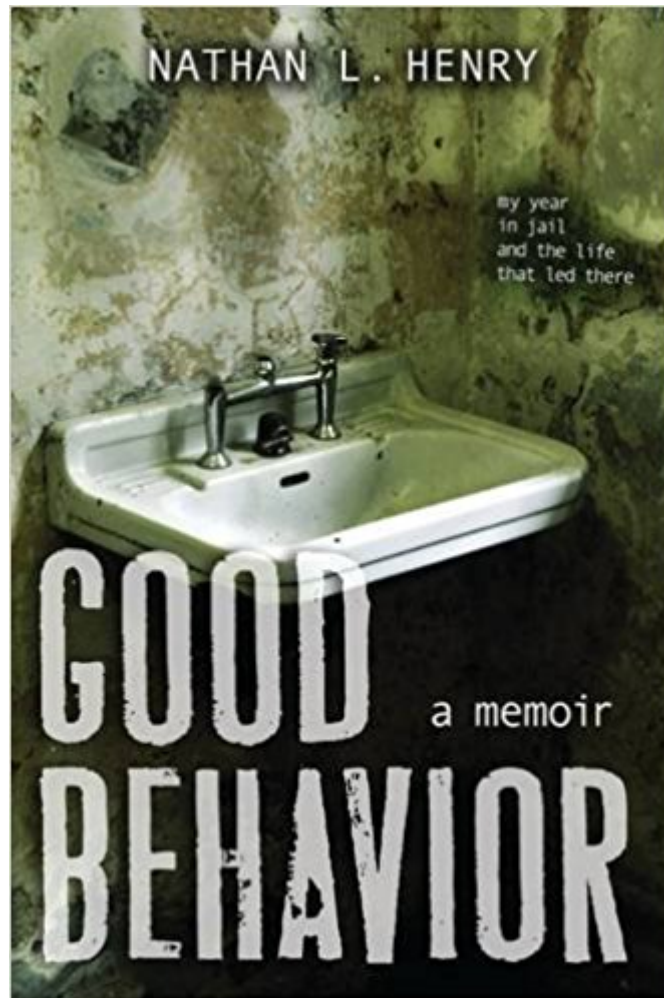




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Synopsis

Jailed at age sixteen for armed robbery, Nathan Henry was the kind of teenager most parents and teachers have nightmares about. His crime was the culmination of a life lived on the edge: guns and drugs, sex and violence, all set against the ordinary backdrop of a one-stop light town in rural Indiana. Nate's personal history is both disturbing and fascinating. A rough childhood becomes an adolescence full of half-realized violent fantasies that slowly build to the breaking point. But these scenes alternate with chapters about Nate's time in jail, where through reading and reflection he comes to see that his life can be different from all he's known up to this point. Nathan's story of his year in jail and the life that led him there combine to create a powerful portrait of an American youth gone bad-and a moving story of redemption.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up "In this gritty memoir, Henry alternates chapters between his childhood and his 16th year, which he spends locked up in Paradise County Jail, IL. His violent father's obsession with guns; paranoid fantasies of death, dismemberment, and destruction; and readiness to share details of those fantasies with his young son paved the way for Henry's fearful and angry acting out (yet he does not use them as an excuse). After the boy did a stint in a behavioral-health rehabilitation center, with no explanation of medication protocol upon release, armed robbery seemed inevitable. Reading and questioning the nature of existence in his cell leads Henry to an awakening and awareness of his life and future desires. An epilogue explains that two years later he is married and happy "presumably out of the life that led him to trouble. The abrupt ending is a disappointment, and readers will be left with many questions. Lots of swearing, violent fantasies, and descriptions of

sexual experiences make this book most appropriate for older teens. There is certainly a place for memoirs of incarcerated Caucasian teens, and youth in detention centers (as well as elsewhere) around the country will want to read this book. Amy Cheney, Alameda County Library, Oakland, CA
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Henry opens the tale of his tough-to-read-about, tougher-to-live teen years with his incarceration for armed robbery, then alternates chapters about his year in jail with the backstory of what brought him there. Obviously a very disturbed boy, he took pleasure in massacring animals, embraced Satanism, and armed himself with guns, knives, and hatred. While most memoirs of teen delinquency seem to come from urban centers and focus on the scourge of drugs and gang violence, Henry's is unusual in its small-town roots and echoes of very real cultural trauma: "We had plans to attack our school and slaughter our fellow students. . . . It's surprising to me that Columbine didn't happen sooner." In jail, Henry finds release from his dark instincts in those pillars of teen iconoclasm "Rimbaud, Nietzsche, and Kerouac" and embraces the world of ideas and literature. Although Henry's is an extreme case, there's little doubt that the troubling content and graphic language of his memoir will be very familiar to teens, especially those in underprivileged areas. Grades 10-12. --Ian Chipman

Henry links his life experiences with the poor decisions he made as a youth and young man. The description of his negative role models, twisted thoughts, and anti-social behaviors makes his placement in jail a given conclusion to his past. As a former elementary and high school teacher, I wished there had been more structure for him as a child. It was interesting to read about his jail experiences, since I don't know much about the penal system. The novel left me wanting to know more about his life as an adult.

Students in my college Juvenile Delinquency class love this book.

Proving that it's so much of what's in your head which might be permanent ruin ,for some. Required reading for the punks in the hood.

Nathan Henry has provided alienated youth a voice not unlike what Kerouac did for the youth of the sixties. The talk is straight and unvarnished but the message is honest and heart felt and

inspiring. There are so many young kids out there experiencing similar feelings, if not the actual consequences that are described in this book and they need to read this to realize that there is hope and love and honest compassion in even the most difficult times of their lives. Henry speaks for his generation. However anyone, of any age who loves vivid, aesthetically clear writing will want to read this!

I thought this book was really well written. It holds the readers attention and it is hard to put it down until you finish reading it.

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