



[We Are the Ants](#) by Shaun David Hutchinson

ISBN: 9781481449649 (Trade Paperback)

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2017

*Age Range: 14+ (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 9+ (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

Henry Denton has spent years being periodically abducted by aliens. Then the aliens give him an ultimatum: The world will end in 144 days, and all Henry has to do to stop it is push a big red button.

Only he isn't sure he wants to.

After all, life hasn't been great for Henry. His mom is a struggling waitress held together by a thin layer of cigarette smoke. His brother is a jobless dropout who just knocked someone up. His grandmother is slowly losing herself to Alzheimer's. And Henry is still dealing with the grief of his boyfriend's suicide last year.

Wiping the slate clean sounds like a pretty good choice to him.

But Henry is a scientist first, and facing the question thoroughly and logically, he begins to look for pros and cons: in the bully who is his perpetual one-night stand, in the best friend who betrayed him, in the brilliant and mysterious boy who walked into the wrong class. Weighing the pain and the joy that surrounds him, Henry is left with the ultimate choice: push the button and save the planet and everyone on it...or let the world—and his pain—be destroyed forever.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ "Hutchinson's excellent novel of ideas invites readers to wonder about their place in a world that often seems uncaring and meaningless. The novel is never didactic; on the contrary, it is unfailingly dramatic and crackling with characters who become real upon the page. Will Henry press the button? We all await his decision." —[Booklist](#), **starred review**

★ "This strikingly original work will grip readers and force them to ponder tough questions." —[School Library Journal](#), **starred review**

★ "[Henry's] journey is subtle and hard-won, with meditations on the past, the present, and the future that are equal parts sarcastic and profound. Bitterly funny, with a ray of hope amid bleakness." —[Kirkus](#), **starred review**

Updated 7.22.24

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★ “Hutchinson has crafted an unflinching portrait of the pain and confusion of young love and loss, thoughtfully exploring topics like dementia, abuse, sexuality, and suicide as they entwine with the messy work of growing up.” —[Publishers Weekly](#), **starred review**

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- Time’s “100 Best YA Books of All Time”
- CCBC Choices (Cooperative Children’s Book Council)
- Georgia Peach Book Award for Teen Readers Nominee
- Chicago Public Library’s Best of the Best
- Nutmeg Book Award Nominee (CT)
- NYPL Best Books for Teens
- TAYSHAS Reading List (TX)
- ALA/YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults - Top Ten
- ALA Rainbow List Top Ten
- Junior Library Guild Selection
- 2016 *Shelf Awareness* Best Book of the Year

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Reading Group Guide](#)
- [Teen Librarian Toolbox blog post](#)
- [TeachingBooks.net Resources](#)
- [Unban Coolies Author Interview](#)
- [Author Shaun David Hutchinson keynote | SLJ Summit 2016](#)

RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

Seattle Times: [Fight book bans so all teens know they are worthy of love](#)

AUTHOR STATEMENT

“I hope people will take away that life is absurd and silly and painful and hilarious and beautiful. That even when life seems pointless, it’s still amazing. Part of what I wanted to explore with WE ARE THE ANTS is how people go on with their lives after tragedy. And that’s what Henry’s journey is. He’s given the opportunity to save the world or let it be destroyed, and he’s not sure it’s worth saving. I hope people will take away that the world is absolutely worth saving. That we’re all worth saving. Throughout the book, Henry asks different people whether they’d save the world if given the chance. Near the end, Henry has the opportunity to ask Jesse’s mother. More than anyone else, I think her answer distills what I hope readers will take away from the book. She says she’d save the world, ‘Because Jesse believed that life wasn’t worth living, and I refuse to prove him right.’”

—From [Transmedia Mutt](#)’s interview with Shaun David Hutchinson

“[School districts] want libraries more worried about lawsuits than about not having the books the kids in their communities need. They want to force teachers to choose between losing their jobs and supporting the students in their classrooms. It’s cruel, and the cruelty is the point.” —Shaun David Hutchinson (Twitter)

—https://lambdalegal.org/blogs/us_20220916_banned-books-week-lgbtq-books-to-read-now/

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***A NOTE ON AGE RANGES**

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

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