

= Gregor the Overlander =

Gregor the Overlander is a children's novel by Suzanne Collins containing elements of high fantasy . It was published in 2003 and is the first book of The Underland Chronicles . It was received well by critics , and was listed as one of New York Public Library 's 100 Books for Reading and Sharing . It was featured by the U.S. National Public Radio in 2005 . Scholastic has rated the book 's " grade level equivalent " as 4 @. @ 9 and the book 's lexile score as 630L , making it reading @-@ level @-@ appropriate for the average fourth or fifth grader .

The novel has been published in several languages and is available as both an audiobook and ebook . Its United Kingdom edition was published under the alternate title Gregor and the Rats of the Underland .

= = Plot summary = =

Eleven @-@ year @-@ old Gregor is left home alone in his family 's New York City apartment to watch his sisters and grandmother . When Gregor 's baby sister Boots falls through an old air duct grate in the building 's basement , he dives in after her . The two fall miles below into the Underland : a subterranean world home to humans with near @-@ translucent skin ; giant sentient bats , rodents , and insects ; and an escalating conflict between the human city of Regalia and the rats ' King Gorger . They meet several " Underlanders " , among them the Regalians ' crown princess Luxa , her cousin Henry , and the bats who are " bonded " to them . At first , Gregor wants only to return home , but when he is attacked by two rats during an escape attempt and saved by the Underlanders , he inadvertently brings the conflict between the two groups to a head .

It is then that he learns the real reason for the rats ' hatred of Overlanders : a mysterious prophecy written by the human colony 's founder Bartholomew of Sandwich hints that an Overland " warrior " will stop an attempt by the rats to take over the underground realm once and for all . The Regalian council believes Gregor to be this warrior , and tries to convince him to undertake the quest mentioned in the " Prophecy of Gray " . Though he sympathizes , Gregor is reluctant to help until he learns a surprising fact : his father , who disappeared unexpectedly over two years before , had actually fallen down into Regalia just like Gregor and Boots and been taken prisoner by the rats . Gregor , his sister , and a group of Regalians go on a journey to rescue Gregor 's father and recruit allies for a war against the rats .

The quest group is challenged to successfully recruit allies for the Regalians , and then journeys to find Gregor 's dad emaciated and tortured in the personal prison of King Gorger . When the rat king discovers their rescue attempt , Henry reveals that he has been helping the rats all along , hoping to ally them with the Regalians and conquer the entire Underland . During the questers ' attempt to escape , Gregor sacrifices himself to lure the rats ' attack force ? King Gorger and Henry among them ? off the edge of a cliff . Henry 's bat Ares , who had no knowledge of his bond 's treachery , chooses to save Gregor rather than Henry as they fall . When the few remaining quest members make it back to Regalia , Luxa and her family are devastated , both because of Henry 's treason and death and because Ares has been sentenced to banishment ( essentially a death sentence in the Underland ) for allowing his bond to die . Gregor saves his life by using his status as the " warrior " to form a new bond with him . When things have settled down somewhat and the Regalian doctors have done all they can for his father , Gregor and his family return to the surface .

= = = The Prophecy of Gray = = =

Beware , Underlanders , time hangs by a threadThe hunters are hunted , white water runs red.The gnawers will strike to extinguish the rest.The hope of the hopeless resides in a quest .

Meaning : The usually uneasy balance of power in the Underland is in flux , with the rats ' king planning to launch an attack against the other species in the Underland . The phrase " white water runs red " refers specifically to how the humans deposit the bodies of two rats who try to kill Gregor into a fast @-@ flowing river beneath the Regalian palace . " Hope of the hopeless " may be

interpreted as a reference to Gregor , who refuses to " allow himself to think about the future at all " , because it makes him sad that he has lost his father .

An Overlander warrior , a son of the sun , May bring us back light , he may bring us back none. But gather your neighbors and follow his call Or rats will most surely devour us all .

Meaning : Gregor is an Overlander and the son of another fallen Overlander ( thus a " son " of the " sun " , in multiple ways ) . He brings the Regalians " light " ( an Underland idiom for " life " ) by killing King Gorgor and the traitor Henry . The humans ally themselves with the other species of their world , warding off an attack by the rats , who are carnivores and occasionally cannibalistic .

Two over , two under , of royal descent , Two fliers , two crawlers , two spinners assent. One gnawer beside and one lost up ahead. And eight will be left when we count up the dead .

Meaning : Gregor and Boots ; Luxa and Henry ; the bats Ares and Aurora ; two giant cockroaches named Temp and Tick ; the spiders Gox and Treflex ; and the rat Ripred all journey on a quest to find the " one lost up ahead " : Gregor 's dad . Out of the original twelve , Tick , Treflex , Gox , and Henry all die during the quest .

The last who will die must decide where he stands. The fate of the eight is contained in his hands. So bid him take care , bid him look where he leaps , As life may be death , and death life again reaps .

Meaning : Henry , the last " quester " to die , decides that he is a traitor to the humans , and seals his fate by failing to notice as Gregor leads him off a cliff . He may be interpreted as controlling the " fate of the eight " because of his powerful connection with the rats , whom he could have manipulated had he lived . The final line may have many different meanings ; among them may be a hint about how miserable Luxa is even though she lives , as Henry was her best friend until he had his life " reaped " .

= = = Characters = = =

= = = = Quest Members = = = =

Gregor : An ordinary eleven @-@ year @-@ old boy from New York City , said to be the warrior mentioned in " The Prophecy of Gray " . He is later bonded to Ares the flier .

Boots ( Margaret ) : Boots is Gregor 's two @-@ year @-@ old sister . She accidentally discovers the entrance to the Underland . She befriends the crawlers immediately and is the only reason they decide to come on the quest .

Luxa : The future queen of the Underland , about the same age as Gregor . Her parents were killed by rats shortly after Henry 's . She is bonded to Aurora the flier .

Henry : Luxa 's cousin , next in line to the throne after her . He wants to ally with the rats to conquer the " weak " species of the Underland . He dies chasing Gregor off the edge of a cliff , believing his bond Ares would always come catch him .

Ripred : A gnawer ( rat ) with deadly fighting skills and intelligence ; Vikus asks him to help the quest group into the rats ' domain .

Temp : One of two crawlers ( cockroaches ) to join the quest . He is one of the first crawlers who encounters Boots and her brother and befriends the two .

Tick : A friend of Temp who sacrifices herself to save Boots from a group of rats .

Ares : A large black flier ( bat ) bonded to Henry who chooses to save Gregor rather than his bond when the two fall off a cliff . He does not know of Henry 's treachery until after the fact , and so Gregor decides to bond with him to save him from banishment .

Aurora : A flier who is bonded to Luxa . She has a golden coat .

Gox and Treflex : Two spinners ( spiders ) who help the quest group .

Gregor 's dad : Though never named , Gregor 's father is an important member of the quest because it is he the group goes to find and rescue .

= = Publication = =

Several editions of the novel have been published since the first in 2003 , each with new or adapted cover art . To date , editions have appeared in German , French , Spanish , Norwegian , Italian , Polish , Greek , Dutch , Finnish , and Chinese . Scholastic has also licensed the novel 's rights to publishers in several other languages . In 2006 The Chicken House produced yet another edition , distributed in the UK by Gardners Books . This edition was published under the alternate title Gregor and the Rats of the Underland .

The novel was available as an ebook as early as 2010 , and as part of a boxed set . An audiobook edition was published December 13 , 2005 , read by actor and narrator Paul Boehmer .

= = Reception = =

Gregor the Overlander has received much critical acclaim , primarily for its new treatment of common themes in fantasy . School Library Journal called it " an engrossing adventure for fantasy fans and for those new to the genre . " Common Sense Media gave it a 5 / 5 and credited the book 's " strong characters , vivid descriptions , flawless pacing , breathless excitement , laughs and scares , and a vision that makes this fantasy very different . " Readers have also praised the novel ; Jane LeGak , an Amazon Reviewer , stated that , " Rats and other wonderfully creepy creatures fill the story 's dark underworld , but what makes this book so wonderful is how human it is . " A. Reid , also from Amazon.com , praised the believable characters , saying , " Gregor is one of the most warmly believable characters I 've encountered in a children 's novel in a long time . " As of August 2015 , users on Amazon.com had given the book a rating of 4 @. @ 5 stars out of 5 , and Barnes & Noble reviews awarded it a total of 4 @. @ 4 stars .

The book has also been praised for covering political themes , such as war and genocide , while still maintaining an adventurous feeling . Collins herself has stated that " she spent hours ... plotting strategic alliances that would make military sense " in a way that kept such themes accessible for younger audiences . Publishers Weekly 's review of the novel was " starred " , an honor reserved for books of " exceptional merit " . The reviewer stated , " Collins does a grand job of world @-@ building , with a fine economy of words @-@ no unnecessary details bog down either the setting or the invigorating story . In her world , a child singing " Patty @-@ Cake " can change the course of history and a stoic rat can mourn the fact that although he is able to read , he cannot write because he has no thumb . Unlike Gregor who cannot wait to leave , readers will likely find it to be a fantastically engaging place . "

Despite the mainly positive reviews , the novel has received some negative criticism . One critical review by Children 's Literature writer Tina Gregory points out that " the novel lacks at certain points necessary descriptive details of the characters and settings . For instance , the descriptions of Regalia , the Underland city , and many of the book 's characters should be so distinct that we visualize them . " The same School Library Journal review which praised the novel 's " exciting scenes and cliff @-@ hanger chapters " also had this to say : " Gregor is not the most compelling figure at first , but as the story progresses he becomes more interesting , maturing through the challenges he faces . "

Gregor the Overlander was named a Kirkus Reviews Editors ' Choice and placed third for the Nutmeg Children 's Book Award in 2006 in the intermediate category . It was also nominated for the Kansas William Allen White Children 's Book Award , the Pacific Northwest Young Reader 's Choice Award , and several other awards . It won the Pennsylvania Young Readers ' Choice Award for 2005 ? 2006 and was the first runner @-@ up for the Texas Bluebonnet Award .