

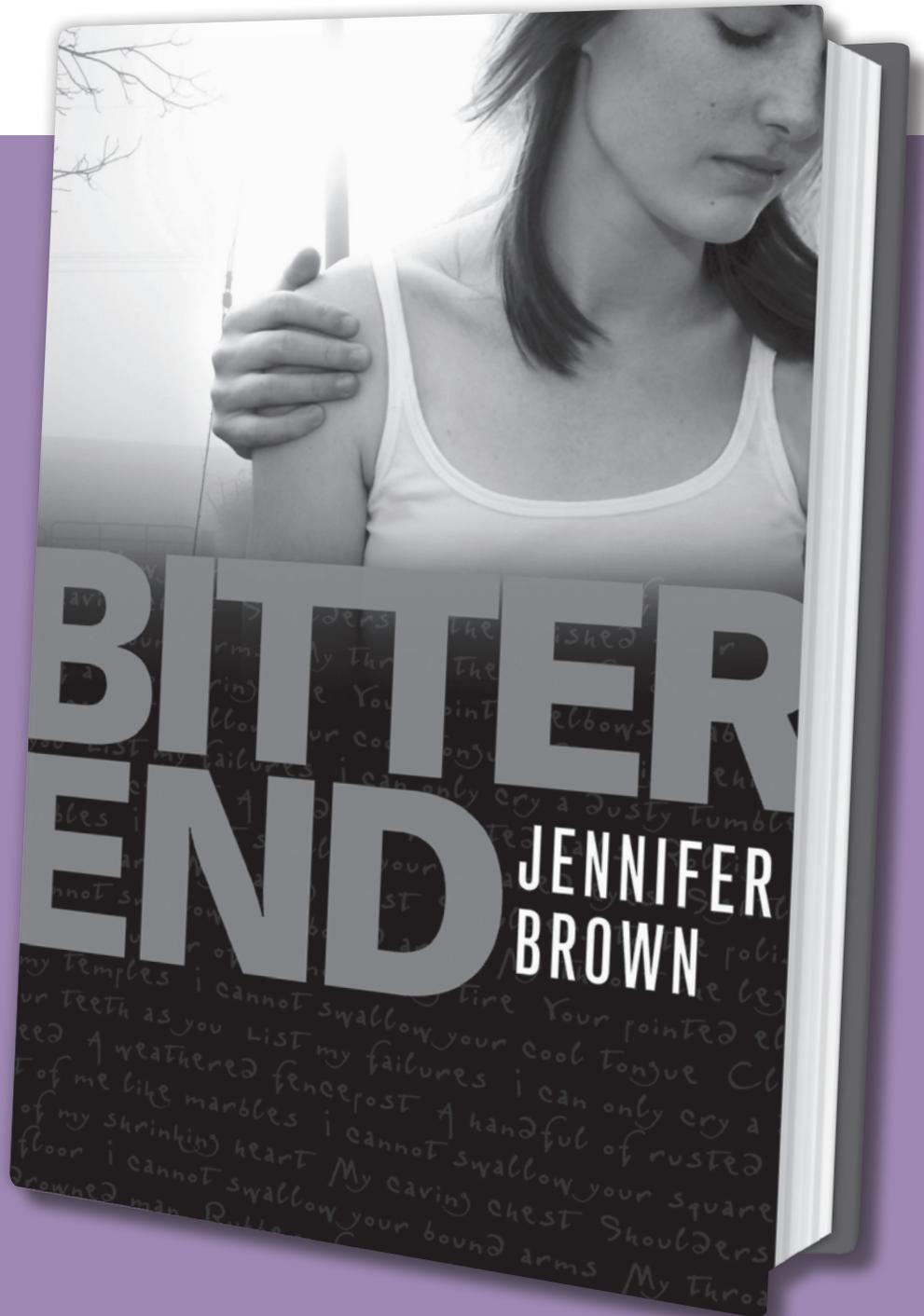
BITTER END

curriculum connections

- ❖ Abuse
- ❖ Relationships
- ❖ Friendship

Ages: 15 & up

by
Jennifer Brown



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Consider the novel's cover. In what ways is the image represented symbolic for the events that transpire throughout the course of the book?
2. What are your earliest impressions of Alex's best friends, Zack and Bethany? Do you find them to be good friends to Alex? Using textual examples, support your position.
3. How would you describe Alex's family? In what ways has the loss of her mother impacted how the family functions? Are they in any way similar to your own? If so, in what ways?
4. After forcing her across a dangerous water spillway on their first date, Cole tells Alex, "You're safe, Emily Dickinson." In your opinion, what is his motivation into pushing her into visiting this perilous place? What can readers infer about Cole from this event?
5. Consider the road trip being planned by Alex, Zach, and Bethany. Explain the significance of this journey. In what ways does Alex seem driven to move forward with her quest to make it to Colorado? What do you believe she hopes to find there?
6. For what reasons do you think Alex feels so connected to Cole? What about him draws her in? How would you characterize the relationship between the two of them, and how does it change over the course of the novel?
7. Early in their relationship, Cole tells Alex, "I just...I really like you, Alex. But I can't share you." In what ways do Cole's actions reinforce this statement? With whom is Cole unwilling to share Alex? Considering his relationship with Alex's friends and family, how would you describe his reactions to these other key players in her life?
8. Explain the significance of the title, *Bitter End*. In what ways does it accurately describe the events and relationships portrayed in the novel?
9. After the frightening yet thrilling experience with Cole, Alex remarks, "I was so scared and so exhilarated I didn't know where one feeling stopped and the other began. All I knew was I loved the feeling. And I never wanted it to end." In what ways does Alex's reflection foreshadow the events to come?
10. Consider the variety of settings for *Bitter End*; name the three places you believe to be most important to the story. Using textual evidence from the book, explain why you find them to be significant to the overall story structure.
11. Compare the parent/child relationships in the story: Alex and her father and Cole and his parents. To what extent are the relationships of these characters shaped by the world around them? To what extent do their relationships shape that world?
12. Describe Alex. What makes her a dynamic character? Is she the type of person you would want to befriend? Why or why not?
13. *Bitter End* is told in first person; how would the story be different if someone besides Alex were telling it? Do you think changing the point of view would make the story better or worse? Why?
14. Consider Alex's writing and Zach's acting. What role does art play in the lives of these characters? In what ways does it allow them to offer the world the "truths" they might not freely articulate?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

15. Alex is profoundly affected by the loss of her mother and her relationship with Cole. Given these emotional obstacles, she often finds herself unable to confront his need to control her. Identify the catalyst(s) that drives Alex to be able to overcome these challenges. In what ways do you expect her to be changed by these experiences?
16. Throughout the novel, readers witness the complexities of the various relationships among the characters. Consider whose relationship seemed most similar to one of your own personal relationships. What about it reminded you of your experiences?
17. Using the phrase, "This is a story about..." supply five words to describe *Bitter End*. Explain your choices.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Domestic Violence Hotline

<http://www.thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/teens-and-dating-abuse/>

Break the Cycle: <http://www.breakthecycle.org/>

Teen Dating Violence Facts: <http://www.clotheslineproject.org/teendatingviolencefacts.pdf>

Do Something

<http://www.dosomething.org/whatsyourthing/Violence+and+Bullying/Dating+Abuse>

Dating Violence Resource Center

<http://www.ncvc.org/ncvc/AGP.Net/Components/documentViewer/Download.aspxnz?DocumentID=38057>

Live Strong/Teen Dating Violence: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/13801-teen-dating-violence/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teen_dating_violence.html

Act for Youth: http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_datingviolence_0206.pdf

Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence: <http://www.acadv.org/dating.html>

Love is Not Abuse: <http://loveisnotabuse.com/web/guest/home>

Love is Respect: <http://www.loveisrespect.org/>

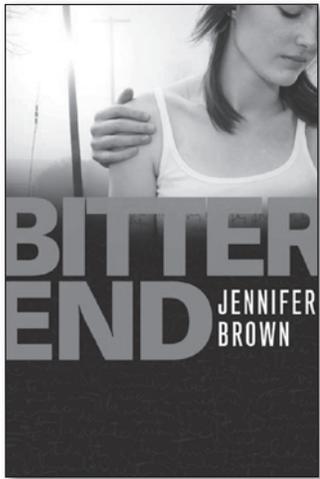
Think First: <http://www.thinkfirst.org/teens/ViolencePrevention.asp>

Teen Violence Statistics: <http://www.teenviolencestatistics.com/>

Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence:

<http://www.ctcadv.org/WhatisDomesticViolence/WhatisTeenDatingViolence/tabid/169/Default.aspx>

about the book



Bitter End
by Jennifer Brown
978-0-316-08695-0

When Alex falls for the charming new boy at school, Cole—a handsome, funny sports star who adores her—she can’t believe she’s finally found her soul mate...someone who truly understands her and loves her for who she really is.

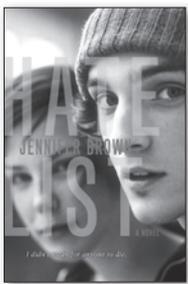
At first, Alex is blissfully happy. Sure, Cole seems a little jealous of her relationship with her close friend Zack, but what guy would want his girlfriend spending all her time with another boy? As the months pass, though, Alex can no longer ignore Cole’s small put-downs, pinches, and increasingly violent threats. As Alex struggles to come to terms with the sweet boyfriend she fell in love with and the boyfriend whose “love” she no longer recognizes, she is forced to choose—between her “true love” and herself.

about the author



Jennifer Brown writes and lives in the Kansas City, Missouri, area with her husband and three children. Her debut novel, *Hate List*, received three starred reviews and was selected as an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, a *VOYA* “Perfect Ten,” and a *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year.

also by Jennifer Brown



HATE LIST
978-0-316-04144-7 HC
978-0-316-04145-4 PB

praise for *Hate List*

- ★ “Startling, powerful, poignant.”—*School Library Journal*
- ★ “Riveting.”—*Publishers Weekly*
- ★ “Spellbinding.”—*VOYA*