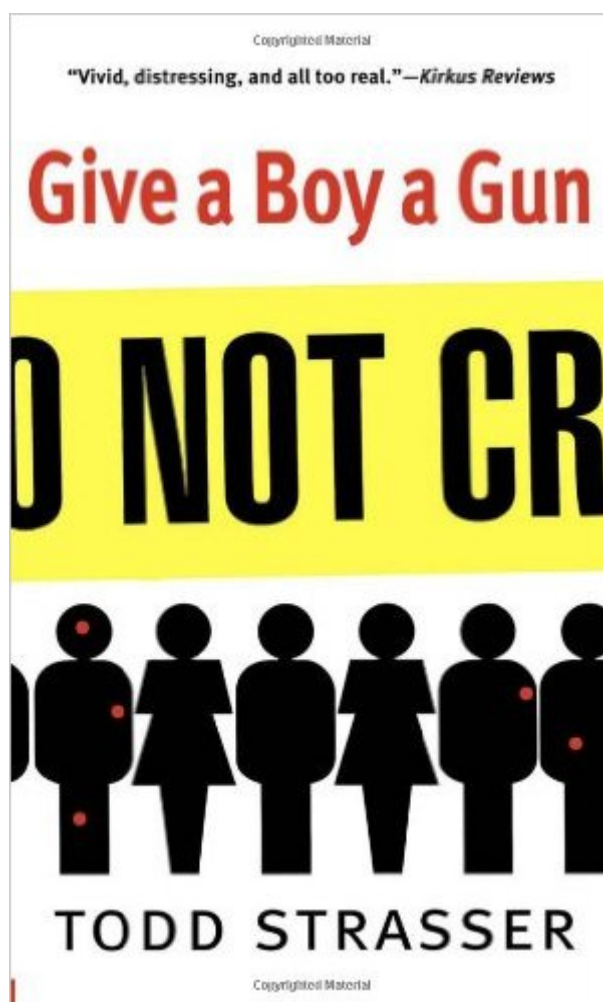


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Give A Boy A Gun



Synopsis

For as long as they can remember, Brendan and Gary have been mercilessly teased and harassed by the jocks who rule Middletown High. But not anymore. Stealing a small arsenal of guns from a neighbor, they take their classmates hostage at a school dance. In the panic of this desperate situation, it soon becomes clear that only one thing matters to Brendan and Gary: revenge.

Book Information

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Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.6 x 7 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (147 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #203,441 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Dysfunctional Relationships #70 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Violence #94 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Abuse

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

I painfully recall those couple of years in my early adolescence when I really got pushed around a lot. For me it was junior high in the late 60's when I'd be constantly harassed by older or bigger kids. Walk down the hall or down the stairs and get tripped or shoved into a locker or have your books slammed out of your arms sending your papers flying everywhere. Sit on the school bus and be whacked with a book by a passerby or have your hat snatched. Occasionally I remember an even bigger kid coming along and asserting his dominance over the bully who was picking on me -- yep, that was me, the bottom of the food chain--but usually these incidents became solitary, painful memories of the time when I was a good, quiet student treading water in a sea of raging hormones. I cannot recall ever having the urge to exact revenge (beyond a hand gesture). But, then again, it was a time that, in retrospect, seemed to pass soon enough as I came into my own in high school. But what would I have been like if I'd had to endure year after year of such torture through high

school as well as junior high? In *GIVE A BOY A GUN* by Todd Strasser, we meet two teenage boys who, after enduring years of torture by their school's most popular students, do take revenge. In a fictional account which recalls real-life school shootings in Littleton (CO), Jonesboro (AK), and Springfield (OR), the two teens take a group of students and teachers hostage at a dance in the high school gymnasium. Strasser presents the story in the form of quotes by the teens (Brendan Lawlor and Gary Searle) as well as their friends, their tormentors and other schoolmates, current and former teachers, their parents and neighbors.

When an author decides to write a story about a school shooting, the unwritten rule is that the author (unless a psychopath) is going to write a story that says school shootings are bad. We don't challenge this assumption because it's inherently moral. At the same time, any book that discusses school shootings shouldn't render the shooters as demonized villains. When kids start killing other kids the reasons are complex and deep. A simple, "This is why it happened", is nearly impossible, and to this end Strasser is very adept. But here's where Strasser messes up: In "Give a Boy a Gun" we have two guys who live hellish lives and try to take it out on their persecutors. By the end of the book they've trapped everyone they hate in a gymnasium with guns and bombs. And at this point the reader **SHOULD** have been given enough information to say a) Yes, these boys are victims and I can understand where they're coming from and b) Killing people is wrong anyway. Strasser drills home the first point perfectly. Strasser misses the second point by a mile. Gary and Brendan (perfect middle-America names) hate high school. It's just their bad luck to be living in a particularly sports crazy town. In Middletown, the high school jocks are granted particularly galling dispensations. Because they can bring their team and town incredible glory, they are treated like gods both in and out of school. This means that anyone who tangles with the glorious football players will inevitably end up on the losing side. The jocks take advantage of this system fully, and it only comes to a head when Brendan, an outsider who's transferred from another town, refuses to cow tow. The more the jocks try to teach him a lesson the worse it gets for Brendan and his reclusive and depressive friend Brendan.

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