



2017

Blackthorn Key #2: Mark of the Plague

Tessa McMillan

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

McMillan, Tessa (2017) "Blackthorn Key #2: Mark of the Plague," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 5 , Article 19.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol38/iss5/19>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Book Review

Title: Blackthorn Key #2: Mark of the Plague

Author: Kevin Sands

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Publisher: Aladdin

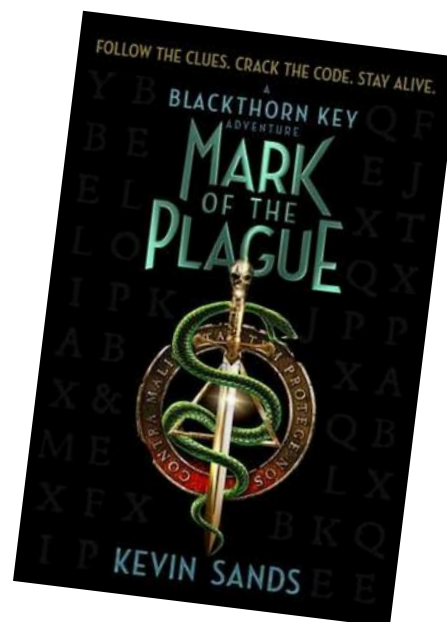
Publication Year: 2016

ISBN: 9781481446747

Number of Pages: 529

Interest Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent



Review

The plague is sweeping through London's streets. Christopher Rowe wants to help by using his departed master's apothecary, but strict rules deny Christopher, still only an apprentice, the right to open the shop to the public. Desperate for money, Christopher finds a cryptic note from Master Blackthorn about a hidden treasure. While Christopher and Tom are out following a clue, an intruder breaks into the apothecary. This break-in entangles Christopher in a deadly conflict between two competing doctors, Melchior and Galen, who claim to be healing plague victims in their own ways. After Tom is falsely diagnosed with the plague, Christopher and his friend Sally rescue Tom. With the help from a dying Dr. Parrett, the three friends uncover a conspiracy to ransom the country for the doctors' false cures. Once the doctors' treachery is resolved and the plague starts to ebb, Christopher, Tom, and Sally finally figure out Blackthorn's clues to the treasure, securing their financial future.

Mark of the Plague seems more like a raw, revealing picture of the past than the code-driven, secret-society fiction used in *The Blackthorn Key*. Fans of Sands's codes and cults will get a taste of these themes with Blackthorn's cryptic messages and Melchior's biblically hostile followers. Sands bases the story on a true historical events and captures the crazed, chaotic world Londoners created during the plague, even adding selections of the actual Bills of Mortality. All of these extra features add to Mark of the Plague and give the book more depth and richness than the first. With such a solid setting, Christopher's character can be explored and expressed to a greater extent. A little less violent than the first, Mark of the Plague is still a suspenseful ride through Christopher Rowe's unpredictable world. The next book, *The Assassin's Curse* comes out in September 2017.