

Why Do Kids Kill?

The story of just one murderous youth raises many questions. Take a few minutes to read each of the following questions and jot down your answers. Don't overthink or worry too much about the questions. This is not a test; there are no wrong answers.

- How would you describe Eric Harris?
- Why do you think Eric Harris wanted to kill other students?
- Was Eric Harris typical of other teenage murderers?
- How have you learned about youth violence?

Now let us consider the possible answers to one of these questions. The information about Eric Harris is somewhat inconsistent (Duggan, Shear, & Fisher, 1999). He was the 18-year-old son of white, middle-class professionals. He had an older brother who attended the University of Colorado. Harris apparently thought of himself as a white supremacist, but he also loved music by antiracist rock bands. On his webpage, he quoted from KMFDM, a German rock band whose song "Waste" includes these lyrics: "What I don't say I don't do. What I don't do I don't like. What I don't like I waste." Online, Harris referred to himself as "Darkness."

Do you have enough information now to understand why Eric went on a shooting rampage in his school?

A year before the shootings at Columbine High School, Harris was arrested on a felony count of breaking into a car. A juvenile court put him on probation, required him to perform community service and take criminal justice classes, and sent him to a school counseling program. He was described by one of his probation officers as a "very bright young man who is likely to succeed in life."

Now can you construct an adequate description of Eric Harris? Can you explain the reason for his murderous rampage? Or do you feel you need to know more about him, about his friends and the family in which he grew up? And