



# I Wish I'd Written? Tom's Midnight Garden

By *Richard Hill*

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Article Author:

[Chris Priestley](#) [1]

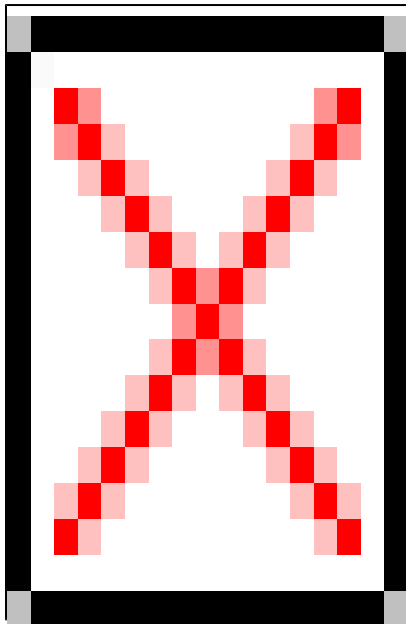
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**Chris Priestley** chooses Philippa Pearce's **Tom's Midnight Garden**.



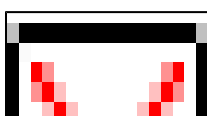
**Chris Priestley** on a novel about the joy and pain of memory?

**Tom's Midnight Garden** may not seem an obvious choice for a writer of horror fiction, but it is nevertheless the children's book I think I would most like to have written.

To a new reader, **Tom's Midnight Garden** may, on the face of it, appear to be yet another children's story about an enchanted garden. But it isn't ? not really. It is often described as a time-slip novel, but there is something much more subtle going on than that. Tom does not so much go back in time to visit Harriet, as enter the memories of Harriet's dreaming older self.

**Tom's Midnight Garden** *is* about time, but in a much more interesting way than simply playing around with the idea of time travel. It's about the joy and pain of memory. It's about longing. It's a grown-up novel about growing up. It's a children's book about the end of childhood.

And it is incredibly moving. There are simply not enough children's books that deal with the gentleness and vulnerability of boys. The scenes toward the end when Tom is literally fading in Harriet's thoughts, is heartbreaking. Philippa Pearce was a wonderful writer and this is a truly wonderful book.



(50th anniversary edition) and 978 0 19 279424 6, £5.99 pbk.

Chris Priestley's latest book is **The Dead of Winter** (978 1 4088 0013 3) published by Bloomsbury in October at £10.99.

Photo of Chris Priestley by Judith Weik.

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