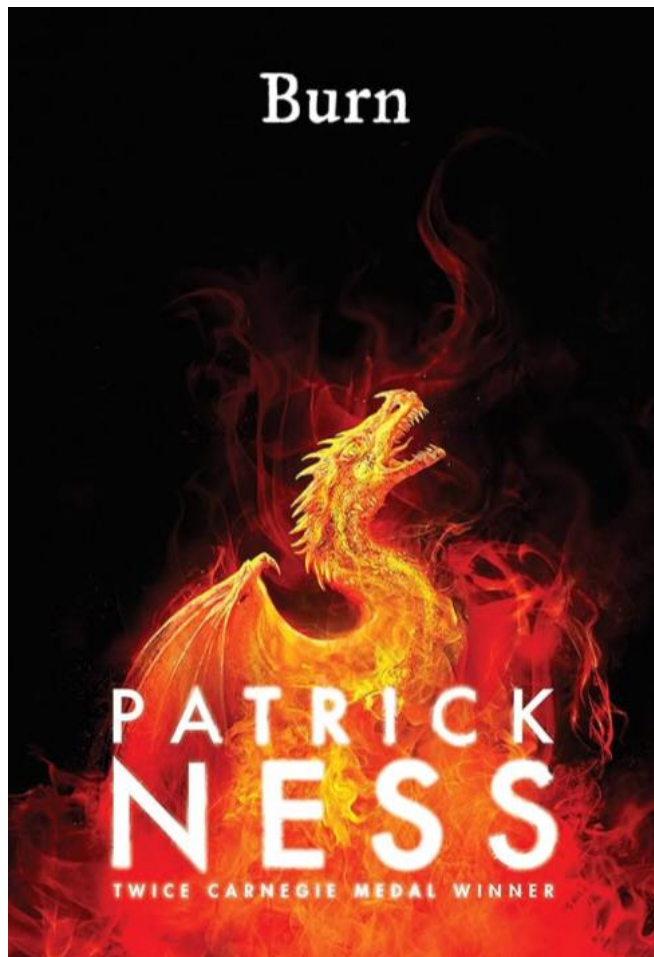


Burn by Patrick Ness: a genre blending masterpiece, where the two-time Carnegie award-winning author gives a masterclass in character building.



As a self-proclaimed bookworm who has read several hundred books despite only being alive 13 years, in all that time, in all those books, I have never found a book quite like Burn. A book that so seamlessly blends together genres which you may never have thought go together: fantasy, action-adventure and a form of social commentary. Ness finds a way to delve deep into the social and political issues that plagued the time the book is set and that continue to haunt our society today.

Ness crafts this spectacular story by having characters that feel real in a way I haven't seen in any other novel. They all have their own goals, ideas, wants and desires rather than just their base purpose. No character however unimportant is free from this treatment. This adds a degree of nuance that I haven't seen any other book do with their side characters

giving them almost the same amount of development as the main characters. The world and story of the novel feels like a true story not just a fabrication of one man's mind.

Even with a story like this with so many brilliant elements, like it's thrilling narrative, filled with twist and turns, impressive set pieces and beautiful imagery, Ness still doesn't stop. He gives you even more reasons to give this book a place of honour on your shelf. Chief among these is the way it blends action and conspiracy, with, in true Patrick Ness fashion, a message made to resonate with all fans of the book. That message is one of acceptance of kindness, of being able to think and act for yourself, to question what you are told and to forge your own path.

Through the novel you as the reader are presented with numerous instances where a gay man like Malcolm is called derogatory names like "fruit" with people suggesting that his sexuality devalues him as a human being. You also get presented with the idea of someone being stripped of their freedom, again through the eyes of Malcolm. It is a battle where he, as an unknowing member of a cult, is forced to question the very way he has lived his life for all these years. A battle where he ultimately chooses to fight for good, throw off the shackles of his upbringing and haul himself into the light.

I believe it is Kazimir's final words that stick with me the most "that most dragons start as human". In essence Ness is saying that you don't have to be something magical to become great, that all you need is to release the dragon inside and soar, not with wings, but within yourself, forging your own path. This is even further shown by the book's melancholy yet triumphant ending. It shows how far we have come in dealing with these issues but, in an effort to force us back to our uncomfortable reality, shows us just how far we have to go.

Bevan
Reed's School

