he'd done and what he'd planned.

Vancha March: I liked his personality: he was tough, amusing, and crude. And for some reason, he was under the impression that ladies liked him. I also like how his brother was secretly Gannan Herst (vampaneze) and how they were both adopted by Evanna. But it was kind of weird that Evanna had their children, when I really think about it. I know that Evanna wasn't blood related to Vancha or Gannen, but, still, the thought is pretty strange.

Vampaneze:

The Vampaneze Lord/Steve Leopard: I. Hate. Steve. Darren sacrificed everything for him to save his life, and even after being told over and over again the truth, he still had the paranoid delusion Darren took his place as a vampire. As for Larten saying his blood was evil: I think it's true. Maybe it hurt him to hear it, but even as a kid, he was a bit violent (pushing Darren and yelling at him) (I forget what page, but I think it is when Darren tells him he saw him talking with Larten, and Darren gets nervous about the evil blood thing, and Steve *really* overreacts.) Steve is evil! He took pleasure in making others' suffer. He was cruel, on a personal level: he screwed Annie, Darren's sister, and had a child with her just to wound Darren even more than he already was! He killed Shancus, Evra's innocent child, just to hurt Darren and Evra! (It's also a little freaky to think this whole time, he and Darren were brothers (half- brothers?) so when he had Darius with Annie, it was incest.) Granted, he had no clue they were related, but it was still disturbing. There is nothing I can think of that redeemed his character, even in the end. Even after he dies. He deserved to rot in the Lake of Souls.

Members of the Circus:

Evra Von: Even though he is a relatively minor character, he was a great friend to Darren, a great father, and a great snake- boy/snake- man. I liked him. His personality, everything about him, pretty much.

Other:

Des Tiny: He is just as bad as Steve. I hate him. I don't think an explanation is needed. If you've read the whole series, you'd know how hate- able he is.

Evanna: Personally, I disliked her. Hate is too strong of a word, I don't hate her, but I dislike her. I didn't like how she treated her servants like Arra Sails and Malora. And if she honestly felt so bad about giving Larten his scar, why didn't she, I don't know, heal it; or better yet, not have given it to him at all?! Her personality annoyed me. I just felt she could be so cold and elusive.

To be continued.

*Edit

About Kurda: While I *do* hate him, I feel I've neglected to mention some of the things I actually admire about him: he did save Darren's life in the trials by convincing the princes to pretend they had other business to attend to and they couldn't make it to his trials; therefore giving Darren a few more days to recover from the burns. And while I hated some of his ideas, I admire some of them. (I'll have to get the book out to quote them later, I don't have them with me.) So, while I mentioned all the things I hate about him, there are a few admirable traits he had.

Chris Koenye says

i think this is one of the nicest vampire series ive read so far but i feel sorry for darren because he never knew his father and in the end when he does find out who his father is he also relises that he is his best friend/enemys father too who he had just killed so he kills himself too and becomes a blue cloacked guy who prevented everything from happening anyway the series is about a kid called darren who goes to a freak show but he steals mr krepsys spider who bites steve and makes him go into a comma darren agrees with

mister krepsy to become a vampire if he cures steve... steve gets cured and finds out that darren betrayed him and stole his wish to become a vampire... read the series i dont want to reck it for you

Jordan Draser says

The Cirque Du Freak series by Darren Shan has been one of the best series by far that I have ever read. I first picked up this series when I was in middle school. I just recently finished it again for the second time. Not only did I catch things I missed before, but the story line made much more sense, now that I am older and can "connect the dots" better.

What I liked best about the Cirque Du Freak series was that the story never got boring. The end of the chapters would leave you begging for more. At night I would have to force myself to put the book down and go to sleep. Also Darren Shan's detail he gave to characters was unbelievable. Throughout this series I always had a clear picture on what was going on as I read. Now the only downfall to this series would be that it is a total of 12 books, quite a lot of reading has to be done. Each book has at least 250 pages, not too long but not too short in my opinion. In the end the plot has some menacing twist and turns but always leaves the reader wondering what happens next.

To sum it up I would definitely recommend this series to anyone who loves cliffhangers. Because this series kept me wondering what happened next. Again I picked this series up in middle school so I was around the age of 13 or 14 and it wasn't difficult to read at all. I think Darren Shan did a great job writing this series. Even though I was highly disappointed with the movie came out and kind of shamed the series. But it is true, the books are way better than the movies.

Stephen Dillenback says

Cirque du freak was an amazing book. This book plays the character of a vampire named Darren Shan in other words. The writers name. After Darren steals a spider from the cirque du freak he gets forced into turning into a half vampire for punishment.

While Darren and his master mr. Crepsley travel around Darren wants to move with the circus to make friends. All that's good until Darren meets mr tiny. A powerful scary person with his army of little people. I would suggest this book to anyone of any age.

Parker O'connor says

Cirque Du Freak is a good book. The name is very catchy. I didn't expect Darren to become a vampire. When Darren and his friend Steve sneak back to steal the spider I knew something was going to go wrong. When Darren is trying to train the spider, his sister comes in the room scaring it and it mortally wounds Steve. The only way for him to get the antidote is from Mr. Crepsley. Mr. Crepsley gives him the antidote, but to pay for it Darren must become a half vampire and be his servant. I didn't think he would do it because Steve said he was going to hunt vampires when he is old enough. Darren has to fake his own death to get away from his family. He throws himself out of a window, but he heals very quickly so it doesn't really hurt him. After the funeral he is dug up and Mr. Crepsley takes him with the freak show. I think he is crazy for going threw all the trouble just to get away from his family. It made me sad when he was told he can't see his

family again. When Mr. Crepsley decided to take Darren and train him to be a vampire I was very excited. I like a lot of the other characters in the freak show. My favorite people are the small people. I like the mystery about them. They don't talk and all they do is hunt. I thought the ending left a good lead into the next book.

I would recommend this book to middle school and low high school students. I think boys would like it more because the main character is a boy and he talks like a boy would. Girls won't be able to relate to Darren as much as a boy.

I rated this book 5 out of 5 stars. It is a great book that I highly recommend. There is plenty of action. There is never a dull moment and it always has you wondering what will happen next.

Oli Powe says

Spoiler alert - basic plot points revealed

'Cirque Du Freak' by Darren Shan (the pen name of Darren O'Shaughnessy) is the first in his eponymous series, 'The Saga of Darren Shan' and plants the foundations of the forthcoming tall tale of horror in a very fun introduction. Here he claims that what his audience is about to read is an entirely true, autobiographical account, all written with the tone of "believe me, or not, but it is". Whether or not this works on the level of the younger reader who it convinces, or a slightly older horror fan enjoying the pretense of truth which is at the heart of the genre, the underlying idea about the cruelty of real life and its consequences is the real chiller here.

As Darren Shan tells us, "it began in a toilet", and that's where we first meet our protagonist, at school dismissed from class for feeling sick. The first part of the story sets the familiar scene of a young boy - who, judging by the tone, is the age of this book's target readership - who is part of a nuclear family, loves football and rolls around in a gang of four mates who talk about how much they hate homework. Sometimes a bit bland in its lack of description, which serves the authentic child's writing voice, but in lieu of fleshing out Darren's local surroundings, his friends and not even himself. However this is all build up to when two of them obtain tickets to the illegal, underground Cirque Du Freak show, which will change their lives forever!

The book's language is very straightforward and sometimes feels restricted in its range of vocabulary; perfect for lower Key Stage 2 but may lack some exciting adjectives or storytelling techniques its older readers in Years 5 and 6 would appreciate. Part of the allure of this genre has always been the notion of experiencing something prohibited or dangerous - the classic image of surreptitiously reading a scary book by torchlight past your bedtime, or watching a horror film without Mum and Dad knowing. It's a tool used in great effect towards that goal of 'reading for pleasure' and 'Cirque Du Freak's' safety in this could be the difference between attracting the widest possible KS2 readership, or just its lower years.

However, what Shan sometimes lacks in vocabulary he makes up with a great pace, pockmarked with thrilling scenes - moving along very quickly, from bad, to worse, to horrifying! From the plethora of freaks with the resonant image of Mr Crepsley the Vampire having his pet spider weave a web over his mouth, to Darren experiencing a living death where his parents discover his corpse and are crying in pain around him. This latter scene in particular is the most vivid and genuinely upsetting moment of the book. The crescendos and twists towards the end surprises the readers with strong lessons around companionship, deception and

responsibility. Like his introduction tells us, in real life there isn't always a happy ending.

Like a volume in any good series, 'Cirque Du Freak' leaves the reader gasping for more and tantalises with an excerpt from the next chapter of Darren's saga, the one in which he is now a Vampire, leaving his life of normalcy behind to quench a bloodthirst. O'Shaughnessy achieves his aim of improving on series such as Goosebumps by adding in a Stephen King-esque maturity to children's horror fiction and I'm sure most children between the age of 9 and 12 will relish it.
