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On April 21, 2008, Steven "Crash" Crashinsky saved more than a thousand people when he stopped his classmate David Burnett from taking their high school hostage armed with assault weapons and high-powered explosives. You likely already know what came after for Crash: the nationwide notoriety, the college recruitment, and, of course, the book deal. What you might not know is what came before: a story of two teens whose lives have been inextricably linked since grade school, who were destined, some say, to meet that day in the teachers' lounge of Meadows High. And what you definitely don't know are the words that Burn whispered to Crash right as the siege was ending, a secret that Crash has never revealed.

Until now.

Michael Hassan's shattering novel is a tale of first love and first hate, the story of two high school seniors and the morning that changed their lives forever. It's a portrait of the modern American teenage male, in all his brash, disillusioned, oversexed, schizophrenic, drunk, nihilistic, hopeful, ADHD-diagnosed glory. And it's a powerful meditation on how normal it is to be screwed up, and how screwed up it is to be normal.

Crash and Burn Details

Date : Published February 19th 2013 by Balzer + Bray

ISBN : 9780062112903

Author : Michael Hassan

Format : Hardcover 532 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Realistic Fiction, Fiction

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From Reader Review Crash and Burn for online ebook

Kelly says

2.5.

Steven Crashinsky -- Crash -- was the person who talked David Burnett -- Burn -- down when he held his school captive. But what was it Crash said to get Burn to stop?

Unfolding over 540 pages is Crash's growing up with and without Burn in his life. The two of them were never friends, but they spent a not-insignificant amount of time with one another. Crash tells this story through his ADD-afflicted mind and it's told as though he's writing a book. But it's not entirely linear, as the story goes from the perspective of the book Crash is writing to the present, when he's angsty about the book he's writing. See, Crash became a hero the day he talked Burn out of the hostage situation. Everyone wanted to know what it was he said. Reporters hounded him. It wasn't until the book contract, worth lots of cash, that he finally decided he'd tell the tale. (view spoiler)

This story is long, and it's indulgent, but it gets away with it because of the gimmicky set up. There's the ADD main character, so the way he writes and thinks and organizes his thoughts is, in a way, forgivable by this. Moreover, the story-told-through-a-story set up further allows for indulgence (especially given that Crash is the hero here). Yes, he's been hurt, but the endless ramblings about who he was sleeping with, what drugs he was doing, and what parties he attended were not enough to warrant such a massive tome. It was more about the history that mattered. In other words, when Crash gave us Burn's history, when Crash gave us his own family history and struggles, that's when the story picked up. The parties and sexcapades didn't give us anything. It felt, quite honestly, like moments for the reader to relate to Crash. But there's no need to do so.

Many of the characters blend together, but that's okay -- it's sort of the point of the story and sort of Crash's mentality. More interesting to me, though, was Burn's story. (view spoiler) But Roxanne (view spoiler)

The story does move quite fast, despite the length. There's certainly something to be said about appeal here. Readers will relate to a lot of what Crash talks about. It's extremely contemporary in that it tackles and exposes the truths of living in today's society -- there are pop culture references (which arguably do NOT need to be there because they're pointless), but there is a lot here about mental health, about education, about the fact people fall between the cracks, about grief and loss, about how events like 9/11 deeply and profoundly impact not just those who lost loved ones, but anyone who remembers what happened. There is, of course, the terror and fear of a high school hostage situation. Of people off the rails in their need for help and for connection and love and trust with one another. (view spoiler) It's impressive what Hassan achieves in the story level. Unfortunately, the writing level is less impressive.

There's a readership here. I can see teen boys loving this. It's the quintessential book of TODAY'S TEEN BOY. The problem is, of course, it is a hulking novel. It is intimidating. I'm not sure those who would benefit the most from this will stick it out. Crash and Burn could have been half the length -- pulling out things like the unnecessary pop culture references, the listing of television shows, etc would have done it. Of course, it's excusable because this is Crash writing a book from Crash's ADD perspective. So, he gets away with it. (view spoiler)

Full review here: <http://www.stackedbooks.org/2013/02/c...>

Runa says

Okay, let's start this review off by mentioning that a drunk person cannot consent to sex. Because the main character of this book has a lot of sex with girls who are drunk, high, or both, and let's just clarify right off the bat that that's 110% not okay. Sex and drugs basically set the tone of this book, with one or the other mentioned practically on every page of the story. A lot of really problematic behaviors are normalized, with the main characters constantly treating women like objects for his own pleasure and it's kind of sickening to read. I did really enjoy the writing style, but I'm a huge fan of stream of consciousness style writing. I can see how some readers would find the story difficult to follow, but that certainly depends on the person reading the book. As far as the book's portrayal of mental illness in YA, I'm a little concerned that it does perpetuate the whole 'mentally ill individuals are violent' myth, but the main character does act as a foil to that idea as a character with ADHD who ends up the hero of the story, though again, his actions throughout the book were less than heroic up until the final confrontation with Burn. I think this would have been an amazing novel if not for Crash's vile treatment of women, and it's pretty disappointing to see a YA novel that seems to glorify his behavior. It's one thing to have an unlikable protagonist that learns and grows and changes throughout the book, it's another to have a protagonist whose problematic interactions are not explained or excused or evolved in any way.

Audra says

What in the holy heck did I just read? Crash and Burn is a long winded, scatterbrained story about a boy, Stephen Crashinsky and his practical life long fear of a fellow sometimes classmate David Burnett. Both kids have their fair share of issues, certainly one more so than the other.

I wouldn't say I hated this book so to speak, but I found it a bit tiresome. It's a very long book. The subject matter is a bit disheartening given recent events.

I wouldn't say the book is terrible. The book had a bit of a Citizen Kane complex. I kept reading so I could find out what Burn had told Crash. There were times I wanted to put the book back on my shelf and move on to a new read. But I HAD to find out what was said. I literally felt like I couldn't sleep without finding out this bit of information. The big secret ended up totally not being worth pushing through the book.

Janie says

Steven Crashinsky saved his school from blowing up at the hands of a super psychotic kid. And he's a complete asshole. Told from his point of view, he is working on writing a book based on his life and what actually happened that fateful day, and the narrative goes back and forth. It's bizarre. And pointless. It's boring. And repetitive, and HE'S SO UNLIKEABLE. Plus, Burn (I forgot his full name), is also TERRIBLE. I mean, sure he's the one who threatened to blow up the place, but SERIOUSLY. I hated him so much. Every time he appeared, I was put on edge. I have no sympathy at all for him despite (view spoiler) That may have messed him up, but he's EVIL. I hated Lindsey; I even hated Jamie. Yep, so completely freaking normal to sit around watching Nickelodeon all day. And his mother was on board with this? What IS Jamie's character? She simply doesn't give a shit about anything other than television? For crying out loud there isn't a single likable character in this book. Steven's dad? The worst father ever to be conceived of in fiction (well, maybe not the worst in terms of actions; he didn't beat his kids or anything, but seriously) He is such a BASTARD. Felicia (the absolutely perfect perfect woman ever who always says the right things, super nice, "super-hot"

etcetera etcetera)? I hated her because she's freaking marrying him. WHY? WHY WHY WHY? When Crash isn't hooking up with girls he's planning cheat on and/or break up with as soon as the affair is over, he's getting high, complaining how scarily psychotic Burn is (and he IS), or gushing about how amazing Roxanne was (view spoiler). Hell. Even the last line was about freaking (view spoiler) I hated Steven so much. All he can talk about is how he's fantasizing about girls, hooking up with girls while thinking about others, etcetera. The last part of the book when the narrative finally goes into exactly what went down that fateful day was fine. But the 500 pages of sheer idiocy I had to slog through was NOT WORTH IT.

Raeleen Lemay says

This book can basically be described as INSANE.

- 1) because one of the characters is actually mentally unstable.
- 2) because so many FREAKIN' CRAZY THINGS HAPPEN YO.

Steven (Crash) Crashinsky and David (Burn) Burnett are two characters that I feel will leave an impact in the world of fiction. Most of the time after finishing a book I don't really have lasting impressions of their characters, unless of course it's *The Hunger Games* or *Harry Potter*. However, I will never forget Crash and Burn and the crazy journey that they had together growing up.

During the entire book you get to see the two boys' interactions, and even though he would never call Burn his friend, Crash becomes the person who knows him best. And that's how he ends up stopping him from blowing up their high school and everyone in it. (That's not a spoiler, that's literally what you're told from the beginning and the entire story leads up to you finding out what the secret is that leads to Crash saving the school).

This book takes place from the 90s to 2008, and it deals with so many different topics, I just can't even. Friends and family relationships, love, sex, mental illness, suicide, 9/11, drugs and alcohol abuse, violence... IT HAS EVERYTHING. And it was an insanely wild ride.

Also it was interesting reading from the perspective of a self-proclaimed manwhore.

P.E. says

I've given Crash and Burn some honest thought, and I think I love it. The operative word being "think" because there's a lot to hate too, and I can see why some people didn't enjoy this book.

But in this review, mine is the only opinion that matters and I'll do my best to explain why this book messed me up so bad.

See, I thought the writing was refreshing. It's not artistic and pretty. It's not stupidly plain. The writing has a voice and so when I read this book, I could imagine Crash talking. There was credibility because Crash had such attitude and it was all there. There is swearing but the real, natural kind. Nobody was trying too hard. There were pop culture references which I totally understood although Crash is a few years older than me. There was rambles which made sense since Crash is not a professional writer. He's kind of self absorbed and this is his book and he'll put whatever he wants in it.

The most endearing quality of Crash and Burn is the believability. Crash is a believable character. Getting to know him is unreal because there are so many layers and parts to his life that he's almost tangible. I can see him. I can imagine him. It's like one of my wishes when I was a kid, to be able to live as someone else, came true because I got to experience the world through the eyes of Stephen Crashinsky, a messed up and real kid.

The most interesting thing is that I don't even know if I like Crash. I don't know if I don't. It doesn't seem to matter because Crash is Crash. There are times he disgusted me, like all the stupid times he lit up and how he was such a manwhore who treated girls like crap. Maybe if I met him for real, I would hate him because he is a jerk. I know I wouldn't like him.

But.

There's more to people than what you see, and this holds true with Crash. He's an asshole and makes some baaad decisions, but there are some moments where I want to hug him because he's real. He's screwing up and dealing with what everybody feels in his own way. From his protectiveness of his sister, to his relationship with his asshole of a father, to his brutal honesty, Crash won me over. He's a tool; a jerk. But I can't say I don't hate him. It's not even about like or hate; Crash feels real to me in a way you never see people or books.

He has all these messed up thoughts in his head, all these awkward moments full of attitude and uncertainty that are fundamental to life. I was never bored with this book. I was completely and utterly engrossed in Crash's story.

And it was a long book. Like, over 500 pages of emotional, real, funny, disgusting shit and it kind of messed with me. It was a real and unfiltered account of Crash's life with hardships and success. The story wasn't chronological and jumped from scene to scene. I loved it because it brought so much insight to Crash's world. There were so many different themes going on; so many storylines that flowed in and out. Recurring characters, fading characters, and new characters. So much about life as a teenager in this time period, and responsibility, and not knowing who to be and how to act. There were surprisingly emotional stories because I could connect. My life isn't like Crash's at all, but the basic feelings are there. I even feel like I went on a bit of a journey with the main character. This book is one of those books.

What originally drew me into the story was the concept: school shooting, who did it and why? I was curious about Burn and I was not expecting too much from this book. I was surprised at how layered the story was. Especially the characters: there's so much to them. Burn was supposed to be a draw although this story really is about Crash. Their relationship was fascinating.

We all have that friend we've known since forever. The ones we don't really consider friends but were a part of our childhood. Maybe our parents hung out together and we hated them. We grew up together though and this is a link that, no matter what happens in the future, will always exist. That is Crash and Burn. They have a bond. It's weird and messed up and you can't even explain it properly because it is constantly evolving. Crash owes a lot to Burn. Crash also hates Burn. Crash feels bad for Burn. Watching the way their lives are linked is so fascinating if not disturbing. Burn is a genius although screwed up. He's vengeful and smart. Actually, there's really no way to describe Burn beyond that he is. Somehow, Burn's actions make sense in some twisted way when considering his character.

That's what I think needs to be said about this book. While Burn's actions are the premise, the story really didn't need things to go so extreme to draw you in. It's a book about people and the stuff that defines them. It is not a feel good story. It doesn't try to be inspiring. It doesn't leave with a happy ending. It is the story of one dude's life to this point, and somehow it is one of the best books I've ever read. I want to reread this book. I want to buy it (I previously got it from the library).

Crash and Burn makes me think and feel. I don't normally write reviews this long, but this book has inspired me in some ways. To do what I want to do. To listen to myself. To realize that even the stupidest little things like some random beans can save someone's life, but at the same time how can beans really save a life?

5 stars.

PinkAmy loves books, cats and naps says

Grade: B+

Steven Crashinski (Crash) , unlikely hero who saved his school from David Burnett's (Burn's) bullets and bombs must finish confronts himself, his father and his past writing an account of the incident.

Narrator Crash is sympathetic yet maddening, arrogant yet lacking esteem, thoughtless and thoughtful, hurting yet hurtful. Verbally abused by his father, I found rooting for Crash to be easy, though sometimes I wanted to shake some sense into him and other times I wanted to teach him how to respect girls. He may even have had more negative traits than positive ones, but I still saw so much potential to be a great young man in him. I'm not sure how much he grew throughout the book, but I'd like to believe his next steps would be wiser.

Readers only see Burn through Crash's eyes, from mentally ill young boy, to adolescent who lost his father in 9/11 to would-be school bomber. I would have loved to read some of the voluminous psych records he must have had.

Debut writer Michael Hassan created near brilliance in his freshman effort. Crash's voice is pitch perfect for a certain type of problematic adolescent boy with lots of problems to create his behavior.

CRASH AND BURN is very long, over 500 pages and at times redundant. I had trouble keeping track of all Crash's friends, classmates and sexual conquests. I love long books, but think this one could have been trimmed by cutting out some of the partying and hookups that didn't really add to my understanding of the plot or character.

THEMES: verbal abuse, violence, friendship, drugs/alcohol, sex, family, parents, siblings

CRASH AND BURN is a tough but important story, filled with teenage (though not all teenagers) profanity, partying and sexploration on steroids, which be reasons to skip this novel that tells us everybody has a story behind how they present themselves.

Paul Lunger says

Every so often there comes a book that may be the most important book you may not ever read. In 2013, that book could very likely be Michael Hassan's "Crash and Burn". This is the story of Steven "Crash" Crashinsky who becomes a hero when he prevents his friend David Burnett from blowing up their high school on 4/21/08 in Westchester, NY. The story is told as a series of flashbacks from the present with Crash who is writing a book about the events of that day & events in the present which show the events post-4/21. The flashbacks are interesting as we see the evolution of the relationship between Crash & Burn as they eventually become known & the sane & insane sides of each others personalities. There are signs that Burn is

capable of what he eventually ends up doing & yet nothing is ever realized. Hassan's story is one of ADHD & medications for it, love & a lot of marijuana smoking across their growing up. We've also got a case of controlling parents, suicides, & lots of loss as well as a lot of adolescent behavior that in this day & age is more common than not.

What makes this book important is the subject matter especially the climactic moment between David & Steven at the school as the big secret that's hinted at in the beginning is revealed & we the reader learn exactly what can cause someone to snap. Hassan's characters are typical teenagers that could be anywhere in the US & the school could be any school in America. The book is a bit long & detailed which may detract some readers & the covers is a bit more than you think at first glance. Also being geared for the high school crowd is appropriate due to the drug use, sex & drinking amongst other things. However, adults as well should pick this up & read it to learn which behaviors to watch for in their kids. This is a book that may in it's own right become a classic as long as we continue to have incidents like Columbine, Virginia Tech, Chardon & Newtown. An important book in an important age & one not to be missed.

Sara Williams says

School shootings and suicide and absent parental figures and a lot of shit faced drunk/stoned people and partying and a very annoying sort of narrative can pretty much describe what this book felt like. It doesn't follow a chronological narrative which can be an hassle, but still that's one of the smallest problems I have with Crash and Burn.

We're in the mind of this 16(?) year old boy named Crash, who saved his entire school from getting blown to pieces by this guy called Burn and guess what, THEY'RE BOTH EQUALLY FUCKED UP IN THE HEAD. To move on to explain why that is would be too much trouble, so just pick up the book yourself if you're interested. Our boy Crash then gets to write a book about the events of his life surrounding Crash, and 'Crash and Burn' has us moving from them meeting when they were kids until they're young adults.

There are so many hilarious scenes and characters I want to pinpoint, like the marijuana stash, Crash's delirious arguments with his father, his relationship with Felicia, and the beauty of his moments with Roxanne - but it all gets lost. 530 pages of rambleness, to be honest. If 200+ pages of this novel were cut out, this would be bliss.

Well, not really, because let's not forget our main character is a major asshole. And not the sort of asshole you accept and want to punch in the face, really the sort of guy you despise and want to stay the fuck away from - all the damn boy does is whine about how unfair his life was, because oh my god I only have 300 bucks in my credit card, and oh my god my father sucks, and oh man I spent all my time getting stoned it's so much fun! I treat girls like shit, it's soooo much fun!

Straight up I have no patience to read about these sort of silly characters, they get on my nerves and I never get to learn anything from them at all.

Rachel says

I just finished this book and I'm still in tears and I should be in bed but I have to write this review.

I hated this cocky little punk Crash when I started the book. He was every douche I knew in high school, charming his way out of trouble and into girls' pants.

But that's just part of the story. This book about a hard-partying, womanizing kid with ADHD and his

frenemy that almost blew up his high school, it turns out, is actually a beautiful, sad, brutal, sweet, thought provoking novel. It might even be a love story.

I can't begin to do justice to all the things that are so right about the book, but I'll point out a few:

- Crash's voice is honest, raw and real. Honest whether it flatters him or not.
- Burn is a complex human being, not just a "psycho."
- Roxanne...where to begin. One of the best characters I've ever read.
- Between the two of them (Roxanne and Burn), mental illness is portrayed in an honest and kind way.
- I'm a sucker for a story that can make me love characters I want to hate.
- it's nice to read a YA novel with a male protagonist for a change.

Definitely one of my all time faves.

Mitch says

I haven't been this conflicted over a book since Libba Bray's *The Diviners* - and for pretty much the same reasons. *Crash and Burn* is definitely something that I wouldn't hesitate to call indisputably well conceived and written, yet at the same time, I'd be lying if I said there weren't aspects to Michael Hassan's debut novel that didn't bother me. Don't get me wrong, I for one totally appreciate how Hassan's written an incisive contemporary that really speaks to me as a twentysomething guy and needless to say totally loved the concept behind and writing of the book, but Crash's narration also struck me as excessively long, convoluted, and just dragged on and on and on. So my status after reading this? It's complicated.

I know the length and style is a conscious decision on Hassan's part - Crash getting a book deal to sell his story's used as a framing device to explore not only his character but also the character of his - close acquaintance? not quite friend? frenemy? something? - Burn (yeah, it's a complicated relationship... no, of course it is) and is fine on its own, but add to that Crash's ADHD and his tendency to tell the story in a massive spew of information, current relevance be damned, and I just couldn't make heads or tails of a lot of things for most of the book. Not to mention the somewhat confusing tendency to skip between events with no warning. I certainly wasn't bored - even though the majority of the story is about Crash and not about what Burn does or why he does it, Crash's irreverent style and flippant attitude towards drugs and getting laid definitely is the kind of (crass) male point of view that I've sorely missed after reading so many female young adult authors trying their hands and failing at coming up with a relatable guy narrator, and - nah, that's just it, guys are crass. Sorry. And it works too because I'm pretty sure only a male author would know to include a constant stream of nineties pop culture and gaming references that brings back so many fond memories, like take for example the origin of the nickname Crash (you may be thinking Stephen Crashinsky, duh, but...):

The one thing was: PlayStation had a new game that was, in fact, the best game ever, a game that I would become closely identified with.

The game in question had come out a few months before and was about a red-and-brown, two-legged dog-thing that kept running and running and running and running, jumping over ditches, spinning around turtles, popping on them, sending them hurling into space, and then running while being chased by humongous boulders and having to jump over pits, while spinning through crates and breaking things, never stopping, except to get an oingaboinga and otherwise stop and you're dead.

Yeah, I'm guessing only a guy would go 'Crash Bandicoot!' so I wouldn't be surprised if it takes a certain

kind of reader to 'get' Crash, to understand why a guy would identify with a video game character, but I swear, it's a brilliant take on a brilliant character.

Unfortunately, not everything hits right away like the double meaning behind Crash's nickname - the point of Crash's relationship with Burn's sister Roxanne for example eluded me for most of the book. In retrospect, not only should I have seen what happens to her coming, but it works (and hits like a ton of bricks when it does) because I wasn't anticipating it - it's so unexpected and unexpectedly written - especially with how it pertains to the hook of the book, the secret Burn shares with Crash when he takes the school hostage. Still, the way Hassan does it, by drawing out this messy, convoluted, strange relationship, left me deeply dissatisfied; I guess I just don't like being left grasping for straws for most of the book trying to figure out Roxanne's role when it was so obvious at the end. Maybe it's just me, but I feel Hassan takes too long getting to a point where everything makes sense and a lot of the beginning could and should have been edited out. And even now that I've made sense of it all, I still feel while I understand Crash's character quite well, maybe even completely, I don't think I fully understand Burn. It's obvious he's always been disturbed, Crash makes that quite clear with the nickname and the fox incident and his constant paranoia at Burn doing things, but I'm trying to figure out if Hassan's saying a combination of Burn's father dying on September 11, his mother dying of cancer, and then what happens to Roxanne pushes him over the edge... and I guess I see it but it feels sort of flimsy for what he ultimately does. Maybe it's because there are still connections, like Christina, that I feel are still outstanding, or maybe it's because it seems like even Crash's sister Lindsey gets a better lesson out of what happened to Roxanne, but either way I felt there was just something missing to Burn.

Really surprisingly, the most interesting part (at least for me) of *Crash and Burn* isn't Crash's (sort of) relationship with Burn, which is kind of hit or miss with some great scenes like the poker game or the Thanksgiving dinner but a lot of filler as well, but another tangential part of the story, Crash's relationship with his father Jacob Crashinsky. Parental hypocrisy is not a topic that's usually covered in young adult, and rarely well, so the entire storyline with Crash's father disapproving of his marijuana use while himself using marijuana was... really hilarious. See this exchange about getting high while high:

Newsguy: "So then are you advocating that people with ADD smoke marijuana?"

Me: "No, I'm not whatever-you-call-it for anything. Look, I'm just an eighteen-year-old kid looking to have a little fun in my last summer before college. Clearly, those pictures show a few people having a good time. When was the last time you had a good time?"

Newsguy: "This isn't about me."

Me: "Yeah, but when was the last time you smoked weed? The truth. If you're gonna ask me that, then don't I have a right to know about you?"

Newsguy (definitely uncomfortable, so I'm thinking maybe I got him and he can be the news story instead of me): "Steven, what I'm hearing from you is that you're making light of your use of what is currently an illegal substance. And that while you began this interview with apologies, it seems that you are unrepentant."

Me: "Actually, it seems to me that you are making a big deal out of nothing. Like every kid, virtually every kid in my high school, has gotten high from time to time. And it's just not in my school, it's every school throughout the country. And it's every college. And it's probably every office and business too. If you polled the people around us right now, like probably half of them are still getting high. Probably even you, like I said before. Even my father still smokes weed now and then. Even at his age. So why are we making such a big deal out of these pictures?"

OK, here there is a superlong pause. Long enough to fit an entire commercial between what I just said and the next sentence.

Newsguy: "Are you saying that your father smokes marijuana? How do you know this?"

Let's just say I don't know where else I would ever read about marijuana use so plainly that still involves a kid discovering his father's pot stash, nicknaming it Jacob's Gold, and then raving about it whenever he takes a hit, but there's just something totally irreverent to the whole thing that has Crash making a serious point yet being completely flip while doing it - it's definitely extremely clever and worthy of the *Pineapple Express* comparison. Still, that's also the problem with the book, I don't think this really is a book about Crash and Burn, Burn's role is almost too simple in the grand scheme of things, and between how Burn comes in and out of events and the focus on tangential aspects of the story like the drugs, it's really a book about Crash.

Sure, that's not a bad thing, but it's still a problem - there's just too much filler that, while enjoyable, has nothing to do with what's needed to make *Crash and Burn* work. And that's why I'm conflicted, there's just too much about Crash being Crash and not enough about Crash **and** Burn.

Nina says

This is another one of those books that I can't seem to review.

Whether it's because I don't have the time, or because I don't really feel like it, or because I can't figure out what to say, whenever I think of sitting my ass down and doing it I never actually end up doing it.

Which is weird, since I loved the hell out of this book.

Crash is an extremely fun and relatable character, and even though his narration often assumes a comedic, slightly off-kilter tone, what he goes through never stops feeling *real*, and his problems and feelings and actions, whether you agree with them or not, are completely, undeniably *human*.

All of Hassan's characters are multifaceted, but still clearly defined - not exactly fitting a precise stereotype, but always acting in a way that makes sense when related to who they are.

The answer, the secret, the thing you want to know from the moment you open the book? You'll have to wait for it. Quite a lot. And I'm usually the first to be disappointed by secrets I'm forced to anticipate for ages, but this was worth it - firstly, because it's satisfying and shocking and thought-provoking enough on his own; secondly, because everything that happens before and around it is insanely gripping, juicy and entertaining.

Loved it, great book, 10/10 would read another by the same author - aaand I'm out.

Becky says

I have mixed feelings about this book, and here they are, kind of scatter-brained.

Crash, the main character, is a pretty repulsive character. He's a poor little rich boy that I never quite managed to be sorry for. Set up against Burn, the manic depressive boy genius whose natural destructive tendencies are exasperated by loss after loss after loss, and his father, a sociopath businessman, Crash certainly sees himself as innocent - a hero even. What's disturbing then, is the ways he can't see how similar he is to the two men he fears. To Crash, he is almost never at fault at school or at home; he objectifies and trivializes women, and is a deliberate date rapist. He excuses himself from everything on account of his ADHD, and this makes him a pretty unreliable narrator and a pretty shitty person. When I read reviews talking about how typical of a boy Crash is, it worries me.

There are many times in the book when, as if to remind us that this book is taking place at a particular place in time, Crash lists of names of movies that were playing at the time. More than other pop culture references made in the book, this annoyed me. A list of movies. And yet, toward the end of the book, I'm near the end of a two page spread of lists of drugs he did and movies playing in the theaters over a summer, when a plot bomb is dropped. I was really surprised, shockingly surprised actually, and I wondered if this tedious listing of pop culture things throughout the book was part of a narrative device leading this moment. And then I couldn't decide if it was brilliant or cheap. It was moving though, and the one part in the book where I really empathized with Crash's character.

So. What is this book about? Does it say something about heroism and villainy? Can Crash's one moment of good action make him a hero despite everything else? Can we believe other people in his life are as he says they are?

Kathy Cunningham says

Michael Hassan's CRASH AND BURN is one hell of a fantastic novel. It's witty and brilliant and funny and terrifying and damn near impossible to forget. Eighteen-year-old Steven Crashinsky is probably the most absolutely real, totally authentic teenage protagonist since Salinger's Holden Caulfield, and that's saying something. It was actually hard for me to imagine an adult writer creating this character - it was as if Hassan were channeling a real kid, with all his quirks, his weaknesses, his outrageousness, and his magic. Because yes, Steven Crashinsky - "Crash" to his friends - possesses an uncanny sort of magic that enables him to connect with others in a totally inexplicable way. It's this "magic" (whatever it really is) that helps him see who David Burnett really is. And seeing who David Burnett really is allows Crash to save hundreds from a horrible death.

CRASH AND BURN is on one level the story of how Crash saves his upstate New York school from classmate Burnett (who earned the nickname "Burn" during an incident when he was eight). When Burn takes hostages and threatens to blow up the entire school, Crash somehow manages to save the day. Which makes Crash an instant hero, with tons of newspaper and magazine stories written about him, and a huge book deal, which means he can buy a BMW (which would be cool for any teenager). But it also means he has to actually write a book about what happened that day at his school . . . which means he also has to figure out what the connection really is between him and Burn. And that's not an easy thing for anyone to do.

But on another level, CRASH AND BURN isn't about the siege at the school at all. It's about kids growing up and experimenting and getting in trouble and trying to figure enough things out to make life livable. And it's about how damned hard it is to look at things honestly without totally falling apart.

Crash is not a particularly admirable character. He's into video games ("Crash Bandicoot" was his childhood favorite), weed, cheap vodka, and sex, not necessarily in that order. He's either stoned or drunk more often than he's not, and it's impossible for him to go five minutes without uttering the kind of language that would make his mother cringe. He hates his father (really, truly hates him, and maybe for good reason), but he's dedicated to his "boys," the group of friends on which he has depended for years. He has no clue about love, and sees most girls as challenges that can be won with a cute smile and a little liquor. He's not the boy most parents would like to see in the company of their daughters. But at the same time, he's a genuinely good guy who cares for his family in ways more profound than he can comprehend - he even admits he'd give his life for his father, in spite of how much he despises him. He forms a complex and real relationship with Burn's damaged sister, Roxanne. And, surprisingly, he is a good friend to Burn, a kid with more baggage than any ten of his friends, even though Crash has been afraid of Burn, in one way or another, since third grade.

Crash also suffers from ADHD, and one of the most amazing things about CRASH AND BURN is Hassan's ability to get the reader to experience just what it's like for a kid who can't think and learn the way the rest of us do. Crash lives in a world in which he's expected to do things that are just impossible for him - and the drugs his parents give him to help just make it worse. There is so much about this character that made me feel I was seeing kids like Crash for the first time, and I was a high school English teacher for many years. This was an eye-opening book for me, if only on that score.

But it's eye-opening in many, many ways. I was profoundly moved by CRASH AND BURN, even devastated by parts of it. And I came to love Crash, with all his destructive behaviors, his stupidity, and his rejection of authority. He is such a real, wonderful, perfectly believable character that I accepted everything about him as true and genuine, flaws and all. He is who he is. And he is a hero in spite of it all . . . or maybe because of it.

I will warn parents that this book is not typical of most YA novels - it is overflowing with profanity, drug and alcohol use, and sexual content. That's probably why it rings so true. Hassan pulls no punches - Crash and his friends are real, twenty-first century kids. The suggested audience for CRASH AND BURN is ages 14+ (or 9th grade and up). It might be a bit edgy for most 9th graders (whose parents balk at their reading I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS). But I can't imagine any teenager not getting instantly pulled into CRASH AND BURN. And for that reason alone I recommend it. But I also recommend it because it's brilliant and honest and absolutely gut-wrenchingly perfect in its portrayal of what it's like to grow up in today's world. Read it for that. Or just read it!

Helene Jeppesen says

This book was PERFECT! This book was everything I wanted! I went into it not knowing anything about it, because I couldn't seem to get a clue from the synopsis. Now, it is - hands down - one of my absolute favourite books! It reminded me so much of "The Catcher in the Rye" by J. D. Salinger. Even though the story is very different, the writing style, tone of voice and main character are very similar and I loved that about it!

READ IT! :)
