

The Woman in Black

reviewed by [Steve A. Vineberg](#) in the [April 4, 2012](#) issue

The Gothic *The Woman in Black*, based on a Susan Hill novel and set in turn-of-the-century England, is so terrifying that it feels like a classic of its type. Daniel Radcliffe, drenched in emotion, plays a young solicitor who can't get himself out of the darkness into which he descended four years ago when his wife died in childbirth. When his firm sends him to a remote village to evaluate the estate of a recently deceased woman, he discovers that her house on the marshes is haunted by a ghost pursuing a vendetta that endangers all the children in the area.

Director James Watkins and cinematographer Tim Maurice-Jones evoke a mood of desolate loneliness and peril, and the imagery is both beautiful and profoundly unsettling. Children's windup toys have rarely been used to such frightening effect. You may want to watch *Hugo* afterward—with its marvelous, candied images of mechanical toys—to stave off nightmares.