Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Eleanor & Park*	**Synopsis** Set over the course of one school year in 1986, this is the story of two star-crossed misfits--smart enough to know that first love almost never lasts, but brave and desperate enough to try. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Rowell, Rainbow	
Copyright Year: 2013	

Professional Reviews of *Eleanor & Park*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist starred (January 1, 2013 (Vol. 109, No. 9))
Grades 9-12. Right from the start of this tender debut, readers can almost hear the clock winding down on Eleanor and Park. After a less than auspicious start, the pair quietly builds a relationship while riding the bus to school every day, wordlessly sharing comics and eventually music on the commute. Their worlds couldn't be more different. Park's family is idyllic: his Vietnam vet father and Korean immigrant mother are genuinely loving. Meanwhile, Eleanor and her younger siblings live in poverty under the constant threat of Richie, their abusive and controlling stepfather, while their mother inexplicably caters to his whims. The couple's personal battles are also dark mirror images. Park struggles with the realities of falling for the school outcast; in one of the more subtle explorations of race and the other in recent YA fiction, he clashes with his father over the definition of manhood. Eleanor's fight is much more external, learning to trust her feelings about Park and navigating the sexual threat in Richie's watchful gaze. In rapidly alternating narrative voices, Eleanor and Park try to express their all-consuming love. You make me feel like a cannibal, Eleanor says. The pure, fear-laced, yet steadily maturing relationship they develop is urgent, moving, and, of course, heartbreaking, too.

Kirkus Reviews starred (December 15, 2012)
Awkward, prickly teens find deep first love in 1980s Omaha. Eleanor and Park don't meet cute; they meet vexed on the school bus, trapped into sitting together by a dearth of seats and their low social status. Park, the only half-Korean fan of punk and New Wave at their high school, is by no means popular, but he benefits from his family's deep roots in their lower-middle-class neighborhood. Meanwhile, Eleanor's wildly curly red mane and plus-sized frame would make her stand out even if she weren't a new student, having just returned to her family after a year of couch-surfing following being thrown out by her odious drunkard of a stepfather, Richie. Although both teens want only to fade into the background, both stand out physically and sartorially, arming themselves with band T-shirts (Park) and menswear from thrift stores (Eleanor). Despite Eleanor's resolve not to grow attached to anything, and despite their shared hatred for clichs, they fall, by degrees, in love. Through Eleanor and Park's alternating voices, readers glimpse the swoon-inducing, often hilarious aspects of first love, as well as the contrast between Eleanor's survival of grim, abuse-plagued poverty and Park's own imperfect but loving family life. Funny, hopeful, foulmouthed, sexy and tear-jerking, this winning romance will captivate teen and adult readers alike. (Fiction. 14 & up)

Publishers Weekly (December 10, 2012)
Half-Korean sophomore Park Sheridan is getting through high school by lying low, listening to the Smiths (it's 1986), reading Alan Moore's Watchmen comics, never raising his hand in class, and avoiding the kids he grew up with. Then new girl Eleanor gets on the bus. Tall, with bright red hair and a dress code all her own, she's an instant target. Too nice not to let her sit next to him, Park is alternately resentful and guilty for not being kinder to her. When he realizes she's reading his comics over his shoulder, a silent friendship is born. And slowly, tantalizingly, something more. Adult author Rowell (Attachments), making her YA debut, has a gift for showing what Eleanor and Park, who tell the story in alternating segments, like and admire about each other. Their love is believable and thrilling, but it isn't simple: Eleanor's family is broke, and her stepfather abuses her mother. When the situation turns dangerous, Rowell keeps things surprising, and the solution-imperfect but believable-maintains the novel's delicate balance of light and dark. Ages 13-up. Agent: Christopher Schelling, Selectric Artists. (Mar.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (February 1, 2013)
Gr 9 Up-In this novel set in the 1980s, teenagers Eleanor and Park are outsiders; Eleanor, because she's new to the neighborhood, and Park, because he's half Asian. Although initially wary of each other, they quickly bond over their love of comics and 1980s alternative music. Eleanor's home life is difficult; her stepfather physically abuses her mother and emotionally abuses Eleanor and her siblings. At school, she is the victim of bullying, which escalates into defacement of her textbooks, her clothes, and crude displays on her locker. Although Park's mother, a Korean immigrant, is initially resistant to the strange girl due to her odd fashion choices, his father invites Eleanor to seek temporary refuge with them from her unstable home life. When Eleanor's stepfather's behavior grows even more menacing, Park assists in her escape, even though it means that they might not see each other again. The friendship between the teens is movingly believable, but the love relationship seems a bit rushed and underdeveloped. The revelation about the person behind the defacement of Eleanor's textbooks is stunning. Although the narrative points of view alternate between Eleanor and Park, the transitions are smooth. Crude language is realistic. Purchase for readers who are drawn to quirky love stories or 1980s pop culture.-Jennifer Schultz, Fauquier County Public Library, Warrenton, VA (c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2013)
It's the start of a new school year in 1986 Omaha when sophomores Eleanor and Park meet for the first time on the bus. They are an unusual pair: she's the new girl in town, an ostracized, bullied "big girl" with bright red curly hair, freckles, and an odd wardrobe; he's a skinny half-Korean townie who mostly wears black and tries to stay out of the spotlight. But as they sit together on the school bus every day, an intimacy gradually develops between them. At first they don't talk; then she reads his comics with him; he makes her mixtapes of his favorite rock bands; they hold hands; and eventually they are looking for ways to spend every waking hour together. Their slowly evolving but intense relationship is chaste first love, authentic in its awkwardness -- full of insecurities, miscommunications, and sexual awakenings -- and life-changing for them both. When Eleanor's unstable home life (replete with abusive stepfather) ultimately tears the young lovers apart, the novel ends realistically: uncertain, yet still hopeful. Rowell presents her teen protagonists' intelligent observations, extreme inner desires, and irrational feelings through compelling alternating narrations. She imbues the novel with rich character development, a spot-on depiction of the 1980s, and powerful descriptive passages ("Holding Eleanor's hand was like holding a butterfly. Or a heartbeat. Like holding something complete, and completely alive"). It's an honest, heart-wrenching portrayal of imperfect but unforgettable love. cynthia k. ritter

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Eleanor & Park*
Source: Follett Titlewave, Novelist Plus, Publisher Website
Assembly on Literature for Adolescents - Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award: 2014
Booklist Editors' Choice - Books for Youth - Older Readers Category: 2013
Boston Globe Horn Book Award - Fiction and Poetry: 2013
Goodreads Choice Awards: 2013
Indies' Choice Book Awards - Young Adult Fiction: 2013
International Literacy Association - Young Adult Fiction: 2013
Michael L. Printz Honor, 2014
School Library Journal Best Books: 2013
YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults: 2014
YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers: Fiction: 2014