

“There Was a War. This is Where it Ended”:  
Activism and Empathy in John David Anderson’s YA novel *Posted*

Empathy and activism find the ideal proving ground in John David Anderson’s middle grade novel, *Posted*, as the book promotes advocacy in the face of several issues students experience: divorced or fighting parents, societal ostracism, and bullying through social media. *Posted* continually deals with these kinds of social dynamics as it works to break down unfair expectations promulgated by the social politics of middle school.

The novel’s hook is the school-sanctioned confiscation of all student cell phones. Students subsequently utilize Post-It notes in place of the once almighty text message. Post-Its begin appearing everywhere: passed back and forth in class, placed in bathroom stalls, and stuck to the outside of lockers. Inevitably, the ugly side of adolescence creeps into these very public messages. It is through this Post-It note “war” that Frost, the first-person protagonist, begins to understand his own role in fighting for his friends in the face of adversity, marginalization, and hatred.

Frost recounts multiple pastoral moments as he relates the Post-It war to the reader; he offers an insightful look into how empathy *creates* activism. And, indeed, it becomes clear that the two are interrelated and codependent: activism requires empathy, and empathy necessitates activism. By looking at how these moments problematize Frost’s view of empathy, I suggest *Posted* presents an unparalleled, yet unassuming look into creating meaningful change in middle school.