Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Boy Girl Boy*	**Synopsis** Three troubled high school seniors plan to run away together from Illinois to California after graduation in order to find out who they are and what they want to be.
Book Author Koertge, Ron	
Copyright Year: 2005	Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of *Boy Girl Boy*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (September 1, 2005 (Vol. 102, No. 1))
Gr. 8-11. Koertge returns with memorable, likable characters, spot-on dialogue that is both humorous and insightful, and a subtle exploration of prejudices and issues that will resonate with teens. Elliot, Teresa, and Larry have been friends "forever."As they approach graduation, they plan to run away to California to live, escaping their small-town, narrow-minded friends, and overbearing, annoying parents. Yet each teen begins to doubt the wisdom of the plan. Mary Ann helps Elliot realize that he has been overshadowed by his two friends; Teresa realizes that she wants a romantic relationship with one of the boys (she likes them both), but they see her as only a friend; and Larry realizes that his homosexuality will eventually lead him away from the trio. Koertge deftly balances the heavy issues with respectful humor. After a crisis and its immediate resolution, an undercurrent of foreboding remains, reminding readers that, even as they mature and become individuals, crises will continue to threaten and relationships will continue to strengthen and evolve. A perceptive book about teenage friendship and the struggle for individual identity that will resonate with many readers. Buy several copies.

Kirkus Reviews (August 15, 2005)
Three unlikely longtime friends-Elliot, the basketball star whose religious parents don't approve of his friends, Theresa, the photographer who secretly harbors a crush on Elliot, and Larry, the clever film aficionado who's slowly coming to terms with his homosexuality-plot a summer escape in the form of a road trip from their home in small-town Iowa all the way to California. As expected, Koertge creates fresh, familiar, multifaceted and well-rounded characters that provoke contemplation yet keep the reader turning the pages. In fact, it's the characters that are the primary driving force behind this instead of its flimsy plot, and herein lies the crux: The characters are so well developed that their thoughts and dreams create a tangle of mini-subplots. Each thread is interesting and true to the character, but as a whole they seem to lead in no clear direction. This scattershot effect may mirror human existence but doesn't necessarily make a story teenagers will want to read. Moreover, when Koertge does choose a place to move the plot forward, the result feels forced, especially after his delicate treatment of the characters' journey through self-discovery and acceptance. (Fiction. YA)

Publishers Weekly (September 19, 2005)
As he did in Stoner & Spaz, Koertge once again creates intelligent, full-blooded teens grappling with their passage into adulthood. The book opens in smalltown Wendleville during senior year for Elliot, Teresa and Larry, who have been friends since childhood and who plan to move to California after graduation. Various flashbacks through their alternating first-person narratives help readers understand the history between the three. Elliot is a stunning jock, but his friendship with the other two bring out his more vulnerable side (they also help him with his studies). Teresa, obsessed with running, grapples with an eating disorder and her abandonment by her mother at age 13. Her quick wit (while running she describes the sites, one of which is the "we-love-Jesus-more-than-you-do Baptist church") makes for some clever repartée with Larry, who, at age 13, realized he was gay (he loves watching movies on TV: "Lo and behold, there's an old black-and-white Tarzan movie with the exquisite Johnny Weissmuller wrestling a fortunate crocodile"). A scene with a toxic homophobe on the basketball court with Elliot leaves no doubt of the trajectory here, but Larry's brush with near-death brings about some soul-searching for all three characters. The plot may hold no surprises, but the three stars and even the minor characters here will hold readers' interest. Ages 14-up. (Sept.)
Copyright 2005 Reed Business Information.

Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2005)
The best-laid plans of mice and men -- and high school seniors -- often go awry. Close friends Elliot, Teresa, and Larry have made a pact to leave their small hometown of Wendleville, Illinois, right after graduation and move to Los Angeles, where, as Larry puts it, they will only allow themselves "friends who are willing to play not just second fiddle but fourth violin." Koertge believably lays out how these three very different kids have, over the years, configured into a tight trio. Each has a niche: Elliot is handsome and not academically minded, to say the least, but sweet-natured and accepting; openly gay Larry is the movie buff with the cinematic vision of their future together; Teresa, whose mother abandoned her years earlier, finds a substitute family with the boys. As the first-person narratives alternate among their three perspectives, cracks in the relationship become visible, and as each one begins to individuate, they realize that their escape plan is more restrictive than liberating. Koertge's use of language is, as always, invigorating ("he unwraps an Almond Joy...and feeds it into his mouth like somebody stoking a boiler"); a gay-bashing incident involving Larry and a local thug is uncliched and sets up the inevitable resolution. As Koertge deftly shows, the most daring move may be not to go halfway across the country but to finally think for -- and be -- oneself.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Boy Girl Boy*

Source: n/a

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Flamer*	**Synopsis** It's the summer between middle school and high school, and Aiden Navarro is away at camp. Everyone's going through changes - but for Aiden, the stakes feel higher. As he navigates friendships, deals with bullies, and spends time with Elias (a boy he can't stop thinking about), he finds himself on a path of self-discovery and acceptance" Source: Follett Titlewave
Book Author Curato, Mike	
Copyright Year: 2020	

Professional Reviews of *Flamer*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist starred (September 1, 2020 (Vol. 117, No. 1))
Grades 9-12. In his powerful debut graphic novel, Curato, best known for the Little Elliot picture books, tells the story of one transformative week of Boy Scout camp in 1995, in which chubby, awkward Filipino American Aiden wrestles with the growing realization that he's gay. Spare panels with simplified, black line work and gray ink washes relay the bulk of the story, following Aiden through activity-packed days and the whiplash-inducing highs and lows of summer camp social interactions, not only navigating friendships on the cusp of high school but dealing with aggressive homophobic and racist bullying. Curato carefully and thoughtfully uses fiery orange-and-red ink washes to accent the black-and-white artwork, not only around the ubiquitous campfire but to indicate moments of intense emotion—anger, naturally, but also fear, hope, and ultimately strength. A lot happens to Aiden over the course of the week, including a desperate moment of suicide ideation, and the transformation of the visual metaphor of fire beautifully crystallizes his growth and resilience in that time. Just as his deft artwork meticulously balances between blazing feelings and quiet contemplation of natural beauty, Curato gives Aiden a poignantly well-rounded character: for all the homophobia and racism inherent in institutions like the Boy Scouts and the Catholic church, Aiden still defiantly finds inspiration and strength there. Masterfully nuanced and stunningly told, this is visual storytelling at its finest.

Kirkus Reviews starred (July 1, 2020)
The last week at Scouting camp highlights accomplishments and humiliations that last a lifetime. Aiden, a fat, biracial (Filipino and white), soon-to-be high schooler, is in his last week of Boy Scout camp in 1995. Each day documents events, from bonding over fireside songs and learning important skills to the micro- and macroaggressions that follow an adolescent boy of color who presents as effeminate and is queer. As the week moves on, readers learn more about Aiden and his life, from his stressful home with an emotionally abusive father to his love of Catholicism and being an altar server. The stress of a new school, bullies who are ever present, and struggles with identity drive Aiden to a breaking point, one that's familiar to many young people. The monochromatic illustrations, sometimes highlighted with red, orange, and yellow, are timeless moments of a remembered childhood. The use of red to highlight the tangible (firelight, a Swiss Army knife) and represent the intangible (passion, sorrow, and hope) is a master class in simplicity. But the true star of this book is the writing, which describes a boy who could live in any decade on his journey of self-discovery. This is a story that will be read and reread, and for some, it will be the defining book of their adolescence. Buy it. Read it. Share it. (afterword, resources) (Graphic fiction. 12-18)

Publishers Weekly (July 13, 2020)
Before transitioning from a private Catholic middle school to a public high school, Aiden Navarro, 14, wants to enjoy Boy Scout summer camp. As in school, however, Aiden can't escape the things he's so often been bullied for: his weight, his Filipino heritage, and his effeminate voice. He endures relentless taunts rooted in toxic masculinity from his camp peers for these things and the way he always seems to act differently than others-in one memorable moment, Aiden spontaneously riffs a Valley girl rendition of a campfire song. As Aiden feels true friendship with pen pal Violet and explores his growing feelings for tentmate Elias ("Gay boys like other boys. I HATE boys. They're mean," Aiden asserts) and his religious upbringing, his sense of isolation compounds. Through straightforward, thick-lined art, Curato interweaves surrealistic, emotionally charged moments, as when Aiden's emotionally abusive father assails his family as a large talking head. Throughout the story, the color red coalesces around fires literal and figurative, as when a camper pushes Aiden to a point of volcanic rage. Emotional and raw, Curato's story plummets Aiden deep into despair, including suicidal ideation, juxtaposing powerful moments of burning, fiery hope. Ages 14-up. Agent: Brenda Bowen, the Book Group. (Sept.) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal Xpress (August 28, 2020)
Gr 8 Up-As Boy Scout camp draws to a close and high school looms, 14-year-old Aiden Navarro, who is biracial (white and Filipino), is on high alert. Feeling self-conscious about his weight, dealing with racism from other campers, and wondering about his sexuality, he often takes preemptive action to appear unimpeachably heterosexual and unconvincingly attempts to imitate the homophobic, macho behavior of other campers-though his thoughtfulness usually wins out. Aiden's precarious balancing of identities pushed upon him and those he tries to hide starts to crumble when he begins to fantasize romantically about his tentmate Elias, a steadfast summer friend who has been unfazed by other campers' gossip about Aiden being gay. As Aiden heads into the last days of camp, his desire, self-loathing, and uncertainty come to a boiling point. Curato's incredible art conveys Aiden's point of view, his thoughts, and his reimaginings of his physical form with compelling beauty and empathy. The drawing style feels specific to a teen's world, spare yet filled with distinct characters and an idyllic camp setting. Most images are in shades of black and gray, which makes the appearance of fire in Aiden's dreams and fantasies-in hues of red, yellow, and orange, signifying his passion, rage, desire, and shame-even more poignant as more light is shed on his true self. VERDICT Curato has created a beautiful story of a teen who must decide if he will force himself into the mold of what he thinks a "normal" boy is, or if he can allow himself to live life on his own terms. An essential book that shows readers that they are never alone in their struggles.-Jennie Law, Georgia State Univ., Atlanta © Copyright 2020. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Horn Book Magazine (November/December, 2020)
Aiden is not looking forward to starting public high school in the fall; his Catholic schooling heretofore has had its challenges -- "jerks" -- but at least it had become familiar. A summer at Boy Scout camp provides a break from his squabbling parents and a chance to breathe ("Everything is so quiet" in the woods) before school starts. Not so fast: camp also has bullies, whose taunts referencing Aiden's presumed sexual orientation are only exacerbated by Aiden's growing love for another camper, the athletic and sweet-natured Elias. Grownup LGBTs will know exactly what Aiden is going through, but this book speaks so well to those kids currently undergoing the ordeal. The graphic novel takes its time to fully pull readers into Aiden's psyche and his setting, which provides the pleasures of summer and friendship and nature along with the rewards of Scout activities. (Orienteering!) The drawing is expertly cartooned, and the palette is black and white with occasional, and then increasing, daubs and splashes of red whenever passions -- of many kinds -- ride high. The variation of small, storytelling panels and full-page and double-page spreads for big moments is wonderfully effective, and the climax -- Aiden in a literal dark night of the soul in the outdoor chapel -- is high drama indeed, emotionally powerful, proudly and extravagantly spiritual (and as Catholic as any Graham Greene epiphany). He comes through it to have one perfect day at camp to sustain him going forward. If you will forgive the editorial intrusion, I wish I had had this book fifty years ago. Roger Sutton
November/December 2020 p.97

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Flamer*

Source: Author Website

ALA Rainbow Book List: 2021
Golden Kite Award Honor - Illustrated Book for Older Readers: 2021
Horn Book Fanfare Booklist: 2020
Kirkus Reviews Best Graphic YA Books of the Year: 2020
Lambda Literary Award for LGBTQ Young Adult: 2021
NPR Best Books of the Year: 2020
School Library Journal Best Graphic Novels of the Year: 2020
YALSA Great Graphic Novels for Teens: 2021

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Grit*	**Synopsis** Darcy, who has a reputation and is used to rumors swirling around her, wrestles with what happened the same night her friend disappeared the previous summer and struggles with the weight of the dark secret she and her cousin share. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author French, Gillian	
Copyright Year: 2017	

Professional Reviews of *Grit*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist starred (April 15, 2017 (Vol. 113, No. 16))

Grades 9-12. Feisty Darcy Prentiss is drawn to wild times. She'll grab at any kind of dare, chug any kind of liquor, and kiss any kind of boy just to alleviate the tedium of small-town life. The summer before her senior year, Darcy joins her sister, Mags, and her cousin, Nell, raking blueberries on a local farm. There's plenty of tension in the air, as Darcy keeps an eye on her nemesis, Shea Gaines. Only Darcy and Shea know what actually went down between them, and Darcy's not telling. Then there's renewed interest in Darcy's ex–best friend, Rhiannon, missing without a trace since the summer before. Is Darcy keeping mute on something she knows about this as well? And there's something else Darcy is hiding to protect Nell, who is beautiful but simple-minded. Any of these secrets could explode and rip Darcy's life apart, but debut novelist French reveals them slowly, stretching the suspense to the very end. French sets the story in a palpably stifling small town, and her unapologetic main character is resplendent with her untamed sharp tongue, an overdose of stubborn courage, and a taste for hot sex. Keen plotting, evocative writing, and dynamic characterization make French a writer to watch.

Kirkus Reviews starred (March 15, 2017)

A girl with a reputation grapples with the secrets of last summer.The summer before her senior year, white teen Darcy Prentiss, her sister Mags, and their cognitively disabled cousin Nell harvest blueberries alongside the seasonal Latino migrants in the eastern Maine heat, working hard to save money. But trouble keeps finding Darcy; she has a reputation, and she's used to rumors swirling around her. It's not just rumors about boys, although a white boy named Shea needles endlessly about a mistake she made with him last Fourth of July—there's also Rhiannon, her ex-friend, who went missing last summer. A police officer starts coming around, suspicious of Darcy's every move. Though Darcy doesn't know what happened to Rhiannon, she harbors a different secret about the night the girl went missing, one that could tear apart her family if it got out. Darcy juggles her self-appointed task of defending her cousin, the watchful eye of the law, and Shea's escalating harassment, all while falling for a fellow white blueberry harvester and begrudgingly participating in the town's Bay Festival pageant. She's tough and a fierce protector of what she holds dear, but something has to give. Small-town claustrophobia makes it difficult to define who she is for herself, but rumors, secrets, and even trauma are no match for Darcy's grit. The mysteries of the previous summer weave together beautifully, and the fallout is achingly real. Gorgeously written and helmed by a protagonist with an indelibly fierce heart. (Fiction. 14-18)

Publishers Weekly Annex (May 15, 2017)
In small-town Sasanoa, Maine, everyone knows that 17-year-old Darcy Prentiss has a reputation for being easy, that her cousin Nell is beautiful and a little slow, and that a person can make decent money raking blueberries. And although no one knows what happened the previous summer when a girl disappeared, that doesn't stop the speculation. Some blame migrant workers who help with the berry harvest, and a local cop thinks Darcy knows something: she was once best friends with the missing girl. There is a lot of plot in French's debut: a creep Darcy hooked up with is harassing her, she's being romanced by one of his friends, she and Nell are keeping a secret, and there's the upcoming Bay Festival Princess pageant that Nell dreams of winning. While the mechanics of the story-secrets and lies, an angry girl who turns out to be loyally doing her best-initially feel overfamiliar, Darcy, her family, and the Maine setting come alive, and the ending lands an effective punch as seemingly disparate threads join up. Ages 14-up. Agent: Alice Tasman, Jean V. Naggar Literary. (May) © Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (May 1, 2017)
Gr 9 Up-Darcy is a raker-she harvests blueberries at the Wardwell Farm alongside migrant farmworkers in Sansoa, ME. It's not true that nothing ever happens in a small town: in this one, "MISSING" posters depicting Darcy's friend Rhiannon hang from every telephone pole on Main Street, and Darcy's cousin Nell thinks she has fallen in love with a teacher, which no one but Darcy knows about. Lacking the means to leave, the teen falls into risky behavior-excessive drinking and hooking up-with the wild Kat; when love interest Jesse pulls her away from that crowd, Darcy doesn't understand why the first thing on his mind is not sex. He's a good guy, and Darcy's mother, Sarah, is also first-rate. She remembers being wild herself and what it cost their family: Darcy's father fell off a high beam to his death before he was 40 because he couldn't resist a dare. Sarah is a good parent and a refreshing change from the stereotypical "bad" mother of a "bad" kid. Rhiannon's disappearance is a mystery: Did she run away a year ago because she, too, wanted to get out of Sansoa, or is she dead? The town thinks the latter, and the protagonist doesn't know for sure, but readers of this excellent teen drama will find out a thing or two before deciding for themselves. This page-turner will hold the interest of mystery fans. -VERDICT A strong choice for most collections.-Georgia Christgau, Middle College High School, Long Island City, NY © Copyright 2017. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Horn Book Magazine (September/October, 2017)
Darcy Celeste Prentiss "lives in the ass-end of nowhere. Rakes berries. Flunks algebra. The end." But that is not the whole story. It is summer in her small Maine town, and things are complicated for seventeen-year-old Darcy. There's the matter of the boy she wants and the boy she regrets, both working beside her in the blueberry barrens. There's the list of "Things We Do" for beautiful Cousin Nell ("even though she's eighteen, in a lot of ways Nell's like a kid; I guess you could call her a little slow"), such as reluctantly participating in the town's beauty pageant with her in spite of stares and scorn. And hanging over it all is the mystery of a missing girl, Darcy's ex-best friend, about which she knows more than she is ready to say. This gripping novel examines the layers of Darcy's reticence about her own past, and explores how burdens borne alone in one small town can lead to risky behavior. Complex but patient plotting and evocative prose elevate this moody coming-of-age novel. rebecca hachmyer

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Grit*
Source: Author Website
Edgar Award Finalist for Best Young Adult Novel: 2018
Junior Library Guild Selection: 2017
Kirkus Reviews Best Teen Book of the Year: 2017
South Carolina Young Adult Book Award Finalist: 2019

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Lucky*	**Synopsis** The author describes the circumstances of her rape as an eighteen-year-old college freshman, her struggle to reclaim her shattered life, and the arrest and trial of the man erroneously convicted of being her attacker. The man was exonerated of all charges and the publisher has pulled the book from distribution. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Sebold, Alice	
Copyright Year: 1999	

Professional Reviews of *Lucky*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist Reviews

The raw and brutal honesty in Sebold's true-life account of a rape and its legal and emotional consequences is horrifying, disturbing, and altogether difficult to stomach. She is an 18-year-old college freshman in Syracuse, New York, when a man assaults her on a dark road and rapes her. During the aftermath of the attack, Sebold's family members try to comfort her and support her desire to prosecute, but they barely understand. Often Sebold is the most courageous one of all. In an increasingly dangerous succession of events, she turns to alcohol, drugs, and unhealthy relationships to cope with the stigma rape survivors bear. Eventually, the same kind of strength that carried her through the attack and years of the trial resurfaces, and she becomes successful and happy and, as her work attests, an excellent writer as well. This book will be painful, and perhaps helpful, to other rape survivors. ((Reviewed July 1999)) Copyright 2000 Booklist Reviews

Kirkus Reviews

A stunningly crafted and unsparing account of the author s rape as a college freshman and what it took to win her case in court. In 1981, Sebold was brutally raped on her college campus, at Syracuse University. Sebold, a New York Times Magazine contributor, now in her 30s, reconstructs the rape and the year following in which her assailant was brought to trial and found guilty. When, months after the rape, she confided in her fiction professor, Tobias Wolff, he advised: Try, if you can, to remember everything. Sebold heeded his words, and the result is a memoir that reads like detective fiction, replete with police jargon, economical characterization, and filmlike scene construction. Part of Sebold s ironic luck, besides the fact that she wasn't killed, was that she was a virgin prior to the rape, she was wearing bulky clothing, and her rapist beat her, leaving unmistakable evidence of violence. Sebold casts a cool eye on these facts: The cosmetics of rape are central to proving any case. Sebold critiques the sexism and misconceptions surrounding rape with neither rhetoric nor apology; she lets her experience speak for itself. Her family, her friends, her campus community are all shaken by the brutality she survived, yet Sebold finds herself feeling more affinity with police officers she meets, as it was in [their] world where this hideous thing had happened to me. A world of violent crime. Just when Sebold believes she might surface from this world, a close friend is raped and the haunting continues. The last section, Aftermath, has an unavoidable tacked-on-at-the-end feel, as Sebold crams over a decade's worth of coping and healing into a short chapter. Told with mettle and intelligence, Sebold's story of fierce determination to wrest back her life from her rapist will inspire and challenge. Copyright 1999 Kirkus Reviews

Publishers Weekly Reviews

When journalist Sebold was a college freshman at Syracuse University, she was attacked and raped on the last night of school, forced onto the ground in a tunnel "among the dead leaves and broken beer bottles." In a ham-handed attempt to mollify her, a policeman later told her that a young woman had been murdered there and, by comparison, Sebold should consider herself lucky. That dubious "luck" is the focus of this fiercely observed memoir about how an incident of such profound violence can change the course of one's life. Sebold launches her memoir headlong into the rape itself, laying out its visceral physical as well as mental violence, and from there spins a narrative of her life before and after the incident, weaving memories of parental alcoholism together with her post-rape addiction to heroin. In the midst of each wrenching episode, from the initial attack to the ensuing courtroom drama, Sebold's wit is as powerful as her searing candor, as she describes her emotional denial, her addiction and even the rape (her first "real" sexual experience). She skillfully captures evocative moments, such as, during her girlhood, luring one of her family's basset hounds onto a blue silk sofa (strictly off-limits to both kids and pets) to nettle her father. Addressing rape as a larger social issue, Sebold's account reveals that there are clear emotional boundaries between those who have been victims of violence and those who have not, though the author attempts to blur these lines as much as possible to show that violence touches many more lives than solely the victim's. (Aug.) Copyright 1999 Cahners Business Information.

Library Journal Reviews

Sebold was raped as a college freshman, but the police said she was "lucky." At least she wasn't murdered and dismembered like the girl before her. Now a journalist, Sebold here details the aftermath posttraumatic stress syndrome, heroin addiction, and, finally, some measure of understanding. This book is based partly on a feature appearing in the New York Times Sunday Magazine that prompted an appearance on Oprah. Copyright 1999 Library Journal Reviews

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Lucky*

Source: n/a

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Scars*	**Synopsis** Fifteen-year-old Kendra, a budding artist, has not felt safe since she began to recall devastating memories of childhood sexual abuse, especially since she cannot remember her abuser's identity, and she copes with the pressure by cutting herself. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Rainfield, Cheryl	
Copyright Year: 2010	

Professional Reviews of *Scars*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist Reviews

The scars that crisscross 15-year-old Kendra's arms are not for public consumption. Her cutting is kept secret from her parents, her friends, and even her beloved therapist. But things change when she meets Meghan, a classmate whose promiscuity with boys belies her budding romantic interest in Kendra. Like other books and movies on this topic, Kendra's story isn't really about cutting—she was sexually abused between the ages of 2 and 12, and the resulting trauma has blocked out her rapist's identity. What sets Rainfield's story apart is the stalking element: her rapist is still hounding her, giving her frightening reminders that she will be killed if she tells anyone the truth. Sophisticated readers may very well roll their eyes at melodramatic clichés ("It's only my utility knife that releases the screams inside me") but that same sense of overwhelming emotion might appeal to teens wrestling with similar issues. The book becomes most enjoyable near the end, when it makes an implausible hairpin turn into the realm of psychothriller. Rainfield's closing research guide is unusually extensive. Copyright 2010 Booklist Reviews.

School Library Journal Reviews

Gr 9 Up—Fifteen-year-old Kendra is being stalked by someone who wants her dead, and she is overwhelmed by the compulsion to cut herself. She is dealing with shadowy memories of sexual abuse from her early childhood and wonders why she cannot recall her rapist's face. Kendra is a tough, vulnerable, troubled teen, a survivor who will win readers' hearts as she struggles to deal with her life. While her biggest challenges may be extreme, there is much that any teen can relate to: frustration with a clueless mother, delight as her friendship with Meghan grows into love, and the struggle for identity and self-knowledge. Watching, guiding, and caring for this emerging young woman are three adults who offer emotional support rather than answers: a gay mentor, a therapist, and a teacher who knows true artistic talent when she sees it. Particularly well written are the scenes with Kendra's therapist; there's no miracle working here, just the long hard slog through pain and uncertainty. And when the revelation comes, there is no cardboard villain in the shadows, but rather a complex person whose cruelties and self-deceptions are believable and deeply sad. The excellent resource section covers widely respected books, Web sites, organizations, and help lines for youth seeking information on extreme abuse, cutting, same-sex attraction, and dissociation. This book will be a particular comfort and source of insight for teens facing any of these challenges, but whatever their life experience, they will be on the edge of their seats, rooting for Kendra to unravel the mystery that shadows her life. This is one heck of a good book!—Carolyn Lehman, Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA [Page 122]. Copyright 2008 Reed Business Information.

Library Media Connection
From the opening paragraph "Someone is following me. I gulp air, trying to breathe"15-year-old Kendra, a gifted artist, has the reader hooked. Kendra's statement to her therapist is the start of a story that unfolds layer by layer. Kendra believes she's being followed by the pedophile who molested her for years, and cutting herself seems to be the only way to hold back her fears. At school, Kendra receives encouragement from her art teacher and finds love with Meghan. The tension mounts as Kendra tries to remember who abused her; she only remembers his hands. The storylines converge when Kendra realizes that her father is her abuser. Her father threatens to kill her; Kendra is wounded, but the police arrive in time. In her Author's Note, the author shares that, like Kendra, she too was abused and cut herself. A list of websites, helplines, and books related to coping with abuse, cutting, suicide, and GLBT round out the book. This novel may help students who think they are alone find the help they need and help other students understand their peers. Highly Recommended. Esther R. Sinofsky, Director, Instructional Media Services, Los Angeles (California) Unified School District 2010 Linworth Publishing, Inc.

Voice of Youth Advocates Reviews
Kendra is frightened. She knows the man that sexually abused her is now stalking her. She finds a note from him in her backpack, and then an MP3 player with a warning recorded on it turns up. As Kendra tries to keep herself together, the only thing in which she seems to find solace is cutting herself. Even her counselor does not know about how badly she harms herself, but when she begins to trust and fall in love with Meghan, another student at her school, she begins to share her secrets with her. Suddenly Kendra realizes the identity of her abuser, but will she be able to save herself from him? Rainfield writes with great empathy and compassion as she tells Kendra's story. Kendra's pain is palpable, and the descriptions of her cutting are graphic. Rainfield delves into the area of ritual abuse, when abusers train victims to self-harm rather than talk about what is actually happening to them and unmask the abuser. Kendra's relationship with Meghan also is very well done. As Kendra begins to trust Meghan and fall in love with her, she begins to open up and share more with people who can help her. It is clear that Rainfield has firsthand knowledge of these topics, and she handles them deftly. There are many resources in the back of the book as well.—Lynn Evarts 4Q 5P S Copyright 2010 Voya Reviews.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Scars*

Source: Author's Website

ALA Rainbow List: 2011
ALA Stonewall Award Nominee: 2011
Governor General Literary Award Finalist: 2010
Independent Literary Award Nominee: 2011
Teaching Tolerance Staff Pick: 2012
YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers: 2011

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *Shine*	**Synopsis** When her best friend falls victim to a vicious hate crime, sixteen-year-old Cat sets out to discover the culprits in her small North Carolina town.
Book Author Myracle, Lauren	
Copyright Year: 2011	Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus

Professional Reviews of *Shine*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (February 1, 2012 (Online))

Grades 8-12. Patrick Truman has been beaten and left for dead at the convenience store where he works. His attackers left a gas nozzle stuffed in his mouth, meant to reference his sexual preference. Cat used to be his best friend, and the shame she feels for having dropped him propels her to find out just what happened and who among those in her closed, North Carolina backwoods community is responsible. Myracle treads carefully to avoid stereotypes: Patrick is not reviled by the other guys (he is something of a mascot), and the young suspects who readers will initially target as perpetrators are more dimensional than they seem. Cat, too, grows throughout the story, as she must face both her prejudices and her fears. But even with her eye on character, Myracle doesn't forget her story, and this is a rip-roaring mystery that will have readers turning pages. The rushed ending is something of a fairy tale. Still, this provides a lot to think about, and teens who are experimenting with their own places in the world will find someone in the book whose problems match their own.

Kirkus Reviews (April 1, 2011)

When her gay best friend is brutally beaten in contemporary Black Creek, N.C., a withdrawn teen tracks his assailant. Different from other kids in their ignorant, poverty-stricken, backwoods community, 16-year-old Cat and 17-year-old Patrick have been "kindred spirits" since childhood. Growing up with a drunken father, a well-meaning aunt and an older brother she no longer trusts, Cat was "full of light and life" until one of her brother's "gay-bashing redneck" friends "messed" with her. For three years, Cat has blinded herself to everyone, including Patrick, convinced her "entire existence meant nothing." But when Patrick's beaten and left for dead at the convenience store where he works, a gasoline nozzle protruding from his mouth, an angry, guilt-ridden Cat knows she must open her eyes and "look straight into the ugliness and find out who hurt him." Cat describes her relentless, determined investigation in the first person, proceeding day by day over a period of two and a half weeks, allowing readers to gradually absorb the complex, twisted relationships, shocking evidence, disturbing memories and gritty atmosphere. Motivated to solve the horrific hate crime, Cat eventually uncovers the truth in a cliffhanging climax in which she confronts fear, discovers that love is stronger than hate and truly "shines." Raw, realistic and compelling. (Fiction. 14 & up)

Publishers Weekly (March 14, 2011)
Cat has been distant from childhood best friend Patrick for three years (she began to "ignore the whole world" after an older friend of her brother's molested her). Even so, when a horrific and possible hate crime leaves openly gay Patrick comatose, she decides to "look straight into the ugliness and find out who hurt him." She grows suspicious of her brother's friends, "the redneck posse," who were with Patrick the night of his attack-especially as she learns they are keeping dangerous secrets, including dealing and using meth. Myracle (Bliss) paints the desperate poverty and bitter divisions within Cat's mountain community well, with memorable details like a friend coloring the duct tape patches on her couch to match the fabric or a meth cooker's bathtub filled with funnels and coffee filters. These details and the thick mystery that Cat unfurls will keep readers engaged-and suspecting several characters, as Cat does. The final faceoff strains believability and the conclusion is a tad neat, but readers will find themselves thinking about Cat's complicated rural community long after the mystery has been solved. Ages 14-up. (May) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

School Library Journal (June 1, 2011)
Gr 10 Up-Cat, 16, has isolated herself over the past three years, retreating from her friends and life after being violated by a boy she knew. But after a gay-bashing incident involving her former best friend at the local convenience store where he works leaves him in a coma, she is determined to enter the world again and investigate the crime to make up for all the years she abandoned him. The sheriff suspects his attackers are most likely out-of-towners angry with Patrick because he refused to sell them alcohol. Cat assumes the perpetrators are closer to home since the "redneck posse" that Patrick hung around with never fully accepted him and must know something since they partied with him earlier in the night. In a week's time, Cat pays visits to her old friends and slowly learns about the hidden relationships in the meth-addled underbelly of her hill-country Southern town. Most of the teens in this novel have either dropped out of high school, come from broken families, or been abused. It's a bleak story leavened a little by the things Cat learns about herself in the course of her investigation. Myracle captures well the regret that many feel for things in their past about which they are ashamed. Cat's reflections on these moments are spot-on.-Shawna Sherman, Hayward Public Library, CA (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Horn Book Guide (Fall 2011)
Sixteen-year-old Cat's gay friend is in a coma, the victim of a hate crime. Her search for the perpetrator leads to disturbing revelations about her friends in their rural impoverished North Carolina town. Cat's authentically Southern, lyrical narration captures tough realities like prejudice, drug use, and abuse (emotional, sexual, and physical), but ends on an optimistic note.

Library Media Connection (August/September 2011)
The book begins with a newspaper article reporting the brutal beating of a teenager, attributed as a gay hate crime. In this small town in North Carolina, the young man's friend Cat tries to find out who did this terrible thing to him. The story is told through Cat's view as Patrick lies in a coma, fighting for his life. The town sees this as a hate crime, but as Cat investigates, the story becomes one of friends not as they seem, drug running, and uncontrolled rage. While this feels like a homophobic story, it quickly morphs into a story with twists and turns as Cat learns the truth about what really happened and grows as an individual. This is a well-written, fast-paced story about the danger all teenagers can face if their peers view them as different. It will be a good addition to your high school collection as a story that tackles diversity issues as well as the hard choices facing teenagers who don't always view the consequences of their actions. Deb Grove, Library Media Specialist, Papillion-LaVista High School, Papillion, Nebraska. RECOMMENDED

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *Shine*
Source: https://alan-ya.org/awards/walden-award/; https://www.ala.org/yalsa
Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Winner: 2012
YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults - Top Ten: 2012
YALSA Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults Selection: 2014
YALSA Reader's Choice for Realistic Fiction Selection: 2012
YALSA Teens' Top Ten Nominee: 2012

Background Information for Library Materials in Review

Book Title: *The Carnival at Bray*	**Synopsis** Uprooted from Chicago to rural Ireland, Maggie searches for her place in the country she now calls home before enduring a tragedy that sends her on a pilgrimage to fulfill her uncle's request. Source: Novelist Plus - accessed via SCDiscus
Book Author Foley, Jessie Ann	
Copyright Year: 2014	

Professional Reviews of *The Carnival at Bray*

Source: Follett Titlewave

Booklist (March 1, 2015 (Online))

Grades 9-12. It's the eve of 1994, and the grunge movement has reached its fevered height. On Ireland's east coast, 16-year-old Maggie, disgruntled and displaced from her native Chicago, after her flighty mother's recent marriage, listens to Nirvana and misses the uncle in America who snuck her into rock concerts. Her plan is to keep her head down and wait for her mother's relationship to implode, but she finds herself drawn into her new town of Bray and its generations of inhabitants. When her first real loss comes on the heels of her first love, she undertakes a pilgrimage to the mecca of grunge music: a Nirvana concert in Rome. Rock-savvy readers might recognize the time line as the story hurtles towards that infamous April of 1994, but, with or without that knowledge, they will be drawn into the sometimes seedy, sometimes madcap atmosphere of this first novel. A mostly fleshed-out cast of supporting characters and rich storytelling make this appealing both to teens and to the contingent that still has copies of Nevermind on vinyl.

Kirkus Reviews starred (September 15, 2014)

In 1993, 16 year-old Maggie and her family move from Chicago to small-town Ireland with the latest of her mother's romantic partners. Moving to Bray, Maggie leaves behind warm, practical Nanny Ei and beloved Uncle Kevin, a 26-year-old who plays in a band, sneaks her into grunge rock concerts and makes himself responsible for Maggie's musical education. Arriving in Ireland, Maggie finds that she's no better at fitting in with the girls of St. Brigid's than she had been at her old school. Instead, she forms a loose web of connections with local figures: Dan Sean, a Bray legend at 99, whose home becomes a refuge for Maggie in times of family conflict; Aine, the bookish classmate with whom Maggie reluctantly goes on double dates; and Eoin, the gentle boy with whom Maggie falls in love. The narrative subtly and carefully interweaves peer and family drama--much of it involving troubled Uncle Kevin--with the highs and lows of the grunge music scene, from the transformative glory of a Nirvana concert to the outpouring of grief around the death of Kurt Cobain. Every character, every place comes alive with crisp, precise detail: Maggie's heartbroken mother "howling along in an off-key soprano" to Joni Mitchell's Blue, Dan Sean welcoming Maggie with a Cossack's hat and a hefty glass of port. Powerfully evocative. (Historical fiction. 14 & up)

School Library Journal (September 1, 2014)
Gr 9 Up-This promising debut, set in the heyday of grunge, tells the story of Maggie Lynch, a displaced Chicagoan and grunge music fan, living in a quiet town (Bray) on the Irish Sea. Maggie was uprooted from her friends, her music scene, and her beloved Uncle Kevin when her romantically fickle mother married her latest boyfriend, resulting in a move to his hometown. During her time of difficult adjustment to Ireland, Maggie falls in love with Eion the very moment a devastating loss hits her family, leading to rebellion and a journey to Rome to see Nirvana and fulfill Uncle Kevin's wish for her. Foley sets the scene vividly, writing that Bray has a "soggy sort of grandeur" and weaving in the tiny cultural differences that Maggie has to navigate as an American. The narrative voice is clear and compelling, but Maggie often makes decisions that feel incongruous to her character. She has an independent spirit, but Eion only joins her on the journey because she needs a rescue. A self-professed Nirvana fan, which is critical to the plot, she never seems to like the band as much as she is trying to impress Uncle Kevin. However, the secondary characters are complex and sympathetic: Foley has also populated Bray with a host of quirky, loving, and memorable background characters, which enriches the story. Recommended for teens who enjoy travelogue romance stories or novels about rock music.- Susannah Goldstein, Convent of the Sacred Heart, New York City (c) Copyright 2014. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Awards/Distinctions Awarded to *The Carnival at Bray*

Source: NoveList Plus, YALSA Book Finder Database

Michael L. Printz Award Honor Selection: 2015
William C. Morris YA Debut Award Finalist: 2015
YALSA Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults: 2017
YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults: 2015