



## The Brimstone Journals

*Ron Koertge*

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**The Brimstone Journals** Ron Koertge

**In a startling, often poignant student journal, acclaimed poet and novelist Ron Koertge creates a suburban high school both familiar and terrifying.**

The Branston High School Class of 2001 seems familiar enough on the surface: there's the Smart One, the Fat Kid, Social Conscience, Bad Girl, Good Girl, Jock, Anorexic, Dyke, Rich Boy, Sistah, Stud . . . and Boyd, an Angry Young Man who has just made a dangerous new friend. Now he's making a list.

The Branston High School Class of 2001. You might think you know them. You might be surprised.

Narrated by fifteen teenage characters, this startling, often poignant poetic novel evokes a suburban high school both familiar and terrifying — and provides an ideal opportunity for young adults to discuss violence in schools.

## **The Brimstone Journals Details**

Date : Published January 5th 2004 by Candlewick Press (first published February 1st 2001)

ISBN : 9780763617424

Author : Ron Koertge

Format : Paperback 128 pages

Genre : Poetry, Young Adult, Fiction, Teen

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## From Reader Review The Brimstone Journals for online ebook

### **bjneary says**

I read this realistic fiction novel in verse as part of the November chat for #yearoya focusing on books written between 2002 and 2007. My students always loved Ron Koertge books, I never found the time to read this, I am so glad I did. With school shootings making the news, this High School in 2001 is dealing with bullying, romance, sexual abuse, and a dangerous group who are making a list of those who will not make it. The teen voices are real and span all kinds of high school kids. Thankfully teens don't shy from talking to the adults and police when they fear for their life. An ALA Notable Book in 2002.

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### **Eme87 says**

High school students explain what is happening in their lives through short, poetry like entries. When some discover there will be violence at the school, they have to decide what they will do about that information.

Grades 9-12

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### **Sandi says**

This book is too short. I really don't believe in short books; that's not to say I need a 1,000 page novel either, but 113 pages in a verse novel....too short.

The problem is there isn't enough time to build up what could be facinating characters beyond superficial and slightly sterotypical images.

I never really understod the community nor the culture of the people either. there was an emmence amount of underlying racism, but why? Where was this, when?

The adults in the book were also portrayed as pretty dumb and black and white.

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### **Arya Moaref says**

#### **Summary**

The Brimstone Journals are the Journals of kids going to the same high school. You have your stereotypes like the homosexual, the jock, and the overweight kid. But the interesting thing is even though two people might not be friends; you can read about other characters in the journals since it seems to be a small high school. The main plot is about Boyd and how he tries to get back at everyone who has done something to him and they are put on a list. But in the end Lester saves the school but ratting him out, which evidently, Boyd didn't hate him for. In the end you have Sheila who admits to being a homosexual and being in love with Monica. Meredith goes to prom with Lester who didn't even think he would get a date. Allison tells a

counselor about her stepfather sexually harassing her. These all come to a full circle when the police are told about what Boyd is going to do.

## Review

This was an interesting book and since it was in the form of a poem, it was an extremely fast read. It had its dull moments at times but it got interesting too. Some characters didn't have interesting stories while I was fascinated by other stories. An example is the story about Kelli and Damon and how Damon thought she loved him but she in fact hated his guts. Another is how Rob doesn't know why he is on the list while Jennifer seemed to have been raped by him. The stories don't seem to connect but in the end you see how Boyd connects most of them by trying to kill all the people on his "list". He doesn't succeed but up until the police catch there is some suspense that is built but not a lot since the stories don't all completely relate so the book sometimes seems to go off topic. Overall it seemed to be a great book but I would rather read a normal book rather than a poem.

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## **Brea Mapes says**

I read the book "The Brimstone Journals" by Ron Koertge. This book was a very short and easy read. This book is centered on the high school class of 2001. Like every other high school, there is the stereotypical students. The fat kid, the jock, the nerd, and much more. The book takes a look at all the students and gives the reader the point of view of everyone. Boyd is a troubled young man who meets a boy named Mike. Boyd and Mike start a hit list of the kids from Boyd's class. Anyone and everyone who upset Boyd in any way was put on the list. Boyd manipulated kids to join his "club" so he could have more pawns in his game. Boyd gets arsenal from a local store and many other deadly weapons. Boyd was eventually stopped and unable to finish the hit. Personally I expected a lot more from this book, and because of that, I was disappointed. At times it was hard to keep the students straight and got somewhat confusing. Other than that it was an extremely short book, and had a decent story line to it.

The main character in this story was Boyd. Boyd was a very troubled young man who had problems in his life. He and his father fought all the time, and Boyd was a drug addict. Boyd was the druggy, thug of the school that everyone was afraid of. He is an amazing manipulator, convincing people to do things he wants. He planned on killing every person who every crossed his path the wrong way. Boyd got caught up with a guy named Mike, who helped him plan. The plan backfired when one of Boyd's "friends" tattled on him to the cops. The end of the book never told the story of what happened to Boyd, so it is still a mystery.

This story takes place in the town of Branston, in 2001. The story shifts from the school to Boyd's house.

The author's message in this story is that rebellious teens can lead to disaster. The author shows how just one kid's problems can be devastating to many. He shows that one decision made by an unruly teenager can affect so many lives. That we as humans should not judge or hurt anyone else, because we care all in this together.

I would recommend this book to high school students due to the violence and language used in its content.

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### **Kori Looker says**

"The Brimstone Journals" was a new concept of reading for me. This book is written in journal segments by each of the 15 students in the class of 2001 at Branston High School. There are many characters in this book that are categorized like students in any school. There was the common geek, the athletic one, the socially awkward, and so forth. Boyd, an angry boy, doesn't fit a category. Boyd is the type of boy that has a list of people he wants to kill. Boyd and his friend, Mike, try and find other kids to join their brotherhood. They plan to go and shoot up the school. The socially awkward boy, Lester, goes to the police before Boyd can carry out his plan.

This book is told from each students point of view. Each page of the book is a journal entry by each person. There are 15 students that have a journal entry in this book. Meredith is an eighteen year old girl that can get whatever guy she wants. Tran is forced to go to Branston High School due to his father's job. Shelia is struggling with how to tell people that she is a lesbian. Damon is a jock that is good at every sport. Rob is just a kid who does what he wants. Lester is a boy that struggles with his weight and being socially awkward. Kelli is a girl who is trying to find who she really is. Boyd is a nut with anger problems. Neesha is an African American who doesn't know where she belongs. Joseph is very environmentally friendly. Allison has problems with her stepdad getting too close to her. Kitty is an overweight girl who struggles with fitting in. David deals with anger issues, but not like Boyd's anger. Carter is an African American who follows his father's footsteps.

The setting takes place at Branston High School. The brotherhood gathers at Boyd's father's house. I believe the time period takes place during modern times.

The theme of this book is about personality. This book expressed many personalities of many teenage students. The characters' personalities defined who they were.

I recommend this book to teenagers. Teenagers might relate more to the characters in this book. I found this book to be confusing to follow along. I would like the book more if the journal entries were longer.

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### **Jorge says**

In the Brimstone journals lester is the socially awkward, meanly unwell, teenager who is constantly pick on by most of his class mates. The main focuse is lester's path to becoming a school shooter. how will this affect the other characters.

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### **Hailee Gorges says**

"The Brimstone Journals" was kind of confusing to me at first. This book is about the class of 2001 at Branston High School. This book is written in journal segments by each of the 15 students in the class of 2001. Like every high school there are many different personalities. There are the athletic kids, the geeks, the socially awkward, the good and bad girls, the self conscience kids and this one boy named Boyd. Boyd is a very angry boy who has a list of people that he wants to kill. Boyd and Mike try and find other kids to join

their brotherhood. They plan on the 17th to go and shoot up the school. Luckily, Lester goes to the police before Boyd can carry out his plan.

This book is told from each students point of view. Each page of the book is a journal entry by each person. There are 15 students that have a journal entry in this book. Meredith is an eighteen year old girl that can get whatever guy she wants. Lester is a boy that struggles with his weight and being socially awkward. Tran is a kid who came to this school, because his dad moved, due to his job. Shelia is struggling with how to tell people that she is a lesbian. Damon is a jock that is good at every sport. Kelli is a girl who is trying to find who she really is. Boyd is an angry young man with an anger problem. Neesha is an African American who doesn't know where she belongs. Joseph, like his parents, is very environmentally friendly. Allison has problems with her stepdad getting to close to her. Kitty is an overweight girl who struggles with fitting in. David had anger issues and can't find a way to deal with his anger. Carter is an African American who follows in his father's footsteps. Rob is just a kid who does what he wants.

The setting of this book takes place mainly in Branston High School. The time period of this story is not really mentioned, but it takes place during modern times.

The theme of this book is to be our own person. Everyone has a different personality, sometimes we just don't all show it. Everyone in this book showed who they really were. They all expressed their personality and that really showed.

I recommend this book to anyone who is in high school and beyond. This book does have some parts that are mildly inappropriate for younger kids. This was an easy read book, with good imagery.

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## **Hunter says**

### **The Brimstone Journals**

The Brimstone Journals is about all these kids that are in the same high school together and each one of them writes their own journal entries each day. It could be what is going on in their lives or what they are doing in school, etc. In this school, there is all different kinds of kids: the smart one, the fat kid, social conscience, bad girl, good girl, jock, anorexic, dyke, rich boy, sistah, stud... and Boyd, an angry young man who has just made a dangerous new friend. Now he is making a list. Boyd creates a gang and says that anyone who joins him, he will protect them. He asks Lester, the fat kid, and Lester is always getting bullied by Damon, the jock, so he agrees. What Lester doesn't know is that Boyd has got a list and if you make him mad then you get put on the list. Later, Lester gets put on the list, and he tells the police that Boyd has got guns and ammo at his house so they go there. They go up in his room, and find a whole arsenal up there, and the police call for backup, and Boyd gets arrested. Then Lester stands up to Damon, and then everything is back to normal.

The book takes place in Branston High School, with the members from the class of 2001. The setting is at the school most of the book and a little bit of outside the school. It is wherever each of the student's journal entries take place. A little bit at each others house, school, work, etc, whatever is happening in their lives.

There are a lot of characters in this book. The two main characters would be Boyd and Lester. Boyd is the one that creates the list of people that he wants to kill. He tries recruit a bunch of people from the school to be apart of his gang. Anyone that makes Boyd mad in anyway, then they get put on the list. He tries to recruit Lester, and Lester says yes, and then he tells Lester that he can protect him from Damon, the jock if he joins. Then there is Lester, he is a bigger kid. He gets picked on a lot and he doesn't know how to stand up for

himself. Later, he asked out this girl Meredith, she says yes. Also, that he should stay away from Boyd, because he is bad news. Lester now learns of this list and makes Boyd mad so now he is on it. Lester goes to the police, and he takes them to Boyd's house where he has gotten a whole arsenal of guns in his room.

I would give the book a four star rating because it is very interesting to see what goes on in each one of their lives everyday. I like this book because you never know what is going to happen next and it always make you think. The theme of this book would be that if you don't think that something isn't right, then don't do it and also to be yourself, don't let people push you around. I would recommend this book to someone who likes non fiction books that you don't know what is going to happen next. It makes you think about what is going on, and how you treat someone can make a difference whether it be good or bad.

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### **Sadie Kaminske says**

I read the book "The Brimstone Journals" by Ron Koertge. I enjoyed this book a lot because it was such a short and easy read. "The Brimstone Journals" is centered on the high school class of 2001. Like every other high school, there is the stereotypical students. The fat kid, the jock, the nerd, and much more. The book takes a look at all the students and gives the reader the point of view of everyone of them. Boyd is a troubled young man who meets a kid named Mike. Boyd and Mike start a hit list of the kids from Boyd's class. Anyone and everyone who upset Boyd in any way was put on the list. Boyd manipulated kids to join his "club" so he could have more pawns in his game. Boyd gets arsenal from a local store and many other deadly weapons. Boyd was eventually stopped and unable to finish the hit. Personally I expected a lot more from this book, and because of that, I was disappointed. At times it was hard to keep the students straight and got somewhat confusing. Other than that it was an extremely short book, and had a decent storyline to it.

The main character in this story was Boyd. Boyd was a very troubled kid that had problems in his life. He and his father fought all the time, and Boyd was a drug addict. Boyd was the druggy of the school that everyone was afraid of. He is an amazing manipulator, convincing people to do things he wants. He planned on killing every person who ever crossed his path the wrong way. Boyd got caught up with a guy named Mike, who helped him plan. The plan backfired when one of Boyd's "friends" tattled on him to the cops. The end of the book never told the story of what happened to Boyd, so it is still a mystery.

This story takes place in the town of Branston, in 2001. The story shifts from the school to Boyd's house. The school was the main place in this book, because that is where the storyline took place.

The theme in this story is that everyone has their own problems. The author shows how just one kid's problems can be devastating to many. He shows that one decision made by an unruly teenager can affect so many lives. That we as humans should not judge or hurt anyone else, because we are all in this together.

I would recommend this book to high school students because there is a lot of violence and swearing in this book.

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### **Ruby Locken says**

This book was fun to read because it was in verse which I always enjoy because I never get bored while reading them. This book was interesting because there were so many characters to keep up with. I liked how

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you could see so many different peoples points of views on one event or topic which made it fun to read. I would recommend this book to someone who is looking for a quick but enjoyable read.

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### **Lillian Nemmers says**

It's about a boy named Boyd and he's making a list of people he wants dead. A bunch of different people were writing about themselves and what they were thinking. As more people were being put on the list, more people were finding out. Some people just thought it was rumors others just ignored it. One kid named Lester went to the cops and they went to the house and found a bomb in the basement. Since he was 18 he was in a lot of trouble. They found out he was planning to put the bomb in the cafeteria to kill everyone he didn't like.

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### **MissDziura says**

Ron Koertge's emotionally-charged, and real-life look at fifteen high school students is a must read. The subject matter is definitely intended for mature readers in 8th grade and above. The Brimstone Journals contains poems written by the fifteen different high school students that are each going through their own issues from being bullied, harassed, abused, and just trying to navigate through high school. Throughout the story there is a thread of an intended act of violence set to happen at school with guns, bombs, and a list. Each student is a part of this plan either because they intend to act on it, or are one of the chosen. The story of each student plays out realistically and Koertge leaves the reader with a feeling of relief and sadness. Very well written and highly recommended.

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### **Alex M Mister says**

I liked this book because the way that the story is told through small parts is well done. The book has a suspenseful plot and the characters are all very different and add to the overall story.

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### **Alecea Harrison says**

The book "The Brimstone Journals" by Ron Koertge tells a great story that has to do with relationship with people in high school. This told one story from different points of views of high school students. This is quick read and with the different points of view it keep you intrigued. The book is going to make you keep reading to see what happens at the end.

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