



Masterminds
By Gordon Korman

Grade Levels: 3-6
Reading Level: 5.2

Synopsis:

Tiny, perfect Serenity, New Mexico has everything anyone would want: pools in every back yard; little to no crime; great schools; a wonderfully supportive community; and a large manufacturing plant making the world famous orange traffic cones. Honesty and integrity is the motto of the town. Everything is perfect until best buddies, Eli and Randy, go outside the city limits. This is forbidden. Eli is felled by blinding headaches and Randy is banished. Randy leaves behind a note warning Eli that all is not as perfect as it appears. Meanwhile, Amber and Tori practice for the annual Serenity Day presentation. Nerdy Hector is secretly tutoring Malik, the most popular boy in school.

During a thunderstorm, the power grid goes down while Eli is doing U.S. history research for a report. What he finds on line about the Boston Tea Party, is not what is being taught at school. Amber's discovery of a left behind USA Today newspaper gives her information about wars, poverty, and major crimes. This is not what is reported in the city's newspaper. Hector and Malik discover that the same trucks go around the city with the same orange cones after a skateboarding accident leaves Hector's blood on one of the cones.

What is going on in this town? What is Serenity? Are their parents lying to them about what their jobs are? Who they are? Will they ever be able to leave Serenity?

Told in five different first person points of view.

Author Website:

<http://gordonkorman.com/>

Curricular Connections:

- English/Language Arts
- Social Studies

Lesson Ideas:

- Design an ideal community. What services would it have? Where would the living and work spaces be? Map it out. Draw building designed for homes, businesses, and services.

- Research planned cities in Maryland---Greenbelt and Columbia. What were the original ideas behind each city? As the communities were being built, did the original ideas change? Why or why not?
- What is cloning? How long has it been around? If you were a clone, who would you like to be your original person?

Common Core Standards:

- RL3 CCR Anchor Standard Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of text.
- RL6 CCR Anchor Standard Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Additional Materials:

- For information about Greenbelt, Maryland go to:
<http://www.greenbeltmd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2087>
- For information about Columbia, Maryland go to:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbia,_Maryland

Suggested Companion Titles:

- For multiple points of view: *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio
- For clones: *The Clones* by Gloria Skurzynski

Reviews:

- *Booklist* starred, 12/15/14
- *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, 3/1/15
- *Horn Book Guide*, 10/1/15
- *Kirkus Reviews*, 11/15/14
- *Library Media Connection* starred, 11/1/15
- *New York Times* 5/10/15
- *Publishers Weekly*, 12/15/14
- *Resource Links*, 2/1/15
- *School Library Journal*, 11/5/14
- *Teacher Librarian*, 6/1/15