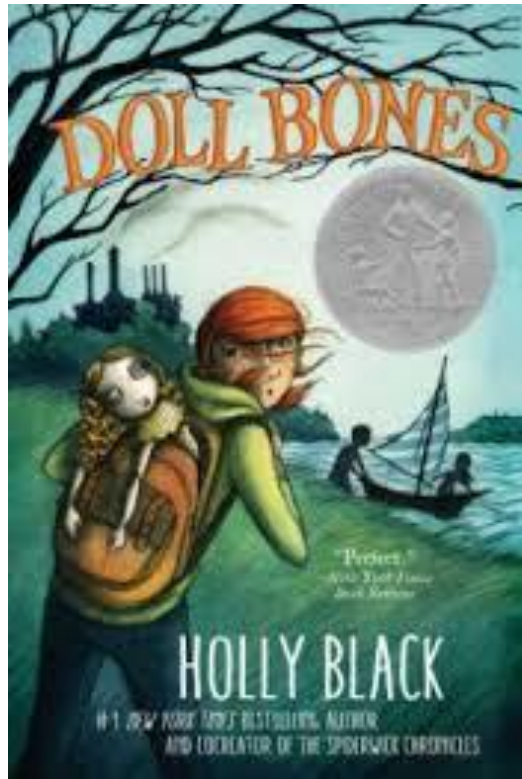


A READER'S GUIDE



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About the Author: Holly Black



Born and raised in New Jersey, Holly Black became the author of some of the bestselling contemporary fantasy novels for children and teens. She has received multiple awards including, the Andre Norton Award, the Mythopoeic Award, and a Newberry Honor for *Doll Bones*. She was also a finalist for the Eisner Award.

Q & A (from an interview on her website <http://blackholly.com/about/>)

What happens after *Doll Bones*?

Doll Bones is meant to be open ended. Not all the questions are answered, so readers can use their imagination if they want to. Feel free to speculate yourself— what do you think will happen? Was the ghost laid to rest? Was there ever a ghost at all? Will Poppy, Zach, and Alice stay friends? Will they keep playing some form of the game, and if so, as they grow up, how will the game change?

Will there be a sequel to *Doll Bones*?

Here's a book where, although I love the characters, I don't think I'd ever want to write about what happens next. I think it's important that there not be a sequel, so that you get to decide both what you think happened in the book and what you think will happen next to the characters.

How did you know you wanted to become a writer? Why did you choose to become a writer?

I've always loved reading and I've always loved making up stories. I wanted to be a writer since I was young and I guess I just never stopped wanting it.

Theme: Gender

Key Passage: “Boys had been hassling her ever since she’d hit ten, gotten curves, and started looking a lot older than she was” (Black 5).

Alice hit puberty a little early and she’s been picked on by the boys ever since. Alice is in a very tough spot, like any other pre-teen. We can see here how human elements can be just as scary as the super-natural. We can also see the boys gender roles here. If you notice, the male characters all behave badly in some way throughout the book. It’s not just Alice who sees major changes.

Key Passage: “His father loved that Zach was on the basketball team. Sometimes that seemed as if that were the only thing he liked about Zach. He didn’t like that Zach played with girls after school instead of shooting hoops with the older kids a couple blocks over” (Black 17).

The story tells us Zach’s mom talks to him about his father being brought up by a very strict father. This is probably why dad is the way he is. Like most dads they want their sons to grow up into the “man’s man” and this is what Zach’s father is trying to do, on top of being “dad”. We find out that the father threw away Zach’s doll “William Blaze”. This crushed Zach and he was not able to get ahold of his emotions and tell the girls what happened, so he ended the game. Dad had good intentions here, but went about it in the wrong way. Dad grows some too. By the end of the story he realizes maybe he shouldn’t have thrown away the toy. Here Black tells us how “gender-coded” behaviors can be enforced by adults.

Key Passage: “Okay,” Zach said to the man, leaning forward, trying to get between him and Poppy. His father would say that as the boy, it was his responsibility to protect the girls. That made him even more scared, because he was afraid he’d let him down” (Black83).

Here Zach has his first glimpse into his gender role as a male. Gender roles play a part in their game. Especially when Popp uses their doll names to ask if Zach likes Alice. The children seem to enjoy the freedom that comes with the game, but when puberty starts to arise they seem to be pushed away from it. This passage also shows us how human elements are creepy. Things change as we mature and it can be scary.

Discussion Questions

1. Which character do you think had the biggest “coming of age” or emotional maturity? Why?
2. How might the story have changed if it had been written from Poppy or Alice’s point of view?
3. Are there any symbols in *Doll Bones*? Explain.
4. Do you think Zach might grow up to be like his father? Why or why not?
5. Which character can you relate to the most? Zach, Poppy, or Alice. Explain.
6. Do you think Alice, Zach, and Poppy’s friendship was weakened or strengthened over the course of the book?

Activities

1. While reading the book take note of where and how they travel on their quest. Use this knowledge to create your own map of their adventure!
2. With all the travel and adventure this is a great time to review the states! You could label and color maps or use an interactive game found online.
3. This story is about ghosts. Share some of your favorite ghost stories!

Something Extra: Handmade Doll

What You'll Need:

- Doll template
- 10-by-18-inch piece of washable fabric
 - 10-inch square of cotton Jersey
 - Needle
 - Skin-colored thread
 - Pins
 - Wool or polyester batting
 - Chopstick
 - Yarn (for doll's hair)
 - Embroidery floss
- - **Step 1: Cut Fabric**
- Print the doll template. Fold a 10-by-18-inch piece of washable fabric (for body) end to end, right sides facing; lay template on fabric with dotted lines of shoulders on fold, and cut out along solid lines; pin. From a nearly 10-inch square of cotton jersey (for skin), cut a 3-by-7-inch strip (for head) and four 2-inch squares (for hands and feet).
 - **Step 2: Stitch Fabric**
- Starting at bottom outer edge of one leg, stitch up side to end of arm, with a 1/4-inch seam allowance. Repeat on other side of body. Sew inner edges of the legs. Notch curves on body. Fold head rectangle in half lengthwise; pin. Starting at the fold, stitch a curved shape across short end, as shown, and continue stitching down open side; snip away excess fabric, keeping 1/8-inch seam allowance. Turn both pieces' right side out.
 - **Step 3: Roll Batting**
- Cut three 2-by-7-inch strips of wool or polyester batting; lay in star shape, as shown. Roll more batting into a 2-inch ball; place on star. Bring strips up and around ball; use a chopstick and your fingers to push batting inside head. Head should be firm; add more batting if necessary, smoothing with fingers.
 - **Step 4: Make Head, Hands, and Feet**
- Tie thread the same color as skin around head below ball to create a neck. Stitch bottom opening closed. For hands and feet, place 1-inch ball of batting on each square; bundle, tying with thread.
 - **Step 5: Stuff Body**
- Stuff body, but not as firmly as head. Use gathering stitch to tighten neck opening. Slip head into neck opening. With a doubled length of skin-colored thread, whipstitch head to body, folding under raw edge of body. Repeat for hands and feet.
 - **Step 6: Make Hair and Features**
- Use pins to mark placement of features. Sew on yarn (for hair) in loops; to keep it in place, make an extra, tiny anchoring stitch at the end of every loop. For features, insert a needle threaded with embroidery floss through the back of the head and out at a pin. Stitch features; needle should exit at the back of the head. Tie off.
 - **Step 7: Complete the Hair**
- Snip loops of hair, and fluff. Use your fingers to shape the face

Works Cited

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Section 2 (Key Passages):

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Section 3 (Discussion Questions):

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Section 4 (Activities): No outside sources!

Section 5 (Something Extra):

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