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The Blackthorn Key



Synopsis

Following a series of murders, an apothecary's apprentice must solve puzzles and decipher codes in pursuit of a secret that could destroy the world in this "spectacular debut" (Kirkus Reviews, starred review). "Tell no one what I've given you." Until he got that cryptic warning, Christopher Rowe was happy, learning how to solve complex codes and puzzles and creating powerful medicines, potions, and weapons as an apprentice to Master Benedict Blackthorn—with maybe an explosion or two along the way. But when a mysterious cult begins to prey on London's apothecaries, the trail of murders grows closer and closer to Blackthorn's shop. With time running out, Christopher must use every skill he's learned to discover the key to a terrible secret with the power to tear the world apart. In his stunning debut novel, Kevin Sands brings readers on a heart-stopping adventure rich with suspense, mystery, and unforgettable characters.

Book Information

Series: Blackthorn Key (Book 1)

Paperback: 400 pages

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Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

Gr 4-6 • An auspicious debut middle grade novel. Set in the 1600s, the story revolves around Christopher Rowe, the apprentice to a Master Apothecary. After losing his master, Christopher begins to unravel a series of complex codes that his master had, unbeknownst to Chris, been preparing him to solve all along. The more that the protagonist uncovers, the more he finds

himself in danger, along with his loyal-to-a-fault best friend. The story is well paced, managing not only to keep readers hooked but also second guessing everything they think they know. Sands integrates a series of fun and interesting riddles and codes with chemistry concepts—no easy feat. The ending is dynamic and rewarding, with just the right blend of the fantastical and realistic. One of the true triumphs is the author's ability to create a character who feels accurate for the time period, while also displaying a modern sensibility that will keep readers engaged. The action does get intense but would still be appropriate for upper elementary school students. VERDICT This is an excellent story for readers who enjoy puzzles, action, and fantasy; keep an eye out for future installments.

—Chad Lane, Easton Elementary, Wye Mills, MD --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Captivating! A masterful page-turner brimming with secrets, traps, friendship, intrigue, pigeons, potions, loyalty, and explosions. Kevin Sands has created an engaging, kind-hearted, and humorous young hero in apothecary's apprentice Christopher Rowe. This thrilling adventure will keep you hooked." (Ingrid Law Newbery Honor and NYT bestselling author of Savvy)"Magic, adventure, and things that go boom--I love this book." (Eoin Colfer author of the bestselling Artemis Fowl series)"First-time novelist Sands has written an exciting and self-assured tale of alchemy and dark secrets . . . Sands adeptly balances the novel's darker turns with moments of levity and humor, and fills the book with nicely detailed characters and historical background—plus lots of explosions. It's a story that should have broad appeal, while especially intriguing readers with an existing interest in chemistry, history, and decoding puzzles." (Publishers Weekly, STARRED REVIEW)"A spectacular debut." (Kirkus Reviews, STARRED REVIEW)An auspicious debut middle grade novel. Set in the 1600s, the story revolves around Christopher Rowe, the apprentice to a Master Apothecary. After losing his master, Christopher begins to unravel a series of complex codes that his master had, unbeknownst to Chris, been preparing him to solve all along. The more that the protagonist uncovers, the more he finds himself in danger, along with his loyal-to-a-fault best friend. The story is well paced, managing not only to keep readers hooked, but also second guessing everything they think they know. Sands integrates a series of fun and interesting riddles and codes with chemistry concepts—no easy feat. The ending is dynamic and rewarding, with just the right blend of the fantastical and realistic. One of the true triumphs is the author's ability to create a character who feels accurate for the time period, while also displaying a modern sensibility that will keep readers engaged. The action does get intense, but would still be appropriate for upper elementary school students. VERDICT This is an excellent story

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I LOVE this book so much. I had to read it for school and I am glad I had to. The plot twists, the character, mystery potions and secret messages is just to good.

13 year old son read it and enjoyed it. from Texas Lone Star 2017-2018 list.

First in a series. Great reading for young and old !

Really enjoyed this book. Finished in one sitting. Five stars.

Easy to readImaginative and hard to put down regardless of your ageHighly recommended for children and the child in all of us!

Very good with twists & turns

Awesome book

My 14 year old son was assigned this book as a mandatory summer read. Sometimes that mandatory part can sound daunting. In this case, it proved to be riveting! He absolutely loved this

book. After putting off reading it for much of the summer, he finally buckled down and started it. That was the last I saw of him for 2 days (excepting mealtimes, the kid eats voraciously this summer). He likes to read, but has a hard time finding books that suit him, this one was a perfect fit. Thank you, Kevin Sands!

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