

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: <i>Nineteen Minutes</i>	Synopsis In the aftermath of a small-town school shooting, lawyer Jordan McAfee finds himself defending a youth who desperately needs someone on his side, while detective Patrick Ducharme works with a primary witness, the daughter of the judge assigned to the case.
Book Author Picoult, Jodi	
Copyright Year: 2007	

Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of <i>Nineteen Minutes</i> Source: Follett Titlewave
<p>Booklist (January 1, 2007 (Vol. 103, No. 9)) Popular and prolific Picoult (<i>My Sister's Keeper</i>, and <i>The Tenth Circle</i>, 2006) now tackles the troubling topic of a school shooting. Picoult considers the tragedy--in 19 quick minutes, 10 are dead and 19 are wounded--from several different perspectives, including that of the shooter, a troubled boy named Peter, who was mercilessly picked on at school. The small town of Sterling is rocked by the carnage. Alex Cormier is the superior court judge planning to hear the case, but her daughter, Josie, Peter's only friend during childhood but now a member of the in crowd, was in the midst of the melee. Peter spared Josie, but killed her boyfriend. Two characters from previous Picoult novels are also involved. Charismatic detective Patrick DuCharme rushes into the school and apprehends Peter, and Jordan McAfee agrees to defend the young killer. Every bit as gripping and moving as Picoult's previous novels, <i>Nineteen Minutes</i> will no doubt garner considerable attention for its controversial subject and twist ending.</p> <p>Kirkus Reviews (January 1, 2007) Picoult's 14th novel (after <i>The Tenth Circle</i>, 2006, etc.) of a school shooting begins with high-voltage excitement, then slows by the middle, never regaining its initial pace or appeal. Peter Houghton, 17, has been the victim of bullying since his first day of kindergarten, made all the more difficult by two factors: In small-town Sterling, N.H., Peter is in high school with the kids who've tormented him all his life; and his all-American older brother eggs the bullies on. Peter retreats into a world of video games and computer programming, but he's never able to attain the safety of invisibility. And then one day he walks into Sterling High with a knapsack full of guns, kills ten students and wounds many others. Peter is caught and thrown in jail, but with over a thousand witnesses and video tape of the day, it will be hard work for the defense to clear him. His attorney, Jordan McAfee, hits on the only approach that might save the unlikable kid--a variation of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder caused by bullying. Thrown into the story is Judge Alex Cormier, and her daughter Josie, who used to be best friends with Peter until the popular crowd forced the limits of her loyalty. Also found dead was her boyfriend Matt, but Josie claims she can't remember anything from that day. Picoult mixes McAfee's attempt to build a defense with the mending relationship of Alex and Josie, but what proves a more intriguing premise is the response of Peter's parents to the tragedy. How do you keep loving your son when he becomes a mass murderer? Unfortunately, this question, and others, remain, as the novel relies on repetition (the countless flashbacks of Peter's victimization) rather than fresh insight. Peter fits the profile, but is never fully fleshed out beyond stereotype. Usually so adept at shaping the big stories with nuance, Picoult here takes a tragically familiar event, pads it with plot, but leaves out the subtleties of</p>

character. Though all the surface elements are in place, Picoult falters in her exploration of what turns a quiet kid into a murderer.

Publishers Weekly (January 1, 2007)

Bestseller Picoult (*My Sister's Keeper*) takes on another contemporary hot-button issue in her brilliantly told new thriller, about a high school shooting. Peter Houghton, an alienated teen who has been bullied for years by the popular crowd, brings weapons to his high school in Sterling, N.H., one day and opens fire, killing 10 people. Flashbacks reveal how bullying caused Peter to retreat into a world of violent computer games. Alex Cormier, the judge assigned to Peter's case, tries to maintain her objectivity as she struggles to understand her daughter, Josie, one of the surviving witnesses of the shooting. The author's insights into her characters' deep-seated emotions brings this ripped-from-the-headlines read chillingly alive. (Mar.) Copyright 2007 Reed Business Information.

Library Journal (January 1, 2007)

Many things can happen in the span of 19 minutes—fun things, mundane things, and downright horrific things. Best-selling author Picoult (*My Sister's Keeper*) shows just how quickly lives can be changed in this story of a school massacre much like Columbine that is told through the voice not only of the victims but also of the troubled teen who did the shooting. Readers will be pleased to see the return of two favorite characters. Patrick DuCharme, the detective from *Perfect Match*, is assigned to the case, while Jordan McAfee, the lawyer from *The Pact*, finds himself representing the shooter. Picoult has that rare ability to write about an unnerving subject in a way readers will find absorbing. What appears on the surface of a Picoult novel is never as it seems, which is why her books are so popular with book groups. Her 14th novel, perhaps her best, is highly recommended for all public libraries.—Marika Zemke, West Bloomfield Twp. P.L., MI Copyright 2007 Reed Business Information.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Nineteen Minutes*

Source: American Library Association, NovelistPlus

Booklist Editors' Choice - Adult Fiction for Young Adults: 2007

Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners: 2009