



# The Gun

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Reviewer:

[Ruth Taylor](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

**The Gun** presents a story that is simple and straightforward, but with implications that are anything but. Rai's expressed aim is 'to explore what makes young men in Britain turn to crime'. The book is not explicit on this point, but describes an urban milieu of teenage gang-warfare in which the central characters are familiar with drug-dealers and loan-sharks, who are often not much older than they are. Jonas and his two mates, Kamal and Binny, witness a drive-by shooting. Jonas then finds the gun, which has been dumped in a back alley. Kamal, who already 'had a nasty temper', gets control of the gun and goes 'gun crazy'. The central story concerns the way in which the gun breaks up the friendship of the three lads and how it can be used to intensify the existing, pervasive violence. We are told in the introduction why it is Kamal who becomes 'all twisted up in his head' - he was a refugee from a war-torn African country.

The novel paints a realistic picture of relationships between the three lads and within the society as a whole: the desire for 'respect', the need to 'back up your mates'. It is written in short, sharp and economical sentences which perhaps reflect the publisher's aim of attracting 'reluctant readers'. Although the dialogue no doubt conveys the speech-idiom of the characters (and presumably of the target readership), the deliberate misspelling of certain words of dialogue to indicate pronunciation seems both unnecessary and unhelpful to unpractised readers. Nevertheless, the book does list 35 readers who commented on the manuscript before publication, and efforts have obviously been made to appeal to young people (boys in particular) who, like Jonas, are 'not thick, but don't get on with teachers'. This is admirable, and both publisher and author clearly know how to set about it.

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