

All the Broken Pieces

Ann E. Burg

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A remarkable literary debut by a stunning new voice in children's fiction.

Two years after being airlifted out of war-torn Vietnam, Matt Pin is haunted: by bombs that fell like dead crows, by the family -- and the terrible secret -- he left behind. Now, inside a caring adoptive home in the United States, a series of profound events force him to choose between silence and candor, blame and forgiveness, fear and freedom.

By turns harrowing, dreamlike, sad, and triumphant, this searing debut novel, written in lucid verse, reveals an unforgettable perspective on the lasting impact of war and the healing power of love.

All the Broken Pieces Details

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From Reader Review All the Broken Pieces for online ebook

Emerald says

“Sometimes the words people don't say are as powerful as the ones they do.”

Laura says

It feels good to be back in the big, “scary” world of verse novels. I was actually craving one. Haha...My biggest literary fear is now a craving! Wow! :)

All the Broken Pieces by Ann E. Burg addresses such a big, traumatic and powerful issue in such a pure way. With a down the middle of the plate, straight forward style, this story and words hit home and my heart hard! With the verse format, Ms. Burg seems to use each word with care and gets right to the emotion and power. The words cut deep.

Matt Pin was just ten years old when he was airlifted out of a worn torn Vietnam and away from his home, family, and all he ever knew. He grew up surrounded by war. Now adopted and living in the United States, Matt must start to face all the pain, memories, prejudice, questions about his parents, and uncertainty with his adopted family before he can begin to heal, forgive and find his way in the world.

“There are no mines here,
no flames, no screams,
no sounds of helicopters
or shouting guns.

I am safe.

How can I
be home?”

There is a lot going on in these pages, but every development and struggle is presented with such honesty, heart and grace. All the characters touched my heart, but Matt had me in emotional knots at page one. The force and power of his struggle broke my heart into pieces right from the get-go. How does a heart or soul survive that kind of trauma? How does a child heal and attempt to move on? People deal with grief in so many ways—from silence to lashing out. Matt turned to music and baseball for solace. Ms. Burg's use of these two wonderful worlds in Matt's healing process was magical and filled my heart with all sorts of happy! :D

“When I play the piano,
I'm sheltered
in that safe place
where the only thing
that matters
is music.”

This book shows the physical and mental pain, violence, and continuing ripples of the Vietnam War on the men who served, men who stayed home, families, children, towns, and nations. No one went untouched.

Everyone broke into pieces whether they realized it or not. Matt's story gave me hope and inspiration to keep talking, working, and giving of myself. Hopefully, with time, patience, and teamwork, we can all pick up the pieces together. Matt's story may have focused on the Vietnam War, but it will ring true for today as well. Soldiers, hearts, nations, and families are still being broken into pieces.

A very powerful read.

I look forward to reading more of Ms. Burg's work in verse. Off to look her up now! :D

Joanie says

*Maybe love is like
a monsoon rain.
When it rains
really hard and heavy,
it seems like
it will never end
and we will swim in mud
forever.*

*But then the wind shifts,
and the earth grows
dry and cracked.
Every gurgle and ooze
tiptoes away
and we're left wishing
and waiting
for rain again.*

*Maybe love is like that
Maybe the wind shifts
and love just tiptoes away.*

Had to include this. My favourite passage for the last three lines.

Matt is 10 years old, loved by his adoptive parents but still struggling with the family he's left behind in the war. He hasn't talked about Vietnam, and he's afraid and unsure of whether or not he should. Ann E. Burg is able to bring forth a lot of emotions in these sparse verses - a very accessible book for everyone. You can choose to go as many layers deep as you wish through Matt's point of view, whether reading to find out how he's dealing with the present or searching back into his past. It's a quick, one-sitter, but don't be discouraged by the length - the simplicity is beautiful, and frankly, communicates better with less than more.

Rebecca McNutt says

This poetic prose was good, but a lot of it was implying events and happenings without explaining them and what made them so meaningful. It was intriguing and nostalgic, but it seems like it's missing something.

Lance Burton says

This is a great book I rated it a 4 star. If you like short books and wars this is your kind of book. The main characters name is Matt he loves baseball and he thinks that his parents don't care for him even though they do.

David says

4.5 Some of the imagery and situations in this book were both haunting and beautiful. I really enjoyed the main themes, but it could have used about 100 more pages to really make the storyline more fleshed out and less conveniently clean. Some of the images and situations were just "wow."

Josiah says

"There is darkness on the water.
There is darkness on the land.
There is darkness all around us,
but I will hold your hand.

You are safe, my precious child.
You are safe now, you are home.
We have found you and we love you.
You will never be alone."

—*All the Broken Pieces*, PP. 11-12

The feel of this book in general will be familiar to readers who loved Karen Hesse's Newbery Medal-winning *Out of the Dust*. The verse flows forth unimpeded, gently and quietly introducing the story of Matt Pin, a boy who was rescued from Vietnam under some of the most horrible circumstances imaginable.

2009 seems to have been an unusually good year for first-time novelists, and Ann E. Burg's contribution to that favorable trend is perhaps the best of them all. Books in verse tend to have a lighter touch than straightforward prose, even when dealing with emotional and weighty matters such as those confronted in *All the Broken Pieces*, and this is a somewhat new feel for young adult literature about the Vietnam War; it contrasts markedly with the nearly unbearable gritty starkness of *Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers, for example. The details of Matt's sojourn aren't completely known until right near the end of the story, but just within the first few pages we can see that he is weighed down by deep guilt over what happened with his family in Vietnam, that he blames himself for some of the most terrible things that happened, and that even after being resettled in the United States with an American family that loves him, those issues will not go away quietly. His new American classmates won't forget what happened either; they lost family and friends in Vietnam, and Vietnamese Matt gives them the opportunity to put a face on all that loss. His presence gives them a human target upon which to vent their anger, a person to look at and tell themselves, "*He* is the reason that this happened. It's *his* fault."

All the Broken Pieces is multilayered in its drive, and each layer surrounds and builds on the others to give the story its power. What comes to the surface again and again, though, are the emotions of the people involved, and the ways that they demonstrate and handle these emotions the best way that they know how, sometimes appropriately and other times unfairly. What everyone seems to have in common is their emotional scars, scars from a war that changed them all from the inside out and made them see the world differently, scars that won't allow them to feel peace even though, for most of them, the losses of Vietnam have ended. How can you forget, when your memories remain as vivid as ever?

The emotional content of this novel comes through sharply and with much effect, even as it is being relayed in such a quiet, lyrical way. *All the Broken Pieces* feels almost like a ballad, weaving its way into the hurt and following the characters as they come to find some measure of solace in where they stand now. The scenes in which Matt sees his new brother Tommy and thinks of his brother in Vietnam are some of the strongest ties in the entire story, and the gentle lullabies that Matt's mother sings to him when he gets mentally caught back in the Vietnamese jungles make for truly beautiful writing that soberingly contrasts with the violence of the war. This is a remarkable book, and I would give it three and a half stars.

"We have found you and we love you.
You will never be alone.

I will sing to you of morning,
I will stay until it's light.
I will sing to you of laughter
on the other side of night."

—*All the Broken Pieces*, P. 138

Adamaris Jauregui says

This book is about a boy named Matt that was sent to the United States because he in the war of Veitname ,he thought that him mom send him over and abandoned him but then he realized that she sent him over because she loved him and wanted him to live.I liked this book because he gave parts of Veitename that he remembered. I would recommend this book to someone who likes sad books and books that could be true

Thomas says

All the Broken Pieces is the story of Matt Pin, a twelve-year-old Amerasian boy who was born in Vietnam but currently lives in the United States. His mother was a native Vietnamese citizen but his father was an American soldier who abandoned him after the war. His mother urged him to flee to the US, and now he lives with a caring adoptive family. However, his guilt and sorrow over the Vietnam War still plague him.

I thought this was overall a decent story told in poems. I really felt a strong connection to Matt, even though I was born in the United States I still have family members who lived through the war and tell me all their sad stories. Matt was a very developed, three-dimensional character and I liked his progress throughout the story. My one complaint is that sometimes the poetry got a little sloppy, and it felt like prose being separated into stanzas instead of actual poetry. Decent read though, and highly recommended.

Kristen Jorgensen says

Young Matt was born in Vietnam, his father was an American soldier that abandoned his family. Matt was around ten years old when his mother begged American Soldiers to take her son to the U.S.A in hopes that he would have a better life.

Now in the States Matt is adopted by loving parents, and surrounded by an amazing support group, that teaches him baseball and piano. Still, two years later, his difficult past still haunts him, he wakes up at night from nightmares, a few kids at school taunt and bully him, and he fears that when he tells his adoptive parents about Vietnam they won't trust or want him anymore.

One of Matts teammates, Rob, hates Matt. Rob is constantly saying "because of you, my brother died." Matt, and Rob must learn to work together to stop the hate and turn things around so they can both heal.

This beautiful story, written in verse, was hard to put down. The power of music, baseball, and love can make anything possible. Ann Burg makes you grateful for all that we enjoy here in the U.S.A.

All the Broken Pieces is sure to be one the Newbery committee takes a good look at.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

At first this seemed like a novel about a Vietnamese boy adopted into an American family and adjusting to American life. However, as I read on it became a novel about how it feels to be adopted, how it feels to be half Vietnamese/half American and never knowing your father, and how it feels to have lived during the Vietnam War. Even further on, it became about post-traumatic stress disorder, and how it affected not just the soldiers who came back from Vietnam, but also the Vietnamese people who survived.

And finally, it was also a novel about guilt and forgiveness, including forgiving oneself. Interwoven between all those threads was a story about baseball, coping with bullies, and dealing with the shock of a very sick coach. This novel had a lot going on it it, and it was well done and had none of that choppy feeling that novels in verse sometimes have. All in all, an excellent effort, and recommended.

Delia says

good

Nathan Kraus says

i thought it was a good book also you fly threw it because there is not a lot of words on each page.

Andy Tutuc says

I recently finished "All the Broken Pieces" by Ann E. Burg. A friend recommended it to me, so I decided to give it a try. I had not previously heard of this author, so I wasn't sure what to expect.

This book fits somewhere in between historical and realistic fiction. It talks about a Vietnamese child named Matt who is now living in America. He is treated poorly by some people, but manages to stay positive. He makes his school baseball team, and also likes to play the piano. He also volunteers a shelter where veterans are staying.

One of the reasons I liked this book is because it mixes in baseball with certain historical events, like the war. I enjoy learning and reading about these events, but I feel that the baseball deepens the story. It does not just talk about the war and how the families were affected; the fact that the boy is playing baseball presents a realistic aspect that many people can relate to. This helped make certain parts of the story easier to understand. Another thing I enjoyed was the way that diversity was promoted. Sure, the author could have just put the book from an American's point of view. It would be very easy for everyone to relate to that. However, the author showed what it was like to be in the shoes of someone from the other side. This showed me that even if someone is originally from a place that America dislikes, this doesn't mean that they are a bad person.

There was one quote that stuck with me from this book. There was a boy that told Matt: "My brother died because of you." Obviously, the boy's brother fought in Vietnam. However, Matt had been adopted, and had no bad intentions. The other boy told him this twice, and it seemed like Matt was hurt. This quote basically sums up the hardships that Matt faced, and how he was discriminated.

David says

I really didn't like this book that much. I expected it to be better but it wasn't. I would recommend this book to people who like sports and poetry
