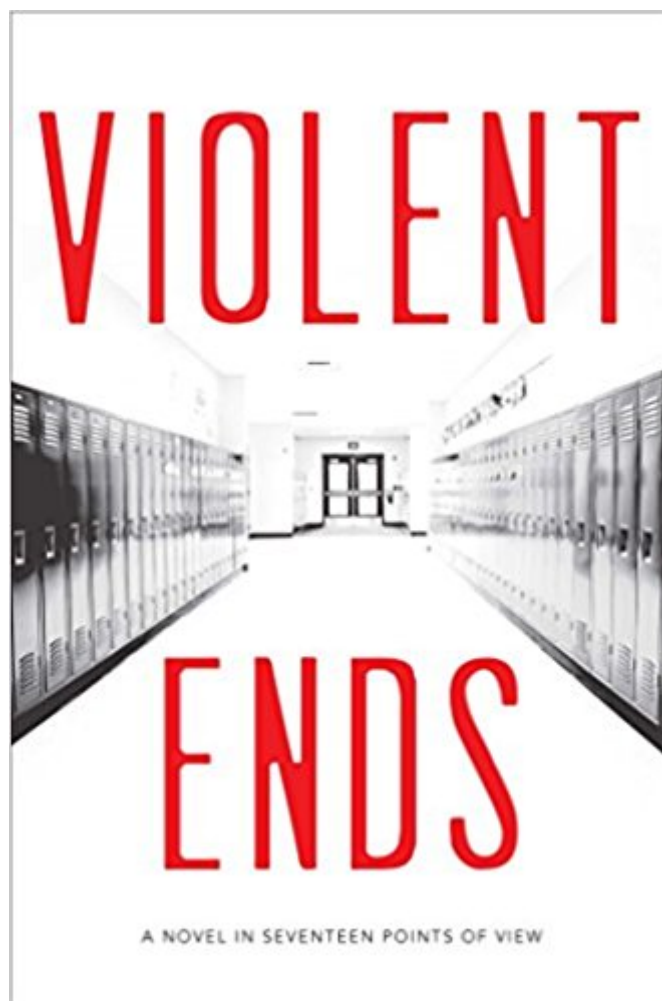


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Violent Ends



Synopsis

In a one-of-a-kind collaboration, seventeen of the most recognizable YA writers—including Shaun David Hutchinson, Neal and Brendan Shusterman, and Beth Revis—come together to share the viewpoints of a group of students affected by a school shooting. It took only twenty-two minutes for Kirby Matheson to exit his car, march onto the school grounds, enter the gymnasium, and open fire, killing six and injuring five others. But this isn't a story about the shooting itself. This isn't about recounting that one unforgettable day. This is about one boy who had friends, enjoyed reading, playing saxophone in the band, and had never been in trouble before—became a monster capable of entering his school with a loaded gun and firing bullets at his classmates. Each chapter is told from a different victim's viewpoint, giving insight into who Kirby was and who he'd become. Some are sweet, some are dark; some are seemingly unrelated, about fights or first kisses or late-night parties. This is a book told from multiple perspectives—with one character and one event drawing them all together—by some of YA's most recognizable names.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up—Seventeen chapters, each from a different point of view, tell the story of Kirby Matheson, a teenager who walks into school and opens fire on a pep rally before committing suicide. Narrators vary from those close to Kirby, like his sister, to more removed observers, such as his childhood next-door neighbor. While readers never enter Kirby's mind, his environment,

upbringing, family, and social interactions breathe life into his character. He is dynamic, at times sympathetic and loyal, while also angry, lashing out or isolating himself. Kirby's various relationships emphasize his humanity and help to avoid stereotyping him as a pure villain. Each chapter becomes a window, slowly revealing what, perhaps, could have driven him to such a heinous act. Ultimately, no concrete reason is defined. Motive is left for teens to determine after exploring Kirby's experiences with bullying, family drama, and the suggestion of a predatory teacher. Although each chapter is written by a different already established YA author, the narrative is cohesive. Using different voices opens a dialogue on a topic that is too often prevalent in young people's lives. Kirby's story is one of how instead of why. VERDICT A fresh and thought-provoking take on a disturbing but relevant topic. — Carrie Fox, South Park High School, PA --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

— “Provocatively and effectively illustrates the multidimensionality of someone considered to be a monster.” — (Kirkus Reviews) — “A fresh and thought-provoking take on a disturbing but relevant topic.” — (School Library Journal) — “These stories humanize a troubled teenager, as well as the people who hurt him along the way, but the authors don't let anyone off the hook, Kirby least of all.” — (Publishers Weekly)*** — “The storytelling is wonderfully intense and distinctive on such a difficult, tragic topic. Readers will be captivated, not wanting to put the book down, but also needing a break due to the extremely engaging, emotionally charged content of characters' feelings and thoughts.” — (VOYA, starred review)

This book was a really good read. There is language and sex in this book so for those who want to keep that away from their kids, make a note. I thought the different chapters were really good. There is one perspective that blew me away. The whole book left me with lots of questions and thoughts. This would be a really great book club read or discussion starter for teens. I believe it would be ok for mature 8th graders to read and good for high school-aged students. It is about a high school shooting, so be prepared. I wasn't initially going to read it because it is about a high school shooting but after reading reviews from teens who had read it, I wanted to. I am glad I did. One of my favorite authors, Neal Shusterman, and his son wrote one of the chapters. I did not identify which author wrote which chapter ahead of time. I am glad I didn't. I enjoyed seeing who wrote what after I completed the book. I loved the chapter the Shustermans wrote. I enjoyed reading the writing of authors I hadn't read before. Overall, great read. Thought provoking. Insightful. Not the usual information you see come out of situations like this. You will flip flop as to how you feel about the

shooter.

I'll confess: I went into the book with mixed thoughts, because books predicated around school shootings can often be tricky territory. They're sometimes done exceptionally well, but I wasn't sure how the multiple perspectives would factor into Kirby's story. Would it ultimately detract away from helping readers develop a full picture of both the shooter and the event itself? Well, I shouldn't have worried. Because Shaun Hutchinson and seventeen of the most talented writers in YA have teamed up to share the puzzle pieces of Kirby's life with insight provided by friends and classmates, who were both intimately and broadly acquainted with him. Through each story, we get a little closer to just what could have possibly drove Kirby to this end. While each of the stories stand on their own merit, it doesn't seem fair to judge them individually. So I'll just say that in terms of the whole picture, each story adds a piece to the puzzle that is Kirby, showing just why this young man has been driven to these violent ends. Each story ultimately asks, and sometimes outright challenges the reader, to ask the question of just what - if anything - could have been done differently to prevent this tragedy from happening. While the temptation is to just write Kirby off as a homicidal monster, something that Beth Revis's main character struggles with in "Violent Beginnings", we see acutely through stories of possibility denied like "The Girl Who Said No" by Trish Doller, or the gentle and painful truths of "Feet First" by Margie Gelbwasser, that this was a young man with complexities and challenges reinforcing his humanity, but also making the end result all the more troubling. While *Violent Ends* is a challenging, and often times painful read, it's also a welcome and much needed look at a reality that has unfortunately become more and more commonplace. Final verdict: *Violent Ends* is an important book in all respects, but especially for younger readers. Sure to provoke a lot of conversation and discussion, and I would like to introduce this book - with care - to the young readers in my life.

Grade: A+ Who is Kirby Matheson? The boy who befriended bullied kids? The kid who tried to protect you? Your victim? The oddball? The loner? The boy you who was once your friend? Your secret crush? The unpopular kid with whom you couldn't be seen? The kid with a gun? The monster? The shooter? Your brother? *VIOLENT ENDS* tells the story of seventeen people who knew Kirby at different periods in his life and in different capacities. Each chapter is written by a different YA writer, each one of the seventeen POVs written in either first or third person, each a fascinating glimpse into Kirby. I devoured this unique novel in one sitting, eager to understand why this kid became a killer. Of course, there are no easy answers, no real answers at all. Armchair

psychologists, media, jurors and peers can theorize, but because Kirby died and we don't get his POV, there can never be real answers. I never saw him as a monster or a victim, but as a kid trying to find his place in his world. Acceptance. Friends. Esteem. An introvert who lived more in his head than among others, unskilled at asking for what he needed. The seventeen flawed narrators let him down in small and large ways, deliberately and by omission, recognized or denied their contribution to who Kirby became in varying degrees. Yes, Kirby pulled the trigger, but he did not become Kirby-The-School-Shooter in a vacuum. I didn't want VIOLENT ENDS to end. I wanted more from each narrator (except the gun), more backstory and more of what happened in the aftermath. I would love sequels in the separate POVs (a series?) because I was that interested.

Collaborator/Editor Shaun David Hutchinson can you make this happen? Please? My only tiny criticism is that I was a little confused in who lived, died and who knew who. If each chapter had had the narrator's name and disposition, that might have helped? THEMES: violence, school shooting, family, friends, bullying, short-stories, peer pressure VIOLENT ENDS is an important book that should be read by teens, their parents and their teachers. It would be a great classroom read for English, Psychology or Sociology classes. It's so good I'm about to reread, even though I have another book I can't wait to read in the queue.

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