Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Damsel*	**Synopsis** Waking up in the arms of Prince Emory, Ama has no memory of him rescuing her from a dragon's lair, but she soon discovers there is more to the legend of dragons and damsels than anyone knows and she is still in great danger.
Book Author Arnold, Elana K.	
Copyright Year: 2018	Source: Library of Congress Catalog

Professional Reviews of *Damsel*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist starred (August 2018 (Vol. 114, No. 22))
Grades 10-12. A prince ventures into the wilderness to slay a dragon and save a damsel. When he returns home with his rescued bride, he becomes king. That is how it has been in the kingdom of Harding, and how it will always be. Sound familiar? Perhaps, but it's not how this story ends. The first thing Ama knows is waking up in Prince Emory's arms as they ride toward his home. "I saved you," he tells her, and though she has no memory of the thing he saved her from, she believes him. In his castle, as their wedding approaches, she learns to become the perfect queen: calm, obedient, gentle. Ama works at becoming small, but flashes of memory are starting to return to her, and there is more in this castle—and in her heart—than can be contained. Arnold's (What Girls Are Made Of, 2017) pitch-black fairy tale is not subtle in its delivery, but, as its volcanic ending attests, this is not a tale that requires subtlety. It's not an easy read: physical, sexual, and psychological violence all come into play, and adults may want to be on hand for discussions. But for teens, especially girls, learning to transform sadness and fear into active, productive fury, it's an essential allegory. Eat your heart out, Sleeping Beauty: this brutal, devastating, powerful novel won't soon be forgotten.

Kirkus Reviews (July 15, 2018)
Arnold (Bat and the Waiting Game, 2018, etc.) blends an abusive romance-novel relationship and intense feminist and patriarchal imagery with the classic storyline of a prince saving a damsel from the lair of a dragon. In a gray, medieval world, Prince Emory of Harding makes his way toward a dragon's lair to rescue a damsel and make her his bride, in the process bringing light to the land and glory upon himself. The damsel cannot recall who she is, and so Emory names her Ama. They return to Harding, where Prince Emory is crowned king, and his mother announces they will be wed in a few months' time, and Ama will give birth to his heir. Ama must learn how to be a queen and is reminded repeatedly that Emory's desires are what matters—she is never allowed to forget that he "saved" her. When she does not comply with his wishes, she is brutally and sadistically punished, sexually, psychologically, and physically. What if, instead of being the hero's beloved, you are your abuser's captive? The symbolism and imagery, as well as the meaning of the sexual violence that is perpetrated upon Ama, may go over the heads of less sophisticated readers. All characters are white. While Arnold has written a compelling flipped fairy tale and commentary on misogyny, she's missed the mark for her intended audience. (Fiction. 15-adult)

Publishers Weekly Annex (October 22, 2018)
This subversion of fairy tale tropes begins with familiar elements: a prince rescues a damsel from a dragon to make her his bride and prove his worth to become king, as happens with every generation in the kingdom of Harding ("I saved you," he repeats). But the damsel, whom he names Ama, has no memory of her past, her family, or her time with the dragon. And the more time she spends around her husband-to-be, learning the ways of his culture and her intended role, the more uncomfortable she becomes. King Emory is cold, strict, sometimes violent, swift to exert his authority, and eager to have sex with Ama-whether she is interested or not. As Ama struggles to unlock her memories and find her own destiny, she discovers the dark side of the kingdom's traditions. With haunting prose and lush descriptions, Arnold (What Girls Are Made Of) weaves a terrifying tale that explores contemporary conversations about rape culture, misogyny, male entitlement, female agency, and the need for consent. The message is as timely as it is vital, but frank discussions of self-harm, physical and emotional abuse, and descriptions of sexual violence may not be appropriate for readers at the younger end of the stated range. Ages 14-up. Agency: East West Literary. (Oct.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (June 1, 2018)
Gr 9 Up-Somewhere in medieval Europe, deep in a gray land by the gray sea, at the top of a craggy tower, a prince conquers a dragon and rescues a damsel. He names the woman Ama and delivers her to his castle where he will be made king and they will be married-for in this land, no king can exist without his damsel. Ama remembers nothing about herself, the world, or her experiences from before her rescue except flashes of bright color and a luscious, soothing heat. Her prince, however, is happy to teach her how to be a woman, and soon Ama learns to carve away at herself to fit neatly into her prince's expectations. Art, exploration, and thinking are forbidden to her, and she is encouraged to take up as little space as possible. Inside, Ama rages and chafes against the physical and mental limitations imposed on her, and despite the warnings, Ama can't stop wondering about the mystery of the dragons and who she was before. Graphic violence, sexuality, and rape are present on the page, though carefully presented to create a crucial juxtaposition to the lyrical writing. The characters' roles, actions, and motivations are reflected through foils, revealing powerful symbolism and dramatic irony. All of this works to increase the tension, which comes to a dark but ultimately satisfying conclusion. VERDICT This incisively written allegory rips into a familiar story and sets it aflame. Highly recommended for high school libraries where literary feminist retellings are popular.-Leighanne Law, Scriber Lake High School, WA © Copyright 2018. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Horn Book Magazine (November/December, 2018)
This original fairy tale begins with Prince Emory on the dangerous quest required to prove himself worthy of his father’s recently vacated throne: saving a damsel from a dragon. But following the successful (off-page) rescue, it quickly becomes clear that our protagonist is the damsel herself, who has no memory of how she got to the dragon’s lair or of her life before it. Emory names her Ama and whisks her away to his walled kingdom to await their wedding day. Initially obliging, Ama soon begins to despair of her captivity and exploitation—and the cruel sense of ownership underlying Emory’s actions. Thematically supporting subplots include the lynx kitten Ama adopts after it is orphaned by Emory; the hawks blinded and tamed by the castle’s falconer; and the servants and villagers entirely at the new king’s whim. Eventually, after meeting the kingdom’s famed glassblower, Ama discovers an unusual aptitude for the craft and much-sought clues to her past. Hints along the way suggest Ama’s true origin and the nature of her “rescue” well before they are revealed, but the conclusion of her tale is nevertheless both surprising and satisfying. Though somewhat reminiscent in plot of Beagle’s The Last Unicorn, Arnold’s wrenching tale is more akin in theme and tone to Lanagan’s Tender Morsels (rev. 9/08) or The Brides of Rollrock Island (rev. 9/12)—lyrical, brutal, and unapologetically feminist. katie bircher

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Damsel*
Source: YASLA Book Finder Database
Amelia Bloomer List - Young Adult Fiction: 2019
Michael L. Printz Honor: 2019

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Empire of Storms* **Book Author** Maas, Sarah J. **Copyright Year:** 2016	**Synopsis** "The long path to the throne has only just begun for Aelin Galathynius. Loyalties have been broken and bought, friends have been lost and gained, and those who possess magic find themselves at odds with those who don't. As the kingdoms of Erilea fracture around her, enemies must become allies if Aelin is to keep those she loves from falling to the dark forces poised to claim her world" Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of *Empire of Storms*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (November 1, 2016 (Online))

Grades 10-12. Aelin successfully freed Dorian and dramatically announced her powerful presence at the conclusion of Queen of Shadows (2015), and that act has reverberated throughout the kingdom. Though whispers among the continent that Aelin, the true queen of Terrasen, has returned suggest the people are rallying behind her, uniting powerful lords in the fight to free her homeland is harder than she thought. More important, her show of strength when defeating Dorian's captors caught the attention of an even wickeder fiend, now intent on capturing her and wielding her awesome power for his own nefarious ends. Recruiting her usual allies, along with Manon Blackbeak, Aelin sets out to imprison the dark forces that plague her kingdom. Though Maas' breathy narrative occasionally feels overwrought, and a few out-of-character pairings among series favorites seem more like an excuse to include lengthy, detailed sex scenes than meaningful plot contributions, fans devoted to the series (and there are many) will be eager for this installment's cinematic action, twisty schemes, and intense revelations of secrets and legacies.

Kirkus Reviews (October 1, 2016)

In the penultimate Throne of Glass book, Aelin meets unexpected obstacles as her enemies move against her and her allies.Aelin may have put her role as assassin Celaena behind her, but that doesn't mean Terrasen's nobles are willing to hand the kingdom over to a young woman with her kind of past. Knowing the Valg king Erawan is a true threat to the entire world, Aelin must form alliances for the imminent war while uncovering the price once paid to halt Erawan—the price to stop him for good, because he's moving fast and striking hard. This plot expands the world, introducing new delights such as a pirate haven (and—of course—naval battles) and swampy ruins in Eyllwe, as the cast also expands, with nods to the novellas collected in The Assassin's Blade. (That said, with the number of characters presented and minimal recap, readers will wish there were a dramatis personae.) Much of Aelin's scheming occurs off-page, as secondary characters' viewpoints take on narrative weight—despite the occasional redundancy, this adds richness, as such characters as Manon enjoy deeper development, and Lysandra anchors the best action sequence. Romance runs rife (the main cast is mostly straight, with nods to queer minor characters) and this everyone-is-breathtakingly-beautiful-(and-also-mostly-white) world. Readers of Maas' other series will spot her touch, especially in descriptions of lovemaking and the cliffhanger ending. Tightly plotted, delightful escapism. (Fantasy. 14 & up)

Horn Book Guide (Spring 2017)
Aelin hones her power now that magic has been restored; meanwhile, the demon Erawan prepares to conquer Erilea's kingdoms. When Aelin's countrymen reject her as Queen of Terrasen, she seeks unlikely allies and a lock to bind the demon in another realm. More adventure and romance await fans of Maas's high-fantasy series in this enjoyable fifth installment of Aelin's epic journey to save humanity.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Empire of Storms*

Source: n/a

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Identical*	**Synopsis** Sixteen-year-old identical twin daughters of a district court judge and a candidate for the United States House of Representatives, Kaeleigh and Raeanne Gardella desperately struggle with secrets that have already torn them and their family apart. Source: Follett Titlewave
Book Author Hopkins, Ellen	
Copyright Year: 2008	

Professional Reviews of *Identical*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (September 1, 2008 (Online))
Grades 9-12. Since the car accident eight years earlier, identical twins Kaeleigh and Raeanne have struggled with dark secrets. Their politician mother is both physically and emotionally absent, and their father, a district court judge, sexually abuses Kaeleigh. The girls struggle with an encyclopedic array of problems that include promiscuity, alcohol and drug abuse, binging, purging, and cutting. Hopkins' trademark free verse carries the sometimes explicit narrative in the girls' alternating, authentic voices as their self-destructive behaviors accelerate. Especially effective are the poems positioned on facing pages that build on identical phrases in mirror imagery. Unfortunately, the book is overly long, stalling the pace in the last third and lessening the impact before powering through to the climax. Adult characters are undeveloped, but the legion of Hopkins' teen fans will be mesmerized by the emotional portrayal of the twins. A plot twist at the end will send readers immediately back to the beginning to track the clues.

Kirkus Reviews starred (July 1, 2008)
Hopkins's gift with free verse reaches new heights in this portrait of splintered identical twins. Sexual abuse, a fatal car accident and violent alcoholism have wrecked their family. Mom disappears by running for Congress. Daddy drinks Wild Turkey and pops painkillers--and molests Kaeleigh. Raeanne acts out with bulimia and rough sex, willingly trading sex for drugs. Kaeleigh shuts down, throws up and withdraws from everyone, even steady Ian, her best friend, who's in love with her. Ian offers the first healthy love Kaeleigh's ever known, but too many secrets lurk under her surface. Masterful shards of verse convey the fragmented emotions: Falling for Ian, Kaeleigh feels, "Fire. Ice. Honey. Salt. Eiderdown. / Iron. Every fiber of me twitches / confusion." Some facing pages reveal additional mirror-poems along the gutter, each identical poem holding a very different meaning for each sister. Kaeleigh and Raeanne maintain distinct voices throughout as they wrestle with psychic damage and an astonishing, devastating realization. Sharp and stunning, with a brilliant final page. (Fiction. YA)

Publishers Weekly (July 7, 2008)
Using free verse as her vehicle, Hopkins (Crank, Glass) takes readers on a harrowing ride into the psyches of 16-year-old identical twins Kaeleigh and Raeanne, both of whom are racing toward self-destruction. The girls' family appears picture-perfect. Their father is a prominent judge, their mother is running for Congress, and both girls do well in school. But ever since an accident, "Mom doesn't love anyone./ She is marble. Beautiful./ Frigid. Easily stained/ by her family. What's left/ of us, anyway. We are corpses." Raeanne seeks escape in sex and drugs; Kaileigh binges and cuts herself. Brief, gutsy confessions reveal a history of sexual abuse and

emotional neglect, and it's not clear that both girls will survive it. Hopkins's verse is not only lean and sinuous, it also demonstrates a mastery of technique. Strategically placed concrete verse includes a poem about revenge shaped like a double-edged sword; in another, about jealousy, the lines form one heart reflecting another, until a rupture breaks the symmetry at the bottom. Often, the twins' entries mirror each other, on facing pages: although used differently in the two poems, the same key words are set off in corresponding stanzas ("think./ How/ different/ life./ could be" reads one set of key words). Those for whom Uncle Vampire means something will anticipate the still-breathless climax; all others, including most of the target audience, will be shocked. Ages 14-up. (Aug.) Copyright 2008 Reed Business Information.

School Library Journal (August 1, 2008)
Gr 9 Up-Identical teen twins Kaeleigh and Raeanne share a picture-perfect California life that is rank with dark, dangerous secrets under its surface. Their mother, who is running for Congress, leaves them at home with their father, a district court judge who is addicted to liquor and OxyContin. Daddy regularly molests Kaeleigh, using her as a stand-in for his absentee wife, and controls every aspect of her life. Raeanne sees every detail and reacts to her father's favoritism by acting out sexually and getting high on pot whenever possible. Written in free verse from alternating viewpoints, Identical tells the twins' story in intimate and often-graphic detail. Hopkins packs in multiple issues including eating disorders, drug abuse, date rape, alcoholism, sexual abuse, and self-mutilation as she examines a family that "puts the dys in dysfunction." The tension builds slowly and subtly, erupting in a shattering climax of psychological disintegration and breakthrough that reveals the truth about the twins and their father's own childhood secrets. Gritty and compelling, this is not a comfortable read, but its keen insights make it hard to put down.-Joyce Adams Burner, Hillcrest Library, Prairie Village, KS Copyright 2008 Reed Business Information.

Horn Book Guide (Spring 2009)
Identical twins Raeanne and Kaeleigh alternate first-person accounts of life in an abusive household. Hopkins's verse-novel style effectively showcases her talent for word choice and form. However, the plot's melodrama verges on exploitation as the girls experience explicitly described incest, drug abuse, alcoholism, bulimia, promiscuity, S&M, cutting, suicide, and mental illness. Surprise revelations in the final episodes complicate the conclusion.
Library Media Connection (November/December 2008)
Like Hopkins's other books, this book is shocking. It is the story of a family--an alcoholic father, an absent mother, and identical twins. The narration alternates between Kaeleigh, the passive twin, and Raeanne, the rebel. It is eventually revealed that Kaeleigh is being molested by her father and Raeanne is jealous that Kaeleigh gets all of the attention. Raeanne gets involved with drugs and bad boys, and Kaeleigh is just going through the motions. Although the molestation was hard to read about, the book itself has a message to which teens will relate. This is a very raw book with cursing and drug use, full of disturbing events, but a book you can't put down. Additional Selection. Tricia Grady, Media Specialist, Franklin (Indiana) Community Middle School

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Identical*

Source: n/a

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Leah on the Offbeat*	**Synopsis** With prom and graduation around the corner, senior Leah Burke struggles when her group of friends start fighting.
Book Author Albertalli, Becky	
Copyright Year: 2018	Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of *Leah on the Offbeat*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist starred (May 15, 2018 (Online))
Grades 9-12. Leah Burke takes center stage in this sequel to Albertalli's Morris Award–winning Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda (2015). It's senior year, and Leah's friends can't stop talking about college, prom, and long-distance relationships. Simon and Bram are as cute as ever, Leah's got college lined up, and goofy Garrett obviously has a crush on her. But Leah can't quite get into it. She feels like a third wheel (even at home, now that her mom is dating someone new); she doesn't really care about prom; and when her friend and bandmate says something racist, Leah's content to just break up the band and get on with her life. Plus, she's nursing a wicked crush on her friend Abby, and she's worried that if she does anything about it, she'll blow up their whole friend group—let alone the fact that no one knows she's bi. Albertalli has a fantastic ear for voice, and it's beautifully on display in Leah's funny, wry, and vulnerable first-person narrative. She gets to the core of Leah's hang-ups about money, her body, her place among her friends, her reluctance to let anyone get too close, and her perfectionism without a trace of heavy-handedness, and she leavens the poignant emotional growth with snarky teen banter, hilarious mishaps, and swoonworthy (but never saccharine) romance. Everything Albertalli already did so well in Simon, she's improved upon here, and fans of the first book will be utterly smitten with Leah. HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Perhaps you've heard of a little movie called Love, Simon? Your patrons certainly have. You'll probably want extra copies of this.

Kirkus Reviews starred (June 1, 2018)
Leah Burke is perched on the precipice of change in the final months of senior year, before everyone in her diverse friend group scatters off to become their college selves. Leah, Simon Spier's best friend in Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda (2015), takes center stage in this sequel. She knows she's bisexual, but she's only out to her mom, not her friends, not even to Simon, who is gay. Leah's cynical and socially awkward but also confident in herself. She's unapologetically fat. She's a talented artist and a ripper on the drums. She's also fierce when called for. When a white friend implies that their classmate Abby Suso only got accepted to her college because she is black, Leah, also white, calls out her bias directly (Abby is not present for this conversation), sparking a nuanced subplot on racism and white allyship. Mostly, though, senior year is characterized by Leah's aching crush on Abby, the oh-so-beautiful and oh-so-straight girlfriend of Leah's good friend Nick. When the prom-scene ending finally arrives, even the most Leah-worthy cynics will be rooting for her. With complex characters, authentic dialogue, and messy-but-beautiful friendships, this sequel is more than capable of standing on its own.   A subversive take on the coming-of-age romance that will leave readers feeling like witnesses to a very special moment in Leah's life and filled with gratitude for sharing it. (Fiction. 14-18)

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Leah on the Offbeat*
Source: NoveList Plus
American Library Association Rainbow Book List - Young Adult Fiction: 2019
Goodreads Choice Awards: 2018
YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults: 2019

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Oryx and Crake*	**Synopsis** Jimmy, perhaps the last living human unaltered by science, struggles for survival in a post-apocalyptic world as he tries to make sense of how everything went wrong, mourning the loss of his beloved Oryx, a girl he met through a kiddie porn Web site. Source: Follett Titlewave
Book Author Atwood, Margaret	
Copyright Year: 2003	

Professional Reviews of *Oryx and Crake*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (March 15, 2003 (Vol. 99, No. 14))
Surely Atwood deserved a respite after The Blind Assassin (2000) won the Booker Prize, but the muse had more to say, hence this hijack-intense speculative novel, sister to one of Atwood's most indelible works, The Handmaid's Tale (1985). Jimmy is struggling to stay alive on a wreckage-littered Earth besieged by a brutal sun and overrun with smart and vicious test-tube-bred predators. Now calling himself Snowman (as in Abominable), he's preparing for an arduous scavenger expedition back to the formerly high-tech compound in which he lived and worked until the bioengineering industry ran amok and a catastrophic event put an end to civilization. Snowman is desperately lonely, but he isn't actually alone since he serves as guru for a strangely passive tribe unaware of the lost world of computers, bullet trains, Web porn, gene-splicing, and the plagues that Snowman so vividly and regretfully recalls. As Snowman remembers his friend, Crake, an emotionally remote genius, as well as the love of Snowman's life, an enigmatic survivor of childhood sexual abuse called Oryx, Atwood conjures a grim, all-too-plausible future in order to consider the possibly devastating consequences of our present ill-advised biotech pursuits. Rigorous in its chilling insights and riveting in its fast-paced "what if"dramatization, Atwood's superb novel is as brilliantly provocative as it is profoundly engaging.

Kirkus Reviews starred (March 15, 2003)
Environmental unconcern, genetic engineering, and bioterrorism have created the hollowed-out, haunted future world of Atwood's ingenious and disturbing 11th novel, bearing several resemblances to The Handmaid's Tale (1985).

Protagonist Jimmy, a.k.a. "Snowman," is perhaps the only living "remnant" (i.e., human unaltered by science) in a devastated lunar landscape where he lives by his remaining wits, scavenges for flotsam surviving from past civilizations, dodges man-eating mutant predators, and remembers. In an equally dark parallel narrative, Atwood traces Jimmy's personal history, beginning with a bonfire in which diseased livestock are incinerated, observed by five-year-old Jimmy and his father, a "genographer" employed by, first, OrganInc Farms, then, the sinister Helthwyzer Corporation. One staggering invention follows another, as Jimmy mourns the departure of his mother (a former microbiologist who clearly foresaw the Armageddon her colleagues were building), goes through intensive schooling with his brilliant best friend Glenn (who renames himself Crake), and enjoys such lurid titillations as computer games that simulate catastrophe and global conflict (e.g., "Extinctathon," "Kwiktime Osama") and Web sites featuring popular atrocities (e.g., "hedsoff.com"). Surfing a kiddie-porn site, Jimmy encounters the poignant figure of Oryx, a Southeast Asian girl apprenticed

(i.e., sold) to a con-man, then a sex-seller (in sequences as scary and revolting as anything in contemporary fiction). Oryx will inhabit Jimmy's imagination forever, as will the perverse genius Crake, who rises from the prestigious Watson-Crick Institute to a position of literally awesome power at the RejoovenEsense Compound, where he works on a formula for immortality, creates artificial humans (the "Children of Crake"), and helps produce the virus that's pirated and used to start a plague that effectively decimates the world's population. And Atwood (The Blind Assassin, 2000, etc.) brings it all together in a stunning surprise climax.

A landmark work of speculative fiction, comparable to A Clockwork Orange, Brave New World, and Russian revolutionary Zamyatin's We. Atwood has surpassed herself.

Publishers Weekly (April 7, 2003)
Atwood has visited the future before, in her dystopian novel, The Handmaid's Tale. In her latest, the future is even bleaker. The triple whammy of runaway social inequality, genetic technology and catastrophic climate change, has finally culminated in some apocalyptic event. As Jimmy, apparently the last human being on earth, makes his way back to the RejoovenEsencecompound for supplies, the reader is transported backwards toward that cataclysmic event, its full dimensions gradually revealed. Jimmy grew up in a world split between corporate compounds (gated communities metastasized into city-states) and pleeblands (unsafe, populous and polluted urban centers). His best friend was "Crake," the name originally his handle in an interactive Net game, Extinctathon. Even Jimmy's mother-who ran off and joined an ecology guerrilla group when Jimmy was an adolescent-respected Crake, already a budding genius. The two friends first encountered Oryx on the Net; she was the eight-year-old star of a pedophilic film on a site called HottTotts. Oryx's story is a counterpoint to Jimmy and Crake's affluent adolescence. She was sold by her Southeast Asian parents, taken to the city and eventually made into a sex "pixie" in some distant country. Jimmy meets Oryx much later-after college, after Crake gets Jimmy a job with ReJoovenEsence. Crake is designing the Crakers-a new, multicolored placid race of human beings, smelling vaguely of citron. He's procured Oryx to be his personal assistant. She teaches the Crakers how to cope in the world and goes out on secret missions. The mystery on which this riveting, disturbing tale hinges is how Crake and Oryx and civilization vanished, and how Jimmy-who also calls himself "the Snowman," after that other rare, hunted specimen, the Abominable Snowman-survived. Chesterton once wrote of the "thousand romances that lie secreted in The Origin of Species." Atwood has extracted one of the most hair-raising of them, and one of the most brilliant. (May 6) Forecast: Readers who know Atwood primarily as the author of The Handmaid's Tale will be thrilled by this return to the future; those who follow her work more closely will be even more impressed. This is a potential dystopian classic and should sell accordingly. Author tour. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

Library Journal (May 1, 2003)
The doyenne of Canadian literature (she's won both a Booker and a Giller Prize), the versatile Atwood has an uncanny ability to write in a number of literary genres. Like The Handmaid's Tale, her latest work is set in a near future that is all too realistic and almost too terrifying to contemplate. Having once led a life of comfort and self-indulgence, Jimmy, now known as Snowman, has survived an ecological disaster that has destroyed the world as we know it. As he struggles to function without everything he once knew, including time, Snowman reflects on the past, on his relationships with two characters named Oryx and Crake, and on the role of each individual in the destruction of the natural world. From its opening scene, in which the children of Crake scavenge through debris, to its horrifying conclusion, this novel challenges the reader, cleverly pairing familiar aspects of the world with parts that have been irrevocably changed. A powerful and perturbing glimpse into a dark future, this is Atwood's impassioned plea for responsible management of our human, scientific, and natural resources and a novel that will cast long and lingering shadows in the reader's mind, well after the book is closed. [Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 1/03.]-Caroline Hallsworth, City of Greater Sudbury, Ont. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Oryx and Crake*
Source: http://margaretatwood.ca/awards-recognitions/
Giller Prize Shortlist: 2003
Governor General's Award for Fiction Shortlist: 2003
Man Booker Prize Shortlist: 2003
Orange Prize Shortlist: 2004

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Ramona Blue* **Book Author** Murphy, Julie **Copyright Year:** 2017	**Synopsis** Ramona was only five years old when Hurricane Katrina changed her life forever. Since then, it's been Ramona and her family against the world. Standing over six feet tall with unmistakable blue hair, Ramona is sure of three things: she likes girls, she's fiercely devoted to her family, and she knows she's destined for something bigger than the trailer she calls home in Eulogy, Mississippi. But juggling multiple jobs, her flaky mom, and her well-meaning but ineffectual dad forces her to be the adult of the family. Now, with her sister, Hattie, pregnant, responsibility weighs more heavily than ever. The return of her childhood friend Freddie brings a welcome distraction. Ramona's friendship with the former competitive swimmer picks up exactly where it left off, and soon he's talked her into joining him for laps at the pool. But as Ramona falls in love with swimming, her feelings for Freddie begin to shift too, which is the last thing she expected. With her growing affection for Freddie making her question her sexual identity, Ramona begins to wonder if perhaps she likes girls and guys or if this new attraction is just a fluke. Either way, Ramona will discover that, for her, life and love are more fluid than they seem. Source: Library of Congress Catalog

Professional Reviews of *Ramona Blue*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist starred (March 1, 2017 (Vol. 113, No. 13))

Grades 9-12. Julie Murphy (Dumplin', 2015) knows a thing or two about navigating the worlds of girls on the brink of self-discovery. In Ramona Blue, that girl is Ramona Leroux, over six feet tall and sporting blue hair. She's also one of only two out lesbians in her little town of Eulogy, Mississippi, where she lives with her father and sister in the FEMA trailer they never left after Hurricane Katrina. Her sister, Hattie, recently pregnant, jokes that Ramona can do whatever she wants with her future, but Ramona has no such illusions. "My sport—" she thinks, "the special skill I've developed my whole life—is surviving." Because of this pragmatism, Ramona has never doubted herself. It's not easy being gay in Eulogy, but it's a label she owns proudly, until her childhood friend Freddie moves back to town. Freddie's a straight guy, African American, and well off, but a love of swimming connects the two. Freddie talks Ramona into spending time at the pool, and as she falls more in love with the sport, she realizes she's falling in love with him, too, questioning everything she knows about herself—everything she's fought to make her town and family accept. Murphy mines Ramona's inner workings with particular skill. Ramona's often-fraught relationships with her family are carefully, lovingly crafted, and her connection with Hattie is an especially important one. Her growing feelings for Freddie come slowly and organically, never feeling contrived. For many teens, Ramona will be a worthy companion as they undergo their own emotional journeys.

Kirkus Reviews starred (April 1, 2017)
In Murphy's (Dumplin', 2015, etc.) third novel, a teenage girl navigates the complexities of romance and identity.Ramona "Blue" Leroux—6 foot 3, white, blue-haired, and gay—has always known who she is and where she is (or isn't) going. Living in a trailer in post-Katrina Eulogy, Mississippi, Ramona does her best to save and provide for her dad, older sister, Hattie, and soon-to-be niece. One of only three queer kids in town, she's always been sure she's attracted to women, and Ramona feels lucky that her coming-out experience was nothing more than "a blip." But this year, everything is changing. She's losing her sister to the coming baby and to Hattie's irresponsible, irritating baby-daddy, who has squeezed into their trailer. Her summer fling with closeted, white out-of-towner Grace may not withstand distance. And then Ramona's black childhood best friend, Freddie, unexpectedly moves back to Eulogy, and, as they reconnect through their shared history and a passion for swimming, she is surprised to find her desires and feelings for Freddie growing deeper. Ramona's first-person narration is tender and compelling, and the love she feels for the diverse cast of secondary characters is palpable. Murphy beautifully incorporates conversations about identity and diversity—including the policing of Freddie's black body, heteronormative expectations, and diverse sexualities (Ramona's white friend Ruth identifies herself explicitly as homoromantic demisexual)—with nuance and care. An exquisite, thoughtful exploration of the ties that bind and the fluidity of relationships, sexuality, and life. (Fiction. 14-adult)

Publishers Weekly (April 3, 2017)
There are two things Ramona knows: she likes girls, and she's the responsible one in her family, especially now that her sister, Hattie, is pregnant. The girls' mother left their coastal Mississippi town after Hurricane Katrina, they live in a trailer, and Ramona is juggling multiple jobs. As the book opens, Ramona is starting her senior year; with Grace, the tourist she has been dating, leaving, there isn't much to look forward to. Then Ramona's childhood friend Freddie moves back to town, and his grandmother adds Ramona to their YMCA membership. It turns out that Ramona has potential as a swimmer-as well as unexpected feelings for Freddie. In Eulogy, Miss., Murphy (Dumplin') creates a place that feels deeply real, a Gulf Coast vacation town that's racially and economically diverse: Ramona is white and poor, Freddie is black and middle class, and the biggest divide might be between the year-round residents and the summer visitors. It's a great setting for a coming-of-age story, as Ramona realizes that she's capable of more than she imagined and that some categories are more fluid than she'd thought. Ages 13-up. Agent: Molly Jaffa, Folio Literary Management. (May) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (March 1, 2017)
Gr 9 Up-Seventeen-year-old Ramona Blue stands out in her tiny town of Eulogy, MS, not only because of her height (6'3") and her hair color (blue). She is also just one of two out lesbians in town. Comfortable in her own skin, Ramona does not question her sexuality-despite attempts from her absentee mother to set her "straight"-until her old childhood friend Freddie moves back to town. Unexpectedly drawn to Freddie, Ramona starts to rethink her identity. Is she gay? Bisexual? What she learns eventually is that labels are not important and that she is OK with figuring things out as she goes along. This atmospheric story unfolds slowly like the hot and humid days of the Deep South. Ramona is an immensely likable narrator; she's selfless, responsible, and earnest. When the possibility of a swimming scholarship to a community college arises, Ramona rejects the idea initially, as she plans to remain in her dilapidated trailer park home and waitress full-time in order to support her pregnant, unwed older sister. The well-drawn secondary characters who populate Ramona's world could have been clichéd and stereotypical but are instead given three-dimensional lives through believable dialogue and actions. VERDICT A must-have work that will resonate with teens, especially those questioning their sexual identities.-Melissa Kazan, Horace Mann School, NY © Copyright 2017. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Horn Book Magazine (May/June, 2017)
Ramona "Blue" Leroux, nicknamed for her dyed-blue hair and love of the water (all kinds--oceans, lakes, pools), stands out in Eulogy, Mississippi. At six foot three, she's too tall for the trailer she lives in with her dad and pregnant sister. She's also a lesbian, a fact that's accepted in Eulogy but one that limits her romantic options. Then her childhood friend Freddie moves back to town, and, to her surprise, Ramona discovers that she's attracted to him. Their ensuing relationship is passionate and unexpectedly natural: "Kissing Freddie doesn't feel different because he's a boy, it feels different because he's Freddie." Ramona's subsequent refusal to label herself as gay, straight, or bisexual is refreshing, if unsubtly portayed, as is her frankness about sexuality: "I think about sex. Girls think about sex. Sometimes a lot. I hate this ideas that boys are thinking about sex nonstop and girls are thinking about--what? Stationery and garden gnomes? No." Like Murphy's heroine in Dumplin' (rev. 11/15), Ramona is unapologetically herself. Set against a post–Hurricane Katrina backdrop, the novel also effectively explores issues of race (Freddie is black, Ramona is white), social class, and family responsibility. Ramona dreams of leaving Eulogy, but is resigned to staying to support her family; the satisfying ending gives her the courage, and the means, to look forward to an uncertain but optimistic future. rachel l. smith

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Ramona Blue*

Source: http://booklists.yalsa.net/; https://glbtrt.ala.org/

ALA Rainbow List Top Ten - 2018
YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults - 2018