Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *All Boys Aren't Blue*	**Synopsis** A first book by the prominent journalist and LGBTQIA+ activist shares personal essays that chronicle his childhood, adolescence and college years as a Black queer youth, exploring subjects ranging from gender identity and toxic masculinity to structural marginalization and Black joy. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Johnson, George M.	
Copyright Year: 2020	

Professional Reviews of *All Boys Aren't Blue*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (March 1, 2020 (Vol. 116, No. 13))
Grades 9-12. With this title, Johnson offers his memoir-manifesto of growing up queer before he had the language to know exactly what that meant. Split into three parts, Johnson's book shares intimate stories of his childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood as he navigates family, friends, and the performance of masculinity. Discussion of his stories includes theory and statistical information that tie his ideas and struggles in with a larger intersectional identity. Johnson struggles with finding his YA voice. Though it's clear that his stories and experiences are formative to his identity as a Black queer boy (now man), they pour out with an intensity that may lead readers to feelings of confusion about the main point of the book. The severe lack of #OwnVoices books from Black queer men makes this title an absolute necessity, but it may fall to the wayside for cultural outsiders. Nevertheless, the personal stories and the healing and reconciliation of self in this title are all undeniably honest and relatable—a reminder of our shared imperfection and humanity.

Kirkus Reviews starred (February 15, 2020)
Centers the experiences, desires, and agency of a queer black boy navigating his evolving selfhood and the challenges of society's conditional love for his truthful existence. Queer black existence has been here forever, and yet rarely has that experience been spotlighted within literature aimed at black boyhood. This is the context in which this "memoir-manifesto" begins, as Johnson, a still relatively young 33-year-old journalist and activist, debuts his unfolding life story within a vacuum of representation. These stories wrestle with "joy and pain...triumph and tragedy" across many heavy topics—gender policing, sexual abuse, institutional violence—but with a view to freedom on the horizon. Through the witnessing of Johnson's intimate accounts, beginning with his middle-class New Jersey childhood and continuing through his attendance at a historically black university in Virginia, readers are invited on their own paths to healing, self-care, and living one's truth. Those who see themselves outside the standpoint of being black and queer are called in toward accountability, clarifying an understanding of the history, language, and actions needed to transform the world—not in pity for the oppressed but in the liberation of themselves. This title opens new doors, as the author insists that we don't have to anchor stories such as his to tragic ends: "Many of us are still here. Still living and waiting for our stories to be told—to tell them ourselves." A critical, captivating, merciful mirror for growing up black and queer today. (Memoir. 14-adult)

Publishers Weekly (April 20, 2020)
Billed as a "memoir-manifesto," Johnson's debut is a collection of heartfelt personal essays revolving around themes of identity and family. Growing up black and queer in New Jersey and Virginia, Johnson feels a tension between these two identities, even before he's fully conceptualized what makes him stand out from others in his close-knit family. The loving Elder/Johnson clan, led by witty matriarch Nanny (whose take on familial loyalty and intimacy is "You might have to wipe my ass one day"), includes Johnson's cousin Hope, a trans woman who models pride and self-determination. Johnson makes impassioned declarations about the importance of community and inclusive sex education, and the freedom to define oneself outside of society's conditioning. Though at first glance the book lacks the synthesizing call to action that "manifesto" would imply, its "be yourself" message remains a radical stance for doubly marginalized individuals. Johnson's writing is a stylistic hodgepodge of anecdotes ("story time," he periodically declares) and letters to relatives. In a publishing landscape in need of queer black voices, readers who are sorting through similar concepts will be grateful to join him on the journey. 14-up. (Apr.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (May 1, 2020)
Gr 9 Up-Journalist and activist Johnson takes readers through his life from childhood through young adulthood, reflecting on how his identity as a queer Black boy was shaped, refracted, and often suppressed for his own safety. Growing up in New Jersey, Johnson recounts becoming aware of his "difference" and how it necessitated choices between who he was and who he felt pressured to be. Part memoir and part manifesto, the text infuses personal reflections with observations about white supremacy, toxic masculinity, homophobia, and how these concepts affected him, whether as a boy forced to choose football over double dutch at recess or as a fraternity pledge struggling to come out on campus. Separated into acts, the book describes different members of his community (family, teenagers, friends)-a stylistic demonstration of his valuable support system that occasionally makes the narrative choppy. Still, the various tangents don't detract from the book's power, and the conversational tone will leave readers feeling like they are sitting with an insightful friend. There are a few detailed depictions of sexual situations and an incident of sexual abuse by a family member. Johnson handles the painful, complicated feelings around this experience with an honesty and tone appropriate for the intended audience. VERDICT This young adult memoir is a contemporary hallmark of the blossoming genre. Johnson anchors the text with encouragement and realistic guidance for queer Black youth. Recommended for YA nonfiction collections where autobiographical and social justice titles are popular.-Ashleigh Williams, School Library Journal © Copyright 2020. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *All Boys Aren't Blue*

Source: https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/george-m-johnson/all-boys-arent-blue/; https://chipublib.bibliocommons.com/list/share/200121216_chipublib_teens/1769527119_best_teen_nonfiction_of_2020; https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/top_10_books_for_teens-best-books-2020.pdf; https://glbtrt.ala.org/rainbowbooks/archives/1341

American Library Association Rainbow Book List Top Ten Titles for Teen Readers: 2021
Chicago Public Library Best Teen Nonfiction of the Year: 2020
Kirkus Reviews Best Books of the Year: 2020
New York Public Library Best Book of the Year for Teens: 2020

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Confess: A Novel*	**Synopsis** Auburn Reed has her entire life mapped out. Her goals are in sight and there's no room for mistakes. But when she walks into a Dallas art studio in search of a job, she doesn't expect to find a deep attraction to the enigmatic artist who works there, Owen Gentry. For once, Auburn takes a risk and puts her heart in control, only to discover that Owen is keeping some major secrets from coming out. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Hoover, Colleen	
Copyright Year: 2015	

Professional Reviews of *Confess: A Novel*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (March 15, 2015 (Online))
Rising new-adult star Hoover (Ugly Love, 2014) will pull heartstrings in this second-chance love story. At 15, Auburn fell deeply in love with a young man who died after a long illness. His family sent her away thinking it wasn't real love, but there is living proof of just how serious it was. On the trail of her child, Auburn ends up in Dallas, finds work at an art gallery, and the talented artist, Owen. He paints pictures based on the often painful confessions people send him anonymously. In a curious twist, Owen recognizes Auburn from the hospital where he heard her say goodbye to her boyfriend five years ago. Owen's problems with his father almost cause him to lose his chance with Auburn, while her difficult situation forces her into a life she doesn't want. But their connection is strong and compels the edgy, sexy story forward. The source of the novel's authenticity is a surprise: Hoover reveals that the confessions Owen received were actually sent to her by readers.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Confess: A Novel*

Source: https://www.colleenhoover.com/about-coho/

Goodreads Choice Award: Best Romance - 2015

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Cool for the Summer*	**Synopsis** Seventeen-year-old Lara's dream of catching Chase Harding's eye finally comes true even as Jasmine, with whom she just spent a confusing, oddly romantic summer, reenters her life.
Book Author Adler, Dahlia	
Copyright Year: 2021	Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of *Cool for the Summer*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist starred (April 1, 2021 (Vol. 117, No. 15))

Grades 9-12. Larissa Bogdan has spent most of her high-school career madly in love with Chase Harding, football star with a heart of gold. But Lara has always been most comfortable in the shadow of her louder, more ambitious best friends. It's not until the start of her senior year, when she arrives with a fresh haircut and a new, easy confidence, that Chase suddenly notices her for a change. It sounds like a lifelong dream come true, except for the reason for Lara's new confidence? That would be the summer she just spent in the Outer Banks with her mom, her mom's boss, and his daughter, Jasmine. What started as an intense friendship quickly developed into something more, both physically and emotionally, and though Lara has always thought of herself as straight, she's still unable to get Jasmine out of her head even now that summer's over. And when Jasmine herself transfers to Lara's high school for senior year, everything Lara ever thought she wanted is abruptly called into question. As she jumps back and forth in time between Lara's summer with Jasmine and her fall with Chase, Adler digs into one girl's exploration of her own desires. Written in Lara's dry but vulnerable voice and strung through with humor, warmth, and sensuality, this romance will speak to any reader who has ever struggled to know their own heart.

Kirkus Reviews (April 1, 2021)

A high schooler tries to keep her summer fling—and questions about her sexuality—a secret. After spending her summer in the Outer Banks thanks to her mom's job, petite, blond-haired Lara is back in New York and ready to take on her senior year with a fresh haircut and newfound confidence. She's finally caught the eye of her longtime unrequited crush, Chase, and as they start dating, she knows she should feel that her dreams have come true. But Lara's secret summer fling, Jasmine, has moved to town, and as Jasmine infiltrates Lara's friend group, Lara feels increasingly unmoored. Lara had only ever been attracted to boys before, but now she can't stop thinking about Jasmine and wondering what that means. If she's always dreamed about dating Chase, who would she be without that dream? And was she just "cool for the summer," or are her feelings about Jasmine something more? While some readers will be frustrated that the plot hinges on simple miscommunication and a love triangle, the thoughtful representation of a questioning teen's struggle to understand herself—and avoid labels for the time being—is sorely needed. Lara is a Jewish second-generation Russian American; Jasmine is a Jewish Syrian American, and supporting characters have a range of racial, ethnic, and sexual identities. A welcome addition to the small but growing canon of questioning queer fiction. (Fiction. 14-18)

School Library Journal (March 1, 2021)
Gr 9 Up-This is at first glance a light teenage romance, but readers will find more depth within its pages. Lara has always blended into her group of friends and been hyper-focused on her crush on Chase, a football star in her school. Then she and her mother spend the summer away from New York on the Outer Banks of North Carolina and Lara becomes friends with Jasmine. That friendship becomes a summer romance. Things get complicated when Jasmine shows up in New York in the fall to attend Lara's school and becomes part of her friend group. Chase, who Lara has swooned over for years, starts to notice her at the same time Jasmine appears, leading to a love triangle. The strength of this novel is Lara's discovery of herself and her sexuality. The relationship drama becomes the backdrop to Lara figuring out how to better understand who she wants to be, as opposed to simply copying the template of a cool friend. While some characters do echo typical teenage stereotypes, eclectic Jasmine is powerful and unique, and her relationship as a foil to Lara is refreshing. Lara is white and Jewish and Jasmine Syrian, Irish, and Jewish. VERDICT Readers who enjoy romance will be delightfully surprised with this book that will take them a bit deeper on the road of self-discovery through high school crushes.-April Sanders, Texas A&M Commerce, TX © Copyright 2021. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Cool for the Summer*

Source: https://us.macmillan.com/books/9781250888471/coolforthesummer

ALA Rainbow List Pick - 2022
Alma Award for Best Jewish YA Book of the Year
Booklist Editor's Choice - 2021
Kid's Indie Next Pick - 2021

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Half of a Yellow Sun*	**Synopsis** Re-creates the 1960s struggle of Biafra to establish an independent republic in Nigeria, following the intertwined lives of the characters through a military coup, the Biafran secession, and the resulting civil war. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi	
Copyright Year: 2006	

Professional Reviews of *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist starred (August 2006 (Vol. 102, No. 22))
Adichie surpasses her award-winning debut, Purple Hibiscus (2003), with a magnificent novel in which the dreams and tragedies of 1960s Nigeria are filtered through the minds and experiences of stupendously compelling characters. From page 1, an unbreakable bond is forged between the reader and Ugwu, a bright and kind young teen who has left his barebones village to serve as houseboy to Odenigbo, a robust and radical professor full of hope for newly independent Nigeria in spite of ingrained ethnic divides and colonialism's deleterious aftereffects. Ugwu becomes devoted to Odenigbo's beautiful and cultured lover, Olanna, as Odenigbo's treacherous mother plots against her, and her estranged twin sister, tough and sardonic Kainene, takes up with a gentle Englishman. The momentous psychological and ethical pressures Adichie engineers could support an engrossing novel in their own right, but her great subject is Nigeria's horrific civil war, specifically the fate of Biafra, the doomed breakaway Igbo state. "Half a yellow sun"is Biafra's emblem of hope, but the horrors and misery Adichie's characters endure transform the promising image of a rising sun into that of a sun setting grimly over a blood-soaked and starving land. Adichie has masterminded a commanding, sensitive epic about a vicious civil war that, for all its particular nightmares, parallels every war predicated by prejudice and stoked by outside powers hungry for oil and influence.

Publishers Weekly (June 26, 2006)
When the Igbo people of eastern Nigeria seceded in 1967 to form the independent nation of Biafra, a bloody, crippling three-year civil war followed. That period in African history is captured with haunting intimacy in this artful page-turner from Nigerian novelist Adichie (Purple Hibiscus). Adichie tells her profoundly gripping story primarily through the eyes and lives of Ugwu, a 13-year-old peasant houseboy who survives conscription into the raggedy Biafran army, and twin sisters Olanna and Kainene, who are from a wealthy and well-connected family. Tumultuous politics power the plot, and several sections are harrowing, particularly passages depicting the savage butchering of Olanna and Kainene's relatives. But this dramatic, intelligent epic has its lush and sultry side as well: rebellious Olanna is the mistress of Odenigbo, a university professor brimming with anticolonial zeal; business-minded Kainene takes as her lover fair-haired, blue-eyed Richard, a British expatriate come to Nigeria to write a book about Igbo-Ukwu art-and whose relationship with Kainene nearly ruptures when he spends one drunken night with Olanna. This is a transcendent novel of many descriptive triumphs, most notably its depiction of the impact of war's brutalities on peasants and intellectuals alike. It's a searing history lesson in fictional form, intensely evocative and immensely absorbing. (Sept. 15) Copyright 2006 Reed Business Information.

Library Journal (September 1, 2006)
Nigerian-born Adichie's first novel, Purple Hibiscus, won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award and was short-listed for two other prestigious awards. As one reads Adichie's lyrical descriptions, it becomes clear why she is recognized as a promising new voice in literature. However, as is sometimes the case, the second novel does not merit the same extravagant praise as the first. Set in Nigeria during the turbulent years of the 1960s, this new work follows the stories of twin sisters Olanna and Kainene, their lovers, their family, and others who inhabit their privileged worlds, soon to be transformed by civil war. From the opening page, on which Adichie describes hedges "trimmed so flat on top that they looked like tables wrapped in leaves," the reader is transported to a world so strongly imaged as to feel like a painting. But, disappointingly, the story line is not as well developed as the setting, and the characters fail to emerge fully. Not as great as the sum of its parts; for larger collections only. [See Prepub Alert, LJ 5/1/06.]-Caroline Hallsworth, City of Greater Sudbury Copyright 2006 Reed Business Information.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Source: https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/ref/books/review/20061203notable-books.html; https://www.chimamanda.com/half-of-a-yellow-sun/; https://www.womensprizeforfiction.co.uk/features/features/news/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-wins-the-best-of-the-best;

Anisfield-Wolf Book Award: Fiction - 2007
Best of the Best of the Second Decade - Baileys Women's Prize: Fiction - 2015
New York Times 100 Most Notable Books of the Year - 2006
Orange Broadband Prize: Fiction - 2007
PEN 'Beyond Margins' Award: Fiction - 2007
Women's Prize for Fiction - 2007

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Hopeless*	**Synopsis** Sometimes discovering the truth can leave you more hopeless than believing the lies. That's what Sky Davis realizes after she meets Dean Holder. A guy with a reputation that rivals her own and an uncanny ability to invoke feelings in her she's never had before. He terrifies her and captivates her all in the span of their first encounter. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Hoover, Colleen	
Copyright Year: 2013	

Professional Reviews of *Hopeless*
Source: Follett Titlewave
Library Journal Starred - 09/01/15 * Starred Review * Sky convinces her mom to let her complete her senior year in a public school, where she encounters sultry, hot rebel Holder. The two form an instant connection. While getting to know Holder, however, Sky realizes that he's holding something back, and when she finds out what it is, her life is shattered. --Erin Cataldi (Reviewed September 1 , 2015) (Library Journal, vol 140, issue 14, p43)

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Hopeless*
Source: n/a

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Kingdom of Ash*	**Synopsis** While Aelin lies locked within an iron coffin, Aedion and Lysandra, along with the allies they've gathered, are the last line of defense against the Erawan
Book Author Maas, Sarah J.	
Copyright Year: 2018	Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of *Kingdom of Ash*
Source: n/a
n/a

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Kingdom of Ash*
Source: n/a
n/a

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Lolita*	**Synopsis** A novel that studies the moral disintegration of a man whose obsessive desire to possess his step-daughter destroys the lives of those around him.
Book Author Nabokov, Vladimir Vladimirovich	
Copyright Year: 1955	Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of *Lolita*
Source: Follett Titlewave
Library Journal (December 1, 2009) Nabokov's classic story about a middle-aged, expatriate European man's obsessive love for a 12-year-old girl. While Lolita continues to raise the hackles of would-be censors even today, most [readers] will marvel at the restraint and playful humor with which Nabokov limns his tale. [LJ 4/15/97] Copyright 2009 Reed Business Information.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Lolita*
Source: n/a

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *November 9* **Book Author** Hoover, Colleen **Copyright Year:** 2015	**Synopsis** Fallon meets Ben, an aspiring novelist, the day before her scheduled cross-country move. Their untimely attraction leads them to spend Fallon's last day in L.A. together, and her eventful life becomes the creative inspiration Ben has always sought for his novel. Over time and amidst the various relationships and tribulations of their own separate lives, they continue to meet on the same date every year. Until one day Fallon becomes unsure if Ben has been telling her the truth or fabricating a perfect reality for the sake of the ultimate plot twist. Can Ben's relationship with Fallon - and simultaneously his novel - be considered a love story if it ends in heartbreak? Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of *November 9*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (December 1, 2015 (Online))

Fallon meets Ben when he saves her from an unpleasant lunch with her actor-father on a terrible anniversary. It has been two years since a fire scarred her, ending her own acting career. She is about to leave to pursue her dreams in New York, but they spend the rest of her last day in L.A together and agree to meet on November 9 every year for five years so that he can write a book about their relationship. Without contact in between dates, they meet each year in increasingly emotional reunions, helping each other deal with huge changes in their lives. While this idea is not new, Hoover (Confess, 2015) infuses it with her trademark passion and emotion. When Ben suffers a terrible loss days before one of their meetings, the plot and feelings ratchet up to a stunning, surprising conclusion. Hoover continues her spot-on streak of NA winners, with a relatable, appealing cast and vivid scenarios.

Library Journal (November 15, 2015)

With one of the most fetching opening scenes in a long time, Hoover's (Confess; Maybe Someday; Ugly Love) latest will have readers hooked from the first pages. Fallon is having a horrible lunch in L.A. with her father when adorable Ben slips in the restaurant booth and pretends to be her boyfriend. She goes with it, and the two have an amazing day together. She is moving to New York that night, and they're both only 18, so they decide to meet on the same day next year to touch base, without exchanging any personal info. As the years unfold they stick to this plan, despite many obstacles between them. Additionally, how does their relationship factor in both their lives, careers, and where they choose to live? Just when you think this romantic story is following a clear path, Hoover throws in a doozy of a plot twist! Then this heartfelt novel combines with an emotional thriller that readers won't be able to put down. VERDICT Hoover joins the ranks of -such luminaries as -Jennifer Weiner and Jojo Moyes, with a dash of Gillian Flynn. Sure to please a plethora of -readers.-Beth Gibbs, Davidson, NC © Copyright 2015. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *November 9*

Source: https://www.librarything.com/work/14906492

Romantic Times Reviewer's Choice Award: New Adult Category - 2015

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Red at the Bone*	**Synopsis** As Melody celebrates a coming of age ceremony at her grandparents' house in 2001 Brooklyn, her family remembers 1985, when Melody's own mother prepared for a similar party that never took place in this novel about different social classes. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Woodson, Jacqueline	
Copyright Year: 2019	

Professional Reviews of *Red at the Bone*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (August 2019 (Vol. 115, No. 22))
When Woodson's (Another Brooklyn, 2016) emotionally rich third adult novel opens, it's early in the new millennium and Melody is the age her mother, Iris, was when she had her, but doing something Iris never got to do: making a grand entrance at her sixteenth-birthday party in Iris' parents' Brooklyn brownstone. Melody has lived her whole life in Sabe and Po'Boy's home along with her dad, Aubrey, while Iris—whom Melody has called by her first name for as long as she can remember—pursued an independent life, first at Oberlin and then in Manhattan. Time flips forward and back as chapters alternate among the perspectives of Melody, Iris, Aubrey, Sabe, and Po'Boy, their stories interlocking and tunneling through one another for a clear and fuller picture of their family, and all that Melody's pivotal arrival brought to it. Woodson channels deeply true-feeling characters, all of whom readers will empathize with in turn. In spare, lean prose, she reveals rich histories and moments in swirling eddies, while also leaving many fateful details for readers to divine.

Kirkus Reviews starred (July 15, 2019)
Woodson sings a fresh song of Brooklyn, an aria to generations of an African American family. National Book Award winner Woodson (Harbor Me, 2018, etc.) returns to her cherished Brooklyn, its "cardinals and flowers and bright-colored cars. Little girls with purple ribbons and old women with swollen ankles." For her latest coming-of-age story, Woodson opens in the voice of Melody, waiting on the interior stairs of her grandparents' brownstone. She's 16, making her debut, a "ritual of marking class and time and transition." She insists that the assembled musicians play Prince's risqué "Darling Nikki" as she descends. Melody jabs at her mother, Iris, saying "It's Prince. And it's my ceremony and he's a genius so why are we even still talking about it? You already nixed the words. Let me at least have the music." Woodson famously nails the adolescent voice. But so, too, she burnishes all her characters' perspectives. Iris' sexual yearning for another girl at Oberlin College gives this novel its title: "She felt red at the bone—like there was something inside of her undone and bleeding." By then, Iris had all but abandoned toddler Melody and the toddler's father, Aubrey, in that ancestral brownstone to make her own way. In 21 lyrical chapters, readers hear from both of Iris' parents, who met at Morehouse, and Aubrey's mother, CathyMarie, who stretched the margarine and grape jelly sandwiches to see him grown. Woodson's ear for music—whether Walt Whitman's or A Tribe Called Quest's—is exhilarating, as is her eye for detail. Aubrey and little Melody, holding hands, listen to an old man whose "bottom dentures were loose in his mouth, moving in small circles as he spoke." The novel itself circles elegantly back to its beginning, Melody and Iris in 2001 for a brava finale, but not before braiding the 1921 Race Massacre in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to the fires of 9/11. The thread is held by Iris' mother, Sabe, who hangs on

through her fatal illness “a little while longer. Until Melody and Iris can figure each other out.” In Woodson, at the height of her powers, readers hear the blues: “beneath that joy, such a sadness.”

Publishers Weekly (July 15, 2019)
Woodson's beautifully imagined novel (her first novel for adults since 2016's Another Brooklyn) explores the ways an unplanned pregnancy changes two families. The narrative opens in the spring of 2001, at the coming-of-age party that 16-year-old Melody's grandparents host for her at their Brooklyn brownstone. A family ritual adapted from cotillion tradition, the event ushers Melody into adulthood as an orchestra plays Prince and her "court" dances around her. Amid the festivity, Melody and her family-her unmarried parents, Iris and Aubrey, and her maternal grandparents, Sabe and Sammy "Po'Boy" Simmons, think of both past and future, delving into extended flashbacks that comprise most of the text. Sabe is proud of the education and affluence she has achieved, but she remains haunted by stories of her family's losses in the fires of the 1921 Tulsa race massacre. The discovery that her daughter, Iris, was pregnant at 15 filled her with shame, rage, and panic. After the birth of Melody, Iris, uninterested in marrying mail-room clerk Aubrey, pined for the freedom that her pregnancy curtailed. Leaving Melody to be raised by Aubrey, Sabe, and Po'Boy, she departed for Oberlin College in the early '90s and, later, to a Manhattan apartment that her daughter is invited to visit but not to see as home. Their relationship is strained as Melody dons the coming-out dress her mother would have worn if she hadn't been pregnant with Melody. Woodson's nuanced voice evokes the complexities of race, class, religion, and sexuality in fluid prose and a series of telling details. This is a wise, powerful, and compassionate novel. (Sept.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal Xpress (July 17, 2020)
This quick novel opens with Melody's coming-of-age ceremony. She is 16, the same age her mother was when she gave birth to her. Woodson weaves together the perspectives of three generations, alternating among Melody, her parents, and her grandparents. VERDICT This is a story of adolescence told from multiple generational vantage points.-Elliot Riley, Deerfield Academy, MA © Copyright 2020. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Red at the Bone*

Source: NoveList Plus

LibraryReads Favorites: 2019
New York Times Notable Book of the Year - Fiction and Poetry: 2019
Women's Prize for Fiction Longlist: 2020

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *The Duff*	**Synopsis** Seventeen-year-old Bianca Piper starts sleeping with Wesley Rush, a notorious womanizer who disgusts her, in order to distract her from her personal problems, and to her surprise, the two of them find they have a lot in common and are able to help each other find more productive ways to deal with their difficulties. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Keplinger, Kody	
Copyright Year: 2010	

Professional Reviews of *The Duff*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (September 1, 2010 (Online))
Grades 9-12. Duff stands for "designated ugly fat friend." And while 17-year-old Bianca isn't that fat or ugly, that's what Wesley calls her as he tries to hook up with her more desirable gal pals. But Bianca has a surprise for him when she kisses him in response. Then, as her life gets more complicated (parents divorcing, father back on the bottle), she finds it easy to drown her own sorrows in their hot, no-strings-attached sex. There are subtle strings, however, especially as Bianca and Wesley find they are not quite what the other supposed. Lots of language, plenty of sex (well, instances, if not images), and contemporary references make this feel of the moment. But the underlying worry about one's place in the sun is eternal. Teens will relate, even though the problems, especially at home, seem a retread and the characterizations are on the thin side. What's best here is Bianca's brazen voice. Even when confused, she is truer to herself than most.

Kirkus Reviews (September 1, 2010)
Downing Cherry Cokes and watching her two best friends hoof it out on the dance floor of the local teen club doesn't make 17-year-old Bianca Piper feel good about herself. Especially when high-school man-slut Wesley Rush tells her she's the Duff, her friends' "designated ugly fat friend," and tries to cozy up to her in order to get into her friends' pants. Later on, somehow, someway, Bianca finds herself drawn to Wesley, and before she knows it, they've created a complex, enemies-with-benefits relationship that the YA market has never seen before. Their encounters are heatedly frank and full of humor, anger and rage, and soon the two learn they have more in common than they could ever have expected. Keplinger scores a first for a genre in which vampires and dystopian futures rule. Her snarky teen speak, true-to-life characterizations and rollicking sense of humor never cease in her debut. Teen readers will see both themselves and their friends in Bianca's layered, hostile world. (Fiction. 12 & up)

Publishers Weekly (August 16, 2010)
When school "man-whore" Wesley informs Bianca that, compared to her group of beautiful friends, she is the Duff-Designated Ugly Fat Friend-17-year-old Bianca is horrified, outraged, and can't stop thinking about the label ("I couldn't believe he was making me worry about such stupid, pointless, shallow bullshit"). Which makes it all the more upsetting when she starts hooking up regularly with Wesley (even though he continues to call her "Duffy"), as a distraction from her father's struggles with alcohol and the divorce her mother is seeking. Keplinger's premise will easily hook readers as she offers the kind of conventional romance (albeit one that is heavy on hookup sex) that summer teen flicks are made of in this well-written, irreverent, and heartfelt debut. Bianca's friends care about her deeply, so there is little drama between them; the arc of this

story is more about Bianca coming to grips with her feelings for Wesley, who is actually a good guy, than about restoring her self-image. Bianca is consistently strong, witty, and confident, and while the nickname pinches, it does little to hurt her self-esteem. Ages 15-up. (Sept.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (November 1, 2010)
Gr 10 Up-Bianca Piper, 17, is smart, outspoken, and loyal to her two beautiful friends. She is also convinced that she is unattractive, an opinion confirmed when school hottie and "man-whore" Wesley Rush calls her a "Duff" (designated ugly fat friend). Bianca responds by throwing her Cherry Coke in his face, but when her mother decides to divorce her father, who then lapses into drinking again, she becomes involved in a secretive sexual relationship with Wesley to take her mind off her problems. Bianca finds that as their love/hate relationship continues, she is falling in love with him. Not surprisingly, Wesley, who has family problems of his own, reciprocates and announces that, although he doesn't chase girls, he is chasing her. Eventually, everything comes to a satisfying but predictable conclusion. This debut novel is a fun read and surprisingly feminist in a number of ways. Keplinger makes good points about female body image and female friendship, and discusses how both men and women use offensive terms about women as a means of social control. Bianca and the other female characters are more believable and realistic than Wesley, who is straight out of female romantic fantasyland. It is a little difficult to understand why Bianca would get involved with him after he insults her, but in their romantic scenes, there is some seriously hot chemistry. These teens are realistically and openly sexual, and there are frequent discussions of such matters as birth control and STDs, as well as a few F-bombs. Older girls, including reluctant readers, will love this one.-Kathleen E. Gruver, Burlington County Library, Westampton, NJ (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Horn Book Guide (Spring 2011)
Bianca is insulted when womanizing Wesley calls her a DUFF (designated ugly fat friend) but she nevertheless begins having sex with him. Though she tells herself Wesley's just a distraction from her parents' impending divorce, Bianca ends up falling for him. The characters lack subtlety (especially the parents), but Bianca's biting sarcasm sets the story a notch above the ordinary teen romance.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *The Duff*

Source: n/a

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Tower of Dawn*	**Synopsis** Following the shattering of the glass castle and the deaths of his men, Chaol pursues recovery by searching for healers in the southern continent while trying to convince Dorian and Aelin to ally with him and Nesryn in order to avoid war. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Maas, Sarah J.	
Copyright Year: 2017	

Professional Reviews of *Tower of Dawn*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Kirkus Reviews (October 1, 2017)

Maas chronicles Chaol and Nesryn's activities during Empire of Storms (2016).Chaol (a rare white character in this book) and Nesryn venture to the Southern Continent on a mission with two objectives. One is to make an alliance with the powerful khagan, the other to see if the famed healers of Antica's Torre Cesme can use their magic to repair his spine. The progressive khaganate, a multicultural empire modeled after Mongolia, is lavishly and lovingly explored during the first half of the book. Nesryn enjoys it as well, taking pleasure in not being a racial other, as she is Adarlan; her father was from the Southern Continent, and her family names are analogous to Arabic). Nesryn, from whose third-person perspective much of the story is told, comes into her own here, apart from Chaol. A complicated political situation involving five potential heirs to the khaganate means Chaol must tread carefully to secure support. Meanwhile, Chaol's assigned healer, brown-skinned Yrene (also a point-of-view character), is from the Northern Continent and has a major grudge against Adarlan. Chaol and Yrene must work on emotional wounds as well as physical—readers who stick around till the end of this long tome will find a subversion of the typical fantasy disability narrative. Meanwhile, romances bloom, and the Valg threat looms closer, leading to major revelations. A compelling story of hard-fought growth and redemption, with yet more to come in at least one more future volume. (Fantasy. 14-adult)

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Tower of Dawn*

Source: n/a