



# Ghost of Spirit Bear

*Ben Mikaelson*

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## Ghost of Spirit Bear Ben Mikaelson

Alone in the wilderness, Cole found peace.

But he's not alone anymore.

Cole Matthews used to be a violent kid, but a year in exile on a remote Alaskan island has a way of changing your perspective. After being mauled by a Spirit Bear, Cole started to heal. He even invited his victim, Peter Driscall, to join him on the island and they became friends.

But now their time in exile is over, and Cole and Peter are heading back to the one place they're not sure they can handle: high school. Gangs and violence haunt the hallways, and Peter's limp and speech impediment make him a natural target. In a school where hate and tension are getting close to the boiling point, the monster of rage hibernating inside Cole begins to stir.

Ben Mikaelson's riveting saga of survival and self-awareness continues in the sequel to his gripping *Touching Spirit Bear*. This time, he weaves a tale of urban survival where every day is a struggle to stay sane. As the problems in his school grow worse, Cole realizes that it's not enough just to change himself. He has to change his world.

## Ghost of Spirit Bear Details

Date : Published June 17th 2008 by HarperCollins

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Author : Ben Mikaelson

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# From Reader Review Ghost of Spirit Bear for online ebook

## Kyle says

Cole Mathews was a troubled child but after spending a year in the Alaskan wilderness he has change and now is friends with the kid he beat up that made him go to Alaska. but now he has to move back to the city and he and peter don't know if they can take all the violence of Minneapolis they need to change there school.

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## Joseph says

I loved it, but it just wasn't the same as the first one, first of all it wasn't as big of a change for Cole and Peter and is not at the top at my rereading list, but there were some good parts, for example when they fight the bully with their heart that was interesting and a little weird, but the story ends nice, unlike some books.  
\*cough Rick Riordan cough\* :(

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## Marie says

### Review/Critique

Mikaelsen, B. (2008). Ghost of Spirit Bear. New York: Harper Collins.

### Why the book was chosen

I chose Ghost of Spirit Bear purposefully it is the sequel to Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelsen. The cover of the book is wonderful. It features a mighty bear rising above a building, mouth wide, open fangs visible. I was interested in finding out how Cole Matthews and Peter Driscall were doing since their last experience, which was a healing journey for themselves.

### Summary/Overview of the book

Cole Matthews was a violent fifteen year old; his victim was Peter Driscall. Cole had smashed Peters' head against the sidewalk causing serious damage to Peter. The incident wounded Peter to his core. Peter became suicidal after being brutalized; he had lost his place in the world. Healing was a challenge for both boys. Peter and Cole survived the island together. It was time for the boys to go home to where reality and reliance on themselves would be put to the test. Cole, with an rage just below the surface, and Peter, with a limp and a speech problem, make them targets in high school. Could Cole and Peter survive the city filled with gangs, bullies and violence? Ghost of Spirit Bear is about the struggles the boys face in a urban setting that is turbulent and violent. Somehow they must find a way to survive without doing harm. Cole and Peter are challenged by the real fact that their internal self-change was not going to be enough when back in the city. Peter and Cole have Garvey their counselor, to support them and he offers advice. The boys would need each other. They would need to use their brains and new skills to change the world they live in; meanwhile, a entity in the form of an elusive old street man (the Ghost of Spirit Bear) is watching them.

Specific quotes from the text

"Cole spoke bitterly. 'We're both in trouble when everybody figures out that fighting will send me to jail.'..." Peter laughed and chimed in, 'see the boy tho got his head smashed and had to go to Alaska so he wouldn't commit suicide' (p. 14).

" 'Don't fight!' Peter screamed. Let them beat me up!"(p. 28).

"I told you before, fight em" Garvey said. "Just don't use your fists." (p. 59).

Cole comments "...well yesterday, I opened my eyes and found that old homeless guy staring at me across the parking lot. I looked down for just a few seconds, and when I looked back he was gone." (p. 72)

My questions, inferences, visual images, thoughts, reactions, feelings, opinions

The Ghost of Spirit Bear is a saga or continuation of Cole and Peters healing process. I

questioned Cole's inability to follow through with his line of questioning when it came to the spirit bears essence he saw in the old bum's eyes. Why did Cole not figure it out, was he so frightened to not see the goodness in the eyes? I felt like the story was a typical continuation, Ghost of Spirit Bear was a good book to read. My own curiosity in how Cole and Peter were going to handle urban life piqued my interest to read it all the way through. I am sure that a teen

would enjoy the adventure and have fun reading about the challenges the book presents. Ghost of Spirit Bear brings out current issues of today. The book brings out bullying in schools, the effects and causes of suicide, which in turn could help a teen speak out to someone they trust and seek help.

Re-evaluating the story with reference to values, ideals, beliefs, and or institutions of Aboriginal peoples

The values in Ghost of Spirit Bear are shown in the wisdom of Garvey, the counsellor, and the justice circle, and Cole, for sure, epitomized wisdom. He was able to forgive through love, for Cole that was powerful lesson he learned. The justice circle is a traditional way of dealing with youth who offend; it is an institution of law. The justice circle is a viable option for youth offenders.

My transformed thoughts: What is not written in the story but now I am thinking about...

I am thinking about irony. The story Ghost of Spirit Bear effectively shows how difficult it is to use traditional practises in urban settings. Cole and Peter look for alternatives, such as a freezer to chill out in and use bowling balls instead of Grandfather rocks. It is funny. Ghost of Spirit Bear brings out the issue of Native contemporary identity and traditional practices.

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## **Ahmad Sharabiani says**

Ghost of Spirit Bear (Spirit Bear, #2), Ben Mikaelson

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## **Ryan Mcpherson says**

I would recommend this book to plenty of people that are interested in hearing about someone that changed their life, then going back to their normal routine and see how they are treated. The title is almost perfect for this book because the bear lived on an island near Alaska. Cole changed dramatically because when he went to the island it changed his whole personality. A portion of why Matthew changed was because he joined the circle and started to hang out with Cole. The plot was perfect for coming back to school because he could

show his peers how much he had changed on the island of Alaska.

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### **Leydi says**

Cole Matthews used to be a violent child, but a year in exile on a remote island in Alaska, has a way of changing his perspective. After being attacked by a Spirit bear, Cole began to heal, even invited his victim, Peter Driscall, to join him on the island and became friends. The exile is over and they have to return to their real life, high school, and see everything around them is violence. As problems at his school worsen, Cole realizes that it is not enough to change himself, he has to change his world.

What I like about this book is that it is a story of survival and self-control, where young people realizes how high levels of violence can reach. The part that I like the most is where Cole, realizes that no matter how much he changes, if he continues with the bad company, it is not to change anything.

What I didn't like about this book is that children are very cruel, and they don't care about feelings, or what other children think. But this helps us to understand what we actually live in schools.

I think, children in schools would like this book, because they can see and understand that violence leads to nothing good.

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### **Syed Absar says**

Ghost Of Spirit Bear By: Ben Mikaelson

This story took place in a boy named Cole Mathews High School. The characters in this story are Cole Mathews, Peter, Garvey, Kieth and the spirit bear. The characters in this story seem real because they are normal kids in high school and, this could really happen. The main character looked like a mean bully at first but then as I read more he became a good person. Cole Mathews said to Peter that "lets go sit in the freezer to release all of our anger" This tells me that Cole is creative by thinking of ways to release his anger. When Cole Mathews was getting bullied and beaten up by Kieth, he did not fight back this tells me that he was a good person and he was relaxed. I really liked this book because it was really interesting and the suspense was good. The theme of this story was Cole going back to his high school and facing many challenges. I think that theme is correct because Cole had to face many challenges in the story.

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### **Paco says**

The thing I really liked about this book was that it almost always left you hanging at the end of a chapter. It made you want to read the next chapter so badly. It was really hard for me to put the book down sometimes. The sentence fluency for it was great. I never had to go back and reread a sentence or two to find out what it meant. It just ran smoothly right through. He didn't use too many "big" words. They were all pretty simple for me. I enjoy that challenge of finding out what some words mean. I only had to do that once or twice the entire book. The thing I really liked was how Ben Mikaelson was able to put great pictures into my mind.

The way he described things was great. For example, the way he was able to describe the school after it had been vandalized, incredible. Something that was really good was that he made me feel really sad for the girl that had committed suicide and Peter after he had gotten beaten up. I also really hated Keith when he was picking on Peter and Cole protected him and through a punch and almost got sent to jail. Cole was just trying to help. He got better though at the end of the book when he turned his friends in and apologized to Peter. Well, I really liked this book. It was one of the best books I've ever read if not the best. The only thing I didn't like was that the ending was horrible. It didn't tell you what happens in the end. I hope there is another sequel.

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### **LuAnn says**

I thought Touching Spirit Bear was a great book and I recommend it all the time, so naturally I was excited to see a sequel and couldn't wait to read it. I was totally disappointed. This book was didactic, judgemental, and telly. Where was the richness of the previous book? Ghost of Spirit Bear reads more like an outline instead of a story. Too predictable and not well-developed, I'm glad I read this one from the library instead of buying my own copy.

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### **Maddie Allen says**

If you have read Touching Spirit Bear, then you'll know that this book is the best sequel this book could've had possible. It not only gives us a recap on the emotional change that Cole went through, but also let's us fully understand that he is not completely healed. He just handles it better. He fully thinks through his actions more and in doing that he changes so much for the people around him and it's just a perfect way to really give us closure and really wrap up this story. I would absolutely say you should read it but only if you read the first one.

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### **Jasper Halford says**

"Ghost of Spirit Bear" is the sequel to "Touching Spirit Bear" and because of that, I had high expectations for this book. I could relate to a lot of this book as much of it talks about school and the relationships that are made with your peers and such. The writing that the author uses is very powerful and makes a good impact. I did enjoy this book quite a lot and it was fairly well put together, but it just wasn't quite as special as its prequel. As you are reading this book, you can tell that it was a bit forced and the author was having a hard time recreating the momentum of his first book. But overall, it is a good book and a great story.

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### **Julia says**

This was a really beautiful read. One thing Mikaelson does so perfectly is create the feeling of helplessness in a high school setting. Admittedly I find that there are a lot fewer "bullies" in today's high schools and most teens are primarily faced with their own inner demons, but I was pleasantly surprised with the way that Cole eventually learned how to face them.

When Garvey kept telling Cole that the way he was dealing with Keith was wrong, I felt as helpless as Cole did trying to figure out exactly what Garvey meant. Mikaelson really makes you as the reader feel like you yourself are the protagonist of the story, and it is not often that a book nowadays can create that level of empathy. As the tension builds, the story presents many shocking aspects, not allowing you to even breathe as you read from one trauma to the next. (view spoiler) Again, this way that the novel is written perfectly parallels life, when you usually don't have the chance to recover from one trauma before another one is presented. I also enjoyed the literal connections to the first book as Cole and Peter tried to regain the peace they had found on the island back in the real world. The homeless man was a meaningful connection too; just like the Spirit Bear, only Cole and Peter would ever know for sure (or as sure as they can be) that he exists. He reminded me very much of David Almond's *Skellig*, and I love the mystery of never knowing for sure who he was or why he came into their lives. As *Skellig*'s Mina would say, "*Sometimes we just have to accept there are things we can't know.... Sometimes we think we should be able to know everything. But we can't. We have to allow ourselves to see what there is to see, and we have to imagine.*"

This is a book that would appear on a school curriculum, and I can see many students hating it. I think it is meant to be that way. Just as Cole thought he would be miserable on the island--and he was, for most of it--the reader really has to *feel* the story to get it. The reader has to *want* to get something out of it, or he never will. The book creates much the same experience for the reader as it does for the protagonist.

So for anyone who thought that Cole's idea to make the school a better place was stupid (and I will admit that I didn't understand it at first), the key is to allow yourself to think that it is meaningful. It doesn't matter if it is or not. You have to choose to make it meaningful for yourself.

Finally, I don't think I can end this review without commenting about Ms. Kennedy. At first, I felt like hating her, because I thought Cole wanted to hate her, but I loved her transition through the novel. I *wish* I had known a single good principal or teacher like her. I found her character surprisingly believable (if that oxymoron makes any sense!), but she seemed like one of the few grown-ups even in the real world who wanted to put the students first and **really** make a difference. (view spoiler) When most of my teachers just bragged about making the Sunshine List (earning \$100,000+ per year), I realized quickly that we were not their priority. Ms. Kennedy was a refreshing change.

This is the perfect follow-up to *Touching Spirit Bear*, and it shows the ability to heal without the harsh and cringe-worthy events of the island (Cole's diet at the beginning, being one obvious example).

One final note: the relationship between Cole and Peter oddly reminds me of that of Albus and Scorpius in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. *Ghost of Spirit Bear* is infinitely better than *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, but it was a very surprising inter-textual connection. Somehow now I feel like *Cursed Child* completely ripped off Mikaelson's beautiful story.

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## Ashley says

I read the first book in the series, *Touching Spirit Bear* years ago and the book had impacted me in a way no other books could. I thought it was the best children's book I'd ever read as Cole's story helped me grow by inspiring me to control my anger and find my inner strength. And since reading *Touching Spirit Bear*, I'd been longing to get hold of its sequel *Ghost of Spirit Bear*. Little did I expect that my opportunity to read *Ghost of Spirit Bear* came this year, about seven years after I read *Touching Spirit Bear*. Upon getting hold of *Ghost of Spirit Bear*, I started reading it with mixed feelings of anticipation and doubt. Whilst hoping that

it would produce the same serene effect on me the way it's prequel did, I was also feeling sceptical about how much the book would impact me as I am not who I was before. This book was truly jaw-dropping! It's an extremely inspirational story about how Cole and Peter mature and shine and I learnt a lot from them. Cole and Peter were heroic figures who empower others by empowering themselves. They apply what they've learnt on the Alaskan island in their previous adventure in their daily lives, inspiring me to apply what I've learnt from them.

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## **Hashim Baig says**

After a crazy ending in the Touching Sprit Bear, Cole Matthews is mostly forgiven by Peter Driscall after Cole had assaulted him. The Ghost of Spirit Bear was overall a decent book. It would of a bit better if it was more serious than Touching Sprit Bear. Cole Matthews returns to Minneapolis after one year and he is scared to go back to school after what he had done to Peter over a year ago. After a few days of school starting, Cole and Peter are worried by Keith and his group or known as the bullies. Cole reacts by fighting Keith and that was a huge problem because he could go back to jail if he had fought someone. After being yelled at by a teacher in the school office and given one last chance, Cole meets Garvey. Garvey was telling Cole not to fight with violence and to stand up for yourself. After Keith was making fun of Cole, Keith fell off his skateboard. Cole helped him up and Keith was taken to the hospital. After all this fighting Cole and Keith were good with each other. The school that they went to had fixed many things which made the school better and a resolution. I recommend you to read this after you read Touching Spirit Bear. I think you will like the Series of these two books.

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## **Zac says**

BR#4

Ghost of Spirit Bear is a heartwarming sequel to Touching Spirit Bear. It is by Ben Mikaelson. There are so many amazing characters that help Cole and Peter. The main characters that helped Cole and Peter are Garvey, Keith, and Ms. Kennedy. Cole and Peter even helped each other out too. "Hey, Peter, we're Spirit Bears," Cole reminded his friend. "Spirit Bears are strong, gentle, and kind." Peter thought a moment. "You got mauled, so that proves they can get ticked off too."

The setting is amazing. It takes place at a school called Minneapolis Central High. The setting helps Cole and Peter become less angry and helps them to see the world around them. Peter and Cole no longer have a pond and an ancestor rock to carry so they have to go and find their own. "let's go sit in the freezer to release all of our anger". The setting helped them to release their anger.

I would highly recommend this book. It is good for someone who likes realistic fiction. It is 160 pages long. It is a short and an amazing rea

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## **Denice says**

This book is about a boy named Cole who has just gotten back from being isolated on an Alaskan peninsula. This is a sequel to *Touching Spirit Bear* which was a very good book. I thought this book did a very good job of showing how Cole is trying his best to get away from the bad things that are now in his life. He is in high school and many people are now bullying him and his new friend Peter.

It is a very good sequel and you should only read this book if you have read the first one. It is sometimes hard to follow if you have not read *Touching Spirit Bear*. When Cole and Peter are on the island they become friends and can do many things to get away from reality. When they are back in their hometown they discover many great things that are in their lives they didn't see before. One thing that the author could've done better was to give more voice to the other characters. He did good on Cole and Peter, but you really couldn't relate to the others in a positive way.

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## **Jonathan says**

I loved the part when Peter and Cole became friends. Also that they stood up for each other when they were in trouble with some bullies. I can't believe that they had good spirits. The part that I didn't get was the part when Cole's dad was there in the assembly when he did not want to see Cole. Also, what happened to the old homeless man? The book said that he disappeared.

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## **Mariah says**

I read the first book of this two-book series with my students during the school year and then I promised that I would read it sometime this summer. I am so glad I did because this book was extremely good! I'm pretty sure I enjoyed it more than the first book. However, it is a YA novel so the ending is very unrealistic, but the rest of the book is very good and has great life lessons.

"Cole Matthews used to be a violent kid, but a year in exile on a remote Alaskan island has a way of changing your perspective... But now their time in exile is over, and Cole and Peter are heading back to the one place they're not sure they can handle: high school. Gangs and violence haunt the hallways, and Peter's limp and speech impediment make him a natural target. In a school where hate and tension are getting close to the boiling point, the monster of rage hibernating inside Cole begins to stir."

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## **Dylan Lafollette says**

So far the book goes on at the island and Cole must tear down his cabin to keep his memories of burning and building a cabin. They (Cole and Peter) thought they will never see the spirit bear but they are waiting for a big surprise.

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## **Cornmaven says**

This is the sequel to *Touching Spirit Bear*, which I have not read, but this book gives a good 'catch-up' synopsis at the beginning. I think the setting of a really crummy, violent urban school in Minneapolis is interesting - I would not have chosen Minneapolis for that kind of school, but it needed to have a big Native American connection, and you wouldn't necessarily get that in NYC or Chicago or LA. The school is full of physically violent and speech abusing bullies, jaded teachers, a new principal who walks on eggs at the beginning. It has a feel good ending, and some of the lessons about learning to choose how to react to situations are OK, but it seemed contrived to me. The kid who comes back from Alaskan banishment does struggle with readjusting to the real world. Apparently in the first book the kid he beat up (inducing permanent brain damage of all things) joins him in the wilderness and they become best friends. That seems contrived, too, with the kids coming from an urban, not native, life. It seemed just a bit too easy for all of the kids to 'come together' at the school and work toward changing the mascot. Maybe the school was not as large as our high schools down here; I just can't see that happening in Texas, much as I would like to, considering how much bullying goes on right under the administration's nose. This might go up to high school level, considering the ages of the characters, but I don't think HS kids would buy into it too much.

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