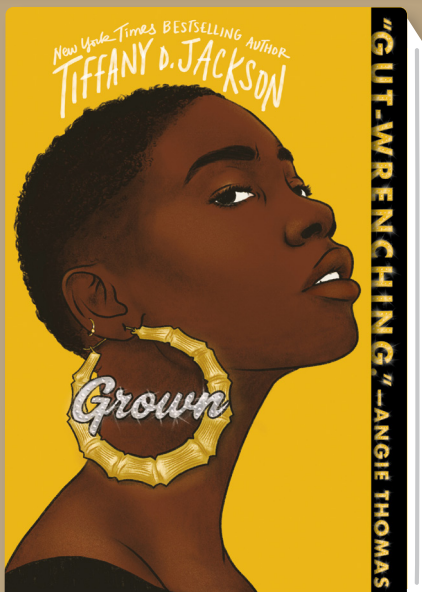
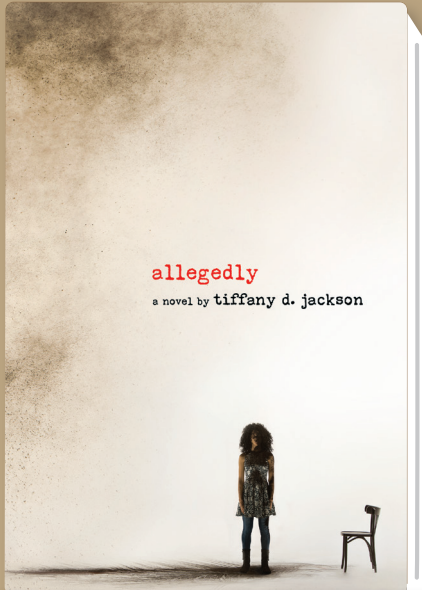


TIFFANY D. JACKSON



AUTHOR STUDY

TIFFANY D. JACKSON is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Allegedly*, *Monday's Not Coming*, *Let Me Hear a Rhyme*, *Grown*, *White Smoke*, and *The Weight of Blood* and coauthor of *Blackout* and *Whiteout*. A Walter Dean Myers Honor Book, Coretta Scott King–John Steptoe New Talent Award winner, and an NAACP Image Award nominee, she received her bachelor of arts in film from Howard University, earned her master of arts in media studies from the New School, and has over a decade in TV and film experience. The Brooklyn native still resides in the borough she loves. You can visit her at writeinbk.com.

Tiffany D. Jackson writes riveting suspense novels that go far beyond thrills and chills. With throughlines of gentrification, systemic oppression, institutional racism, and abuse, coupled with gripping plots and twisty surprises, her books are **“sure to initiate important conversations while delivering an engrossing story”** (*The Horn Book* magazine).

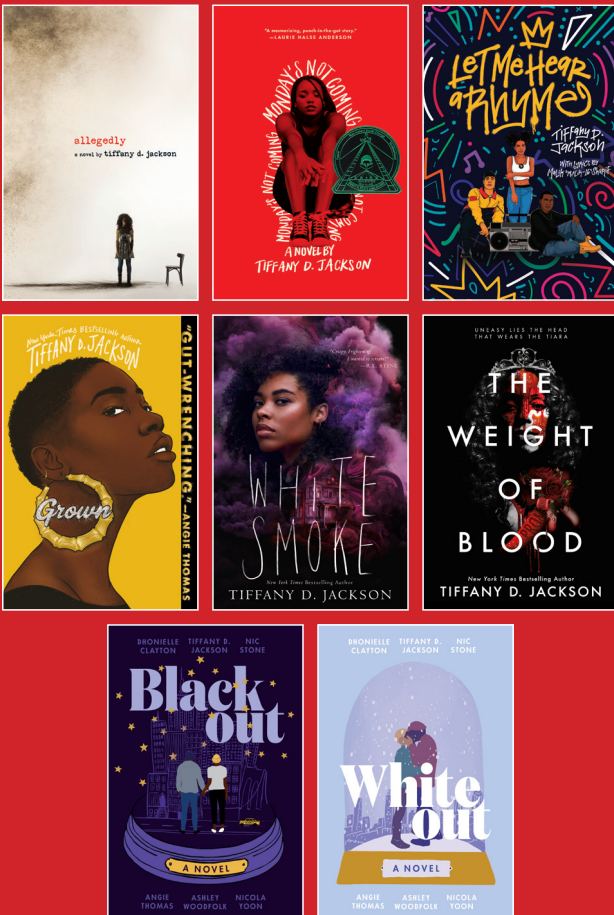
“A TITAN AMONG HER PEERS.”
—Booklist



Photo by Kolin Mendez

“THE QUEEN OF YA.”
—Entertainment Weekly

“JACKSON IS ONE OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE YA SUSPENSE WRITERS IN RECENT YEARS.”
—SLJ



Guide created by: **JULIA E. TORRES** is a nationally recognized veteran language arts teacher and librarian in Denver, Colorado. She is an EduColor steering committee member, a Book Love Foundation and ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE) board member, and a cofounder of #DisruptTexts.

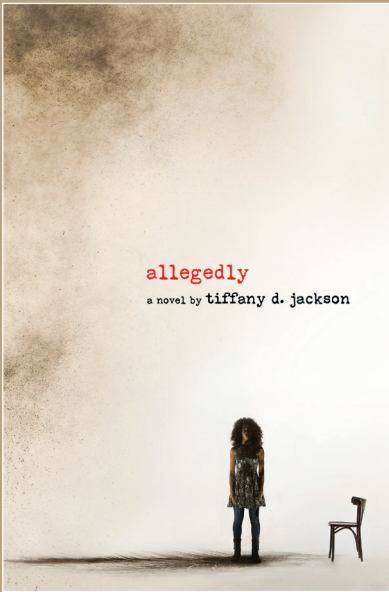
COMMON THEMES IN TIFFANY D. JACKSON'S WORK

Though all the protagonists in Tiffany D. Jackson's works identify as young, Black, and female, their stories of **coming of age** are complicated by their perceptions of themselves and the misconceptions others hold about them. Mary in *Allegedly*, Enchanted in *Grown*, and Maddy in *The Weight of Blood* are victimized by individuals and societies that should have made and maintained safe spaces for them. As each of the girls navigates fictionalized accounts of events and life stories that closely mirror those from our society, readers learn to evaluate for themselves the significance of individual **perception vs. reality**. As teaching tools, *Monday's Not Coming*, *Grown*, *Allegedly*, *Let Me Hear a Rhyme*, *White Smoke*, and *The Weight of Blood* offer opportunities for readers to evaluate the American justice system and its role in perpetuating **institutional racism and systemic oppression** against Black American individuals and communities through gentrification, police brutality, child welfare, and sexual violence.

Each of the novels offers a unique window into what it might mean for a young Black girl to grow up, live, and love in a society that regularly silences and erases Black female experiences. Tiffany D. Jackson's writing bravely and unapologetically explores the theme of individual and collective responsibility, in a validating and inspiring pursuit of **justice through artistic expression**.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- 1. UNRELIABLE NARRATOR.** A commonality between many of Tiffany D. Jackson's books is the unreliable narrator. In *White Smoke*, Mari suffers from anxiety that shapes the way that she perceives reality. *Monday's Not Coming* is told in four separate timelines that have to be pieced together to understand what happened. In *Allegedly* Jackson manipulates the reader's ideas of truth and lies. Using one of the previously mentioned books, create a timeline of events with evidence from the novel to support one character's path between two opposing ideas. It could be truth and lies, guilt and innocence, responsibility and irresponsibility, nurture and neglect, or any others that you identify as influential to understanding the plot.
- 2. GENTRIFICATION.** *Monday's Not Coming*, *White Smoke*, and *The Weight of Blood* deal with gentrification, abandoned neighborhoods, and segregation. The United States has a long and often brutal history of displacing communities of predominantly Black, Latinx, and Indigenous home and land occupants. Using the resources and databases available to you, research the history of redlining in your area. Consider patterns of migration around industrialization and urbanization. What communities of people have been displaced? Where did they go? How did land or property values change as a result of this process? Who benefited? Create a multimedia presentation, TikTok video, or other social media campaign to reveal your findings.
- 3. LYRIC ANALYSIS.** *Grown* and *Let Me Hear a Rhyme* both talk about music and the music industry. Music is poetry, particularly hip-hop. Look up the lyrics to one of the songs mentioned in the books, or one of your favorite songs. Analyze the poetic devices used in the lyrics. What connections can you make to your life and social issues in the world?
- 4. WAGE DISCRIMINATING.** Coming of age and seeking independence is a theme throughout many of Tiffany D. Jackson's books. In *Grown*, part of what draws Enchanted to the music industry is her desire to seek fame and fortune and build independent wealth for herself. As of August 2021, a Black woman makes sixty-three cents for every American dollar earned by a non-Hispanic white man. Research information about #BlackWomensEqualPayDay and brainstorm how you can educate those in your community about issues of wage discrimination via a community forum or online discussion.



allegedly

ABOUT THE BOOK

Mary B. Addison killed a baby. Allegedly. She didn't say much in that first interview with detectives, and the media filled in the only blanks that mattered: a white baby had died while under the care of a churchgoing Black woman and her nine-year-old daughter. The public convicted Mary and the jury made it official. But did she do it? There wasn't a point to setting the record straight before, but now she's got her unborn child to think about. When the state threatens to take her baby, Mary's fate lies in the hands of the one person she distrusts the most: her Momma. No one knows the real Momma. But does anyone know the real Mary?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you believe a person can be “born bad”?
- What social support does Mary have/not have in the home? What draws her to Ted?
- Unpack the way cleaning works as a metaphor in the story. In your opinion, can past actions make a person morally “clean” or “dirty”?
- What are some of the warning signs that something isn't quite right with Momma?
- What can you infer about Ted when Mary goes looking for him and is met with the comments, “Not again,” and “You one of his girls?” (p. 196)? What does this reveal about Mary and her ability to correctly discern the character of those closest to her?
- With respect to caregiving, what do Ms. Claire and Ms. Cora provide for Mary that Momma does not?
- How do Ted's expectations of adult life differ from his reality? What are some of the ways he is forced to grow up faster than he might have if his circumstances were different?
- Compare and contrast the two Thanksgiving celebrations. How might holiday celebrations influence an individual's sense of belonging and acceptance?
- Compare and contrast Mary and New Girl in respect to their relationships with their parents. How are they seen as the same by those around them, and also revealed to be vastly different through the story's narration?
- What is the role of forgiveness in the story? Do any of the characters forgive those who have wronged them? In your opinion, do you think forgiveness is possible?



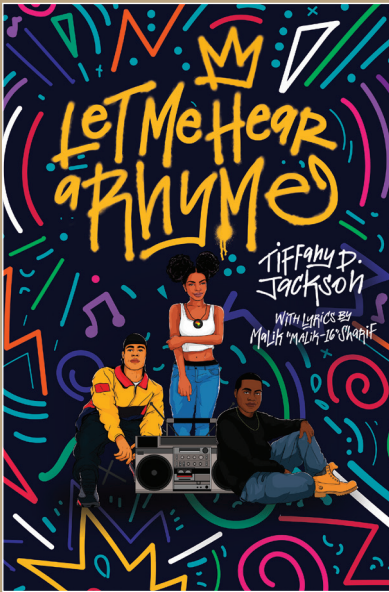
MONDAY'S NOT COMING

ABOUT THE BOOK

Monday Charles is missing, and only Claudia seems to notice. Claudia and Monday have always been inseparable. So when Monday doesn't turn up for the first day of school, Claudia starts to worry. When she doesn't show for the second day, or the second week, Claudia knows that something is wrong. Claudia needs her best—and only—friend more than ever. But Monday's mother refuses to give Claudia a straight answer, and Monday's sister April is even less help. As Claudia digs deeper into her friend's disappearance, she discovers that no one seems to remember the last time they saw Monday. How can a teenage girl just vanish without anyone noticing that she's gone?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are some of the first signs that Claudia isn't experiencing time in a linear fashion?
- What is concerning about the community's response to Monday's disappearance?
- Early in the novel, Claudia reflects that, "If Monday were a color, she'd be red. Crisp, striking, vivid, you couldn't miss her—a bull's-eye—in a room, a crackling flame" (p. 41). What feelings do you normally associate with the color red? How might this phrase serve as foreshadowing?
- What inconsistencies exist in the description of Mrs. Charles's character? What clues do readers have that she may not be as she appears?
- What clues do readers have that Claudia's home life is drastically different from Monday's?
- How does Monday's disappearance impact Claudia? Reflect on the way Monday protects Claudia and nurtures her as the two navigate school and social situations—and the ways their relationship sometimes borders on codependency.
- What are the initial emotional and psychological consequences for Claudia when Monday disappears?
- When Mrs. Valente tells Claudia that she's "... very bright. [She] just ... absorbs things differently than other students ... and there ain't nothing wrong with that" (p. 162), she offers her acceptance. What role does Mrs. Valente play in helping Claudia deal with shame and self-doubt?
- How does Ma serve as a surrogate mother for Monday? What does this reveal for the reader about Monday's relationship with her own mother?
- As Claudia starts to develop a life of her own in the wake of Monday's disappearance, she also begins to learn that she may not know Monday as well as she thought. What information is uncovered? What does this information reveal about Monday's life, relationships, and character?
- How is Monday both visible and invisible throughout the novel? What does this say about the state of Black girls and women in society?



LET ME HEAR A RHYME

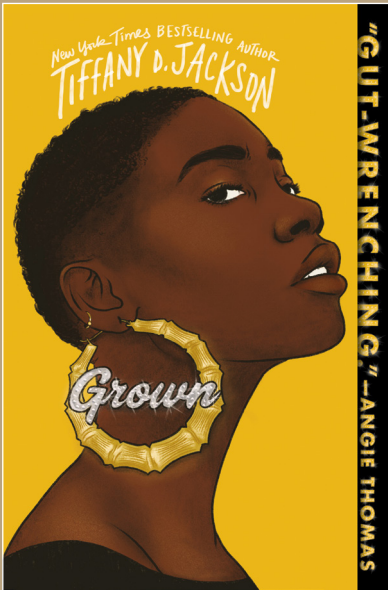
ABOUT THE BOOK

Brooklyn, 1998. Biggie Smalls was right: Things done changed. But that doesn't mean that Quadir and Jarrell are cool letting their best friend Steph's music lie forgotten under his bed after he's murdered. With the help of Steph's younger sister, Jasmine, they come up with a plan to promote Steph's music under a new rap name. But when his demo catches the attention of a hotheaded music label rep, the pressure of keeping their secret grows, and Quadir, Jarrell, and Jasmine are forced to confront the truth about what happened to Steph. With everything riding on Steph's fame, they need to decide what they stand for or lose all that they've worked so hard to hold on to—including each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does reading a story told from multiple points of view inform your understanding of the book? Why do you think the author chose to write from the perspectives of each of these particular characters?
- How does Steph describe the neighborhood he and his friends are from? What is some of the language used in the “headlines” peppered throughout the book when describing the Brooklyn community? How does your personal experience inform your opinions of a place, people, and community? Why is it important to tell our own stories?
- The only time that Jarrell and Steph almost get into a fight is over whether they would ever snitch. What are the codes or rules that Steph and Jarrell live by? Where do they come from? Who are they meant to serve? Does the way that the people around you live impact the way you want to live?
- How do the police treat people in the Brevoort community? What do race, gender, and/or socioeconomic status have to do with the way police treat different characters?
- How does Jasmine reshape Quadir's understanding of what Brooklyn is, has been, and could be? Using the metaphor of Brooklyn, how does Knowledge inform Jarrell's understanding of his blackness and African heritage? Do you think understanding your history helps you to shape your future?
- How does hip-hop music bring Jasmine and Quadir together? Have you ever heard a song that made you feel something? What makes hip-hop more than just music? What are the five foundational elements of hip-hop?
- What did Biggie mean to Brooklyn? How does the entire Brooklyn borough mourn Biggie on the day of his funeral? How do Jarrell, Quadir, and Jasmine mourn Steph collectively? What is the difference between grieving on your own and grieving in community with others?
- On page 317, Jasmine is surprised by Ronnie and her crew: “I never expected they'd have such feminist views. Maybe I am too . . . judgmental.” How does Ronnie's perspective about Lil' Kim and Foxy Brown make Jasmine think twice about her own opinions? What are some different ways to be a feminist? How do Ronnie and Jasmine talk differently about the empowerment of black women? Which one of them do you agree with more? Why?

Let Me Hear a Rhyme discussion questions created by Amanda Torres M.Ed, MFA, educator, writer, and arts administrator.



Grown

ABOUT THE BOOK

Korey Fields is dead. When Enchanted Jones wakes with blood on her hands and zero memory of the previous night, no one—the police and Korey’s fans included—has more questions than she does. Korey was Enchanted’s ticket to stardom. Enchanted was an aspiring singer, struggling with her family’s recent move to the suburbs. But then legendary R&B artist Korey Fields spots her at an audition, and suddenly her dream of being a professional singer takes flight. Enchanted is dazzled by Korey’s luxurious life, but soon her dream turns into a nightmare. Behind Korey’s charm and star power hides a dark side. Except now he’s dead.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What attracts Enchanted and Korey Fields, first as a team in work, and later as they grow in their personal attraction to one another?
- What are some early warning signs that Korey may not be exactly the person he wants Enchanted to believe he is?
- On page 148, Enchanted thinks, “. . . If I want freedom, I have to work this out on my own.” How does this thinking put her closer to being in danger?
- Why does Enchanted lie about needing help during the welfare check?
- How does Korey rationalize his behavior and make Enchanted doubt her own intuition about what’s really going on and who he really is?
- Who are the people in Enchanted’s circle of support? What does it take to finally make her turn to them?
- What sorts of pressures exist that discourage Enchanted from seeking justice? Consider internal and external factors.
- How does Korey use emotional blackmail to dominate Enchanted? Consider both his words and actions.
- On page 305, Enchanted mentions that, “Peter Pan kind of reminds [her] of Korey. Flying high on blissful thoughts, he was fine never growing up, wanted to stay a kid forever. He was also forgetful, self-centered, and cocky enough to put himself in danger, skating by without consequence over and over again.” From your perspective, what are the social and interpersonal factors that allow Korey to escape over and over again?
- In the end, does Enchanted manage to save herself? Explain your answer.



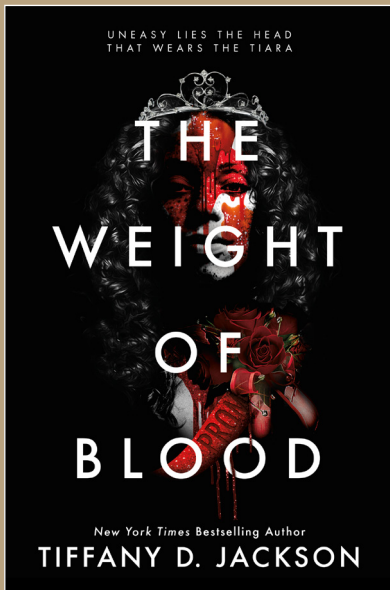
WHITE SMOKE

ABOUT THE BOOK

Marigold is running from ghosts. The phantoms of her old life keep haunting her, but a move with her newly blended family might be the fresh start she needs. Their renovated picture-perfect home on Maple Street, sitting between dilapidated houses, surrounded by wary neighbors, has its . . . secrets. Household items vanish, doors open on their own, lights turn off, shadows walk past rooms, voices can be heard in the walls, and there's a foul smell seeping through the vents, which only Mari seems to notice. But "running from ghosts" is just a metaphor, right?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What types of coping strategies does Mari use to deal with her anxiety?
- What does Mari notice about her environment that gives her a sense of unease? What clues do you have that her perception may not match reality?
- On page 100, Mari reasons that, "Parents have this unique way of reminding you of the ways you've disappointed them without spelling it out." What do Mari's thoughts reveal about her family dynamics, the way she perceives herself, and the way she believes others perceive her?
- What are the Sterling Laws and what impact did they have on the Cedarville community?
- What phobia does Mari have? How does this amplify her fears of the unexplained noises and other phenomena in the house?
- How does Yusef serve as a safe person and emotional support for Mari?
- What history of Greenville is revealed as Mari gets to know Yusef and begins to ask questions?
- Yusef says to Mari, "Proud you went back to get your sister" because it "means you ain't as heartless as you think" (p. 285). Describe Mari's relationship with Piper. Why do you think they feel the way they do toward one another?
- How does Yusef feel when he discovers Mari's secret? Why does he feel that way?
- How does Mari's past catch up with her? What is revealed about her family's reasons for coming to Cedarville?
- What does Mari learn about the importance of discovering the truth and the dangers of believing without question the illusions of one's own imagination?



THE WEIGHT OF BLOOD

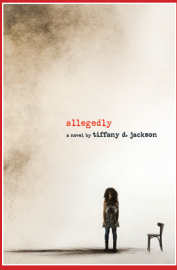
ABOUT THE BOOK

Maddy wants nothing more than to be loved for who she is. But that's not her reality—tortured, bullied, and otherwise invisible, Maddy struggles to feel powerful. Until she meets Kenny, the superstar quarterback who asks her to prom, and things finally start to seem like they might work out for her. But the town isn't done with her just yet . . . Little do they know just how powerful Maddy Washington is.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- “When asked if she was Black, she straight up denied it because she knew damn well how Black people were treated and wanted no part of that. And she had the privilege to do so while the rest of us don’t” (p. 223). What privilege is Kali talking about? How does Maddy’s proximity to whiteness, and denial of her Blackness, make it difficult for other Black students to be in solidarity with her?
- How do the lasting effects of racism continue to exist within the structures, systems, and beliefs of the town? Consider how the town is designed, where people live, and some of the town’s most important institutions (school, power plant, police, sports). How does this connect to what Tanya says about “societal racism” on p. 402?
- Where does Jules get the inspiration for what she does to Maddy at the all-together prom? Where does the phrase “Maddy did it” come from? How do our families and friends’ beliefs influence our understanding of the world?
- “You wanna help Black people? How about you start by actually helping them instead of just helping yourself” (p. 118)? What does Kali mean when she says this to Wendy at a Black Student Union protest? How does Wendy think about her relationships? To Kenny? To Jules? To wealth and race? What do you think is most important to Wendy? Why does Wendy propose the idea of an integrated prom? Is it to help Black people or help herself?
- What does it mean to advocate for someone? Where can you find examples of Maddy, Kenny, Kali, or other Black people advocating for themselves and each other in this book? What are the different strategies they use?
- Why do you think Kenny’s dad doesn’t want him to get mixed up in school politics? Kali and Kenny are siblings but have very different ways of navigating their Blackness. How do their strategies differ? Does Kenny’s non-involvement and sports celebrity status protect him from experiencing race-based micro and macro aggressions? How does Kali help her brother embrace his full self?

The Weight of Blood guide created by Amanda Torres M.Ed, MFA, educator, writer, and arts administrator.



★ “With remarkable skill, Jackson offers an unflinching portrayal of the raw social outcomes when youth are entrapped in a vicious cycle of nonparenting and are sent spiraling down the prison-for-profit pipeline. This dark, suspenseful exploration of justice and perception raises important questions teens will want to discuss.”

—SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL (starred review)



“This is a book that is filled to the brim with shocking twists and turns, but in 'Grown,' Jackson also centers Black girls in conversations about abuse, discussions they are so often erased from.”

—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW



★ “This thought-provoking thriller examines issues such as abuse, gentrification, and the marginalization of people of color with nuance and sensitivity. The narrative deftly moves back and forth between past and present, building to a devastating conclusion. A spellbinding, profoundly moving choice for YA collections.”

—SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL (starred review)



★ “Jackson conjures horrors both supernatural and otherwise in a masterful juxtaposition of searing social commentary and genuinely creepy haunts, as well as providing an authentic portrayal of tensions within a blended family. Begs to be finished in one sitting, though maybe with the lights kept on.”

—KIRKUS REVIEWS (starred review)



★ “Deftly chronicles the timely story of bold young talent gone too soon . . . Jackson scores a bull’s-eye with her passionate homage to black city life in the late '90s, yet it’s her earnest takes on creativity, love, and loss that are timeless.”

—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (starred review)



★ “Jackson kills it with this nod to Stephen King’s *Carrie*, drawing clever and clear connections from our nation’s tragic history (and present) to the horror genre . . . Layers of intentional complications speak to racial identity, passing, colorism, and the consequences of misinformation, and this novel is a spirited urge to critically examine traditions and do, as we know we should, better.”

—BULLETIN OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS (starred review)

CONTENT WARNING:

The books featured in this guide tackle tough topics and depict some content that may be difficult for readers who have experienced trauma to engage with. This includes mentions of police brutality, sexual violence, addiction to opioids, child abuse, and kidnapping, among other occurrences that are unfortunately harsh realities to all too many. We encourage you to research trauma-informed education practices and to thoughtfully consider ways to alert your students of potentially activating (sometimes called “triggering”) content before broaching sensitive topics.