



The Blackthorn Key

By Kevin Sands

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The Blackthorn Key By Kevin Sands

Following a series of murders, an apothecary's apprentice must solve puzzles and decipher codes in pursuit of a secret that could destroy the world in this "spectacular debut" (*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review).

"Tell no one what I've given you."

Until he got that cryptic warning, Christopher Rowe was happy, learning how to solve complex codes and puzzles and creating powerful medicines, potions, and weapons as an apprentice to Master Benedict Blackthorn—with maybe an explosion or two along the way.

But when a mysterious cult begins to prey on London's apothecaries, the trail of murders grows closer and closer to Blackthorn's shop. With time running out, Christopher must use every skill he's learned to discover the key to a terrible secret with the power to tear the world apart.

In his stunning debut novel, Kevin Sands brings readers on a heart-stopping adventure rich with suspense, mystery, and unforgettable characters.

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The Blackthorn Key By Kevin Sands Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 4–6—An auspicious debut middle grade novel. Set in the 1600s, the story revolves around Christopher Rowe, the apprentice to a Master Apothecary. After losing his master, Christopher begins to unravel a series of complex codes that his master had, unbeknownst to Chris, been preparing him to solve all along. The more that the protagonist uncovers, the more he finds himself in danger, along with his loyal-to-a-fault best friend. The story is well paced, managing not only to keep readers hooked but also second guessing everything they think they know. Sands integrates a series of fun and interesting riddles and codes with chemistry concepts—no easy feat. The ending is dynamic and rewarding, with just the right blend of the fantastical and realistic. One of the true triumphs is the author's ability to create a character who feels accurate for the time period, while also displaying a modern sensibility that will keep readers engaged. The action does get intense but would still be appropriate for upper elementary school students. VERDICT This is an excellent story for readers who enjoy puzzles, action, and fantasy; keep an eye out for future installments.—Chad Lane, Easton Elementary, Wye Mills, MD

Review

"Captivating! A **masterful page-turner** brimming with secrets, traps, friendship, intrigue, pigeons, potions, loyalty, and explosions. Kevin Sands has created an engaging, kind-hearted, and humorous young hero in apothecary's apprentice Christopher Rowe. This thrilling adventure will keep you hooked." (Ingrid Law *Newbery Honor and NYT bestselling author of Savvy*)

"Magic, adventure, and things that go boom--I love this book." (Eoin Colfer *author of the bestselling Artemis Fowl series*)

"First-time novelist Sands has written an exciting and self-assured tale of alchemy and dark secrets . . . Sands adeptly balances the novel's darker turns with moments of levity and humor, and fills the book with nicely detailed characters and historical background—plus lots of explosions. It's a story that should have broad appeal, while especially intriguing readers with an existing interest in chemistry, history, and decoding puzzles." (*Publishers Weekly, STARRED REVIEW*)

"A spectacular debut." (*Kirkus Reviews, STARRED REVIEW*)

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"An inspired blend of action, adventure, science, history, and humor, filled with fascinating facts, clever codes, and wonderful characters." (Stuart Gibbs *bestselling author of the Spy School series*)

About the Author

Since escaping from university with a pair of degrees in theoretical physics, Kevin Sands has worked as a researcher, a business consultant, and a teacher. He lives in Toronto, Canada. He is the author of the award-winning and bestselling Blackthorn Key series.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jack Lau:

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Debra Durso:

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