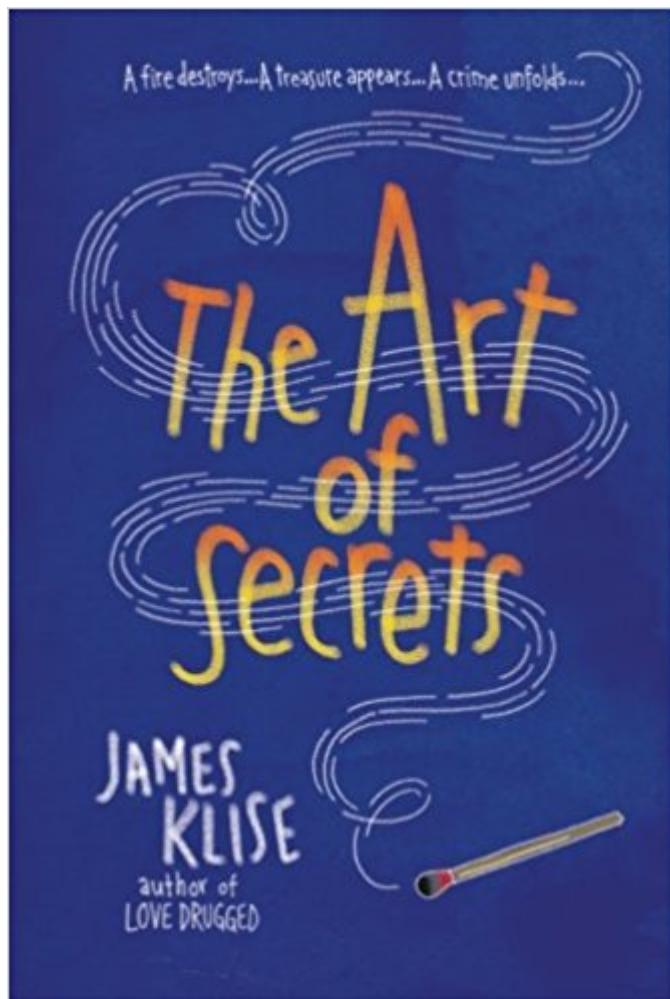


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# The Art Of Secrets



## Synopsis

An Edgar Award Winner, Best Ya Novel 2015 Where there's smoke . . . When Saba Khan's apartment burns in a mysterious fire, possibly a hate crime, her high school rallies around her. Her family moves into a rent-free luxury apartment, her Facebook page explodes, and she begins (secretly) dating a popular boy. Then a quirky piece of art donated to a school fund-raising effort for the Khans is revealed to be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, and Saba's life turns upside down again. Should Saba's family get the money? Or the students who found the painting? Or the school? Monologues, journal entries, interviews, articles, and official documents expose a tangled web of greed, jealousy, and suspicion as students and teachers alike debate, point fingers, and make shocking accusations about what's really going on. *“Relationships, secrets and lies aplenty.”* -Kirkus Reviews *“Will stay on readers' minds long after the last page.”* -Booklist, starred review *“This story . . . culminates in a shocking twist of an ending that will engross readers until the very last page.”* -The Christian Science Monitor A Booklist Editor's Choice Book A Booklist Top Crime Fiction Book A Chicago Public Library Best of the Best Book A Mystery Writers of America Edgar Award Nominee

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 16 years

Grade Level: 7 - 10

## Customer Reviews

Gr 6-10 •A suspicious fire, possibly a hate crime, destroys Saba Khan and her

family's apartment and possessions. The Khans rely on the generosity of their neighbors and donations from Saba's school, a prestigious private school near downtown Chicago. Siblings Kendra and Kevin Spoon, two of the teen's classmates, decide an auction would be a great way to raise money to help the Pakistani American family. Soon the Spoons find a unique piece of artwork for the auction, and the event becomes big news that everyone wants in on. The art goes missing, and anyone involved in the auction is a suspect. This novel is told in variety of formats, including journal entries, email, text messages, newspaper stories, and police reports. Ten different characters share their points of view, leaving readers to work out exactly what happened and who might be guilty. Keeping up with all the different perspectives can be daunting, and some entries don't always contribute to the momentum. For fans of realistic fiction with plot twists, mysteries, and epistolary-type novels. --Natalie Struecker, Rock Island Public Library, IL --This text refers to the Digital edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** After her family's apartment goes up in flames, Saba Khan's Chicago high school organizes a benefit auction for her family. When a book by the famous outsider artist Henry Darger turns up among the items that have been gathered for sale, it raises a number of perplexing questions: How did such a unique piece go missing for so long? Shouldn't the financially floundering school get a cut of the profits? Instead of bringing everyone together, the discovery further marginalizes the school's outsiders. The story is told through documents, interviews, journal entries, and text messages from Saba, her father, teachers at her school, and her classmates as their suspicions about the art and the origin of the fire grow, and fingers are pointed in every direction. Klise lets loose a chorus of genuine voices as the disturbing truth emerges, and people's secrets grow too large to hide. This art mystery is that rare book that will be passed around by teens as well as teachers in the faculty lounge, discussed and dissected and immediately reread to scour for hidden clues and motivations. The incidents at Highsmith School will stay on readers' minds long after the last page. Grades 7-10. --Erin Downey Howerton --This text refers to the Digital edition.

When fourteen-year-old Saba Kahn's Pakistani family loses everything in a fire, her classmates at a prestigious private school, spearheaded by the enthusiastic Spoon siblings, decide to have an auction to benefit the Kahns. While dumpster diving, the Spoons find previously unowned works of art by a great, reclusive painter, sure to bring hundreds of thousands or dollars auction. The kids who found the work want to give the proceeds to the family, sparking some jealously among the

students, adult parents and school personnel. Then the paintings go missing and fingers begin pointing. The chapters are written from different perspectives, students and adults, and they include newspaper articles, letters, messages and narratives. The voices include Saba, Kevin and Kendra Spoon, Saba's superficial boyfriend, a foreign exchange student, the Kahn parents, 3 teachers, the headmistress, several parents, and an art appraiser. I didn't think the ART OF SECRETS was as much a mystery, because I didn't really care who took the paintings. I cared about why and the motivations of the characters in helping and accepting help. Billed as a YA novel. THE ART OF SECRETS will probably appeal to adults more than teens. YA age readers might be bored or uninterested in the politics between teachers and adult jealousies. As an adult I was. James Klise has penned a thought provoking novel about generosity and jealousy, helping others and benefitting, selflessness and selfishness, what we deserve and what we'll do to get that. I love how the Kahns' Muslim faith are just a small part of their characters, like the exchange student's Spanish heritage is a small part of who he is. Any of characters could have been from any country, faith or have any color skin. That's diversity done right.

I really enjoyed reading the Art of Secrets by James Klise, a librarian at a high school in the Chicago area. I am NOT a young adult, but after hearing him interviewed on NPR, I ordered it and read it. I loved the way he constructed it with a lot of different first person narratives. The story unfolded like a flower from a bud, and although he doesn't come out and give us answers, the answers are quite apparent if you think about it.

I bought this for my 14 year old niece after hearing a good review of it on NPR. She was a little dubious about reading it at first the story title didn't grab her. However, one quiet afternoon she finally dove in and she really loved it. We had a long discussion about it. I would suggest it for young teen.

(No young adult here)....I also heard the author's interview on NPR and decided to buy the book. Made for enjoyable reading with a very surprising ending. Good purchase!

THIS WAS A JOY. THE JOURNAL TYPE OF CHAPTERS AND CHARACTER WAS GREAT. THIS WOULD BE GREAT TO TEENAGERS. THE ENDING WAS SUPERB AND A SURPRISE. ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS I'VE READ THIS YEAR.

This. Disc will not open in an apple computer, hp computer, nor play in my bose stereo, car stereo, or DVD player. So I am not able to tell you if the story is any good or not.

Saba Khan is a tennis-playing sophomore on academic scholarship at an elite Chicago high school who struggles to fit in because her parents are low-income immigrants from Pakistan. Still, she has friends and no one seems prejudiced against her background --- until one day, her family returns home from one of Saba's tennis matches to find their small apartment aflame, all their possessions and memories reduced to ash in a matter of hours. The fire inspector confirms that it was arson. It looks like a hate crime, perpetrated against Muslim immigrants who are not American enough in spite of their legal citizenship and years of living in the community. The Khans struggle to even begin getting back on their feet, until one of Saba's classmates begins a school-wide fundraising effort. Suddenly, the Khans find themselves living rent-free in an apartment in a luxury high-rise that was temporarily donated by a student's wealthy parents, and items for a fundraising auction start to accumulate at the school. Among these is an album of strange artwork depicting a story of girls and soldiers in a surreal landscape. The siblings who donated the artwork found it abandoned in an alleyway. No one thinks the album is worth anything --- until the art teacher sees it. It turns out that the artwork's creator is Henry Darger, a reclusive Chicago artist, and the artwork has an insurance value of half a million dollars. Suddenly, everyone is invested in the auction, as people jostle for a piece of the fundraising pie. Can the Khans, the school, and the fundraiser survive the pulling and publicity of half a million dollars in art? And what will happen in the wake of disaster when disaster strikes again? *THE ART OF SECRETS* weaves a complicated plot and nuanced characters from Saba's journal entries, interviews with faculty and students, text messages, emails, newspaper articles, police reports and more. The structural complexity of the novel is never confusing; instead, it allows the many major players to show who they really are through what they say and do. James Klise does not tell us who the teachers, students and community members are --- he shows us, and allows readers to piece together what happens from many angles, which enhances intrigue and suspense in the novel. This innovative mystery explores issues of secrecy, social class, greed, family, self-justification and the need to belong in one's community.

Saba's internal and external struggles are realistically specific to her situation, but they will resonate with anyone who has ever felt like an outsider. As in life, the questions *THE ART OF SECRETS* poses do not have easy answers, which is the book's greatest strength. Reviewed by Quinn Colter

James Klise is the author of The Art of Secrets; the book is sad and serious at the same time. The Art of Secrets is overall a great book, the thing I enjoyed most is how the characters interacted. The book is realistic fiction. The author makes me believe in the characters as people because people really can have house fires and have auctions and assemblies at school. I liked most of the characters I think that's why I liked the book because I can relate to the characters. The only thing I didn't like about the book is that people were bullying Saba because of her parents living in Pakistan. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone.

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