



Pushing Back: Book One in the Boone Series

Jim Hartsell , Nick Castle (Cover)

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The Boone Series is the story of a teenager on the fringes of society. He doesn't have looks, or money, or education going for him, but he's a decent human being trying to grow up with the odds stacked against him. He is often belittled or ignored, but like others out there on the edge of things, he has a story that deserves to be heard. "Pushing Back" is told from Boone's point of view.

The first book in the series finds Boone at sixteen years old, in a family he can't wait to escape. His father is an angry drunk who scrapes out a living doing farm work and takes out most of his frustration and rage on his family. Boone's mother is a passive sort, unable or unwilling to stand up to her husband, and his sister is only seven, so he feels like he can't leave. Then, in one weekend, his family disintegrates around him and Boone finds himself alone for the first time in his life.

Soon he begins to realize how much of his father's anger and mistrust is also a part of him, and much of his struggle to become an adult revolves around trying to let go of most of what his daddy taught him.

Circumstance brings him into contact with an elderly neighbor, and he and Gamaliel form an unlikely friendship. Gamaliel's son-in-law has nothing but contempt for Boone and the conflicts with him bring out the worst in Boone's character.

Boone's low social standing and his inexperience with most kinds of relationships makes his growing involvement with Nancy, a former classmate, full of stumbles and missteps on his part and a determination on hers to make things work, even though she has her share of normal teenage insecurity as well.

A decent person at heart, Boone's battle with his inner demons and his almost complete lack of knowledge about the adult world make his progress intermittent at best, full of setbacks often of his own making. He approaches maturity clumsily, but when he can figure out the right thing to do, he usually does it. Unfortunately for him and those around him, sometimes his anger and insecurity get in the way.

Pushing Back: Book One in the Boone Series Details

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From Reader Review Pushing Back: Book One in the Boone Series for online ebook

Tilmer Jr. says

I absolutely loved this story. Hartsell has a prodigious talent for painting character portraits from a first person perspective. The central character, Boone, is three-dimensional, beautifully imperfect and wholly engaging. He is a teenage boy who is forced to embrace adulthood ahead of schedule due to tragic circumstances in his life. I was riveted to Boone's psyche and, even though this sounds completely like a cliche, I could not stop turning the pages.

First person narrative is notoriously hard to pull off convincingly. Hartsell nails it. I felt like a part of Boone - a confidant, if you will. By the time I got halfway through the story I felt like he was a good friend telling me all about his hopes, worries and challenges. He carries the optimism of youth clouded by the harshness of the reality around him. His life is not easy by any stretch, but he is strong and carries on. Tragedy hammers him. Uncertainty rails against his peace of mind. His father's darkness and his mother's distance haunt him. Still, hope remains.

Life remains. Boone perseveres.

I really enjoyed this book. I flew through it. It was almost over too soon. Highly recommended!

Just for you parents out there : This book is appropriate for mid-teens and up in my opinion. There is sparse mild profanity, some violence and some very light sexual situations - nothing explicit.

Dwayne Fry says

There were hints of a good story in here and there, which kept me reading. But, those hints were short-lived and didn't deliver much of a punch.

The book starts off fairly good. A kid's mom runs off and his dad kills himself. There was promise of an interesting story here. How is this sixteen year old boy going to get by on his own? What if someone catches on and tries to get him to leave his farm? Yet, none of that really materializes. The kid seems to fall into money whenever he needs it, so he's able to buy groceries, keep the lights on and so on. There's no real struggle. The author seems to be afraid to challenge Boone, the main character.

Boone spends an awful lot of time farting around his farm, doing nothing. He goes and checks on his pond to see if it's there. He goes to check his dad's grave and finds it still there. Boone spends a lot of time watching TV, napping, eating pizza, and drinking "shine" (moonshine). The book would have worked a whole lot better as a novella by trimming all this pointless meandering around the farm. Boone even drops out of school to prevent us from having him interact with anyone interesting.

Boone has a neighbor, who is pretty much like himself, only much older. Boone goes up to visit with his neighbor, who also lives alone and doesn't seem to have much going on in his life, either. The old man yells at Boone for coming to visit, but Boone keeps going back for some reason.

The book becomes laughably unrealistic when a lawyer shows up on Boone's doorstep. He was looking for the old man and went to the wrong farm. So, the lawyer suggests Boone should look in on the old neighbor now and then. The old man's daughter pops in for a visit and suggests the same thing to Boone. Is there no one else in this county? Why entrust the old man's health and welfare to some kid who barely knows him?

There's a girl Boone knows named Nancy who comes around now and then, spends about two minutes with him and then freaks out and leaves again over some little thing. She does this repeatedly. The author seemed to be in a hurry to get back to scenes of Boone drinking shine and checking to see if his pond is still there. Why waste a lot of pages on interaction with another character?

And then the book kind of ends with another ridiculously unbelievable turn of events for the kid. Reading the blurb of the second book, it seems to be promising that stuff will finally happen to Boone. So, I guess the first book is really just an overly drawn out introduction for the second book? I am curious to see if we finally get to a story, but I already wasted three bucks on this book. Not sure I can handle another entire book of a boy wandering aimlessly around a farm.

Cyn Taylor says

The writing in *Pushing Back* was so true to the Appalachian way of life in the hills of Tennessee I have to admit I was a bit uncomfortable reading it. Reminded me too much of how my life went in my teens. That is also what made it such a good read. The author does a fabulous job of drawing you in with first person narrative. Not my favorite viewpoint but well done in this book. At times I wondered if the author might possibly be recounting a bit of his own youth. Even though this is a coming of age series, I would not recommend it to anyone under age eighteen. Too graphic at times, which also helped make it a great read. Planning to read book two ASAP.

Wayne Zurl says

PUSHING BACK by Jim Hartsell.....

It's easy to write a first person story when your protagonist is your age and has close to your life experience. Middle-aged Jim Hartsell was able to place himself within the head of a seriously troubled teenager and articulate all the boy's fears, hates and other emotions in a way that made me think the character (Boone) was writing his memoir. You can read the summary to get the gist of the story. What you can't read on the dust jacket is the brilliance of this author who goes beyond just storytelling and captures the depth of what Life has inflicted on this seventeen-year-old. Top shelf writing. 5 stars.
