



I Know Your Kind: Poems

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Selected for the National Poetry Series by Ada Limon, *I Know Your Kind* is a haunting, blistering debut collection about the American opioid epidemic and poverty in rural Appalachia.

In West Virginia, fatal overdoses on opioids have spiked to three times the national average. In these poems, William Brewer demonstrates an immersive, devastating empathy for both the lost and the bereaved, the enabled and the enabler, the addict who knocks late at night and the brother who closes the door. He shows us the high, at once numbing and transcendent: "this warm moment when I forget which part of me / I blamed." He shows us the overdose, when "the poppies on my arms / bruised red petals." And he shows us the mourner, attending his high school reunion: "I guess we were underdressed: / me in my surf shoes / you in an urn." Underneath and among this multiplicity of voices runs the Appalachian landscape--a location, like the experience of drug addiction itself, of stark contrasts: beauty and ruin, nature and industry, love and despair.

Uncanny, heartbreaking, and often surreal, *I Know Your Kind* is an unforgettable elegy for the people and places that have been lost to opioids.

I Know Your Kind: Poems Details

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Author : William Brewer

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From Reader Review I Know Your Kind: Poems for online ebook

Maddie (HedgehogBookReviews) says

You can also find this review on Hedgehog Book Reviews!

This is a selection of poetry about the opioid epidemic, focusing on Oceana, West Virginia (sometimes called Oxyana). The poems' subjects range from detox, halfway houses, withdrawal, to Naloxone. I Know Your Kind is told in the voice of a someone, first hand, struggling with addiction.

I wish I could add more to my brief summary of this collection, as it's far beyond merely a selection of poems told in the voice of an opioid addict. These poems have so much substance to them; they're very powerful. They are powerful for two reasons— they can teach readers about the realities of addiction and they can make other addicts feel less alone in their struggles. I was extremely pleased with how touching, emotional, and human the voice in the poems read. I truly think this is an amazing work.

I want to highlight some lines that really blew me away.

“Who can stand another night

stealing fistfuls of pills

from our cancer-sick neighbors?”

“We were so hungry; Tom’s hand

on the table looked like it was warm bread.

I crushed it with a hammer”

Going back and reading all of the places I marked in this book (there were a lot of sticky tabs!) prove how raw and honest William Brewer’s words are. I’ve never read a work that outlines these particular aspects of addiction: stealing pills from sick individuals and purposely harming oneself or friends to get a prescription for pain medication. These are topics not touched upon in many books about addiction, at least out of the handful that I’ve read. I loved the articulation and authenticity that went into the experiences that William Brewer chose to write about.

I want to tell everyone I know about I Know Your Kind. I think it has the power to educate those who have loved ones that struggle with addiction. I also think this work has the power to unite those struggling with addiction, whether they’re in recovery or not. These two reasons make this collection of poetry one of my favorites that I’ve read not only this year, but in the entire time I’ve run my book review website. I Know

Your Kind really hit the mark. I'm so thankful that honest, real poems about the opioid epidemic exist and are accessible for anyone to read and learn from.

I want to give a big 'thank you' to Milkweed Editions for agreeing to send me a copy of this work in exchange for an honest review. I wish I had William Brewer's personal email so I could tell him, myself, how touched I was by his words. I wish I had 20 copies to give out to friends and family to share this collection of bravery and power. I very much look forward to reading more works from Milkweed Editions in the future, as I Know Your Kind was an excellent addition to my blog and my bookshelf of 'favorites'.

Kate Gaskin says

These poems are haunting and beautifully wrought. Each line is more skillfully rendered and devastating to read than the next. Brewer's talent with image and metaphor makes every single poem a pleasure to read, even when the subject matter is so sad and disturbing. Love, love, loved this book.

Peggy says

How can I learn to write poems like these? They bring something to me--they are from everywhere, they could be from Wisconsin, we have plenty of addicts. But they are about West Virginia and remind me of my first winter when I lived in Beckley and traveled through the wilds of Wyoming County occasionally for work. I am there in these poems among beauty and despair, with a brother, pushing against the edges of our lives, why, I don't know, we do this because that's what we do. The book describes addiction in Oceana (Oxyana) from half-way house to relapse to resolution to half-way house to overdose. This is where "...the power plant / is a womb for clouds. // The clouds aren't real / because no matter / how hard I look I see // only clouds in them, not rabbits / or a pirate ship or hands." The images come fast and thick but they are always told from a true voice. The poems are powerfully formed. I need to deconstruct them, learn from them, but the first reading was emotional for me, as it will be for many readers. Pure poetry.

I know Your Kind is a finalist in the National Poetry Series competition. I understand why after reading this book.

Karen says

In his first full-length collection of poetry, William Brewer explores the opioid epidemic in his home state of West Virginia. In a recent interview, Brewer explains that he didn't want to write about the epidemic, but couldn't get away from it -- I'm glad that he decided to explore this subject, as his book is full of rich, lyrical poems told from many perspectives of this crisis! A great read!

Kari says

.Reading poetry aloud would not only help with my depression, but also strengthen the bond (through

speech) with my bird, I thought. Perhaps poems about addiction, and the melancholic yearning for oblivion that comes with it, wasn't a great choice.

I love this collection, although it didn't help with the depression.

Incredible volume.

Allison says

Wonderful book. Haunting poems about the opioid crisis in West Virginia. Highly recommended.

Nicole Hardina says

I Know Your Kind is an artifact of grief for the time we are living in, in which opiate addiction has led to widespread heroin use and the place the author calls home, West Virginia, has been particularly affected. This work is an important addition to a sad canon of work on this topic, but one that should be read to more fully understand. Read Sam Quinones' *Dreamland* to understand how this happened; read William Brewer's *I Know Your Kind* to feel its impact.

Erica Wright says

This brilliant and devastating collection examines the opioid epidemic of rural America. No, not examines. Breathes, confronts, grieves, defies, succumbs, survives. Brewer doesn't so much transcend the content as explode it. Each poem works as a standalone, but as a whole? A triumph. Sure to be one of my top 2017 collections.

Hapzydeco says

In his poems William Brewer projects a light on the emotional and intense subject of opioid epidemic of rural America.

Sandra says

Just about every one of these poems is an explosion in the heart, they are that powerful. This beautifully organized collection addresses the drug epidemic, particularly of the drug OxyContin, the one that has been replaced by heroin, in West Virginia. Brewer writes with pain and compassion drawing on the West Virginian landscape and its way of life, in exquisite descriptions, at once bleak and reverent, and speaking as a first degree witness to the individual who suffers addiction, overdose, recovery, relapse, death, and aftermath, including the despair of the family and community. So many of his lines burn. Here are only two of many that speak to me, these from "In the Room of the Overdosed, an Ember":

Once as boys we found a snakeskin hanging the barn rafters and wondered.

Tell me, do pieces of us also get caught on our way to heaven.

Jen Hamon says

There were so many moments while reading this when I realized I was holding my breath. I have relatives in West Virginia, spent some summers there as a child, and always felt that it was a land that time forgot. Reading this book took me back to those places and filled me up with the sorrow of a life that could have been mine if my dad had not left there in the early 1980's.

Mike Good says

I Know Your Kind conveys the pervasive shadow the opioid epidemic casts across Oceania, WV—and, by extension, towns like Oceania—in a way that statistics, figures, and journalism cannot..."

I hope you'll dig my full review on the Ploughshares blog: <http://blog.pshares.org/index.php/rev...>

Kristin MB says

Maybe this should be 4.5 stars. Maybe 5 stars. I never know how to rate poetry, but I did think these were excellent, and I recommend this collection without reservation.

Rachel says

Okay, let me explain myself a bit here. I'm not a reader of poetry. I read this book as part of a challenge I made to myself to read 40 books outside of my "normal". I chose this book by searching for recently published books of poetry. I made the erroneous assumption that something that was published more recently would be easier to understand. It isn't. This book attempts to take a very real look at the opioid crisis in our country, but it comes off as the ramblings of someone who may or may not be on drugs as they are writing their poems. It didn't make any sense to me, and probably reinforced my dislike of poetry in general.

Amanda says

Brewer, William. I Know Your Kind. Minneapolis, Milkweek, 2017.

In this collection of poems about the opioid crisis, Brewer weaves together Biblical tales and Greek mythology with the visceral narrative of addiction and all those caught in its web. Brewer crafts something so messy and monstrous into poems so beautifully constructed and seemingly simple they pierce the skin and awaken the consciousness to a problem of one community part of a national epidemic.

