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### Ben Braver and the Incredible Exploding Kid

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# Book Review

## Ben Braver and the Incredible Exploding Kid

### Author

Marcus Emerson

### Illustrator

Marcus Emerson

### Reviewer

Audrey Lowther

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### Rating

Outstanding

### Level

Primary, Intermediate

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### Pages

319

### Year

2019

### ISBN

9781626727113

### Publisher

Roaring Brook Press

After Kepler Academy (a special school for super-powered kids) was terrorized by Abigail Cutter and her army of plant zombies last year, Ben Braver is worried about returning to school. After all, her partner was never caught! Besides his anxiety about Cutter and her mysterious partner, Ben is nervous that his classmates will somehow find out his secret—that he has no superpower. Luckily, his friends Noah, Penny, and Jordan all have his back. Ben and his friends compete in Power Battles, help Professor Duncan in his lab, and try to uncover the mystery of student fifteen. As Ben’s popularity (and his ego) grow, he finds himself distanced from his friends and the other students who once looked up to him, but in a time of crisis, the students of Kepler Academy pull together to defeat an unexpected enemy.

Emerson does a great job of using the book’s illustrations to add to the story. Many of the illustrations are actually styled as comic strips that pick up where the last paragraph left off, offering a break from longer blocks of text. While this second book in the Ben Braver series is definitely a fun read, it contains deeper messages for its readers. One of this book’s principle themes is that the line between “good” and “bad” can sometimes feel fuzzy. Using likeable, relatable characters like Jennifer, Coach Lindsey, and even Headmaster Kepler, Emerson demonstrates that people are often willing to do questionable things to help loved ones, or to perpetuate what they see as the greater good. Another theme found in this book is how our lies can affect the people around us. For example, throughout the book, Ben hides that he doesn’t have a superpower from everyone but his closest friends, and his secret often makes it necessary for them to step in and help him in situations that would otherwise be embarrassing or dangerous. During the first Power Battle, for example, Jordan has to use his invisibility to secretly battle in Ben’s place so that he isn’t beaten or badly injured by Dexter.

\*Contains mild violence