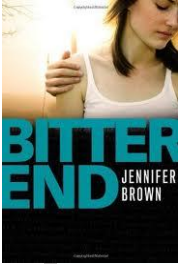




Fr. Michael Goetz Library Learning Commons Teacher's Book Review



Bitter End, Jennifer Brown

Reviewed by Ms. Cosgrove, February 6th, 2013.

Writers of young adult fiction, in the last decade especially, have featured in their works of fiction some of the most important subjects facing teens today. They include, but are certainly not restricted to coping with the loss of parents, locating effective treatment for eating disorders, finding acceptance as a gay teen and the journey toward wellness for those suffering from mental illnesses and/or addiction. This week's book tackles a subject, regarded as a taboo for much too long. It is about a young woman who is the victim of physical and mental abuse by her boyfriend.

The story begins with a young woman who meets a new boy at school. The attraction is immediate and very strong. The girl, whose name is Alex, has lost her mother, under very tragic circumstances, at a very young age. She has two close and supportive friends and has not had a serious relationship. She is smart but she is also vulnerable and the reader is left wondering if her boyfriend saw the traits, which might have made her his prey, from the very start of the relationship.

The author has done her research in writing this book. She weaves the characteristics of a victim of abuse, as well as the red flags of an abuser into her narrative. In doing so she explores answers to so many of the questions associated with abusive behavior in a relationship. If a young man has come from a home where he witnesses domestic abuse, does it mean that he will, himself, become an offender? Are there factors – psychological, social, and environmental – that contribute to a woman entering into or staying in an abusive relationship? Why don't young women leave a relationship after the first incident of physical or mental abuse? What is the success rate in treating the offenders so that they can develop healthy relationships? These and so many more questions are explored in this gripping story about a courageous young woman's battle to reclaim her sense of self.

I really admired the author's integrity in writing a story about a horrific subject, intended for a teen readership, without white-washing the details. She doesn't sensationalize the subject matter, nor does she attempt to sanitize the awful suffering, both mental and physical, that Alex endures until she makes the necessary decision to end it. As a reader, you will be a witness to

the escalating incidents of violence and you, like her friends in the book, will be desperate to save her from it. You may even recognize some of your own friends or yourself, to varying degrees, in this story, whether it is a past relationship or a current one. The book offers an excellent appendix listing resources that might be useful in helping you or someone you love in this situation.

