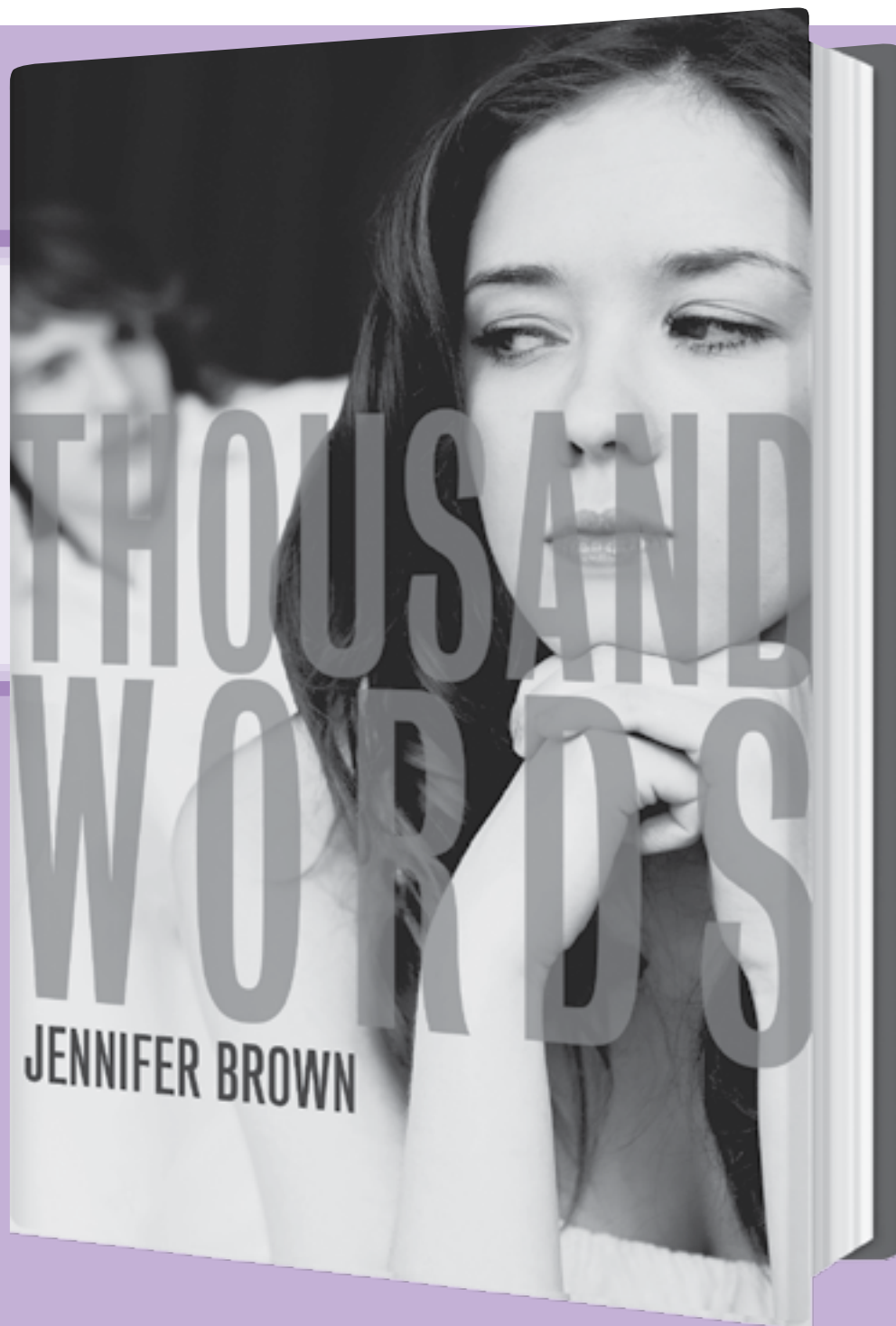


THOUSAND WORDS

curriculum connections

- ❖ Friendship
- ❖ Personal Development
- ❖ Relationship/Sexuality

Ages: 15 - Up



by Jennifer Brown

READING DISCUSSION GUIDE

Before Reading:

What do you think are essential qualities in a good friend? Write about three important traits you look for in a friend, and give reasons to support your opinion. Be prepared to refer back to this after reading *Thousand Words*.

What is your opinion on texting and social media? In what ways can they be a positive influence? In what ways can they be negative?

During Reading:

What information about the main character, Ashleigh, is revealed in the first chapter?

How would you describe Ashleigh's relationship with her boyfriend, Kaleb? If Ashleigh were your friend, what advice would you give her about her relationship with Kaleb?

Ashleigh reflects, "It was all I wanted, really. To let Kaleb know that while his boys were important, I was the real thing." What does she mean by this? What does she do to make sure Kaleb would not forget her?

Peer pressure can take many forms. What role, if any, do you think peer pressure played in Ashleigh's decision? Support your answer with details from the text.

Darrell says, "You ever regret it?" He asks Kenzie if she has regrets about her current situation. Kenzie reacts by asking if Darrell regrets beating people up. How does Darrell respond to this question? What are Kenzie's views on feeling regret? Do you identify more with Darrell's view or Kenzie's view? Explain.

Mack usually keeps to himself, but he speaks up when Kenzie and Angel confront Ashleigh. How do people react to this? What details does the author give about Mack? How would you describe him?

When Ashleigh and Kaleb break up, what reason does he give? At this point in the narrative (September), what is your opinion of Kaleb? Support your opinion using details and clear reasoning.

The meeting with Kaleb and his lawyer reveals a number of major consequences that could happen as a result of decisions made by Ashleigh and Kaleb. What are some of the possible consequences for Kaleb? What are some of the possible consequences for Ashleigh's family?

Ashleigh does not feel Kaleb's apology is adequate. Do you think Kaleb truly regrets his actions or is he, as Ashleigh thinks, just sorry he was caught? Explain.

How does Ashleigh learn that her friends have gotten revenge on Kaleb? What did they do? Do you think this was a reasonable way to show their support of Ashleigh? How did Ashleigh feel when she found out? How did Kaleb respond?

When Ashleigh's father came home from work, he was complaining that the principal wanted him to address a cell phone issue first thing the next morning. The chapter ends with Ashleigh's prediction, "Tomorrow. This wasn't going to blow over tomorrow. It was only going to get worse. Because tomorrow my dad would know." How accurate was her prediction? What changed once adults learned about the picture?

Ashleigh is not only suspended, but also kicked off the cross-country team. What justification does Coach Igo give for this decision? Do you think she is right?

What does Ashleigh find at the thrift store? Why does she find comfort in the discarded items of the second-hand shop? How does she relate this to her own experiences? Explain.

Mack takes Ashleigh to one of his special places. What does this reveal about their friendship? What does Mack mean when he tells Ashleigh to "think harder"? How does Ashleigh react?

On the day of the school board meeting, Mack shares an important secret with Ashleigh. What does she learn about him? What conclusion does she draw about the word "SOLO" inside the tunnel?

How do Mack's actions, advice, and example inspire Ashleigh to take a stand? What does she do?

Do you think Ashleigh's father, in his role as superintendent, mishandled the case? What did he do? Do you think he

might have acted differently if it had not been his daughter?

On the last day of Community Service, two new students arrive who know about Ashleigh's situation. She reflects, "They knew the thousand words, but they didn't know the rest of the story." What does she mean by this? What does this statement, along with her final action of writing her name in spray paint, show about Ashleigh's character?

After Reading:

Friendship and changing relationships are a recurring theme in *Thousand Words*. Refer back to your discussion about essential qualities in a good friend. Does Vonnie fit these criteria? Does Rachel? Does Mack? Choose one of these characters and show (by using examples from the book) how they do or do not meet your criteria for being a good friend.

What is the definition of justice? Ashleigh is arrested for distributing child pornography and is sentenced to community service. Do you think this is justice? Explain. Kaleb will likely have to register as a sex offender because he was over the age of 18 when he distributed the photo of Ashleigh. Is this justice? Why or why not? Refer to your definition of justice and use specific examples to support your thinking.

Do you think the response of classmates and community members would have been different if roles were reversed, if it was a nude picture of Kaleb instead of Ashleigh? If a picture of Kaleb had gone viral, do you think it would have been as damaging? Why do you think this?

How did this experience change Ashleigh's view of herself? How did it change her relationship with her parents?

Ashleigh's community service project, a PSA about the dangers of texting is intended to help educate other teens. Do you think teenagers understand what could happen if they misuse texting or social media? Do you think a poster campaign designed to educate is a good idea or is something else needed? What else could be done?

Author's Craft:

How does Jennifer Brown use the structure of her book to help tell the story? Do you think it was an effective storytelling technique? Why or why not?

How does the point of view used to tell the story help the reader understand the events? In what way does it limit the reader's understanding? Choose a scene from the book and rewrite it from another character's perspective. What additional insight does this offer? Why do you think the author chose to tell this story from Ashleigh's point of view?

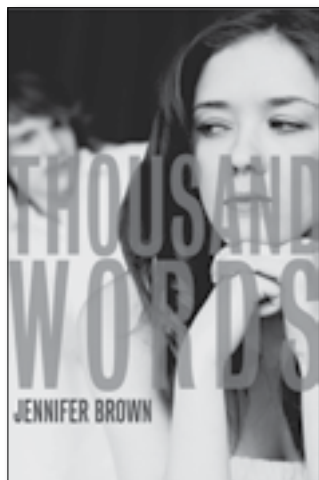
Many authors use quotations from famous people at the beginning of each chapter to help frame their story. How does Ms. Brown's use of the various text messages received by Ashleigh help frame the events? Choose another book you have read that used a similar framing technique, and compare and contrast how this is used in both books to help move the story forward. Be specific in your discussion and use examples from both texts to illustrate your points.

Connecting to Informational Text:

Ashleigh gathers a number of statistics and facts about sexting. While social backlash is damaging, the legal issues surrounding misuse of social media and cyberbullying are frightening. Laws and policies regarding the use of social media, Internet, and texting are constantly changing. Research the current laws or proposed legislation regarding sexting and cyberbullying in your state or area. The website: <http://m.ncsl.org/issues-research/telecom/sexting-legislation-2012.aspx> is one possible resource that tracks legislation regarding sexting around the United States. How would the law or proposed law you researched influence the way Ashleigh's case would be addressed? How would Kaleb's case be treated? Do you think the law is a good idea? Why or why not?

Using close reading techniques, read the federal law 18 USC § 2252a regarding distribution of child pornography: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2252A>. First, read it all the way through and tell what you think the law is saying. Next, highlight any vocabulary that might be confusing, and define these words. Next, read the document line by line and discuss with a partner the meaning of each line. Finally, reread and apply it to the situation of Nate, Rachel, and Silas. As distributors of Ashleigh's photo, have they broken a law? What specific sections of the law might apply to them? Use evidence from the book and the law to outline your argument.

about the book



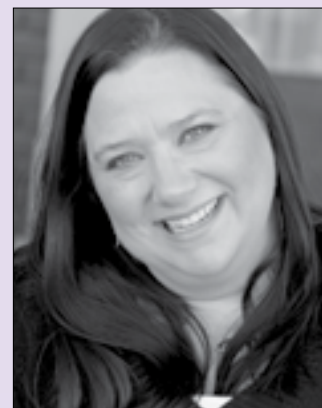
THOUSAND WORDS
by Jennifer Brown
HC: 978-0-316-20972-4

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.

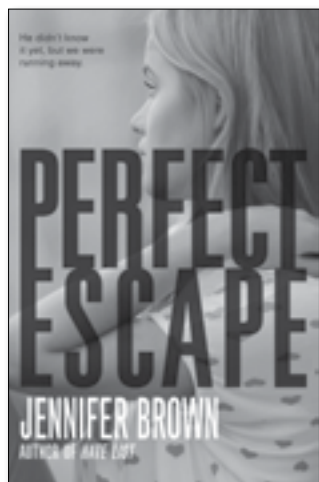
Acclaimed author Jennifer Brown brings readers a gripping novel about honesty and betrayal, redemption and friendship, attraction and integrity, as Ashleigh finds that while a picture may be worth a thousand words . . . it doesn’t always tell the whole story.

about the author

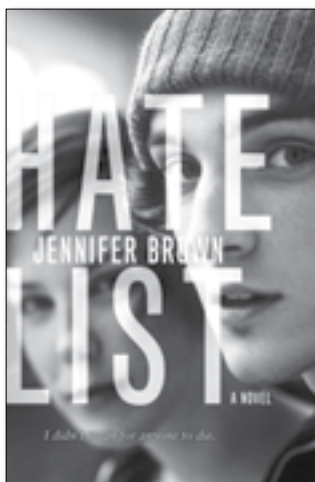


Jennifer Brown writes and lives in the Kansas City, Missouri, area with her husband and three children. She is the author of *Perfect Escape*; *Bitter End*, which received two starred reviews and was named an ALA Best Fiction for Young Adults title; and *Hate List*, which received three starred reviews and was selected as an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, a VOYA Perfect Ten, and a *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year.

also by JENNIFER BROWN



PERFECT ESCAPE
ISBN: 978-0-316-18558-5
AR 4.8



HATE LIST
ISBN: 978-0-316-04145-4
AR 4.9



BITTER END
ISBN: 978-0-316-08696-7
AR 4.8



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