

## **The Blackthorn Key**

**Kevin Sands**

**Reviewed by: Ritika Chhabra, 13**

**Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity [www.bethestaryouare.org](http://www.bethestaryouare.org)**

As a young apprentice to Master Benedict Blackthorn, Christopher Rowe should be spending his time learning about medicines, potions and ciphers. But when other apothecaries throughout London are struck by a vicious murderer, he knows it's only time before his master's store becomes a target. Set on a trail of clues and conspiracies, Christopher journeys throughout the perilous streets of London in a search for answers.

As a debut novel, this book portrayed the atmosphere and setting of old London with vivid imagery and a rustic, medieval style. I loved the depth and accuracy of historical knowledge that is blended into the story, while maintaining an easier reading level. The main character, Christopher is both humorous and intelligent in a clear-headed, realistic manner. As a result, there is no extra time wasted on following false leads or mistaken clues, a feature that allows the story to flow at an excellent pace. Readers will also love to follow along and try solving some of the puzzles in the story, which are provided in enough detail to make your own attempts.

I also loved how Christopher's character and actions were true to his age. Although he was brilliant in many different aspects, he still demonstrated a young curiosity and sense of adventure that helps lighten the mood. However, one of the drawbacks of the story is that it was heavily centred around male characters. Even though this was historically accurate to the time period, it would be nice to see more involvement from some of the side female roles (not including Christopher's friend pigeon, Bridget). In addition, the story is often marketed as a MG book, as it contains understandable, relatable characters for this age group. However, I found that the book contained many gory details that might be better suited for ages 12+.

### **Recommended Titles:**

Restart by Gordon Korman

The Apothecary by Malie Meloy

Mark of the Thief by Jennifer A. Nielsen

The Clockwork Ghost by Laura Ruby

The Boundless by Kenneth Oppel