



# TEEN BOOK REVIEWS

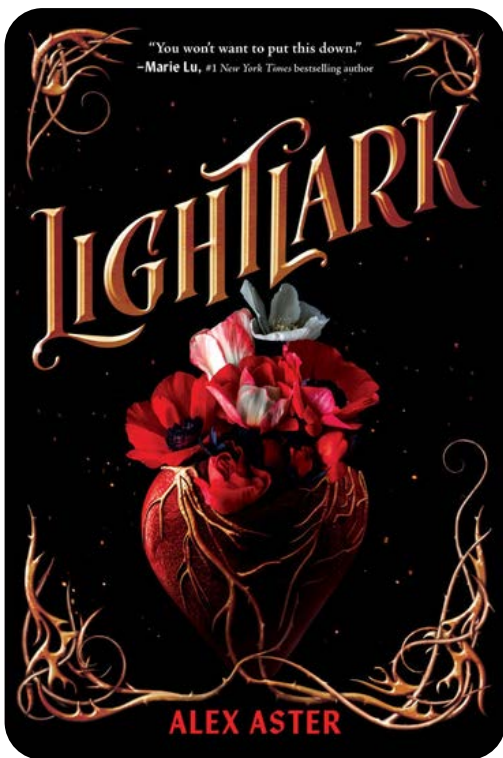
DECEMBER 2023

GUIDE

BOOKS IN THE  
YOUNG ADULT  
COLLECTION

BOOKS IN THE  
ADULT  
COLLECTION

BOOKS IN THE  
CHILDREN  
COLLECTION



# LIGHTLARK BY ALEX ASTER

CALL #

YA FIC ASTER

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

FANTASY

## Book Review:

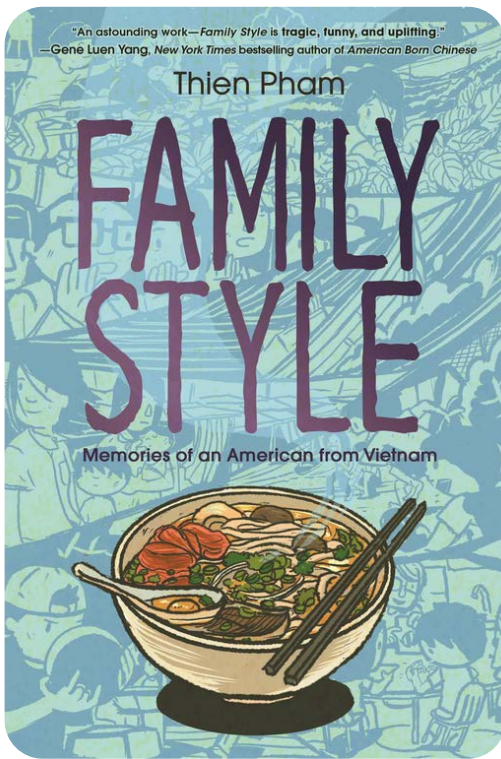
Lightlark follows the story of an island. Every hundred years, the island appears to host a game where six rulers fight to break their “deadly” curses. In doing so, one will win power, and another shall die. The story follows the main character, Isla, as she competes in these games to break her realm’s curse, falling into the risk of love as she fights.

It’s safe to say that this book does not achieve its goal very well. The promise of a “dark fairy Hunger Games” tale is only slightly fulfilled; the only real fight scenes or scenes of betrayal are in one short chapter and the chaotic finale of the book, and the book seems to use the idea of curses, royalty, and brutal games as decoration instead of actually looking into the topic. Additionally, the curses are also pretty random and not well thought out, as they are all described as “deadly” when some are clearly worse than others, from not being able to fly (Skyling kingdom curse) to everyone in your kingdom having a guaranteed death at 25 (Starling kingdom curse).

The book’s main focus is telling the story of Isla and her two love interests, Oro and Grimm, and her partnership with them to find a less brutal way to break their curses, the games being in the background. Obviously, there’s nothing wrong with this; the only fault this book has is in its marketing. If it were portrayed as a story where the main character teams up with her love interests to find a new way to break their curses, I would’ve enjoyed it a lot more. Still, since it promises major betrayals throughout the book (the only real betrayal is in the end, which was random plot twist after random plot twist in a few pages after the book’s low drama storyline for a hundred pages), lying, cheating, and tons of fighting, it made it more disappointing.

The only other bad part of this book is that the main character has an “effortlessly perfect and can seduce any guy she wants” vibe, which I’m not over-exaggerating in the slightest, as you can see by this quote, “Isla’s voice was unnaturally good...waves crashing roughly the island’s harrowing white cliffs as if trying to get a good look at her,” (pg. 20). This description of her perfect voice goes on for a page and a half.

I wouldn’t recommend this book to people searching for more Hunger Games-esque stories with love, betrayal, fighting, and true mystery, but I would recommend it to people who are just looking for fantasy romance. Aside from the bad marketing and the poor plot, the book was nicely written and is pretty good for the author’s debut novel.



# FAMILY STYLE BY THIEN PHAM

CALL # YA GN B PHAM

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT GRAPHIC NOVEL

RATING: ★★★★★

GENRE: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMICS

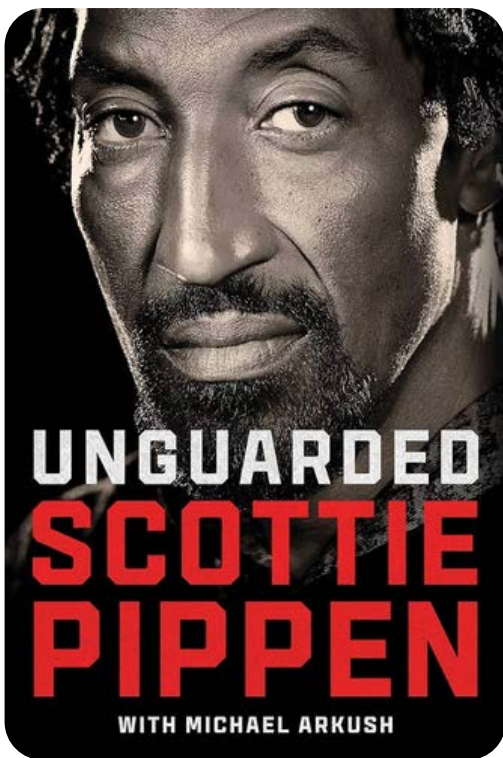
## Book Review:

Family Style follows the story of a young Vietnamese boy named Thien, moving to America. This book is a great way to view immigrants' struggles while adapting to a new place. Throughout the story, we follow this boy as he strives and struggles to find a feeling of belonging in a new country. All of his new experiences are in one way or another connected to food, the food of success, of sorrow, of new culture, and lost ones, all while growing up.

I thought this book was an interesting and intriguing story. The drawings were done in a unique style I had never seen before, and I eventually came to love the way that these beautiful illustrations were done. I thought that the words provided great detail and power to the emotions the author was attempting to invoke. Additionally, the author helps shine a light on the struggles of immigrants coming to America while demonstrating the joys and successes this family had amid previous hardships. My favorite characters were Thien's parents since they worked so hard to provide a good life for their children, which inspires me to always persevere through the struggle.

I would give this story 4 stars. I thought that this book was beautifully done and was such a heartwarming story. The illustrations were incredible, and the plot had me at the edge of my seat (and made me finish the book in one day!). For anyone considering reading this, I would highly recommend doing so; this was one of my favorite books! Also, this book, I think, would be good for kids 10ish years or older, so the issues they talk about make sense and are more relevant for them. If you like American Born Chinese, then I suggest you check this book out!





# UNGUARDED BY SCOTTIE PIPPEN

CALL #

B PIPPEN, S.

COLLECTION:

BIOGRAPHY

RATING:



GENRE:

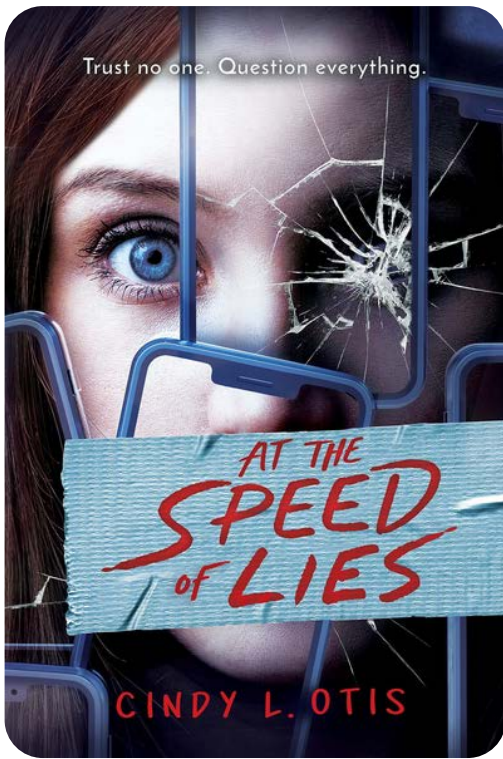
AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AND MEMOIRS

## Book Review:

Unguarded is a biography about the life of Scottie Pippen, the great facilitator for the 1990s Chicago Bulls. The book captures Scottie's daily life and stories from when he was still a boy living in Hamburg, Arkansas, as well as his time in the NBA and thoughts on certain events and stories. This book captures it all in its pages, even the highs and lows. Overall, this biography will introduce Scottie Pippen's family, teammates, rivals, and what it took for him to become a two-time gold Olympic medalist and six-time NBA champion.

This was one of the fastest reads of my life. The book really kept me in touch with the events and stories happening. The pacing was very good, and it never took too long to get past a certain moment. The story was good at keeping interesting topics throughout the story and never had a dull storyline to get through. Scottie Pippen also talks about untold stories, and you get to hear his side of the story and his thoughts for certain moments, such as almost being traded to the Seattle SuperSonics. Overall, the book was very interesting and could keep me locked in for a long time.

This book is definitely for readers who enjoy basketball and biographies. I recommend this book due to its well-written events, thrilling action, and good writing and grammar. Even if you don't play basketball or watch it, I am sure you will enjoy the book. The book isn't that thick and has decently sized pages, so reading it should be very casual. The vocabulary isn't over the top either, so any reading level should be able to understand it. Overall, I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys basketball or likes sports biographies.



# AT THE SPEED OF LIES

## BY

### CINDY L. OTIS

CALL #

YA FIC OTIS

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



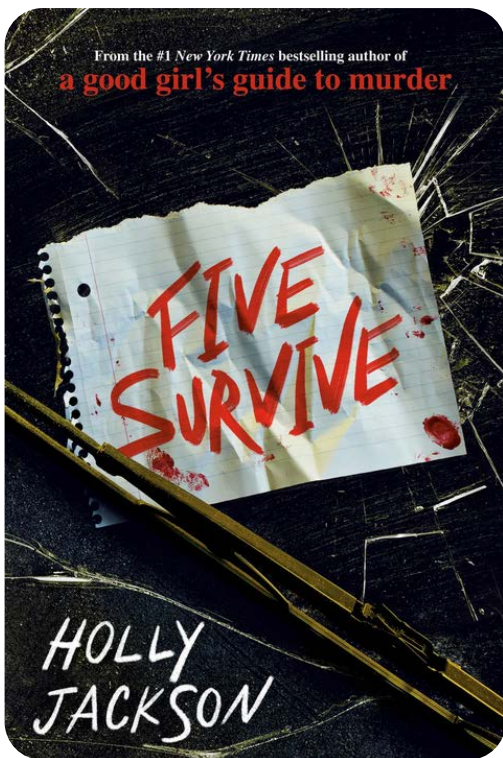
GENRE:

MYSTERIES; THRILLERS AND SUSPENSE

#### Book Review:

Quinn Calvet, a young girl with plans to grow her social media following and enjoy her time with her best friend Ximena and sister Ava, finds herself feeling left behind due to her disability and Ava's newfound obsession with school clubs and studying. Quinn tries to express her feelings to Ava, but she is too preoccupied. Meanwhile, a club called Defend Kids emerges and gains widespread attention after two children are kidnapped from a nearby town. Quinn's posts about Defend Kids on social media go viral, gaining her new followers. However, as more children go missing and the authorities seem indifferent, the dangers that Defend Kids aims to combat become all too real when two of Quinn's classmates are kidnapped as well.

I would rate the book At the Speed of Lies 4 stars because it is a compelling young adult mystery novel that offers a thrilling exploration of social media, friendship, and the dangers of online communities. Catherine Hapka's ability to tackle important themes while maintaining an engaging and fast-paced plot is commendable. The relatable characters and thought-provoking narrative make this book a must-read for fans of the genre. Overall, "At the Speed of Lies" is a captivating and thought-provoking novel that will leave readers eagerly turning the pages until the very end.



# FIVE SURVIVE BY HOLLY JACKSON

CALL # YA FIC JACKSON

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE: PSYCHOLOGICAL SUSPENSE

## Book Review:

Five Survive by Holly Jackson, author of the Good Girl's Guide to Murder series, is a thriller and mystery young adult novel. The book is about seventeen-year-old Red Kenny, and it is the story of a simple road trip for spring break that turned into a sole night of survival with no outside contact. Red and a couple of her friends are driving from their hometown in Philadelphia to Gulf Shores, Alabama, to spend spring break. But around halfway through to their destination, the RV they are driving breaks down in the middle of nowhere. Unable to use a phone to contact for help due to no cell service, the six friends must survive the night. The story takes a sickly turn when they realize there is an active shooter with them, prying for information only one of the friends knows. But the question is, will all the others die if that person does not spill their secret?

The book Five Survive was written amazingly, as expected from the author of Good Girl's Guide to Murder! I really like how each character seems to play a key role in the story and how everyone seems to hold a secret ready to be told. It adds a nice touch when some characters seem to lose themselves in the eight hours they must survive; it nicely explains how fear can tear a person apart. My favorite character has to be Arthur, who at first seems just to be a side character, but as the story progresses, different parts of his story are revealed. I would rate this book a four out of five because even though the whole book was nicely written, I find open-ended stories unsatisfactory. Other than that, I highly recommend it.

I would recommend this book to anyone who likes thrillers and mystery, as the story includes plot twists and sudden deaths that leave you on edge. I find any book by Holly Jackson enjoyable. Although the book starts a little slow, by the middle of the story, the tension clings to the air. Five Survive reminds me of another mystery book, One of Us is Lying, since it incorporates the idea of some people walking in but one less coming out. In conclusion, I found the book, Five Survive, to be a very amazing read and would recommend it to others who also like the thriller and mystery genre.



# KILL JOY BY HOLLY JACKSON

CALL #

YA FIC JACKSON

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

MYSTERY

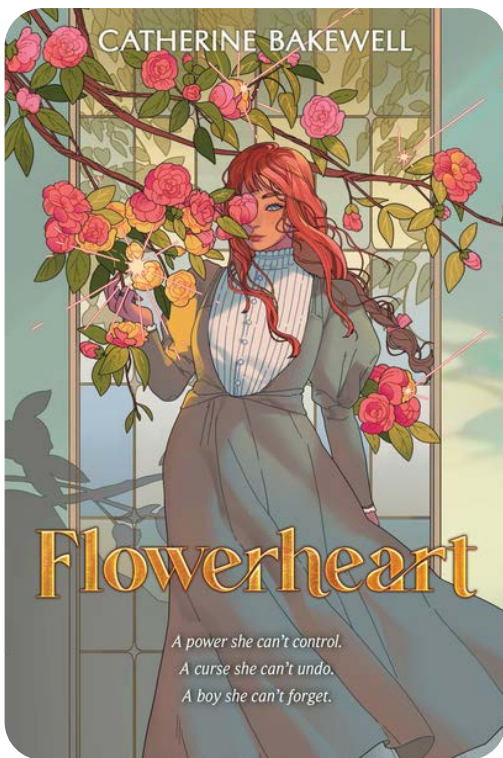


## Book Review:

Holly Jackson's suspenseful and exciting novel Kill Joy is about our favorite teenage investigator from A Good Girl's Guide to Murder, Pip. She is getting together with her friends for a night of mystery-solving. They're throwing a 1920s-themed murder mystery party, complete with period-appropriate attire and dialect. Furthermore, during the party, there are a ton of hints and red herrings that can be used to cast suspicion in any direction after someone "dies."

While reading this book, I was reminded of how much I enjoyed the original series. It is a lot of fun to follow Pip as she attempts to identify the killer because she is such a clever and feisty protagonist. I laughed many times throughout this entire book. It was adorable and hilarious how terribly Pip, Cara, Conner, Zach, Lauren, Anthony, and Jamie acted out their roles, not to mention how ill-planned the party was. Additionally, I noticed that my comprehension of Pip and her general capacity to solve murder cases had improved significantly. The plot of the mystery itself was cleverly constructed, and it was both exciting and entertaining. For me, the most satisfying part was when Pipp disclosed her suspect and reason. It was interesting to observe her thought process again.

Because of Holly Jackson's readable and captivating writing, Kill Joy is a page-turner from beginning to end. Emotion, drama, and mystery are all expertly blended by the author to provide a compelling and well-rounded reading experience. For lovers of the thriller genre, Kill Joy is a must-read, and it further establishes Holly Jackson's status as a gifted writer who can hold readers' attention until the very last page.



# FLOWERHEART BY CATHERINE BAKEWELL

CALL #

YA FIC BAKEWELL

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

FANTASY

## Book Review:

Flowerheart is a young adult fantasy novel set in a Victorian-inspired world of plants, potions, and spells. It follows a young witch named Clara Lucas, who possesses powerful magic that she is unable to control. When her wild magic accidentally injures her beloved father, she is forced to make a deal with her estranged childhood best friend, Xavier. In exchange for helping Xavier run his potions business, he agrees to help her learn to control her magic in order to perform the complicated spell needed to cure her father. But it becomes clear that Xavier is harboring a mysterious secret, and as the two rekindle their friendship, Clara becomes determined to find out what Xavier is hiding.

It was easy to feel transported into this world because of how atmospheric the writing style was. Many of the scenes made me feel like I was watching a whimsical movie, and I especially enjoyed the descriptions of all the different types of flowers and plants. While I appreciated how fast-paced and easy to read this book was, I also felt like some aspects of it were slightly rushed, and because the worldbuilding was very loose, the magic system didn't really make sense and felt very shallow and underdeveloped. Clara and Xavier were both likable protagonists, although I think they came off a little one-dimensional at times. I did like their relationship development and getting to see the two of them become close again after years of being apart. Overall, this was a lighthearted, uplifting book that was simple and enjoyable to read.

I would recommend this book to people looking for a light and cozy fantasy story to breeze through. It's perfect for someone trying to get into reading more fantasy, especially if they feel intimidated by other stories with much heavier themes and harder-to-understand world-building. The lush Gothic setting, simple and easy writing style, and sweet romance make for the perfect book to curl up and read in one sitting!