



Battle Royale: Angel's Border


By Koushun Takami

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 10 Up—Two short stories expand the inner lives and past histories of characters originally appearing in the Japanese novel *Battle Royale* (Viz, 1999). Haruka, on watch with class representative Yukie, attempts to come to terms with her hidden romantic feelings for her classmate with whom she is supposed to be fighting to the death, and Chisato remembers a past encounter with popular cool kid Shinji that revealed a talent for deception and hidden depths. These short episodes expand upon characters dispatched over a few chapters late in the original source, creating motivation for the actions that ultimately caused their respective deaths in the Program. Initially considered exploitative by critics, Takami's cult novel spawned manga and film adaptations and is even considered by some to be a thematic prototype for Suzanne Collins's "Hunger Games" series. Despite the work's controversial violence, these vignettes focus instead on the ties that bind students who are instructed to ignore those human connections. The artwork, appropriately, has an emotive, romantic quality. Very little graphic content is depicted here, with the most intense sequences being effective portrayals of how the Program psychologically wounded its contestants.—Benjamin Russell, Belmont High School, NH

About the Author

Koushun Takami was born in 1969 in Amagasaki near Osaka and grew up in Kagawa Prefecture of Shikoku, where he currently resides. After graduating from Osaka University with a degree in literature, he dropped out of Nihon University's liberal arts correspondence program. From 1991 to 1996, he worked for the prefectural news company Shikoku Shinhun, reporting on various fields including politics, police reports, and economics. Although he has an English teaching certificate, he has yet to visit the United States. *Battle Royale*, completed after Takami left the news company, was rejected in the final round of a literary competition sponsored by a major publisher due to the critical controversy it provoked among jury members. With its publication in Japan in 1999, though, *Battle Royale* received widespread support, particularly from young readers, and became a bestseller. In 2000, *Battle Royale* was serialized as a comic and made into a feature film. Mr. Takami is currently working on his second novel.

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