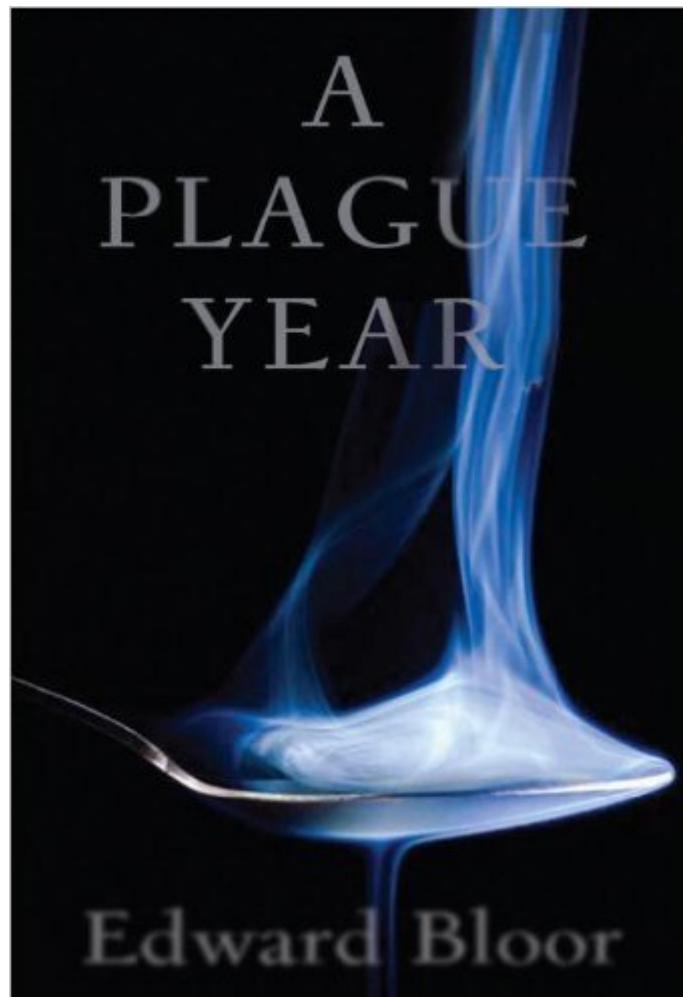


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# A Plague Year



## **Synopsis**

It starts small, with petty thefts of cleaning supplies and Sudafed from the supermarket where Tom works. But the plague picks up speed, tearing through his town with a ferocity and velocity that surprises everyone. By year's end there will be ruined, hollow people on every street corner. Meth will unmake the lives of friends and teachers and parents. It will fill the prisons, and the morgues. Tom has always been focused on getting out of his depressing coal-mining town, on escaping to a college somewhere sunny and far away. But as bits of his childhood erode around him, he finds it's not so easy to let go. When home and family are a lost cause, do you turn your back? Or are some lost causes worth fighting for?

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 590L (What's this?)

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Ember; Reprint edition (November 13, 2012)

Language: English

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ISBN-13: 978-0375846090

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (15 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,379,481 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #20 inÂ  Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > United States > 21st Century #309 inÂ  Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Drugs #642 inÂ  Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Drugs & Alcohol Abuse

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

A Plague Year is the story of a small coal mining community in Pennsylvania as they struggle with the drug methamphetamine and the impact it has on their community. It takes place beginning in September 2001, when meth first began to hit the nationwide spotlight amidst stories of family addiction, armed robberies for cold pills, and the awful effects its use has on the human body. I applaud the author for delivering an effective anti drug message here - he doesn't sugar coat anything, as the reader discovers the horror of this drug right along with the main character Tom, a

ninth grader who is just beginning to become aware of the secrets in his hometown. This book stands out in YA literature of late because it features characters who are poor, not always the smartest or most attractive students, and who are coping with everyday life. It is firmly planted in the working class community, where going to college is sometimes not even an option, and the best kids have to hope for is finding a job that is "good enough for government work". Young teens will enjoy Tom. He has a strong narrative voice, and they will easily relate to his confusion and self doubt. It is also easy to cheer for him as he discovers his own strength and his own sense of hometown pride during a time that many in the country were reeling from the 9/11 attacks and a floundering economy. The author ties in this story with a class project the students are completing on Daniel DeFoe's book *A Journal of The Plague Year*. Also included is another tie in with the film *Night of The Living Dead*. I appreciated the comparisons, however this brings to light the reasons why this book barely squeaks into the three star rating for me.

Edward Bloor has crafted a powerful page turner about a small town facing the siege of methamphetamine and the teens who fight back. Tom Coleman began a journal on Monday, September 10, 2001 as part of a school assignment. His life is divided between his studies and his unpaid work at the Food Giant his dad runs, but he does squeeze in some PSAT preparation. When his story begins, he is viewing a robbery at the Food Giant and realizes an employee is in trouble. He acts quickly to stop it before anyone gets hurt, and then heads to school. This opening begins a pattern for Tom, though of course his life changes with everyone else after 9/11. His small Pennsylvania town is not far from Shanksville, where United Flight 93 crashes after the heroic passengers take it over. But Tom is undergoing another change. His mother wants him and his older sister to attend an after-school drug discussion group, as addiction runs in his family and his sister already has one marijuana-related arrest. Tom and Lilly are surprised to find that their estranged wrong-side-of-the-tracks cousin has joined the meeting. Arthur is trying to stop the pattern of drugs that has affected his family. The counseling group is run by Catherine, a counselor from a local university. Her beautiful daughter, Wendy, is there, and soon Tom is trying to get her attention. When she invites him to a party on the "right" side of town, Tom discovers that ugliness can be found under the surface anywhere. The group begins taking field trips to Shanksville to see the crash site and other powerful locations as the teens struggle to envision their futures outside of their dying small town among the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

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