

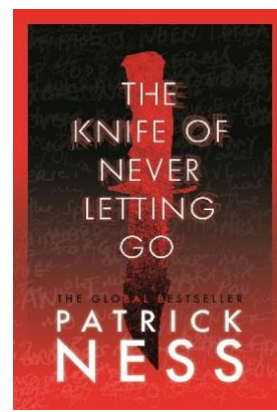
The Knife of Never Letting Go

By Patrick Ness

Reviewed by: Puneet Gill, 17

Star Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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On the New World, Todd Hewitt, a boy in Prentissstown, is affected by the “Noise,” a germ where men can hear each other’s thoughts. As Todd reaches manhood, he discovers a glitch in the Noise: a “hole,” or silence. This fault leads him to find Viola, the first ever girl near the swamp since the extinction of women. Furthermore, his guardians Ben and Cillian have secretly planned his escape from the authoritarian regime under Mayor Prentiss and preacher Aaron. Todd and Viola’s dangerous path lead them to confront the secrets of Prentissstown and what lies in store for their doomed future. Will they get caught by the mayor, or get far enough to defeat the malignant creatures that surround them?

An interesting detail most readers recognize is the simplistic style and word choice of Patrick Ness. This intentional decision helps to view through Todd’s perspective and experience his take in first-person perspective. Plus, the run-on sentences and lack of punctuation add on to the intimate reliability with Todd and the way his emotions react with color in his mind. Second, the contrast between him and Viola stood out as she presented hope inside a threatening world full of harm. It may also challenge gender norms and Todd’s curiosity to how humanity was before the disappearance of women. Third, the knife’s symbolism to show Todd’s uprising courage against evil portray him earning manhood as he killed a Spackle, a fictional creature in Ness’ world.

Experienced readers can sense a bit of predictability, especially when it arrives at “coming-of-age” or dystopia. Certain plot details may lead on to the ending a bit faster than anticipated. On the other hand, the novel deals with topics such as violence and betrayal, which can add emotional weight on readers versus those who enjoy a lighter take on the genre of authoritarian regimes. A few areas including murder and moral ambiguity complicate the themes present all throughout. However, adolescent protagonists leading the novel still create relatable moments for teens interested in the “sci-fi” genre.

Readers ages 13 and up may explore with discretion. Although the writing may have clear prose, the themes of violence along with blurring between what is considered right and wrong in the protagonist’s twisted world raise the age ratings. Science fiction readers can have a stab at the world involving space technology and an unknown virus affecting humanity. Dystopian readers may additionally enjoy ordinary main characters that defy and rebel the oppressive system limiting their freedom, which repeats both in fiction and reality.

Recommended Titles:

A Monster Calls, by Patrick Ness

Ender’s Game, by Orson Scott Card

Scythe, by Neal Shusterman

The Maze Runner, by James Dashner

Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury