



## The Year of the Bomb

*Ronald Kidd*

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The year is 1955, and there's nothing that Paul and his best friends, Oz, Arnie, and Crank, love more than horror movies. So when Invasion of the Body Snatchers starts filming in their small California town, they couldn't be more excited. But when their acquaintance with Laura and Darryl, extras on the movie, leads to an involvement in a possible Communist conspiracy, Paul is afraid that they're in too deep. It's not a horror movie anymore—this is real life. From acclaimed storyteller Ronald Kidd comes this coming-of-age tale about taking a stand, following the crowd, and navigating the gray areas in between.

## The Year of the Bomb Details

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Author : Ronald Kidd

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## From Reader Review The Year of the Bomb for online ebook

### Aaron says

The year is 1955, and the Cold War is going strong between America and the USSR. A group of four boys growing up in Sierra Madre, California, near LA are going through their daily lives. This includes bomb drills and tales of communist espionage from their social studies teacher.

Thirteen-year-old Paul is the main protagonist, and he is joined by Oz, Crank, and Arnie. They are thrilled to find out that Hollywood is going to be coming to their small town. They are all big fans of the Saturday horror/sci-fi movie features, and this will be their chance to see a movie made. The movie being filmed will end up being the cult classic Invasion of the Body Snatchers, and it will form an interesting parallel as the boys are pulled into the red scare that is hitting Hollywood and the rest of America.

While on the set, they meet actress and star-double Laura, with whom they end up becoming friends. With her help, they get an opportunity to see all aspects of the movie and even get a chance at a cameo. But they also meet Darryl, a man who is a co-worker who seems to have interest in becoming more than her friend. This distresses Paul who has a bit of a crush on Laura.

Things become more interesting when they figure out that Darryl is not necessarily there for the movie, but on assignment for the FBI in order to look into the potential communist activities of the Hollywood folks.

Before long, Paul and the gang find themselves being pulled into an investigation that will end up concentrating on an area professor who once worked on the Manhattan Project.

Kidd has always been a master at choosing often overlooked periods of Twentieth Century America and setting interesting tales their. An earlier book, Monkey Town introduced readers to the Scopes Monkey from the perspective of the daughter of a major town player.

It is this type of unique perspective that makes Kidd's story flow nicely. They are dependent upon strong characters that allow young readers to connect with their peers from decades earlier. This also allows readers to get a better understanding of a time or event in history they would normally be less familiar with.

The story ends up with a high stakes chase, forcing the young protagonists to question what is true and what is right.

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### Betta Fish says

The Year of the Bomb is an exciting, and realistic story based off of true events. I rated this book a four out of five stars because the ending was predictable, and it definitely was not the best writing I have ever read. But, the story stuck to the plot line and left me wanting to read more. I usually veto historical fiction right away, but I gave this book a shot, and it was well worth it. There are thrills, twists, and some family/friends drama.

The book starts out with the main character, Paul, and his three friends Crank (bossy-bully type), Oz (fearless brave type), and Arnie (total nerd who loves PEZ dispensers). They are at a movie theater watching a horror film in the front row, as the book goes on, it explains why people in that time period loved going to

scary films. Continuing, Oz finds out that a horror film will be filmed in their hometown, Sierra Madre! Of course, the boys go and see the filming for the first two days. They meet a young woman named Laura who was an extra, but in Paul's mind, "Astoundingly beautiful!" As the filming goes on, the quartet follows the filming, and even meet the director and producer. As all of this is exciting, there are some behind the scenes secrets that the boys get in on.

Since I do not want to spoil the whole book for you, I am going to start with the negatives (to get it out of the way). I remember how they continuously mention how the film is low budget, but to be honest, as good as the book is, it was low budget in details. Another negative is how Oz, Arnie, and Paul hang around Crank. I believe that he bullies everyone around, and is the conflict starter. Honestly though, those are really the only things that this book is lacking. I have been briefly reading some pages from the book and even then I find excitement.

Finally, onto the positives! I loved that this book was based off of true events, and that made the fictional characters more realistic and easier to relate to. An example is how Paul has trouble communicating with his father, and many kids feel separated from their parents, so when they get a divorce, Paul struggles like any kid at that age. I also really enjoyed the characters Oz and Arnie because they have exciting lives and use them in a positive way, unlike Crank who is ferocious to many friends and bystanders. The last thing I thoroughly adored was the scene where Crank doesn't tell Darryl (not saying a word) about Paul and Arnie hiding underneath the planks. I believe that it shows a change in him, and that he might try to improve himself and his friendships. "He was staring right at me. I stared back. My neck hurt, and my shoulder was jammed up against Arnie, but I hardly noticed. All I could do was gaze at Crank and shout in my head..."

I have gone through all aspects of this book for you as a reader without giving away many spoilers, so now it is your turn to read it on your own. Like I had said before, I rarely read historical fiction, and I usually loathe it, but with this book I really enjoyed it. As I had mentioned, the ending is pretty predictable, but has some plot twists. But if you are a person who enjoys books about World War Two, then this is the book for you!

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### **Kamryn says**

"Horrifying yet pleasant". The Year of the Bomb is a mysterious book with lots of fun surprising details. In this book 4 friends Paul, Crank, Arnie and Oz are horror movie addicts here about a new movie called Body Snatchers that is going to be filmed in their home town Sierra Madre. On the first day of shooting the 4 boys go a meet some of the actors including Laura. She is a young girl who Paul thinks is beautiful and likes.

After the first day the boys take her to get some ice cream. A few days later they meet her boyfriend Darryl he is very protective over her. Darryl soon explains to the boys that he is F.B.I and is on a secret mission to find who is sending atomic bomb facts to the Russians. They boys soon do some investigating of their own. They find out about a professor who worked on the Manhattan Project. He was friends with Klaus Flauach who was a Russian spy and got lots of secrets from us. Later on they investigate him and find out that he really didn't do anything. At the next filming location Darryl says that Feynman was guilty because they found a letter that the Russians sent him about a conference. The boys know it is not true and grab the photo of the letter and take it with them. They were running from Darryl to hide the photo and destroy all evidence. In the end, Laura ends up being on F.B.I and the boys get free. Feynman is not found guilty and Darryl and Laura reunite with the boys and make up.

I rated this book 3 stars because in the end they don't even tell you who is sending the secret messages. Also, you never figure out what Professor Fleming did after he got blamed. This read was pretty quick and did not take me long at all. I think this would be good for ages 9 and up because it has some topics that might

interest young kids. It also might fit anyone who likes to read mysterious scary books. I think that if a teacher wanted to read this to a class that the kids would like it because it would leave them on their toes and keep them well entertained. Ronald Kidd also wrote another book *Monkey Town: The Summer of the Scopes Trial*. It has another mystery vibe that this book gave me. I think that this book needed some more details because I felt like something was missing that would have made it better. I like how it did relate to the Cold War and how they had to prepare and be on guard for anything that might happen in a second. Next, you do any type of report or research project because you can fit in the Cold War and make it really interesting. Overall, I would probably recommend this book to some of my friends who want to read something interesting and fun.

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### **Hylary Locsin says**

Originally posted on my blog: <http://libraryladyhylary.blogspot.com> ! Check it out for more reviews!

Paul, Arnie, Crank and Oz are best friends living in Sierra Madre, a suburb of Los Angeles, in 1955. The boys love spending their summer days at the local theater watching the latest horror movies. When they learn that a new movie called *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is set to be filmed in their town, they're ecstatic. The boys get to see the movie being filmed and even become friends with the director, Don Siegel, and a beautiful extra named Laura Burke. But when they learn that an FBI agent is working on the movie set to determine if anyone involved in the film is a communist, their summer of fun turns into their own hunt for Russian sympathizers.

The Year of the Bomb opens the door for tweens to learn about a time many may not be familiar with, the communist witch-hunts of the McCarthy era. Friends Paul, Arnie, Crank and Oz are a likeable gang of teenage boys who fill their days in much the same as their 2011 counterparts would: exploring the world through the eyes of the movie camera. Many classic horror films are mentioned in the book and will undoubtedly prompt curiosity on the part of young readers who want to learn more about *Invaders from Mars* or *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. What makes the story so interesting is that it makes reference to real people, places and events. In a way, the novel is a history lesson disguised as a story about a group of friends in the 1950s. While The Year of the Bomb is not for everyone (tween girls might not be as interested in this title), it is an entertaining and well-written story that holds a lot of appeal for readers who are interested in this particular historical period.

I began reading this book not knowing quite what to expect, but was very pleased with what I found. The McCarthy-era is one of the most interesting and strange periods in American history and I love that Kidd created a book for tweens that looks into it. I had some familiarity with the movies mentioned in the story, but it definitely peaked my interest in watching more classic horror films, which I'm sure would be the effect upon tween readers as well.

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### **Ellie says**

Interesting historical fiction. Would have been better without a few things....

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### **Madigan Mirza says**

In Sierra Madre, California, 1955, Paul and his three best friends Oz, Crank and Arnie are obsessed with monster movies. The horror-movie fake-out at the beginning of the book really drew me in. Shortly after leaving the theater, Paul and his friends are overjoyed to learn that Invasion of the Body Snatchers will be coming to film in their downtown.

It really is amazing to think that this juxtaposition of events: monster movies and world altering breakthroughs in physics, including work on nuclear bombs were all happening within a 15 mile radius. While Paul and his friends enjoy a lot of freedom - they ride their bikes, or bus around town, with no fear of crime, the negative sides to the 1950's are also highlighted. Hollywood Boulevard has yet to become a seedy (and later still, commercialized and gentrified) place. The book touches lightly on the Hollywood blacklist as well as the pressures that families (especially fathers) felt at that time to financially keep up with the Joneses.

There's a wonderful contrast in this novel between the (artificial) fear that Paul loves to inspire in himself watching monster movie matinees vs. the very real daily fears that he struggles with. He genuinely fears nuclear attack, and family dynamics are tense as his father slogs away in a top-secret military job that he hates in order to pay the bills. The other boys families have similar problems. Paul is soon drawn into some FBI intrigue, as one of the female extras on the set (who Paul immediately develops an innocent crush on) starts spying on her fellow castmates, looking for signs of Communist sympathizers.

I thought it strained credulity that the four boys would gain such easy access to the movie set, as well as famed physicist Richard Feynman's office. They literally show up and start grilling Feynman with questions. Feynman answers them in full and pours his heart out to the boys. Still, it's an enjoyable read and Kidd definitely manages to transport you to another time.

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### **Patrick says**

This deals with McCarthyism in the 50's, and thus suspicions of Jewish scientists and actors leaking nuclear secrets, but it's not about nuclear bombs or deep history. It takes place around the filming of a B Horror movie in a small California town. The teenage fanboys get mixed up in the McCarthyistic action.

I liked some things about it and the first half more than the second half. The last 1/4 goes way goofy though. [SPOILERS coming!!] The narrator and protagonist kid, Paul, suddenly starts having totally preachy internal monologues about he needs to stop fearing things that are different and becomes action hero man. The chase is kind of fun, but it resolves stupidly. Fearless Paul preaches to everyone about losing your fear, the scientist says "I'm not a spy," the overbearing FBI agents get humbled and apologize, and Paul's parents get divorced in a show of overcoming fear. And why they ever put up with their bully "friend," Crank, never makes sense. Meh.

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## **Kay McGriff says**

The Year of the Bomb (Simon and Schuster 2009) by Ronald Kidd combines horror movies, conspiracy theories, and quantum physics in this historical fiction novel set in Sierra Madre, California, during the spring of 1955.

Friends Paul, Oz, Arnie and Crank enjoy nothing more than scaring themselves silly at the Saturday movie matinee. They've seen them all—The Thing, The Day the Earth Stood Still, It Came from Outer Space, Invaders from Mars. They can't believe their luck when they learn that the movies are coming to town. An entire film crew will invade their town to film Invasion of the Body Snatchers. While hanging around the movie set, the boys strike up a friendship with two extras, Laura and Darryl. But Laura and Darryl may not be who they claim, and soon the boys are involved in unraveling a Communist spy plot.

Now the fear is not just in the movies. It pervades real life through bomb drills at school and dark accusations of Communism. Are Paul, Oz, Arnie and Crank in over their heads? Who can they trust when anyone could be a spy?

I'm not a horror movie fan, but I enjoyed the behind-the-scenes look at movie making and history provided in this story. I also enjoyed the boys at the center of the story. Paul holds the group—and the story—together. The movies and his friends are his escape from the predictable, black-and-white-world at home. Oz provides movie-making knowledge from his sound director father. His family also shows the devastating consequences people faced when accused—fairly or not—of being Communist. Arnie would much rather face his fears on the screen rather than in real life. Crank is sometimes blinded by his need for the world to be neatly divided into good guys and bad guys.

The Year of the Bomb opens a window on a different time period that shares at least one characteristic with our own: the fear that pervades society, whether from terrorists or communists. The stories of both reflect that fear. So, what are your favorite scary stories?

Also published on my blog at <http://kaymcgriff.edublogs.org/2011/0...>

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## **Shane Young says**

The Year Of The Bomb was well thought out and detailed. I like how the genre and the idea of the book tied in with the date of when the book took place, ( 1950s, Cold War ). I think if your looking for a suspenseful and action packed book pick the Year Of The Bomb.

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## **Majesty Uwagerikpe says**

This book was awesome. It takes place in 1955 Sierra Madre. Paul, Crank, Arnie, and Oz love horror movies. Then, a movie crew came to film a horror movie in their town. They meet the cast and crew. Paul develops a crush for Laura, an extra. They also meet Darryl, Laura's friend. Soon, they are involved in an investigation that involves bombs, Russian spies, and more. It was a great book. It was historical fiction, and the cast and crew from the movie are real people. They actually did film a movie in 1955 Sierra Madre. It is great. You have to read it.

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## **David says**

I so related to this book, simply because I grew up in the 50's, did the air raid drills, watched the horror movies and could relate to the time.

Set in the 50's, a bunch of friends are excited that Don Siegel is filming "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" in their little California town. There is an FBI agent investigating movie people, and he also has a physicist on his list to be investigated, so the boys discover the complexities of loyalty, patriotism, paranoia and real fear as they pursue their interest in movies, and try to discover what sort of spy Richard Feynman might be, and discover a lot of interesting people along the way, including Feynman's friend Jiryar Zorthian.

Ronald Kidd attempts to tie a lot of threads together in a plot that is as complicated as the times. I would classify this as an historical novel, because all of the real characters did face blacklisting or charges of un-American activities, and ordinary people like the fictional characters were also caught up in these events. As an introduction to America in the 1950's, it may help readers understand their grand-parents childhood.

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## **Connor W. says**

Have you ever read a book that is questionably relatable to you before? If so, then this is the book that gave me the sense of living in a story.

The Year of the Bomb is a book like no other that I have read before. There is something about it that keeps calling to me, and I never want to stop reading it. I read TYOTB over a year ago, and I can't let go of it. Everything about the book is so interesting and relatable, and it is definitely worth the read.

TYOTB takes place in the small, quiet town of Sierra Madre, cuddled along the mountains of California during the year 1955. The main protagonist, Paul, is a rather shy middle school kid who is just another face in the crowd. He has a full blown buzz cut and resembles your typical 50's white boy. Paul is a huge horror movie fan, along with his three best friends, Oz the genius, Crank the brute, and Arnie the basket case.

One fateful day, Paul and company head out to the comic store, and while they are exploring the latest and greatest space adventure comics and knickknacks, Oz begins to read the Hollywood Reporter and finds out that the infamous "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" is going to be filmed in their home town!

"Gentlemen." Said Oz, "Invasion of the Body Snatchers will be filmed in our home town, Sierra Madre."

With excitement running through their veins, the four boys venture to distant areas in California to absorb as much knowledge as they can about the movie. Invasion of the Body Snatchers isn't only going to be filmed in the town of Sierra Madre; it will also be shot in Los Angeles and throughout the mountains.

However, every day on set begins to get stranger and stranger than the next when conspiracy goes around of a Russian spy!

In this fast passed sci-fi mystery novel, relive the true suspense that was felt by kids your age during the life changing Cold War, and unlock your true inner detective by trying to find out who isn't who they seem to be...

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## **Peyton says**

Summary:Four friends that love horror movies find out there will be a horror movie filmed in their hometown. On the set of the movie they meet two extras Laura and Darryl who are apparently Russian communists. Then they find a old Russian communist who gives them a flash drive that will tell them about the bombing on america. Last they show a FBI agent the flash drive and the FBI look over the plans the Russians have to bomb them.

Characters:Paul, Crank , OZ , and Arnie

Paul is the main character in the book and is a quiet kid but when he learns about the russians in class he tries to spot them out

Crank is a huge buff jerk who betrays his friends Paul, Arnie , and OZ for a FBI agent and helps him find Russians.

OZ is a movie fanatic but when he finds out there is a movie being shot in his hometown he goes crazy.

Arnie is a shy quiet kid who helps Paul find the Russians.

Setting:Sierre Madre, in Los Angeles, California

Conflict:Four boys Paul, Crank, Arnie, and OZ all meet communists from Russia that are planning to bomb America.

Resolution:They find one of the Russian communists who is attached to the whole story about the bombing and he gives them a flash drive that tells them about the bombing and their plans to bomb america. Then the boys show the flash drive to the FBI.

My opinion of the book is that it wasn't very clear about the concept of the book. I was very confused and mixed up because they went to a lot of places like where they filmed the movie, the diner , and the houses they went too. I would not recommend this because the story line was hard to follow.

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## **Aidan Desrocher says**

The Year Of The Bomb

The book that I have read was the year of the bomb by Ronald Kidd . Ronald Kidd wrote a book that is about a group of kids that live in the 1950's and this would be a relatable topic but when some things that I won't spoil happens in the book I start to lose the feelings for some of the characters. Me as a not so constant reader can't just pick up a book and read, this was one of those books that was hard to read and stay interested in.

This book you could relate to but only if u were a kid in the 1950's who liked horror movies and had four

other friends who also liked horror movies like you. The audience that this is intended for will not be able to relate to this topic . This is one of the reasons why it was hard to relate to this book. the audience that this book has been intended for young adults and unless you are a 50 year old teenager I doubt you will be able to relate.

If you are a reader that finds it hard to pick up a book and read if you don't get into it right away this could be a bad choice. This was hard for me to get into this book. But it did not get better for me. This book really looked interesting for me but it was not. This book had nothing that interested me. I feel like it does not really have a good grab to get you into the book.

To conclude my opinion on this book I would say that this book is hard to get into and like but I think if you were to take your time and read this book I think it could be a good book. if you are not a reader that will willingly read a book you might not like this. I hope this helped you in whether you want to read this book or not.

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### **Sandra Stiles says**

Talk with kids today about the “red-scare”, Russian spies, black-listing of actors and actresses and see what kind of reaction you get. We had a conversation regarding the red scare a few weeks ago and my students looked at me with blank faces. They had never heard of such a thing. The characters in this book have grown up with the “red-scare, bomb shelters and horror movies. They believe these things are all made up until.... This is one of those books you need to read. I really like it. Maybe it is because I grew up during the red scare and horror movies like “Invasion of the Body Snatchers”. I remember where I was the first time I saw it. I don't think I would go to the extremes the kids in this book went. They had quite the adventure. I am hoping my enthusiasm for this book will carry over to some of my students and that they will like it as much as I did.

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