

Scythe by Neal Shusterman



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Death has been defeated and world peace achieved. With the guidance of Artificial Intelligence, humanity has ushered in a utopia?. mostly. In *Scythe*, Neal Shusterman posits that AI has evolved into an omniscient (and omnibenevolent) force called the Thunderhead, through which the world has achieved a true and lasting peace. The Thunderhead controls everything, but unlike many dystopian works, this is a miraculous and profoundly beneficial event. The only power that the Thunderhead does not possess is the ability to take life. That responsibility is assigned to Scythes, who roam the world utilizing quotas to randomly glean (aka kill) in order to keep earth?s population in check.

The story opens as two teens, Citra and Rowan, are apprenticed to Scythe Faraday. Their worlds are upended entirely as they leave their old lives behind and train in martial arts, weaponry, poisons, and other deadly arts. They both progress rapidly and show great promise, until their mentor gleans himself and they are separated and assigned to new Scythes. However, not everything is as it seems. As Citra digs more deeply into the death of her mentor and Rowan discovers he is apprenticed to a new type of Scythe who specializes in mass gleanings, they both will have to reach deep within themselves to survive and grow.

Scythe is a fascinating story that tackles a variety of relevant and complex issues. Shusterman is asking big questions about human nature and values, while at the same time painting a picture about how technology could actually be humankind?s savior (doing a far better job at everything than we ever could), all within a compulsively readable story. A 2017 Printz Award Honor Book, *Scythe* is a must read for those who love sci-fi, adventure, coming of age stories, and wrestling with big ideas. Suggested for ages 14 and up.

Posted by Sam O. on January 24, 2017

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