

Kaboom!

Brian Adams

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In fifteen-year-old Cyndie's Appalachian hometown of Greenfield, West Virginia, coal companies carry a lot of clout. When she and her best friend, Ashley, learn that mountaintop removal is planned for their beloved hangout, Mount Tom, they decide they have to do something about it. After all, they can't bear to lose the one place in nature where they "get a good heavy dose of old-time religion"—and gossip about boys. With the help of their science teacher, Mr. Cooper, they form a new club, Kids against Blowing off Our Mountaintops (KABOOM), and get started with petitions, letter-writing, and planning a march. "I was no longer Cyndie the Invisible. I was Cyndie the Activist," the engaging narrator marvels.

KABOOM! is retired environmental science professor Brian Adams's second work of romantic-comic climate fiction, after *Love in the Time of Climate Change* (2014). The author enlists Rosa Parks, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. as historical examples of civil disobedience, and situates Cyndie and Ashley within an unexpectedly large community of fictional environmentalists—not least Cyndie's late mother, who protested strip-mining back in the 1980s. The girls' unlikely partners in the fight against MTR include an evangelical youth group and a quirky band of Civil War reenactors. But as Auntie Sadie, a font of folk wisdom, is fond of repeating, "Life is like a Ferris wheel." *KABOOM* faces setbacks along the way, but the overall message is one of empowerment for young people. "If I can do it, then anyone can!" Cyndie insists. Adams's surprisingly solid grasp of a teenage girl's shifting emotions and slang vocabulary is one of the highlights of this funny and socially engaged novel.

REBECCA FOSTER (Summer 2016)

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