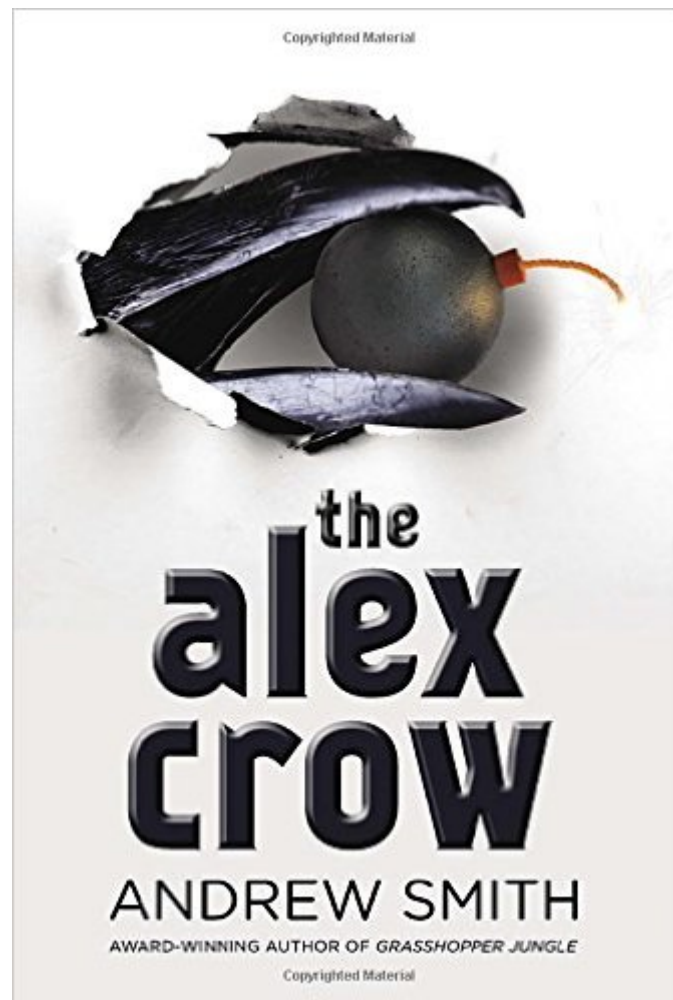


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# The Alex Crow



## Synopsis

“Andrew Smith is the Kurt Vonnegut of YA . . . [Smith’s novels] are the freshest, richest, and weirdest books to hit the YA world in years.” —Entertainment Weekly

Skillfully blending multiple story strands that transcend time and place, award-winning *Grasshopper Jungle* author Andrew Smith chronicles the story of Ariel, a refugee who is the sole survivor of an attack on his small village. Now living with an adoptive family in Sunday, West Virginia, Ariel’s story is juxtaposed against those of a schizophrenic bomber and the diaries of a failed arctic expedition from the late nineteenth century . . . and a depressed, bionic reincarnated crow.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

By now everyone should know how much I appreciate Andrew Smith and his writing. I love the humor, the wittiness, and even the absolute absurdity of his books. The Alex Crow is no exception to this. For me the writing technique was very similar to *Grasshopper Jungle*. The story is all intertwined between these 3 different perspectives we follow throughout the book. We have Ariel both in the present and in the past, we have Lenny and his bombing journey, and finally we have the arctic expedition in 1880. At first all these stories seemed so different but they all came together somehow. And I know you are probably thinking that is not that weird, but once you learn about the experiments being done by the Alex Division things start to become really strange. The bionic pet Crow the Burgesses have is such a strange character and he is also somewhat central to the bizarre things that the company has been researching and conducting. The shining moments of

humor in this book are the boys at summer camp. That is when we see the crazy things they get up as they piece together just what the Alex Department does. The difference for me and this book was just how serious the topics were. You had Ariel who is a refugee living with a new family in America. We learn all about the horrors that Ariel dealt with before moving to Sunday. And this story is woven into the narrative and story about the research and science experiments. I really appreciate how Andrew Smith discussed these topics while also staying weird. This book starts off in a really dark place with the attack on Ariel's village and from there we continue on this journey. This book was not at all a disappointment. It lived up to my expectations for an Andrew Smith novel. It was weird but also intrigued me with its moral questions about just how far humans are willing to go in their thirst for knowledge. And that reincarnated bionic crow was a favorite character for me. We did not get a lot of scenes with him, but he was integral to the stories all tying together.

Smith certainly can draw compelling characters, and everything he writes is amazing. I did find the very intricate plot shifting a little difficult in this one, ... 'Can he ever pull all of these unrelated characters together?' (Actually, yes.) but it is a tight, well-paced story full of challenges. I'd give this to a skillful reader who likes a little challenge.

Amazing novel but not for every reader, and Andrew Smith is an author that I intend to read more. This book is definitely for a high school crowd and the language is shall we say "a bit ripe"? It proves a series of seemingly unrelated stories that are eventually woven into one story that poses some ethical and moral questions. Might be just the read for a male reluctant reader who likes to think.

Well this is 5 brilliant stars ! Like there's really nothing to say other than you need to read these authors books !!! Grasshopper Jungle was my first and I got hooked to his writing style ! And now The Alex Crow is just as odd and unique ! I am absolutely in love with Andrew Smith! He is so refreshing and just a brilliant writer !

An amazing book in the style of Douglas Adams. Three plots unfolding simultaneously. As a summer camp counselor, the camp scenes, while exaggerated, had a real life ring to them. I have purchased several copies to give as gifts to my fellow counselors.

What do a talking crow, a sunken ship, and a refugee from a war-torn country have in common? If I

told you, it would spoil the fun... While the premise (and the prologue) sound confusing, don't be intimidated! Keep reading -- it all comes together in the end.

Ariel is a refugee, a fifteen year-old boy who can't seem to find his place in the world, no matter how many lives he lives. When his village in the Middle East is bombed, Ariel is collected by soldiers who take care of him - until their convoy is bombed. Then Ariel tags along with a family escaping the wreckage of their town. They part ways at a UN refugee camp - the tent city where Ariel goes through the hardest nine months of his life. And from there, he comes out on the other side reborn, like a phoenix, taken to America to live with a foster family. There Ariel meets his new brother, Max, who is only sixteen days older than Ariel. And that's where things gets weird. Max's parents, and now Ariel's too, are part of the Alex Division of the Merrie-Seymour Research Group, where a lot of unbelievable things happen. It's where the family got their previously extinct pet crow, named Alex. The MSRG funds a camp for boys, where Ariel and Max are sent to stay for 6 weeks, supposedly to bond and become better brothers. The Merrie-Seymour Camp for Boys is basically a completely crazy place where introverted boys are tortured in a variety of interesting ways and examined thoroughly, in the name of (secret) research. There they meet Cobie, who is the only other somewhat sane kid at the camp. Meanwhile, a man named Lenny, who may or may not have a chip in his head and a truck full of mercury and bombs, drives across the south on a collision course for the Merrie-Seymour Camp for Boys. Will Max, Ariel, and Cobie survive their time at the Camp? Well, you'll have to read to find out. What I loved: The way humanity is never in control of anything. Smith really makes the reader take a good, hard look at the world and just how little control people have over it. We try and try to be in control - of ourselves, our families, war and peace, the environment, our health - but ultimately the universe is it's own force and we will succumb to it. Smith's stories are often about boys who are thrown into an uncontrollable (or unstoppable) situation. Then they have to cope with it, they have to survive and come out on the other side, hopefully stronger than before. The boys make it out of this story stronger because they form connections and bond over their time at the Camp. They go through a lot of tough things together, and I liked seeing Max, Ariel, and Cobie let their walls down a little in order to let each other in. What I wanted more of: Character development and depth. I was a little disappointed by my lack of attachment to the boys. I felt for Ariel, I laughed at Max, and I was curious about Cobie - but that's it. They weren't complex characters, and they didn't make me feel very much. I didn't connect to them in the way I normally to the characters in Smith's books. The verdict: An original and creative look at what happens to the ones we love when we can't help but try to control them, THE ALEX CROW is another weird,

humorous, and slightly disturbing novel from groundbreaking YA author, Andrew Smith.

I enjoyed the writing style, which was clever and interesting, and I found the characterization of the main character, Ariel, very interesting, but by the time I got to the end of the book, I really wondered what the point was.

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