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# Masterminds

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# Book Review

**Title:** Masterminds

**Author:** Gordon Korman

**Reviewer:** Tessa McMillan

**Publisher:** Balzer + Bray

**Publication Year:** 2015

**ISBN:** 9780062299963

**Number of Pages:** 323

**Interest Level:** Intermediate, Young Adult

**Rating:** Outstanding



## Review

Serenity, New Mexico, seems to be the best town in the United States. There isn't any crime, poverty, or secrets. But Serenity's clean streak is smeared when Randy Hardaway accidentally takes his best friend, Eli Frieden, outside the city limits. Eli almost dies and Randy is immediately shipped out of town. But Randy leaves Eli a secret note stating that Eli and several other kids are "special" and that Serenity isn't what it appears. Eli and four of his classmates—Tori, Hector, Malik, and Amber—start seeing behind Serenity's spotless façade. The classmates execute a reconnaissance mission to the local plastic's works, the only source of employment in town. The kids discover that the plant is an observation station that is monitoring them. As more clues come together, the classmates find out they are clones of major criminals. The whole of Serenity is an experiment to see if a peaceful environment would change the nature of these children. Not wanting to be anyone's lab rat, the kids escape Serenity and make their way to Randy's location.

Korman's beginning novel to his Masterminds series is a clean, clever, and calculated book that will keep readers on their toes. Each chapter is told from the perspective of Eli, Tori, Hector, Malik, or Amber. As the truth behind Serenity is unveiled, their narratives show the unease, shock, anger, and doubts each child has about their existence, their families, and the purpose behind Serenity. Korman's underlying theme behind the series is the psychological debate of nature verses nurture. But taking that theme further, Korman addresses what happens when the ones being nurtured find out their possible nature and the deceiving way their nurturers are combating it. A spectacular start to a promising series. Appropriate for ages 10 and up.