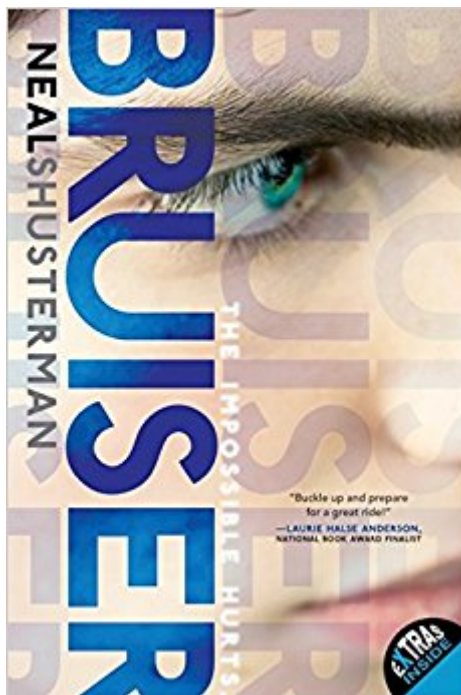


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Bruiser



Synopsis

The New York Times bestselling author of *Challenger Deep*, Neal Shusterman, delivers a suspenseful, eloquent, and thrilling novel that you won't be able to stop thinking about after you've put it down. Tennyson is not surprised, really, when his family begins to fall apart, or when his twin sister, Brontë, starts dating the misunderstood bully, Brewster (or The Bruiser, as the entire high school calls him). Tennyson is determined to get to the bottom of The Bruiser's reputation, even if it means gearing up for a fight. Brontë, on the other hand, thinks there's something special underneath that tough exterior. And she's right—but neither she nor Tennyson is prepared for the truth of what lies below the surface. Told through Tennyson, Brontë, and Bruiser's points of view, this dark, twisting novel explores friendship, family, and the sacrifices we make for the people we love. A Texas Lone Star Reading List selection A Book Page Top Ten Book of the Year A Bank Street College of Education Best Book of the Year A Cooperative Children's Book Center Choice

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up Tennyson, 16, is a hulking loner who seems to possess the power to heal both physical and psychic hurts. When his twin sister, Brontë, befriends their shy and withdrawn classmate Brewster "Bruiser" Rawlins, he is concerned that her relationship with this boy from the wrong side of the tracks will prove somehow dangerous. After he spies Bruiser changing in the locker room and notices that his back is covered in scars and welts, he becomes

even more certain that the teen and his family are bad news. In spite of her brother's warnings, Brontë continues her relationship with Bruiser, drawing him closer to her family and Tennyson in the process. The twins begin to notice Bruiser's unusual talent: not only can he assume the physical pain and wounds of those he cares about, but he can also absorb their anger, hurt, and grief. Told from the three characters' alternating perspectives, with Brewster's rendered in poetic form, Shusterman's novel reveals its secrets and their implications slowly, allowing readers to connect the dots before the characters do and encouraging them to weigh the price of Bruiser's "gift" against the freedom from pain that Tennyson and Brontë enjoy. Amy S. Pattee, Simmons College, Boston © Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Is it possible to experience joy if you don't experience pain? Is absorbing someone's pain a gift or a curse? Shusterman explores these central questions in this thought-provoking new book. Sixteen-year-old Tennyson fumes when he learns his twin sister, Bronte, is dating Bruiser, the guy voted Most Likely to Go to Jail, but Bronte insists Bruiser is misunderstood. Tennyson is eventually won over and befriends Bruiser, and that's when the twins notice something odd. Their cuts and bruises disappear overnight while Bruiser is a mass of new hurts; somehow he takes on the pain, both physical and emotional, of the people he cares for. The story is narrated by Tennyson, Bronte, and Cody, Bruiser's brother, in prose and by Bruiser in free verse, and the individual voices are nicely distinct. It is Tennyson, though, who stands out as he evolves from self-centered bully to caring young man and ponders big questions about friendship and sacrifice. A culminating crisis is a bit convenient, but the compelling issues and engaging premise make this a rewarding read. Grades 8-12. --Lynn Rutan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As a junior high librarian and big Neil Shusterman fan, I ordered missing books for our collection by Mr. Shusterman and discovered Bruiser. Once again, the author has developed an original idea that might sound totally implausible, but upon execution is completely riveting. Twins Bronte and Tennyson become enmeshed in the life of school misfit Brewster and discover that this unkempt and apparently unwanted young man has more than just run of the mill empathy for others. For those he cares for, Brewster/Bruiser is able to take both their physical and internal pain onto and into himself. But a body can only withstand so much pain. And isn't pain a natural part of life?

Readers will be awed by the power of this book and left, hopefully, with an entirely new perspective on caring for others and handling their own pain. Recommended for readers grades 7 and up.

I am a huge fan of Neal Shusterman's Unwind series, and so when an offer popped-up to get a free download of Bruiser, I took it. As a bonus, for \$1.99 I was able to add narration. The title sat in my To-Be-Read pile for four months, and then I had a road trip with my son. Unwind is one of the very few books my son has read and enjoyed, so I figured this would be a good listening choice for our trip. My son's a teenager, and we were driving before noon, so naturally, he slept through most of the book, but for me, Bruiser made six plus hours absolutely fly by. The narrators do an outstanding job of voicing the four main characters, and Shusterman has each presenting from a unique point of view: Tennyson is in first person present; Brontë, is first person, past tense; Cody is stream of consciousness; and Brewster is in free verse*. I have never before read a book that did this, but it works very well, and especially with the four distinct voices narrating the audiobook, these characters really come alive. And the story. . . Shusterman is truly a master storyteller and as is customary in his books, Bruiser will have readers/listeners thinking deeply about life, relationships, pain (emotional and physical), and sacrifice. And what-ifs: what if you could take on someone else's pain -- would you? What if someone else could take on your pain -- would you let him? What if you could live pain free -- is that even living? At times, the story is painful to hear/read. Readers' hearts will ache for Brewster as the people around him are either oblivious to the damage they are doing to Brewster or worse, they know. Shusterman does an excellent job of helping readers to really feel the emotions and turmoil of the characters as the full reach of Brewster's abilities is revealed. I was relieved and mostly satisfied with the ending. An epilogue would have solidified things since the ending wasn't absolutely clear-cut and could be open to interpretation for those with an active imagination. The book has no sex or sexual references (a few chaste kisses only) and only a few swear words. There are adult situations with mention of parents divorcing and having affairs and adult consumption of alcohol. There is child abuse violence, but it's not described in a graphic manner. The book is probably fine for more mature middle grade kids and older. About the audiobook... This story was outstandingly narrated by a group of talented actors: Nick Podehl, Kate Rudd, Luke Daniels and Laura Hamilton. Their performances really defined each character. My only complaint is that Brewster's dialogue was kind of hard to hear. His voice is very low and soft, which is perfect for Brewster but hard to hear with road noise.*NOTE I listened to the whole book, but then I looked back at the eBook to re-visit and clarify what happened with the ending. It was only at that point that I realized

Brewster's parts were written in free verse. Happily, I also discovered the first fourteen chapters of *Challenger Deep*, Shusterman's latest novel! **moves higher on TBR list** If you like this review, read it and others on my blog at <http://kristinehallways.blogspot.com>

Bruiser is my first read outside of the *Unwind* series that I've read by Neal Shusterman so I had high expectations that I was trying to keep in check and I'm so, so thrilled to say that this blew me away. This only reaffirms that you know you're going to get a phenomenal story when you pick up a Neal Shusterman book. There are so many reasons why. Like *Unwind*, this story is told through multiple points of view. Shusterman is a master at multiple POVs. He nails every voice, making each so wonderfully distinct with so much depth. Brewster's voice was so poetic and made me fall in love with his words, his story even faster than I was already falling. The relationships had so much depth as well. For a story like this, it's necessary to feel the weight of each relationship as we discover that Brewster is an empath. Brewster has to literally not care about people in order to survive. So he pushes everyone away. He sets guard rails up everywhere all while taking on the pain of his younger brother and the Uncle they live with. An Uncle whose guilt over Brewster's ability turns him into the worst version of himself. This leads to abuse in the home, making this a very emotionally tough book to read. The tension is heavy. The tone of the story gradually gets darker and darker as Brewster takes on more and more pain. As he endures the darkness for those around him, almost to the point of death. It's a tough pill to swallow but Brewster must learn to stop allowing himself to take on other people's pain and those around him must learn to own their faults, their mistakes, their pain in order to grow, in order to be whole. *Bruiser* is a devastating story about what happens to the one person taking on all of the despair of the people denying the world around them, the world within them and how they all learn to heal because of it. *Bruiser* is an arresting tale about what it means to have hope for a world that asks you to be selfless over and over again with nothing given from them; it's a story about what it means to have joy when you can't love over and over again. It's about the fight of a child's life, a fight that very few can see but so many are unknowingly affected by. *Bruiser* is extraordinary and in saying all this, I still don't think I've done it justice. This is not an easy book to read, it's a dark, dark book about the will to love. The will to let love in. The will to love selflessly. The will to do what's right despite our love. It goes there. But it is so worth it, so if you think you can handle it, read this book and read it now. It will leave a much needed bruise on your heart, one that you won't want to have go away.

I know it is written as a 'young adult' but it brings up some thought provoking issues on emotions,

pain/joy, learning from mistakes, the many forms addiction can take, etc. I actually listened to this on Audible, and was so captivated by the story and the moral implications of the book that I bought a hard copy. I enjoy stories that change the POV, although I know other readers might not enjoy that aspect. I have recommended this book to others and have loaned out my hard copy already. Read it, listen to it, using whichever format makes you happy (the Audible performances are VERY good). I have read other reviews that tried to fit the story to specific religions, but I didn't much consider that until I read those reviews. I took the story at face value and enjoyed the lessons for what they were.

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Bruiser

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