



## Ask the Dark

*Henry Turner*

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*Lots of people have asked me 'bout what happened. Tell the truth, I'm tired of getting asked. I want to answer everybody all at once and get it all the hell over with...*

Billy Zeets has a story to tell.

About being a vandal and petty thief.

About missing boys and an elusive killer.

And about what happens if a boy who breaks all the rules is the only person who can piece together the truth.

Gripping and powerful, this masterful debut novel comes to vivid life through the unique voice of a hero as unlikely as he is unforgettable.

## Ask the Dark Details

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Author : Henry Turner

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Genre : Mystery, Young Adult, Thriller, Fiction, Teen, Mystery Thriller

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## From Reader Review Ask the Dark for online ebook

### Linda Strong says

14-year-old Billy Zeets is an unlikely hero. He's been a petty thief for several years, committed vandalism, skips school, essentially breaks all the rules.

He's angry that his mother died. His father is unable to work and so depressed he's barely alive. Billy's older sister is also acting out in unhealthy ways.

It is Billy's voice who tells us his story. Boys are going missing ... and being murdered. Billy's dream is not for himself .. it is something for his father. The reward for catching this monster is \$100,000. So .. how hard can it be?

The writing seems to have been written by someone who is real knowledgeable about teens in small towns. This is a gripping, powerful story .... one I am so happy I did not miss.

After reading this, you have to ask yourself ... what makes a hero?

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### Janie Johnson says

I received this book through Net Galley in exchange for an honest review. This is a debut novel of the author and I was a little hesitant about that at first. This is a mystery and also classed as YA, but I am not sure as to why it would be YA because the language used in this book was pretty bad.

In this book we have a boy named Billy Zeets who has been less than perfect in the eyes of those in the community. Billy does not have a clean record, he has been known for stealing and trashing the community he lives in. He does make a promise to do better and not revert to the life he once lived. That was before he stumbles upon a crime and he makes it his mission to solve the crime in his small town.

I was a bit confused by this book being classed as a YA since it read more like an adult book. I say that mostly because of the language. Normally bad language does not bother me but in this book the language at times was a bit over the top for me with all of the cursing and it put me off a little bit from really enjoying the story. I love a good mystery, but I don't feel like I got that with this book since you know at the beginning of the story pretty much what is going to happen. The only mystery was really figuring out who did and I have to say it was pretty predictable and not really a surprise. I felt like that hurt the story a lot. Despite my issues with the story I found it was an engaging, fun read simply because we have an unlikely hero as the protagonist of the story.

I did find that Billy grew on me despite his use of a few choice words constantly throughout the story. I think he was developed ok, but I think a bit more backstory would have really benefitted the story a lot. I did not really find much connection with any of the other characters in the book. I thought the speech/accents of our protagonist was written very well and gave him more character.

I really can't class this book as a YA mystery and I don't think people should go into it thinking it is. There is some mystery to the story, but it is very much an adult book IMO. If you like a mystery but more on the fun

side rather than serious, then you may like this book. I was on the fence about what I wanted to rate this book since I had some issues with it. I decided that since it was pretty engaging and fun I would rate it a 3 star. I think that is pretty generous.

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### **Patricia says**

Ask the Dark is a fabulous read for a first novel. Although Ask the Dark is dubbed Young Adult, I found it fascinating. Billy is a troubled teen with past brushes with the law. Before his mother dies, Billy promises her to change his bad ways. Trouble starts when young boys begin disappearing. The body of one boy is discovered by Billy, and Billy decides to discover who the killer is. Told through Billy's voice, I found this to be a very powerful novel. Highly recommended.

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### **Caryn says**

Definitely an interesting read because of the narration. You get used to it quickly and I was intrigued that we saw the whole story through Billy's eyes. I did have a hard time keeping track of some of the side characters. I appreciate how the purpose of the story was for Billy to solve the mystery and get the police to believe him based on his past, but I was hoping for more of a mystery for the reader.

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### **Dianne says**

Told in the innocent voice of a young teen, a tale of loss, poverty, accidental heroics, and the truth of his feelings, the voice and heart of Billy Zeets come to life in through the eyes and heart of the main character. **Ask the Ark** by Henry Turner is as heartwarming as it is heartbreaking as Billy recounts his life and events since the day he made a deathbed promise to his dying mother. Once a troublemaker, Billy has always been looked down upon by his peers as well as many adults who know of his family's poverty, his father's issues and the boy Billy used to be. What these people all failed to see was the loyalty and love held within this teen's soul. Billy tends to forgive most transgressions, finding an excuse for what has happened. But the pivotal day in his life came the day he found the body of a young boy who had gone missing and never told anyone what he saw. Between the threat of losing their home and his father's deep depression, Billy takes on the responsibility to save both their home and his family from complete emotional destruction. Does this mean he must go back to his wilder days and break the vow he took for his mother?

More boys go missing and Billy may have hit on a lead that he follows up on, himself, because he has no faith that the adults in his small town would even listen to him, not even those in authority, the ones he should be able to go to. Will Billy's personal investigations land him in more trouble than he can handle? Will he go above and beyond to bring the monster behind these crimes down or are his attempts going to prove once again, that Billy will never amount to anything?

Henry Turner has captured the heart and soul of a humble young teen through his words. The dialogue is down home quaint, as Billy comes across as a boy who has never really been given the chance to try to soar with the eagles of youth. This trip through Billy's life and the town he lives in will feel real, will capture your imagination and your protective side as you root for Billy to finally find acceptance and acknowledgement of the fine young man is his becoming. His blushing humility and sense of honor often get

him in trouble, all because he is trying to do the right thing, something he now finds to be second nature. A fascinating and sweet read, perfect for YA on up, I think Henry Turner could squeeze tears from a rock, with **Ask the Dark**. No matter what genre you read, this is one to step outside of your box with.

I received an ARC edition from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

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### **Kerri (Book Hoarder) says**

Yay, nabbed this on Netgalley!! Hope it's good :)

~\*~\*~

Finally read this months later, and oh, I enjoyed it!

I have a weakness for dark and gritty YA, I have to admit. In this weird way, because the first time I read The Hunger Games I actually wasn't sure that I could finish it, yet I love books like this...

This was the perfect time of year to read this book, and I quite enjoyed it. Billy Zeets used to be a hellion of a child - until his mother died and he turned over a new leaf, determined to live life as a good son, the boy his mother would have wanted him to be. So far he's been successful, but things are changing.

Boys are going missing. His father is going to lose the house. His sister is in trouble. So when Billy finds himself being dragged back onto a darker path, he decides to follow it - because just this once, it might be that being the good kid isn't going to get the job done.

The tone and language in this book might deter some people, but it fell into a rhythm for me after awhile, and above all it actually suited the character, and the story being told. Sometimes dialect or accents serve to throw you out of the story, but in this case it just made Billy more real in my head, a character explaining his story to me with vivid clarity.

As for the story itself? Well, it's the story of a young boy and his family, and the duty he feels to them. It's a story of being young and the scrapes that kids can get into, that hearkens back to maybe fifty years ago with some of the hijinks that Billy gets up to. (Yes, hijinks is the word I think fits in this case.) At times it had the tone of a slow, wandering tale of young boys and their adventures, and at other times it had me tense, wondering what was going to happen next!

It's also a story with all the makings of a good mystery, with an unlikely hero at the forefront to save the day and make choices that nobody expects him to make - and who saves the day because of his past, not in spite of it.

Overall a book I quite enjoyed, and I'll definitely keep an eye out for future books from this author!

*A copy of this book was provided through Netgalley in return for an honest review.*

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### **Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says**

Billy Zeets finds out that his family is losing their house. His dad has been recently hurt and can no longer make the mortgage payments so the bank is foreclosing in 3 months. His older sister tells Billy he needs to do something. I mean don't all older sister's who refuse to get a job to help with anything tell their younger brother's to find a way to keep the house?

I don't much like sister-girls character.

What does dad do? He is depressed so I will give him that. He just starts to want boxes though so he can pack. He comes up with the idea that he can stay at the recovery AA house. **WHAT ABOUT THIS 14 YEAR OLD KID!!!!**

Thanks be to the gods of young adult books that this kid doesn't let his family being idiots stop him. He actually goes out and does odd jobs. He could have done more but the neighborhood doesn't trust him because, well he has been a bit of a punk.

**At the time I was in the seventh grade the second time, like I still gonna be, and I spent most of my time downtown at school and didn't get much news 'bout what happens up our way, 'cause my teachers down there's just a bunch'f nuns and they ain't never had much to tell me, 'cept to say I got stains on my soul.**

So he starts working around the neighborhood, and boys start going missing. He starts spying on a weird guy who furnishes drugs for some of the kids and is a bit on the weird side.

Books where the kid takes on the roll of solving crimes usually get on my nerves for the most part. This one actually did a pretty decent job of it. You just knew that no one was going to help Billy.

**"Cause he made it plain to me, I'd busted too many windows, stolen too many bikes, soaped too many cars.**

**Weren't no police for me. I was on my own.**

There is lots of cussing and f-bombs in the book too.

Scuse my language.

Even more than I cuss. It got a star added just for that.

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### **Karen says**

Billy is a 14 year old boy who is constantly in trouble. Ask the Dark is his retelling of the ways that he redeemed himself and his family for the whole town to see. This is Billy's story.

This story starts at the end. Billy is some sort of hero for what he did, and so he proceeds to tell us the whole story. Kids have been disappearing and there is a curfew to try to keep everyone safe. Billy is a rule breaker, and a juvenile delinquent. He vandalizes and breaks in and steals from his neighborhood. Over the summer Billy learns that his father, a single dad, is about to lose his house. His sister is out running around with the town bad boy and now it is up to Billy to try to make enough money to save the house. In his wondering he finds a suspicious character in the neighborhood. No one will listen to Billy about his suspicions. What if Billy is right?

This story is told entirely by Billy. His accent comes straight through the text as it is written the way he tells it. This was a bit off-putting at first, because it is a bit hard to understand. Billy is really just an uneducated kid and his thoughts and language reflect his lack of depth. I hated that the story was told in his voice only. There were times when I got used to it, but mostly it was very annoying.

Billy is not a hero all the time in this story. He is regularly teased by kids in his neighborhood, and doesn't win most of the fights he is in. Billy has a bad reputation as a trouble maker and no one trusts him. He is a bad kid and people around town have good reasons not to trust him. I felt like the narrator gave us almost too much detail about Billy's story. It was more than we needed to know to understand what happened.

Between the awful narration and the dragging story line, I ended up not enjoying this story as much. The last few chapters did have me on the edge of my seat because it is just so thrilling. This story wasn't as frightening as I had hoped. It makes for a good middle school tale, but wasn't captivating enough for this adult to enjoy it.

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### **Lisa says**

Good story about a teenaged boy who fights the darkness in himself by turning his life around to help his family and his town catch a serial killer. Billy, the main character and narrator of the story, describes how he put all the pieces together and figured out who the killer was. I was initially put off by Billy's narration but I got used to it quickly because the story flowed so well and kept me occupied. It's definitely a book for mature young adults because of the serial killer aspect of the story.

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### **Heather says**

I got this novel on NetGalley. I didn't know what to expect but I really enjoyed this book. I especially liked the way it was written in the voice of young Billy. The story was great and so were the characters. It would have been easy not to like Billy but from the beginning of the book you can't help but cheer for him and want to adopt him- or at least help him.

Great book by Henry Turner. I can't wait to read more by this author.

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### **Cheryl says**

I am the minority regarding this book. I thought this book was going to read like a horror story but it barely kept my interest or even kept me from falling asleep. No intrigue, no real scary moments, uninteresting characters, and tons of use of the "f" word.

After a while of reading this book and seeing that it was taking a long time to draw out to the murders and disappearances of the other boys, I skipped all the way to the last 4 chapters of the book. I read them to see how the story ended and to see if the ending would excite me to wanting to go back and read the rest of the book again. Nope the ending did not change my mind about this book. Such a bummer.

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### **Kelly (and the Book Boar) says**

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

3.5 Stars

***“Isn’t that funny? All that stealing and never going to school. It’s what made it so you were outside a lot, seeing things nobody else saw. Hidden and secret things.”***

This book is about to turn YA right on its ear.

*Ask the Dark* is Billy Zeets’ story. Literally. What you read is what he is telling into a handheld digital recorder. It’s the story of some missing neighborhood boys, and how Billy became an unlikely hero. It’s a phenomenal f\*&^%\$# debut.

***“Scuze my language.”***

I loved Billy. He reminded me a bit of this guy . . .

And holy guacamole did this book push some boundaries when it comes to the traditional definition of “YA.” Now, if this were being marketed as a book for adults, I would be a harsher critic, but it’s not, so I’m not. In a kid’s book it’s completely understandable for a boy from the wrong side of the tracks to ignore all common sense and put himself in harm’s way in order to potentially solve a crime. (It’s been my experience that people aren’t as accepting of these types of storylines in “grown up” stories.) There’s also no use of quotes to distinguish conversion which will grate on some, but again I think most kids won’t even notice or if they do notice I don’t think they would have as much of a problem with it. Remember, this isn’t supposed to be a written story – it reads like a transcript of a recording (a tactic that I found worked **very** well).

*Ask the Dark* is a book that would hold a kid’s attention. It has mystery, action, violence, foul language, etc. Unfortunately, these are also the things that will keep parents from being accepting of this book, so it’s a

double-edged sword.

I would have given this one 4 Stars, but I had a couple of issues. First, this book read like a “blast from the past” – the MC was a kid who spent his days wandering the town, looking for odd jobs, riding around with the junk man, etc. No offense to modern-day kids, but from my experience not many of you are like this. Then every once in a while there would be a reference to a cell phone or something that made me realize this was supposed to take place in the present. Second, the dialect is **so** well written. I can’t remember the last time I read such great “drawl.” However, as a mom I know reading accents is something that doesn’t come easily to kids and can slow down the pace/lessen the enjoyment for a non-adult.

All in all, though? Remarkable. We’ll call this one “Kelly Tested and Oprah Approved.”

Okay, not really. Don’t sue me, Oprah.

*ARC provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you, NetGalley!*

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### **AH says**

A dark young adult book told from the perspective of Billy Zeets. Billy is 14 years old and he comes from a family with financial struggles. Billy takes on all sorts of odd jobs in order to help his father save the house from repossession. While on a job, Billy makes a discovery that leads him to suspect a local man is responsible for a series of murders of young boys. Instead of contacting the local police (with which he's had a few run-ins himself), Billy decides to try to gather as much information as possible on his own.

I enjoyed this book. Billy is the kind of kid that you may not want to have running around your neighborhood, however, he does have a good heart and he means well. It was interesting watching him put together the clues like pieces of a puzzle. It's not a detective/crime story - it's just a boy taking his observations and trying to make sense of them.

I understand that this book is labelled as Young Adult but be forewarned that the language may be objectionable for some readers. There is also drug use although Billy doesn't partake. The last part of the book may frighten younger readers. I would recommend this book for older young adult readers, perhaps Grade 10 and higher.

*Thank you to NetGalley and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Children's Book Group for a review copy of this book.*

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### **Shari says**

(Argh! I wrote the wrong title in my previous attempt with this book--How do I fix that?)

ASK THE DARK is one of the most gripping and compelling books out there. (actually will be out there)-- not only did I have to know who the killer is but I had to discover how Billy figures it out and how he saves the victims. This is one of the creepiest books I have ever read.

#### SPOILER ALERT

So often in crime books, I'm screaming at the characters to just go to the police. There usually is some flimsy reason, or dumb reason, or no reason that they don't. In ASK THE DARKNESS, Turner creates the animosity so clearly between Billy and Richie and the police, especially Dryker, that there is no question that Billy can't take his evidence to the authorities. The theme of "people who are seen as waste" is so painfully and clearly illustrated in this novel. Even Richie discusses how he picks up trash, but isn't trash. (Actually, he does such a service for the town, but while those who go out on early morning litter pick-ups at the creek are seen as good-doers, Richie is seen in a negative light.) This is a novel about judging and labeling and refusing to understand what is behind our behavior. Even Billy judges Bad-Ass's brothers as dangerous men, but who instead are helping to keep Bad-Ass in line. People are all so complicated and multi-faceted.

Another theme that stands out to me is the importance of parents and parenting. Many of the characters' flaws can be traced back to parent abuse and neglect or death. Parenting has nothing to do with socioeconomics --rich, middle class, and poor are all affected.

What makes this novel stand out from the many thrillers is the characters. Henry Turner is a master at creating interesting and individual characters. As Sam says to Billy, Billy's sneaking around because of the effects of his mother's death is what makes him observant and wily which is how he survives and becomes a hero. There is also the implication that he has a form of ADHD, which makes him not so good in school, but sharpens his ability to move and observe. He is lovable but also very difficult--stealing, destroying, violent--we as the reader can understand why, but in reality, Billy would not be someone with whom it would be easy to get along. Richie is the same. In fact there are very few people in this novel who are sweet and kind, Sam Tate and Marvin might be the only ones.

I am glad that the book starts out with the ending--that I knew that Billy and others survived. It is such a harrowing story that I needed to know that the narrator was going to be ok in the end.

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#### **pearl. says**

I don't ever really read this genre, but I enjoyed Ask the Dark! I really liked the way the main character told the story!

**Edited to include full review.**

**\*I received an Advance Reader Copy in exchange for my honest review\***

## **First Thoughts**

I hardly ever read this genre, but **I was delightfully surprised with *Ask The Dark*.** I enjoyed how Henry Turner captured the voice and personality of Billy Zeets. I especially liked the way the story was told: Billy Zeets talking into a recorder and telling the story of how he accidentally saved a boy from a serial killer.

## **What I Enjoyed**

**Billy Zeets.** I know some readers will probably be turned off by the way Billy spoke in the book-- uneducated (scuze, took'm, yar, 'cept). I liked it, though! I think it helped me envision who Billy is and the sort of environment he was brought up in. **I also liked that he wasn't really a hero.** He would have never found out who the serial killer was if he hadn't been thieving around.

**The plot.** I'm not going to lie-- **there were times I was terrified!** That serial killer was a nasty piece of work! My heart would race so fast every time the killer would make an appearance!

## **Recommended For**

This definitely isn't for children. Some of the scenes are graphic and there is a lot of cursing in the book. Those who enjoy a good thriller will probably want to pick this one up.