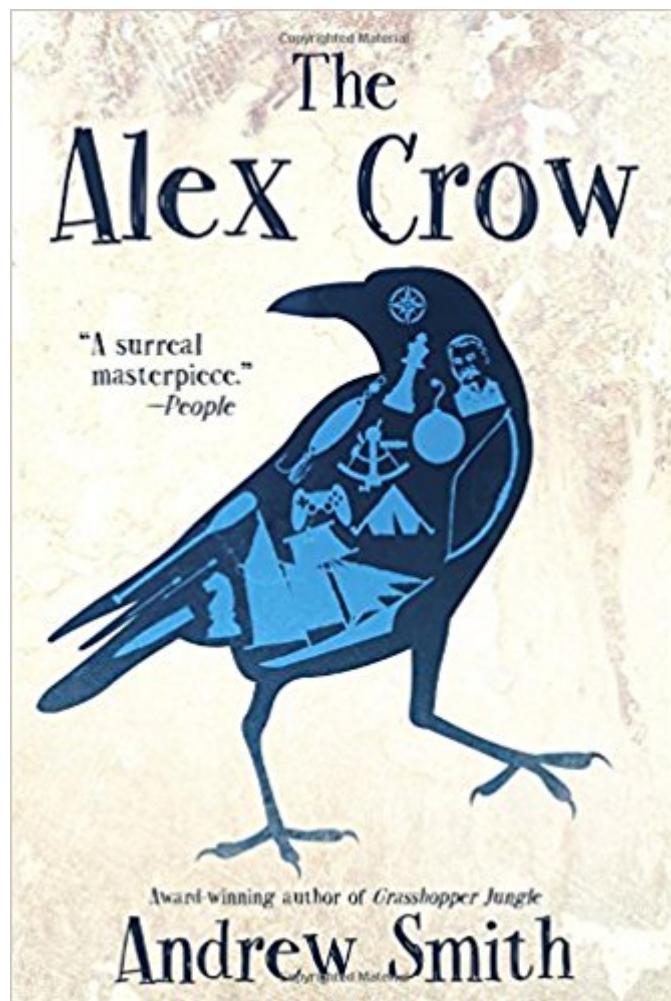


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# The Alex Crow



## Synopsis

The author of Printz Honor book *Grasshopper Jungle* returns with another genre-bending literary exploration of the absurd. Once again blending multiple story strands that transcend time and place, *Grasshopper Jungle* author Andrew Smith tells the story of 15-year-old Ariel, a refugee from the Middle East 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 of his summer at a boys' camp for tech detox is juxtaposed against those of a schizophrenic bomber and the diaries of a failed arctic expedition from the late nineteenth century. Oh, and there's also a depressed bionic reincarnated crow. "Smith takes [readers] to a place where humanity is imbued with the potential to render people inhuman" and reminding us that being human, all too human, is far better than any conceivable alternative.

• BCCB Reviews, starred review

• Kirkus, starred review

• Booklist, starred review

• Publishers Weekly, starred review

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up • The author weaves several odd yet connected story threads: the 19th-century Arctic exploration aboard the ill-fated Alex Crow ship; a madman's bizarre U-Haul road trip; and the

Merrie-Seymour Research Group and its de-extinction program. But the most compelling narrative is that of Ariel, a teenage refugee of an unnamed country, who is adopted into an American family. He and his brother, Max, are sent to Camp Merrie-Seymour "where boys rediscover the fun of boyhood." The camp's purpose is to wean teenage boys off of their technology addictions. Unfortunately for Max and Ariel, their father works for Merrie-Seymour, so they're forced to attend because it's free. Smith deftly combines Ariel's harrowing wartime horrors juxtaposed against his hilarious six weeks at an American summer camp with maladjusted teenage boys. The teen protagonist is the lens through which readers see how society exerts its control over teenage boys' thoughts and actions. And Camp Merrie-Seymour is the satirical showcase for how often these boys are expected to deal with the harsh world on their own without any real guidance from adults. Smith's writing seems to ebb from an honest place, not one of nostalgia, but of the discomfort and agony of adolescence. Smith follows up his enthralling, boundary-pushing *Grasshopper Jungle* (Dutton, 2014) with this more cohesive and brilliant work. VERDICT A must-have for all YA collections. — Kimberly Garnick Giarratano, Rockaway Township Public Library, NJ

2015 New York Public Library Best Books for Teens 2015 Boston Globe Best Books, Young Adult 2015 Chicago Public Library's Best of the Best 2016 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults List "Therein lies the brilliance of Andrew Smith. He somehow always finds a way to turn the reader inside out, by grounding the farcical or turning mad science and vomit into art." • New York Times Book Review "The weirdness shakes out ridiculously well in this often humorous and touching sci-fi tome." • USA Today "Magnificently bizarre, irreverent and bitingly witty." • Kirkus, A starred review "Smith is a spiritual heir to Kurt Vonnegut." • Booklist, A starred review "Fans of Smith's raunchy, profane, and provocative work will find this funny but morally serious tale deeply appealing." • Publishers Weekly, A starred review "A smartly cohesive exploration of survival and extinction, and the control humans have (or shouldn't have) over such matters." • Horn Book, A starred review "Smith takes [readers] to a place where humanity is imbued with the potential to render people inhuman—and reminding us that being human, all too human, is far better than any conceivable alternative." • BCCB Reviews, A starred review "Andrew Smith is unequivocally one of the reigning kings of YA." • Bustle.com "In a market oversaturated by trends . . . [Smith's] novels are fresh and exciting." • VICE.com Praise for *Grasshopper Jungle*: A "This is a raunchy, bizarre, smart and

compelling. A sci-fi novel defies description. It's best to go into it with an open mind and allow yourself to be first drawn in, then blown away. A literary joy to behold. . . . reminds me of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, in the best sense. •The New York Times Book Review

A bizarrely fascinating premise that Smith pulls off with panache. . . . Like an absurdist *Middlesex*. •Entertainment Weekly

"I found myself saying over and over again, 'Where in the heck is he going with this?' all the while turning the pages as fast as I could. Mostly I kept thinking, 'This was a brave book to write.' •Terry Brooks, author of the *Shannara* series

"Andrew Smith is the bravest storyteller I know. *Grasshopper Jungle* is the most intelligent and gripping book I've read in over a decade. It's a masterpiece. •A. S. King, Printz Honor-winning author of *Ask the Passengers* and *Please Ignore Vera Dietz*

"*Grasshopper Jungle* plays like a classic rock album, a killing machine of a book built for the masses that also dives effortlessly into more challenging, deeper regions of emotion. Above all else, when it's done you want to play it all over again. It's sexy, gory, hilarious, and refreshingly amoral. I wish I'd had this book when I was fifteen. •Jake Shears, Scissor Sisters

"This book is nothing short of a brilliant, hilarious thrill-ride that is instantly infectious. The deft hand by which Smith explores teenage love and sexuality . . . is truly breathtaking. In writing a history of the end of the world, Smith may have just made history himself. •John Corey Whaley, Printz Award-winning author of *Where Things Come Back*

"Original, weird, sexy, thought-provoking and guaranteed to stir controversy. One hell of a book. •Michael Grant, A New York Times bestselling author of the *Gone* series

"*Grasshopper Jungle*, in many ways, is a book about how there might be a manual for defeating monsters that have invaded town, but there's not going to be an easy manual for everything else that weighs on the mind. •A.V. Club

"You, too, will love Smith's bold, bizarre, and beautiful novel. •The Boston Globe

"No author writing for teens today can match Andrew Smith's mastery of the grotesque, the authentic experiences of teenage boys or the way one seamlessly becomes a metaphor for the other. •BookPage, Top February Teen Pick

"A meanderingly funny, weirdly compelling and thoroughly brilliant chronicle of the end of the world, and shit like that...a mighty good book." •Kirkus, A starred review

"Filled with gonzo black humor, Smith's outrageous

tale makes serious points about scientific research done in the name of patriotism and profit, the intersections between the personal and the global, the weight of history on the present, and the often out-of-control sexuality of 16-year-old boys." A PW, A starred review "Original, honest, A and A extraordinary A pushes the boundaries of young adult literature." A A School Library Journal, starred review From the Hardcover edition.

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 series 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.

WOW! It's been a while since I've read a book that contains as much oddity and anticipation as this book. Andrew Smith, known for his strange novels, does a fantastic job of maintaining this book's secret till the end...I was shocked. I highly recommend this book to anyone looking for a quick read (I read it in two days), and a creepy yet modernly thrilling book with a pinch of science fiction thrown

in! I don't recommend this to anyone younger than 14, due to the books adult content. But overall, I highly enjoyed every single chapter of this book, which follows three stories that magically intertwine and connect bringing about a mind blowing ending!

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.

Andrew Smith gives his teen boy characters credible voice as they navigate an incredible plot. Too cheerful to be dystopian, too dreadful to be comfortable, it is readable fun the whole way. One clear take-away: trust anyone over eighteen at your peril.

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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