



Thousand Words

Jennifer Brown

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Ashleigh's boyfriend, Kaleb, is about to leave for college, and Ashleigh is worried that he'll forget about her while he's away. So at a legendary end-of-summer pool party, Ashleigh's friends suggest she text him a picture of herself -- sans swimsuit -- to take with him. Before she can talk herself out of it, Ashleigh strides off to the bathroom, snaps a photo in the full-length mirror, and hits "send."

But when Kaleb and Ashleigh go through a bad breakup, Kaleb takes revenge by forwarding the text to his baseball team. Soon the photo has gone viral, attracting the attention of the school board, the local police, and the media. As her friends and family try to distance themselves from the scandal, Ashleigh feels completely alone -- until she meets Mack while serving her court-ordered community service. Not only does Mack offer a fresh chance at friendship, but he's the one person in town who received the text of Ashleigh's photo -- and didn't look.

Acclaimed author Jennifer Brown brings readers a gripping novel about honesty and betrayal, redemption and friendship, attraction and integrity, as Ashleigh finds that while a picture may be worth a thousand words . . . it doesn't always tell the whole story.

Thousand Words Details

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Author : Jennifer Brown

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From Reader Review Thousand Words for online ebook

Arlene says

Wow! This should be listed as required reading for middle and high school. Relevant, topical and all too real.

A picture is worth a thousand words.

No truer statement than that, especially when it involves a seventeen year-old high school junior who while intoxicated took a picture of herself, sans her clothes, and texted it to her boyfriend. After a nasty breakup, Ashleigh's ex-boyfriend Kaleb callously forwards the text and her picture only to have it circulate to an entire school and its neighboring districts.

This book tells the story of Ashleigh's humiliation from this incident and the taunting she received in the aftermath of having her nude photo distributed. There were nasty emails, texts and even message boards on the Internet that forced her to deal with the ramifications of a single moment of lapse in judgement.

There were so many elements to this story that came to the forefront and to capture them all would lead me to go on forever, so I wanted to capitalize on a few that stood out to me.

First being, the cruelty that can be the Internet. It never ceases to amaze me how bold and cruel people can be in a virtual forum when they can conceal their actions and words with the anonymity that the Internet provides. It's no doubt that the Internet affords cowards with fake courage, but it still saddens me to see the distance to which some will go. This story did a great job in showing how virtual bullying is rampant, real... and most of all hurtful.

Second, it was a rude wake-up call to witness the ramifications and criminal side to sexting. A portion of the book centers on the consequences of their actions. We're talking school suspension, being kicked off a sports team, a parent possibly losing their job over his daughter's actions, an ex-boyfriend being charged as an adult sex offender for distributing a minor's revealing photo, the list goes on! It's no joke... so just don't do it.

Lastly, there was a level of substance that I appreciated in the story. As much as I faulted Ashleigh for her stupid mistake, I equally admired her resolve to face the consequences to her actions. The strength she showed after losing faith in her friends and family for support was inspiring. I appreciated her dedication to her community service at Teen Talk and I felt she shared a worthy story with the right amount of remorse and character growth.

Overall, this book is topical, it's relevant, and it's real. I highly recommend this to YA Contemporary readers that are looking for a story with substance and truth. It caught and kept my attention. Well done!!

Catherine ? says

I've always loved how Jennifer Brown's books comment on social issues. This one was no different, and the plot seemed captivating and realistic.

Still, I didn't really care for the romance part; I understand that romance is EVERYWHERE in YA fiction, but I felt like it took too much away from the more important message.

Rose says

Initial reaction: Reading Jennifer Brown's books always seem to punch me so hard in the gut I feel like I'm close to tears or bawling. Reading this book hurt in places and I was impressed at how real an account it was. But it did have some issues.

Full review:

I'm keeping it at 3.5 stars, because while there are some great moments in this book, there are...not so great moments when it comes to showing/elaborating on the particular topic at hand. Some of those not so great moments left me questioning how high I'd rate this one, and I don't think it was as strong as "Hate List" for the overarching narrative, though I appreciated the way this made me think about the topic and how I found myself following it with the gut-punch I've come to associate with Brown's narratives.

This is a difficult book to read in more ways than one, because Ashleigh is a young woman who sent a nude photo of herself to her boyfriend, they had a horrible break-up, and he sent the picture out to his friends as revenge to get back at her. The result? A whole lot of backlash, bullying, slut-shaming, and examinations of legal and moral measures in the aftermath of Ashleigh's sexting. It's definitely emotional - I felt for Ashleigh in some tougher moments, but I almost feel like certain scenes undercut the emotion or had something missing to them. I couldn't put my finger on what was missing exactly at first, but maybe because it was telling so much of Ashleigh's thoughts and ramifications of her actions that some of the emotional gravity was lost. Ashleigh isn't a perfect person; there are moments of weakness where she starts to define herself in the scheme of the scandal, but it's re-examining her relationships and her work in her community service that has her come to terms with the aftermath of what happened. I almost think the book started off stronger (which were the parts where I felt most for the MC) than the latter part, though the book tied up, for the most part, all the threads it introduced.

The story trades between past and present and does well with showing the realistic reactions of its cast. I almost wish it'd done more to examine the issue of body and sexual shaming, contradictions of gender perceived roles by society, and identity - though it touched on the measure briefly in the scheme of Ashleigh's experiences. Brown makes a good point in the narrative about a picture not showing the whole complexity or story behind a situation, and I appreciated that notation. I just feel like, the more I think about the narrative, my gut's telling me that as much as I felt for the character, even in moments where she was difficult to like, something was missing. At first, my gut told me I should rate this 4 stars or higher, but the more I thought about it - it still felt like as much ground as it covered - it still only scratched the surface of how complex and emotional this issue really is.

But I appreciate the narrative with the experience it provided, and I think it's still important for contributing to its larger discussions.

Overall score: 3.5/5 stars.

Ashley says

Thousand Words was probably my most anticipated read ever, and it sure lived up to it's standards.

The only thing I didn't like was how Ashleigh was constantly playing the victim in the situation. She blamed everyone else for the spreading of her nude pictures but herself, to which if weren't taken by her, nothing would of happened. I understand that Rachel shouldn't have talked her into it, or that Vonnie shouldn't of violated Kaleb's house, or that Kaleb or Nate or whomever shouldn't of spread the pictures, but if Ashleigh never took off her clothes in front of Vonnie's mirror and sent the picture to Kaleb, all of this could of been avoided.

Now that doesn't change the fact that I don't have sympathy for Ashleigh and her family, because I do. She made a mistake and sadly, her ex-boyfriend attempted to get revenge on her by sending the picture to a couple people, and then it got blown out of proportion. Ashleigh trusted Kaleb because he had said that he wouldn't show anyone else, but you can't take someone's word for it. If I were Ashleigh, I would of made sure the picture was deleted the night they broke up, whether it made her look like a crazy ex-girlfriend or not.

I really enjoyed how Mack helped Ashleigh develop as a character, and how it made her realize that some people had it a lot worse than she did. Mack basically had no family, and Ashleigh realized through that that this scandal wasn't the end of the world for her, and that it was time to move on from it.

All in all, I thought this book was great, and definitely in today's society, it should be a mandatory read for students. There are so many teenagers nowadays sending private things over text message and whatnot and they have no idea what the consequences are and what they can be held accountable for. For example, Kaleb was over eighteen and he was charged with distributing child pornography and would possibly have to register as a sex offender. Most of the youth don't realize that this is a serious issue, and anyone can see it.

I'm looking forward to reading more from Jennifer Brown because she is one of my favorite authors. I hope she sticks with writing about real issues because out of all the other authors I've read who have wrote about this genre, she does it the best.

Wendy Darling says

3.5 stars *Thousand Words* is somewhat of a modern cautionary tale. A timely and relevant topic of discussion for YA readers.

*The full text of this review appears in The Midnight Garden. An advance copy was provided by the publisher.**

*There are links to interesting articles related to the book's subject on our blog.

L-A says

This was like reading an After-School Special. And that isn't a good thing. It's a very important message with a thin plot and flat characters. And there were literally statistics about sexting in the book. Statistics. I would read a PSA if I wanted that.

I didn't find any character to be particularly sympathetic, even Ashleigh. I didn't particularly care about her at any point.

Basically, it's a lot of telling instead of showing. And a little disappointing since I'm pretty sure I enjoyed *The Hate List*. There must be a way to write about important issues without being so obviously didactic about the whole damn thing. Although I guess if you want younger teens to learn a valuable lesson, this is an entertaining-ish way to do so.

I'm saying spoilers to be nice, because there really isn't anything to spoil. The entire story is exactly what you expect. Except the description of the book is kind of misleading and I need to rant about that and some of the characters. So, spoilers.

Mack? No idea why he existed except to be the emotional dumping ground of Ashleigh. If the book jacket hadn't told me he hadn't looked at the message, I'd have no idea. Because he doesn't tell you until the end of the story when he drops his truth bomb and exits stage left (*oh, BTDubs, my dad committed suicide, I'm homeless, I dropped out of school and sometimes I sleep on the couch of the lady who supervises community service, but I won't tell you what my connection is to her. Now, please, tell me more about that text you shouldn't have sent*). I thought he was going to be all sympathetic and interesting loner like Owen in *Just Listen*. Instead, he was a boring character who barely talks and just eats candy for a bunch of pages.

Rachel? Why did she send the text with the phone number? No motive? Just straight up bitch? Okay. That's cool. But you know, I like when characters have motivation - even if they are doing bad things. It makes for a more interesting story.

Vonnie? Worst best friend ever. Not sure why they're even best friends beyond the fact that Asleigh explains that they are. Not even sure why a best friend was needed in this story, other than to keep saying, "why are you mad at me?"

Ashleigh? Sorry kid, but you were completely whiny about the boyfriend who went to college. Even I wanted him to break up with you. And he seemed way too lame to whine about. Also, maybe you could have asked a few more questions from the guy you hung around with. Or googled him. Or looked him up in your yearbook. Something.

Adult characters were just useless.

Finally, the ending was way too neat. Like, "My dad keeps his job, I've got my friends back, I've told the bitchy girl to leave me alone and I'm going to stand up to anyone who slut shames me. I've learned a valuable lesson and life will be A-OK. The end."

Anyway, the book annoyed me enough to write a ranty review.

Giselle says

The first Jennifer Brown book I read made me an instant fan of her work, and *Thousand Words* shows me she has more than one story to tell; one she tells admirably. This time, we meet a girl - Ashleigh - who had her life turned upside down when a private picture text to her boyfriend goes viral.

With technology allowing us constant and worldwide communication, sexting is an issue that was not even possible when I was in high school (way to make me feel old!), so stories like these are real eye openers to the damages that an online world can have with a simple error in judgment. Especially to someone as young

as Ashleigh who is in an age where you feel invincible, yet mistakes happen, friends often betray each other, and boyfriends rarely last. It also importantly points out how permanent things are online. Once words or pictures, are out there, there is no deleting them, ever. Not only does this book give us a realistic, well handled story of something so very undoable, so scandalous, it also sends an important message to teens who may not realize how easily a situation like this can come about. One thing I'm sure of: it can't be easy to be a teen in these times, where everyone and everything is out in the open. (Ok, I'm not THAT old, we did have the internet -- ICQ anyone? -- but no one really used it much, then. *sigh* pre-Facebook times!)

A past and present POV is how we learn of Ashleigh's story. We first meet her when she's starting the community service she was sentenced to. While she's slowly making a new friend and trying to make due with how tattered her life seems, we get regular chapters that go back to before anything ever happened. This is where we find out what lead to her taking a risk that she will regret for the rest of her life. Past and present POVs don't always work, but for a story like this, I found it to be the perfect way to tell it. We're able to get the emotional and mental ramifications of her ordeal from the start, making it so when we're taken to her past we're left cringing, for knowing what will come of it. It also makes it easy to put ourselves in her shoes, somehow. It's like seeing her regret and humiliation makes her past mental status more accessible. Additionally, we're shown how much growth her character was forced into by going from a girl who had it all (though she wasn't in any way written as a stereotypical mean girl), to someone who only has regret. While some would have become an emotional mess in her shoes, I admired how strong Ashleigh stayed throughout all of it. She does have her breakdowns which are expected, but overall I loved how she becomes stronger for it. It would have been so easy to go melodramatic with this story, but Brown explores a different side: the side where the character does not get overrun with emotional and mental onslaught. Ashleigh takes back her life and that, to me, is the second most important message of the story. Even when things are at its worse, how you react and take charge of your mistakes are what will make a difference in the end.

Like all Jennifer Brown books, Thousand Words has just the right amount of heart, friendship, family, and emotion; it grabs you, but it remains a quick and easy read nonetheless.

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An advance copy was provided by the publisher for review.

For more of my reviews, visit my blog at [Xpresso Reads](#)

Maggie61 says

I must say Jennifer brown is one of my favourite young adult fiction writers. She fakes some fantastic issues relevant to today's kids and weaves emotional well written stories, this one is no exception.

Ashleigh has no idea of the consequences when she sends a picture of herself naked in a text to her boyfriend. After a breakup, Kaleb sends the picture to some friends who send it to some more friends and soon not just some people know, but everyone knows. Ashleigh is ostracized, she loses her friends and she loses something in the eyes of her parents disappointment in her that she can never regain. Strangers she doesn't know call her names and feel they have the right to judge her and she is kicked off the track team. And then to top it all off, she is arrested for distributing child porn. With sending a picture naked of herself, something that countless other teens have done. I was so mad at everyone's treatment of Ashleigh, the humiliation she suffered was heartbreaking. But after attending community service "teen talks" she learns to forgive herself. She realizes loving herself is more important than what others will say or do against you. Excellent book for anyone to read. I am clearly not a teen, yet I enjoyed it very much. The way the author writes is not juvenile or cheesy like many teen/young adult books. This book is gritty and honest and well worth the read

Siiri (Little Pieces of Imagination) says

I actually don't know why this book has such a low rating on Goodreads since it voiced an important issue that my generation most definitely has: everything is pictured and filmed and instantly published without no shame or thoughts about the consequences. In my opinion, Thousand Words is a great novel for teenagers to read and offers thoughts to grown-ups as well.

“People talked. Let them talk. Nothing I could do to stop them. They knew the thousand words, but they didn't know the rest of the story.”

The story. Ashleigh is one of the popular kids and has a ton of friends. She's in the school's track team, has a very respected family and a great boyfriend. However.. her boyfriend Kaleb is leaving for college soon and all he cares about is spending time with his boys from his baseball team. With a little encouragement from her friends, Ashleigh sends a compromising picture of herself to her boyfriend. This could only make things better. There's no way that this is the turning point to something horrible, is there?

My thoughts. I found Ashleigh a little hard to connect with but once I did, I was totally rooting for her to get everything worked out in this awful situation. I knew this book was about sexting, but I had no idea how the whole picture would come together. I don't think Ashleigh was innocent and she provoked the situation a little with her attitude and doubts in some situations, but I think the one who forwarded the picture, was a total d-bag! I'm aware of teenagers showcasing their body very freely, but I had no idea it would ruin a person's life to this extent. I found this solution to be very realistic though and actually liked that it wasn't all flowers and candy for Ashleigh, but she, therefore us, had to suffer for acting irrationally and the one who forwarded the message, got what one deserved! It's never okay to publicly humiliate someone, no matter how angry you are.

What I liked best were the parts where Ashleigh spent time doing her community service. They were educational and showed us different teens with different problems which I found interesting and captivating. Also, Mack—the sort-of-love-interest-slash-friend—was a great change since he was hard to crack. That nut had a tough shell around him and Ashleigh had to twist and shake him to get him to open up a little. Moreover, he wasn't one of the good-looking swoon-worthy guys. No—he had his secrets and definitely falls into the mysterious category, but he was a total opposite from Kaleb who was a very handsome guy. Point: good looks don't make for a good personality. Oh, and the way this harmed Ashleigh's family and friendship with her best friend—it was hard to read about, but by the end made me smile. Trust is hard to earn back and Ashleigh had to earn it as well as give it.

At the end of the day, it was my first ever Jennifer Brown book and I read the interview with her at the end of my e-copy. I love how she said that she wants to basically educate teenagers and give them something to think about and write unconventional stories rather than follow the formula. That is exactly what she did! She most certainly doesn't follow any trends, but speaks the truth and paints a very painful, realistic picture in front of us. I definitely want to explore some more!

More of my reviews can be found on my blog.

Sue (Hollywood News Source) says

Thousand Words is my first Jennifer Brown read and I can assure you this won't be my last. I was rendered speechless with her raw writing.

Thousand Words tell the story of Ashleigh. In her drunken stupor and peer pressure of her friends. She sent her boyfriend a nude picture of herself thinking it would make him more enamored with her when he leaves for college where he'll be surrounded with other girls while she's still stuck in high school for two more years. And when shit goes down, she didn't expected her photo to become viral, thus landed her a work through community service as a punishment for the scandalous mess she tangled herself into.

Soon after that she lose her best friend, everyone are throwing crap at her. Her reputation are damaged beyond repair. She had become a social pariah, a victim of bullying. If that isn't enough her parent's job are at stake as well.

As she started her community service. We're able to see how she's slowly coping up. She learned to stand up for herself, to dealt with the consequences of her action. She didn't let the flow take her instead she maneuvered it to her advantage.

If there is one thing Thousand Words had taught me, it is no matter how awful things turned out to be, Its how you handle the situation would count in the end.

I believe Thousand Words is a book made for everyone. It has so many moral lessons to offer. It completely open your eyes with things that you should be aware of. A truly brilliant read.

Alyssa says

When Amanda Todd's story went viral, I had many friends tell me that she'd deserved everything that happened to her - she deserved to have been bullied, she deserved to have felt suicidal, she was outrageously stupid and gross. "Disgusting", "insulting", "desperate" and "slutty" were words that were thrown around from tones dripping with hatred, as if people had the right to feel personally destroyed for the simple reason being that they'd heard of the scandal. All the while I sat there, trying not to judge – but judging a little bit - being not quite sure how to feel to, minutes later, being extremely opinionated on everything wrong with the whole scandal, and all the ways people in her life had failed and misguided her.

Thousand Words is a story that will stay with me for a very long time because it did a lot to make me understand. Brown made me rethink my opinions on Amanda Todd's parental involvement, made me reconsider my opinions on bullying, and relook where I've placed blame in situations like this. This book created the grey space existing between the camps of black and white, and the depth Brown uncovered in such controversial issues as sexting and unjust juvenile offense has opened my eyes and widened my mind in many great ways. For someone who has always prided herself on being liberal and accepting, Brown has shown me that there is such a multitude of points that I've never even taken into consideration, and that maybe there's something wrong with the whole idea of "blame".

Thousand Words is completely frank in its narration and characterization. Ashleigh's character rang realistic and true for me, and her questionable responses and attitude towards the people in her life has made her story seem even more honest to me. What I really appreciated were the aspects of the book which focused on how Ashleigh's case affected her parents' and ex-boyfriend's lives and reputations, and also how friendship isn't always the easiest wheel to steer. *Thousand Words* offers a lot to readers, but the biggest thing, IMO, is its portrayal of lives being tempered with by such an unthinkable, unconventional situation.

This book does not preach or bias, but enlightens, and I want to put it into the hands of everyone I go to school with. In the wake of continental recognition of Amanda Todd and other stories like hers, I genuinely believe this book needs to be passed around and talked about. Sexting isn't going away any time soon - nor are unhealthy relationships or slut-shaming – but I think that this book might help make clear, for unsure and uneasy people like me, that there are about a gazillion ways to look at something so big.

4.5 stars.

An e-ARC was provided to me from the publisher, though this fact in no way affects my review.

Aimee ♥ | Aimee, Always says

"A picture's worth a thousand words... but they don't tell the whole story."

Jennifer Brown is an author I've been meaning to read from for a while now. I know she writes about sensitive issues that are relevant in this generation, and I respect her for that. For being able to open up the eyes of the youth (and even people past their youth) to different kinds of problems that other teens and people are experiencing.

Thousand Words explores an issue that not a lot of us (I'd assume) are concerned about, possibly because we've never known anyone who's done this--sexting. **It was very realistically done, too.** Peer pressure really affects a person's choices, and that's exactly what Ashleigh experienced. When her friends pushed her to take *the picture*, she did.

"I was not my mistakes. I was definitely not defined by anyone."

You can clearly see how Ashleigh's character develops throughout the entire novel. We're given past (things before and after the picture) and the present (community service) chapters to fully get a grasp of the story. **During the past chapters, I really couldn't connect to Ashleigh's character** and thought that she was a boring bitch. **But in the present chapters? I sympathized so much with Ashleigh (but still without connection) and rooted for her.**

Now, you shouldn't go into this novel thinking there's going to be a cute guy in community service whom Ashleigh will fall in love with and will solve all her problems. Fine, **Mack's definitely adorable and I love him, but this isn't a sweet or sappy love story.** It isn't a love story at all. *Thousand Words* is the story of a girl who made a mistake and who wants to fit in with the rest of the world again.

This is definitely a well written novel. **Brown crafted a realistic set of characters who did what other people would probably do in their situations.** Ashleigh knew that her friends were doing things for her sake, but she still got mad when they offended her. We'd do that, right? Some friends abandoned Ashleigh

after her photo went viral. We'd probably do that. Maybe.

We also have a lovely cast of delinquents in community service with different issues of their own, and I love the diversity of their problems. There was a teen mother, a guy who beat his father up, a guy who sold drugs... All different, but with relevant problems.

Despite all of its positive points, **I was a bit disconnected from the story.** I'm not quite sure why, but there were times when I didn't really give a crap about the characters, or I wanted the story to have more excitement... **Different kinds of readers will interpret this story differently, so my dis-attachment may just only be because of me.**

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Basically:

This book is not for the light of heart. If you're into issues that need to be discussed, Thousand Words (or Jennifer Brown in general) will probably work out for you.

Jan Bethel says

So the part in the blurb that says, "*...he's the one person in town who received the text of Ashleigh's photo -- and didn't look.*" is what made me click that want-to-read button. This one sounds really interesting. Got to watch out for this book.

Anna says

**A PICTURE'S WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS.
BUT THEY DON'T TELL THE WHOLE STORY.**

3.5 stars

I remember an incident that happened in our City not too long ago about the same thing. Sexting. Apparently, sending naked pictures about oneself, or just forwarding the text, was not unusual as we are run and mostly living thru the technology. Teens are probably more skilled on the technical stuff rather than their parents as we are more loose and will likely tinker on what's new. And cellular phones are much of a greater level than boyfriends as they sleep with it every night, and grabs it the moment they wake up. I am very guilty of this. What? You wouldn't know if it's important.

So back to my story. This college couple was said to have taken not a picture, but a video of them having sex (which was more serious). Years after, the video was spread out within the school as students made a feast out of it and not sooner, all over the city. The school was very devastated as it was a Catholic School and was run by priests and nuns; and said girl from the video was sponsored by the nuns. So imagine the

disappointments. She was about to be expelled and will be at risk to not graduate. Fortunately enough, through the sympathy from other student's parents, and other people, she was chanced to stay and finish her last year.

In the course of the incident, students has to wear civilian clothing than their uniforms because they were shamed with what happened. Parents by then were murmuring to their children to not do those acts and other obscene, ungrateful behavior. Not long after the issue subsided then was gone form the airwaves. But what happened was already engraved to the children's minds, and especially to those who have seen it.

"Are you looking for something in particular?"

Anonymity. Freedom. Peace. Do you sell any of those here? Are those purple-tag items? Because I would think they'd be full price if anything was. Hot commodities."

Like the girl, Ashleigh became the victim of her own doing. It may be a considerable decision at the time, but pondering on the idea, she was dubbed as a *Child Pornographer*. In the end she suffered the whole student body's scrutiny, then the whole town on how far her picture went. I can't imagine passing by the corridors and hearing catcalls, whispers, and lewd comments about you and not break down to it? Have I been on the receiving end I'd most probably have died of shame. But she heard it all, thought it through day and night the impact of what she's done due to peer pressure and constant longing.

I'd say she's not the only one who have gone through a bad break up, probably bitter ex-boyfriends done a much shameful things with shaming their ex, to the extent of spreading a pornographic material of the other half. But this does not only affects the victim, but more so on the suspect. They both deal with the humiliations that carries the content, and soon would likely affect their future.

The novel was not strong, nor was it deep and a more thought-provoking than what I'd expected, but it was really good to say the least. Because when we say we want something that deals with teen issues, *Thousand Words* would surely be on the appropriate-books-to-read. Though it was simply written and fast-paced, all points on the matter was completely covered and the author did a really great job at capturing the realistic cause and effects of the issue, and as to how people embrace such subject. I was only glad it didn't lean on the romantic side as this thing should not be taken lightly. Awesome stuff.

"Don't hear it, Ashleigh, I told myself. Be Blind and deaf to it. Exist in your own quite, dark world. You're in a tunnel. You're floating. Just a few more feet and you're there at the finish line."

xx

Sana says

Blog| Facebook| <https://www.instagram.com/gewispertew...>

"Trying to remember that I loved him and that I'd sent that picture to him because I wanted him to want me. It was okay to want to be desired. Everyone did, right?" - p. 75

Ashleigh ist glücklich mit Kaleb zusammen, doch sein Studium am College rückt immer näher und sie verbringen immer weniger Zeit miteinander. Auf der Sommerparty ihrer besten Freundin schlägt sie ihr vor, ihm ein Nacktfoto zu schicken, um ihm zu zeigen, was er verpasst. Ein wenig alkoholisiert sendet Ashleigh ihm kurzerhand das Foto. Doch nach einer bösen Trennung hat auf einmal jeder Jugendliche in ihrer Umgebung ihr Foto - und das bringt Ashleigh in ziemliche Schwierigkeiten.

Jennifer Brown ist eine Autorin, vor der man den Hut ziehen muss. Denn anders als viele andere Schriftstellerinnen im Contemporary-Genre fokussiert sie sich nicht auf fluffige oder klischeehafte Geschichten mit einem großen Romance-Anteil, sondern auf ernste Themen, mit denen sich Jugendliche definitiv mehr beschäftigen sollten. Mit der **Hassliste** und **Bitter Love** schlug sie sogar Wellen in Deutschland. Mit **Thousand Words** wollte sie eine Geschichte über die Gefahren des Sextings erzählen, das sicherlich mehr Jugendliche machen als zugeben wollen.

Doch im Gegensatz zu ihren anderen Romanen wirkt dieses brandaktuelle Thema oberflächlich behandelt. Natürlich sind die Gegebenheiten an sich sehr realistisch: viele Jugendliche sind sich gar nicht dessen bewusst, dass ein so freizügiges Foto negative Konsequenzen haben könnte, wenn mit dem Freund oder der Freundin jemals mal Schluss sein sollte. Das Internet und die Direct-Messaging-Kultur bietet einem viele Möglichkeiten für Revenge Porn. Alleine auf den falschen Kontakt zu klicken, um das Foto zu versenden, kann schon enorme Folgen haben, und wem ist so etwas nicht bereits aus Versehen passiert? Dementsprechend sind ihre anfängliche Paranoia und ihre Panik, als das Foto schließlich verbreitet wird, verständlich und lassen sich gut nachvollziehen. Auch die Reaktionen der Außenstehenden - dass einige es für einen Witz halten, das Foto weiterzuverbreiten, dass sie von der Schule suspendiert wird, dass ihre Freunde sich von ihr abwenden, dass Kaleb keine Verantwortung übernehmen will - ist ebenfalls etwas, was in so einer Situation passieren würde und sicherlich schon vielen jungen Menschen passiert ist. Was besonders positiv ins Auge sticht, ist die Ausschlichtung dieses Themas, in der das Opfer letztlich juristisch zur Täterin wird wegen angeblicher Verbreitung von Kinderpornographie. Dass die Autorin darstellt, wie lächerlich das ist, insbesondere da diejenigen, die das Foto gesehen haben, alles andere als geschädigt davon sind, sondern im Gegenteil der Protagonistin schaden, ist sehr lobenswert und zeigt, dass mit dieser Thematik falsch umgegangen wird. Insbesondere in einem so konservativen Land wie Amerika, in dem Kinder in manchen Staaten mit Gewehren rumlaufen, während eine nackte Brust für Skandale sorgt. Doch obwohl Brown all das anbringt, fällt all das recht kurz aus und hinterlässt kaum emotionale Spuren im Leser. Dies mag vielleicht daran liegen, dass Ashleigh als Protagonistin nicht sonderlich interessant ist. Sie ist einfach das typische nette Mädchen von nebenan, das gut in der Schule ist, sich sportlich betätigt und nichts hat, worüber es sich beschweren kann. Sicher sollte damit der Kontrast zwischen ihrem wahren Ich und demjenigen, das durch das Foto für andere entsteht, klar werden, aber emotional verbinden kann man sich mit ihr nur an wenigen Stellen. Das kommt noch mehr zum Tragen, wenn das Mädchen einen ihrer passiv-aggressiven Anfälle hat. Es ist psychologisch zwar in ihrer Situation nachvollziehbar, aber es gibt in diesem Buch wirklich keinen größeren Charakter bis auf ihre Eltern, der nicht von ihr blöd angemacht wird. Alleine dass sie Kaleb ganz zu Beginn des Buches vorwirft, sie zu betrügen, nur weil er sich für zwei Tage in seiner Einführungswoche am College nicht meldet und sie im Hintergrund Mädchen lachen hört, ist unter aller Sau und selbst für eine Jugendliche kindisch. Auch bei anderen Diskussionen, egal mit wem, muss sie durch ihre bissigen Antworten immer eine Schippe drauflegen, statt sich auf die Zunge zu beißen und die Folgen ihrer Worte zu bedenken. Es gibt Figuren um sie herum, die sich auch alles andere als nobel verhalten, vor allem ihre angebliche beste Freundin, aber diese Eigenschaft erschwert es einem wirklich, sie zu verstehen. Ein Problem, dem die Autorin in ihren anderen Büchern sehr gut aus dem Weg gegangen ist. Neben den schnell abgehandelten Reaktionen und Konsequenzen fehlt auch ein sehr wichtiges Unterthema, nämlich die Stigmatisierung des Wortes „Schlampe“. Kein Wort fällt so häufig wie dieses, und dennoch unternimmt Brown keinen Versuch, diesen Begriff zu entkräften. Ihre grundlegende Message, dass man selbst bei tausend Worten nicht die ganze Geschichte eines Bildes ergründen kann, ist nicht verkehrt, aber wie kann man sie treffen, ohne auch nur im Ansatz zu diskutieren, warum Ashleigh keine Schlampe trotz dieses Nudes ist? Sie selbst scheint es mit ihrer Jungfräulichkeit zu begründen, was ein so veraltetes Bild ist,

dass es bei einer solchen Thematik inakzeptabel ist, es zu benutzen. Ashleigh wird zwar irgendwann klar, dass diese Beleidigungen sie nicht definieren, und lässt sie an sich abprallen, aber damit ist noch keine Auseinandersetzung getan. Man ist keine Schlampe, wenn man Nacktfotos an seinen Freund oder an eine Person versendet, an der man Interesse hat. Man ist auch keine, wenn man mit vierzehn Jahren sein erstes Mal oder wechselnde Sexualpartner hat. Man ist ebenso keine, nur weil man knappe Klamotten trägt. Und dass das überhaupt nicht besprochen wurde, ist ein enormer Störfaktor, denn mit welcher Message werden die Leser sonst rausgehen? *Du bist keine Schlampe, wenn du keine Nacktfotos von dir machst*, obwohl sie eigentlich sein sollte *Gehe vorsichtig mit freizügigen Fotos im Internet um*. Da hat sich die Autorin ein kleines Eigentor geschossen.

Thousand Words hätte ein toller und aufklärer Roman sein können. Vieles von dem, was die Autorin beschreibt, ist auch durchaus realistisch und könnte jedem von uns passieren. Diese emotionale Wucht, mit der sie normalerweise von ihren Hauptfiguren und ihren Schicksalen erzählt, ist jedoch nur an wenigen Stellen vorhanden, weswegen nicht sonderlich viel beim Leser hängen bleibt. Statt sich wirklich tiefgehend damit auseinanderzusetzen, scheint das Buch eher wie ein Entwurf, der eigentlich viel mehr hätte beherbergen können. So erzählt sie zwar von vielen gefährlichen Konsequenzen und dem fehlerhaften Umgang der Gesellschaft damit, allerdings in aller Kürze und ohne viel Feingefühl. Zusätzlich mit der fehlenden Klärung des Schlampe-Begriffs, der bei Sexting nicht wegzudenken ist, und einer schwierigen Protagonistin ein schwächeres Buch einer sonst sehr guten Autorin. Aber man kann ein Werk eben nicht nur deswegen gut bewerten, weil es existiert.

Gesamtwertung: 3.25/5.00 Sternen
