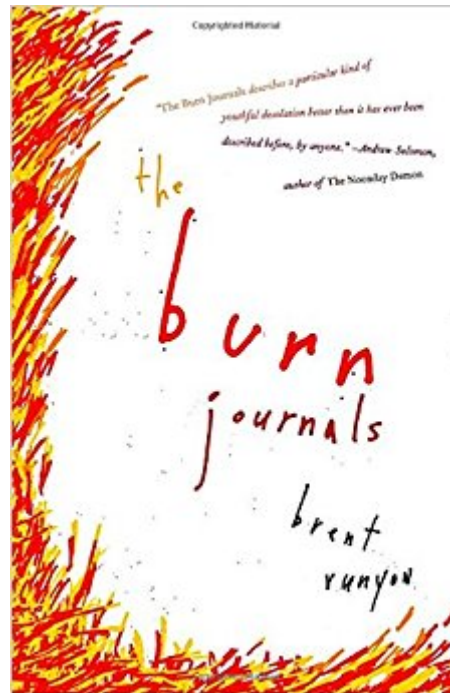




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# The Burn Journals



## Synopsis

Fans of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, *Running with Scissors* and *Girl, Interrupted* will be entranced by this remarkable true story of teenage despair and recovery. In 1991, fourteen-year-old Brent Runyon came home from school, doused his bathrobe in gasoline, put it on, and lit a match. He suffered third-degree burns over 85% of his body and spent the next year recovering in hospitals and rehab facilities. During that year of physical recovery, Runyon began to question what he'd done, undertaking the complicated journey from near-death back to high school, and from suicide back to the emotional mainstream of life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 8-12. On the sixteenth page of this incisive memoir, eighth-grader Brent Runyon drenches his bathrobe with gasoline and ("Should I do it? Yes.") sets himself on fire. The burns cover 85 percent of his body and require six months of painful skin grafts and equally invasive mental-health rehabilitation. From the beginning, readers are immersed in the mind of 14-year-old Brent as he struggles to heal body and mind, his experiences given devastating immediacy in a first-person, present-tense voice that judders from uncensored teenage attitude and poignant anxiety (he worries about getting hard-ons during physical therapy) to little-boy sweetness. And throughout is anguish over his suicide attempt and its impact on his family: "I have this guilt feeling all over me, like oil on one of those birds in Alaska." Runyon has, perhaps, written the defining book of a new genre, one that gazes as unflinchingly at boys on the emotional edge as Zibby O'Neal's *The Language of Goldfish* (1980) and Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1999) do at girls. Some

excruciatingly painful moments notwithstanding, this can and should be read by young adults, as much for its literary merit as for its authentic perspective on what it means to attempt suicide, and, despite the resulting scars, be unable to remember why. Jennifer Mattson Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

“[The Burn Journals] describes a particular kind of youthful male desolation better than it has ever been described before, by anyone.” -Andrew Solomon, author of *The Noonday Demon*  
“A fascinating account of the mending of a body and mind, told with the simple and honest sensibility of someone too young to have endured so much.” -Arthur Golden, author of *Memoirs of a Geisha*  
“Runyon has, perhaps, written the defining book of a new genre, one that gazes...unflinchingly at boys on the emotional edge.” -Booklist (starred review)  
“A taut, chilling account of the author’s attempt to commit suicide...a must-read for teenagers struggling with self-doubt.” -The Denver Post  
“An excruciating, brilliant book...WOW.” -A.M. Homes, author of *Things You Should Know*

In the novel *The Burn Journals* by Brent Runyon, the characters include himself, Brent Runyon, his mom and dad and the doctors. Brent holds in most of his emotions and doesn’t talk to anyone. The internal conflict is that Brent keeps to himself a lot and has a hard time talking about his feelings with other people. The external conflict is that Brent doesn’t let close friends or even his parents know what he is feeling. While Brent is in the hospital his parents come visit him. In the hospital he realizes that the doctors and his parents are only there to help him. The two important plot events that make up the rising action is Brent committing to taking his life. Another action was Brent lighting his friends shirt on fire and was about to get expelled if the teachers found out. This is one of the reasons he committed to killing himself. Some things I liked about the book were how far he had come and never giving up on his recovery. Even though he wanted to give up his life, he didn’t and realized, “why did I do that?” One part of the book that I liked was when Brent was finally able to go on date with Tina (one of the nurses he really liked.) Another part was when Brent was at Children’s and he was getting all those letters from his friends. The last part that I liked was Brent go to get his hair cut and it hasn’t been cut in a really long time. I like all these parts because it shows even though you’re in the hospital you can still do things that an average person does. I recommend this book because in the beginning Brent wanted to kill himself he was very dark and told no one how he was feeling and by the end he survived and now he is alive and is now doing

great things. This book is very inspiring to any age and some teens could relate to Brent and how to deal with depression.

The Burn Journals is a book about a 14 year-old high school student, Brent Runyon, who suffers throughout the book after his suicide attempt. His parents are very kindhearted and supportive toward Brent as well as their other son, Craig. After almost burning the school locker room when he lit a shirt on fire, he panics that he might get expelled and drenched himself with gasoline. He lit himself on fire almost taking his life. Brent suffered 3rd degree burns on 85% of his body and was in hospital care for many months. The main conflict in the story is Brent dealing with himself and trying to fit in with the world despite his unusual disability. Every day he prays that he could go back to his previous conditions, and would do anything to redo his actions. After leaving medical care, Brent has to go through many months in rehabilitation centers and live with his unattractive skin disorder. Through his countless amount of meetings with psychiatrists, he learns more about himself and understands the true meaning of life. I really enjoyed this book, mostly because it reminds me that we should never take anything for granted. Brent describes his inability to walk and lift his arms above his shoulders. These simple tasks are very effortless but for people like Brent, it isn't. He also describes his every day massages as, "sloppy" and, "intolerable." He also discusses his horrid body color and how unappealing he is as a teenager. I'd really recommend this book to any young adult with a good level of maturity. It hits hard topics and also adds in humor every so often. This book is definitely in my top 10 list. I highly encourage you to pick up this book, you won't regret it.

My name is Corina and I am 14 years old. I just finished this book for some summer reading and here is my review. I feel that "The Burn Journals" does appeal to its audience (teenagers). The book may touch on some subjects that are considered inappropriate, but mature readers will understand what the book is really about. I consider the reading level for this book to be easy. There aren't many "big" words in this book, and it's fairly easy to understand. It's easy to understand since the book was written from the perspective of a teenager. I'm 14 and read at a 12th grade level, so those who read at a lower level may not find it as easy to understand as those who read at a high level. I think that the author's purpose for writing this book was for him to say that life is precious. The book was his way of telling people not to harm themselves. He wanted for people to know his story so that they wouldn't follow his mistake. The author wanted people to understand what he and his loved

ones went through because he hurt himself. I believe this book is written for teens around the ages of 13 through 18. It would appeal to a mature group of teenagers since the subject matter in this book is serious, but the author does add some humor to lessen the subject matter. It takes a certain level of maturity for the reader to enjoy and understand this book. As a caveat for readers, this book contains swear words, religious expressions, self-harm, suicide, and some sexual content. Multiple times in the book there are parts that discuss and contain this material. I gave this book four stars because of how detailed it was. I would have given it five if it weren't so repetitive. I did however like how the author added some humor in such a serious topic. The book may have had vulgar parts in it, but I enjoyed the story.

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