



Coda

Emma Trevayne

Running Press Teens (May 7, 2013)

Softcover \$9.95 (320pp)

978-0-7624-4728-2

The uplifting energy of music powers an all-consuming Corp in this engaging, fast-paced speculative fiction.

What happens if the very thing that nourishes the soul also poisons the body? Emma Trevayne's novel *Coda* explores what it might mean to have something as universally loved and enjoyed as music become both a controlled commodity and a weapon that keeps the masses in check.

Anthem and his friends aren't strangers to the seductive power of music. They know how it lifts the spirit and makes a person feel alive. They'd also consider spending their last credits on just a few more of the tracks they crave. And that's just how the Corp wants it. In this novel's imagined society of the future, the Corp manages everything from leisure time to memories. It has no intention of taking the addictive and mind-altering encoding out of the music its citizens are so eager to hear.

Anthem is a member of this postwar world's lowest caste, long ago forced into addiction, and daily expected to give up his personal energy to power the Grid. He won't last long this way. The energy transfers cripple his body, halve his life expectancy, and push him further down the same destructive path that has already claimed his mother and nearly his father, too. But Anthem's situation isn't without hope, and readers will cheer him on as he dreams of making good on his promises, opens himself up to love, and, together with his friends, breaks ever more serious rules for a chance to enjoy music—pure music—and feel free.

Coda is a story of youthful rebellion against a heartless and overreaching authority concerned only with its own survival. The action is engaging and fast-paced, propelled forward by the authentic and sometimes conflicting interests of its likable cast of characters.

Young readers may delight in the fantasy on display as the teenage Anthem lives a version of adult life that includes a full-time job, nights with friends at the club, and a lovingly makeshift family that pulls together his two younger siblings and the girl he loves. But, fair warning, Anthem is not all grown up, and in the mayhem that ensues, he confronts profound dilemmas with rather simple solutions. Drastic measures are taken in the name of freedom and justice, and Anthem remains largely untroubled by the price that's paid all around.

The ending is tense and sensational, and readers won't feel let down by the action. But it relies heavily on Anthem's selfless heroism and pursuit of revenge, a combination that doesn't leave a lot of room for nuance or debate concerning the previously explored themes of personal expression and the uplifting power of music.

JENNIFER WILLIAMS (Summer 2013)

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