



# TEEN BOOK REVIEWS

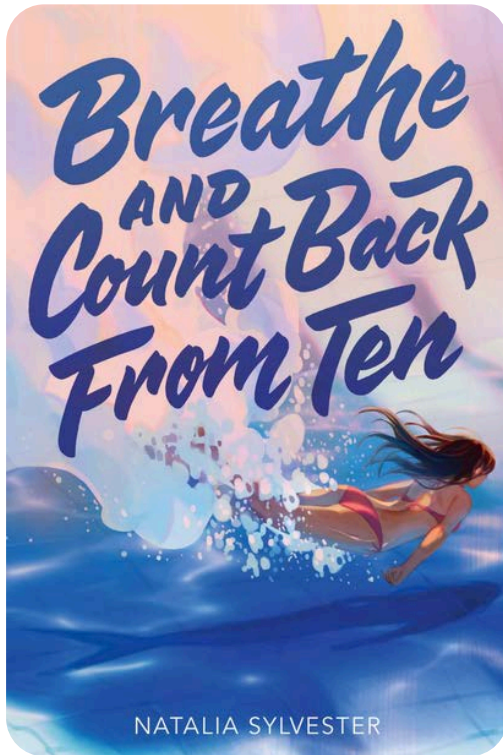
MAY 2024

GUIDE

BOOKS IN THE  
YOUNG ADULT  
COLLECTION

BOOKS IN THE  
ADULT  
COLLECTION

BOOKS IN THE  
CHILDREN  
COLLECTION



# BREATH AND COUNT BACK FROM TEN BY NATALIA SYLVESTER

CALL # YA FIC SYLVESTER

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING: 

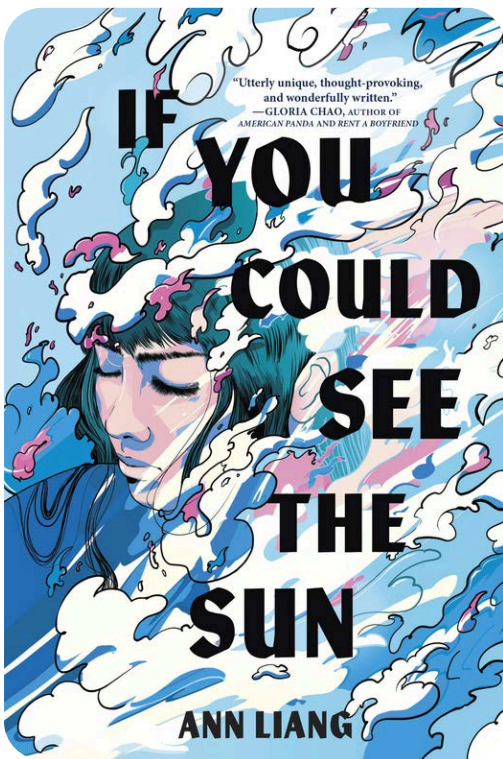
GENRE: REALISTIC FICTION

## Book Review:

Breathe and Count Back from Ten was just amazing and breathtaking. Verónica's situation piqued my interest from the start. I can't imagine all the surgeries and pain she's been through. Or learning the truth about how serious her position was. This book looks into a variety of profound topics. Disability, being an immigrant in America, having strict, traditional parents, poverty, and medical issues. It portrays the story of a 17-year-old Peruvian-American girl with hip dysplasia who dreams of becoming a mermaid.

Vero, her challenges, her personality—it was all so easy to sink into and become lost in. I became so immersed in her story that I read the majority of this book in one sitting, unable to put it down. I enjoyed the Mermaid Cove portion of the narrative. I can honestly say I've never read a book like that before, and I really enjoyed it. I loved the Cove's atmosphere. We get to experience it through Verónica's eyes as a child as she recounts her first visit. We get to view it through 17-year-old Verónica's eyes as she returns.

Honestly, all I can say is that this is a wonderful, captivating, and compelling book that you should read. This is one of the best books I've ever read. I immediately wish I could read it for the first time and relive the experience.



# IF YOU COULD SEE THE SUN BY ANN LIANG

CALL # YA FIC LIANG

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

FANTASY

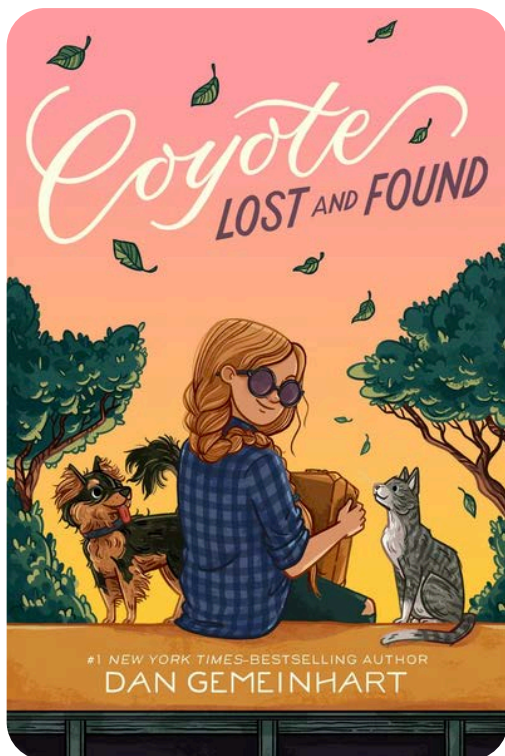
## Book Review:

Within less than a chapter of, If You Could See The Sun by Ann Liang, the words on the pages come to life, plunging the reader into the world of Alice Sun. On the surface, it may simply seem as though Alice is one of the top students at her world-renowned boarding school, not much different than her billionaire peers. Inside, she bears the weight of a lifetime of poverty and the dreams of her family's future. When Alice's parents tell her they cannot afford tuition anymore, similar to everything else in her life, she has a plan. Quickly, she finds a way to use her newfound power, invisibility, to try and piece her shattered hopes back together. She looks to Henry Li, her longtime academic rival, and convinces him to become business partners for her latest idea. Together, they sneak secrets from classmates, some of the most influential teens in the world. However, plans start slipping, and her morals are questioned; minor gossip transforms into life-threatening crimes. Alice is forced to decide whether the so-called perfect life she's always dreamt of is worth risking everything for.

By using gorgeous imagery and nostalgic details, the story instantly pulls the reader in. Liang masterfully details Alice and her circumstances in a way that makes her a sensationally dimensional character. The majority of characters featured in this story are all unique and have their own quirks, making them realistic and easily relatable. It feels as though the reader is transported into Alice's life. Another factor I value is how fantastic the pacing is; there were never any moments when the plot slowed. Besides the pressures and challenges Alice was facing, the enchanting romance subplot and fantastical invisibility aspect kept me wondering how the story would continue to unfold. However, the ending felt slightly rushed and unfinished. There were some questions I had about a character and major plot line that were left unanswered.

This novel has an incredible atmosphere to it, with notions of growing up and unlikely friendship interwoven throughout the main plot. I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in a fun and lighthearted read, not necessarily one that will resonate with you for a long time afterward. Readers looking for an entertaining and humorous story about youth with some narrative about classism and the economic hierarchy will thoroughly enjoy If You Could See The Sun.





# COYOTE LOST AND FOUND BY DAN GEMEINHART

CALL # J FIC GEMEINHART

COLLECTION: J FICTION

RATING: 

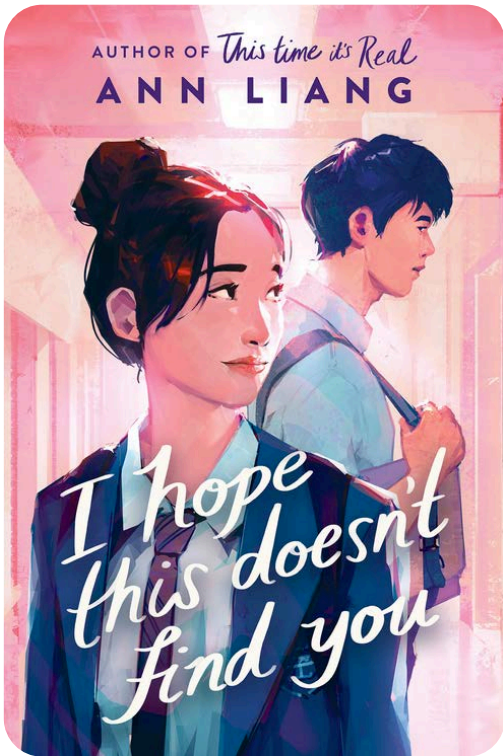
GENRE: REALISTIC FICTION

## Book Review:

It's been a year since Coyote and her dad, Rodeo, have left their life traveling the United States in an old school bus. For Coyote, life was average, even boring, when you were off the road. But when she finds a box of her mother's ashes, she and her dad get back on the road to scatter her in her chosen resting place. The only problem is, her mother wrote her final resting place in her favorite book, which Coyote sold to a secondhand bookstore. Now Coyote has to try to find that book without her dad finding out it was missing in the first place.

Dan Gemeinhart paints a heartwarming detailed picture of a story. The characters soon become semi-iconic as the story unfolds, with each chapter unlocking something new about them. The dynamic between Coyote and her best friend, Salvador, is mutual and reminds everyone that an understanding friendship is a positive one. The cheery, hippie-like atmosphere never falls flat throughout the book, and the passengers aboard Yager, the old school bus taking them around the states, are lively and bright, just like the story.

I would recommended this book for quiet afternoons. It is best to read it while snacking. It's the type of book that sweeps and carries you along like a lazy river, and before you know it, you have finished the story, and the next day, you'll want to start from the beginning again.



# I HOPE THIS DOESN'T FIND YOU BY ANN LIANG

CALL #

YA FIC LIANG

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

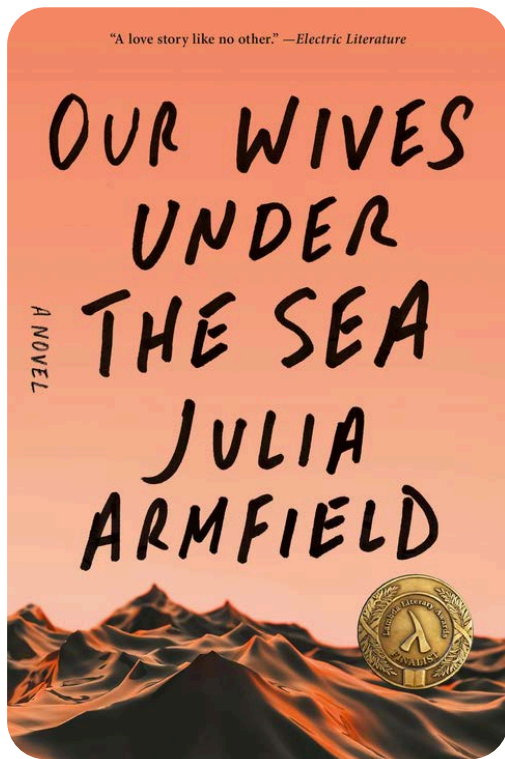
ROMANTIC COMEDIES

## Book Review:

In this stand-alone book, readers are introduced to the perfect, nice student, Sadie Wen, whose rival has been the pain of her existence for almost all her life. Julius Gong is the boy everyone adores and finds charming, well, except for Sadie, of course, because she knows who he truly is. He's arrogant and manipulative and everything in between. To keep her calm façade, she writes all her irritations in email drafts that she keeps to herself and no one knows of until one day, they are all suddenly sent to the school for everyone to see, and people start reading what she truly thinks of them, while she watches helplessly in horror. But what's really horrible amidst this chaos is that the person most of the emails are sent to is Julius, and while he's shocked and mad at first, he begins to adjust to this new and real version of Sadie.

What made me excited to read this book is the fact that many people were talking about it as soon as it got released and also because I've read another work of the author previously and I loved it. I liked the different places the characters went to and the different scenes occurring in these settings. Something that bothered me was how Sadie was so weak, and such a people-pleaser person, but then I was really happy with the character improvement that worked its way throughout the book. My favorite character would probably be her best friend because, unlike Sadie, she is confident in herself and encouraging, and just in general, has a bubbly atmosphere about her.

If you like the academic rivals-to-lovers trope, then this book is pretty much for you. You can feel the competitive air between Sadie and Julius in every chapter. And even if you don't really like the trope, I would recommend reading this book because it might be the reason you start enjoying it. The other book that was mentioned above is actually *If You Could See the Sun*. In my opinion, I liked that one more because the main focus isn't only on the rivalry between the main characters but also on the action and suspense that unfolds as the story goes on.



# OUR WIVES UNDER THE SEA BY JULIA ARMFIELD

CALL #

FIC ARMFIELD

COLLECTION:

FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

LITERARY FICTION; HORROR

## Book Review:

Our Wives Under the Sea is an adult horror novel that follows a woman named Miri, whose wife Leah returns home after months away for a failed submarine research mission. The truth of what really happened in the submarine is shrouded in mystery, and upon returning, Leah has become extremely odd and withdrawn. Miri must grapple with trying to reach her detached wife and discover what it was that left her so shaken before Leah fully slips away from her.

This book was extremely suspenseful and eerie, and I was constantly on my toes, wanting to know what would be revealed next. The tense mood and looming sense of unease throughout the book make for both a gripping and unsettling read. Through the chapters from Leah's point of view, the author really captured how mysterious and treacherous the ocean really is. I also liked the flashbacks of Miri and Leah's past that were interwoven throughout the book, and I think it added a nice balance to the dark storyline in the present. Seeing their relationship develop and grow made both Miri and Leah feel like real, genuine people that I couldn't help but root for. It made the stakes all the more urgent because I wanted everything to be figured out between the two of them. Although I know the writing focused on small moments and memories, the book could be very slow-paced at times, and I felt like the middle of the book dragged a bit. It definitely picked up for a very impactful ending, though I do wish there had been a little more explanation and closure about a few things. Overall, I thought this book was really absorbing and the perfect mix of creepy and emotional.

Fans of slow-paced horror focused on eerie atmospheres and gradually building tensions will love *Our Wives Under the Sea*. I would recommend it to anyone who loves the deep sea and wants something that will leave them spooked, confused, and tearful.



# THE LAST TIME WE SAY GOODBYE BY CYNTHIA HAND

CALL #

YA FIC HAND

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

REALISTIC FICTION

## Book Review:

The Last Time We Say Goodbye is a beautiful book exploring grief and guilt. It follows a teenager named Lex as she struggles with her brother's suicide and tries to get through every day without him. The book also goes into how Lex and many others blame themselves for the death and must come to peace with having no control. It alternates between the main character's current perspective and flashbacks of when her brother was alive. There are also interesting subplots involving her ex-boyfriend and friends.

I loved this book. It was written so well, and it made me cry (which always means it's an amazing book.) I appreciated how I really felt like I understood Lex and her situation by the end. I also loved the mysterious way information was revealed throughout the novel.

I recommend this book firstly because it's just an amazing book that's enjoyable to read. It made me feel so much, and it was very hard to put down; I kept pulling it out at school even when I just had a minute to read. Additionally, The Last Time We Say Goodbye made me feel empathy and a greater understanding for people who have lost family members or friends to suicide. Even if you don't tend to like realistic fiction or don't find yourself relating to this book, I recommend reading it. I honestly can't imagine anyone hating this book.





# SO LET THEM BURN BY KAMILAH COLE

CALL #

YA FIC COLE

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

FANTASY

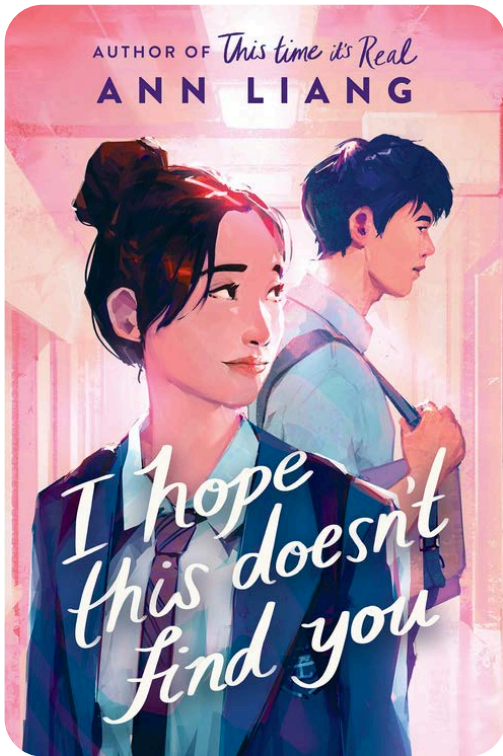
## Book Review:

The book, So Let Them Burn by Kamilah Cole, first talks about Faron Vicent, a seventeen-year-old with the power to channel the gods, who liberated her island from the dragon-riding Langley Empire five years ago. Now revered as a legend but seen as a nuisance, she faces a new challenge at an international peace summit. There, her older sister Elara forms an unexpected bond with an enemy dragon, and the gods decree that the bond can only be broken by Elara's death. Determined to save her sister, Faron embarks on a dangerous quest for an alternative solution while Elara uncovers disturbing secrets within the Langley Empire. Their journeys force them to make tough decisions, ultimately influencing each other's lives and the fate of their world.

I would rate this book a  $\frac{4}{5}$  because it is overall a good book. However, someone like me would rather pick a book that doesn't have about 400 pages long. The book does have a lot of stuff in it, including plot twists and so many more items I can't talk about until you read the book.

I would maybe recommend this book to people who are into dragons or mysteries because this book is kind of about it.





# I HOPE THIS DOESN'T FIND YOU BY ANN LIANG

CALL #

YA FIC LIANG

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

ROMANTIC COMEDIES

## Book Review:

I Hope This Doesn't Find You is a standalone young adult romance book that features a main character named Sadie Wen, who is what many consider the perfect student; she not only has perfect grades but also participates in sports and is the co-captain of her school. Aside from all that she does to be able to keep her conditional offer of admission to UC Berkeley, in her mind, getting into a good school dictates the prestige of her future job and, therefore, her ability to take care of her family, she also has added stress with being a people-pleaser. She not only bends her back for the responsibilities she puts on herself for her family, but she also goes beyond her way to always maintain the image of being an extremely nice and easygoing person to her teachers and classmates at all times, even to the extent of having to do things like doing all of her classmate's parts in a project. The only way she has to vent her frustrations is through writing strongly-worded hate emails about her frustrations, countless of which are about her infuriating and cocky academic rival Julius Gong, and leaving them unsent in her mailbox. Until one day, all of those email drafts mysteriously got sent out and sent her image crumbling...

In my opinion, out of all the books I have read from Ann Liang so far, this is my favorite from hers. I especially love how fleshed out the central characters of the book were and this not only pertains to Sadie, but also strongly to Julius as well. When the hate emails got sent out, even when this obviously isn't happening to me, I really felt how crushing (my stomach flopped when I read through the scenes) it would have felt for Sadie to be hated by the teachers and students that were talked about in her emails, even when it was rightfully justified why she was frustrated with them in the first place. The way Ann Liang wrote about how it feels to be a people-pleaser was extremely genuine and heartfelt to read. However, as much as I love the main character of the book, the character that captured my heart was Julius Gong. He was written in a way that makes him seem very human, which I won't spoil, but I feel that many people would relate to this problem that he struggles with. Julius was never written in a way that his "cocky" and confident nature came across as annoying, but rather it was quite endearing.

I really do highly recommend this book! If I have to be completely honest, my favorite thing about this book is the scenes between Sadie and Julius because I swear that while I was reading this book, those scenes made me grin and giggle like a complete idiot. The underlying message of the importance of letting other people also shoulder some responsibilities is important, but the book also serves as a great escapism that fondly reminds me of fantasy books. For me, the book hit me in a way that no book I read this year ever had.



# DARK STAR BURNING, ASH FALLS WHITE BY AMÉLIE ZHAO

CALL #

YA FIC ZHAO

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

FANTASY

## Book Review:

Dark Star Burning, Ash Falls White, by Amélie Wen Zhao, is the sequel to Song of Silver, Flame Like Night. The protagonists of this book, Zen and Lan, are lovers who both wish to protect their kingdom against the Elantian colonizers. Zen, who is in possession of the Black Tortoise, one of the demon gods, wants to use its power to free the kingdom, even though he is aware that doing so will result in the loss of his soul, body, and mind. Lan, however, wants to destroy the demon gods since they create too much chaos, even though she has acquired the Silver Dragon's power. Therefore, in an attempt to permanently eliminate the demon god's powers, she sets out to find the god slayer. Even though the two travel in different directions, they encounter hardships and challenges in both their romantic relationships and on their travels. Regardless of which side they support, they are both working toward the same objective: releasing the Last Kingdom.

I really enjoyed this book because it was great to read and finished off the series well. Although I've read many novels in the past, I always find this series in particular to be extraordinary. The plot is so well written, and the language in this book is so beautiful; it's like I'm in the book itself. Of all the characters in this novel, I liked Shàn'jūn the best because he was such a caring, loyal friend to everyone. He was always there, trying to help everyone to the best of his ability. The relationships between characters in this book were wonderful, but I didn't enjoy how quickly it moved along and how little build-up there was compared to the first book.

I would recommend this book to anyone who loves a bit of fantasy fiction and romance. This book includes some Chinese history and is quite easy to read, so I think most people would love it. A book that I think is similar to this is Daughter of the Moon Goddess. Both books have fantasy, action, romance, and some Chinese elements in them. This book is also similar to the C-drama, "The Untamed," and may relate to other C-dramas. Therefore, if you are a fan of "The Untamed" or anything similar, I would suggest you read this book. All things considered, I really enjoyed reading this book!

# NO LONGER HUMAN BY OSAMU DAZAI

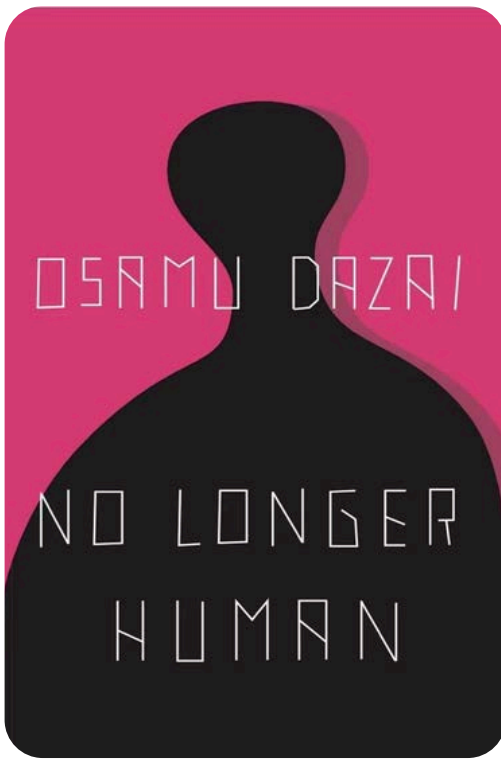
COLLECTION: Available as an E-Book on Libby

RATING:



GENRE:

LITERARY



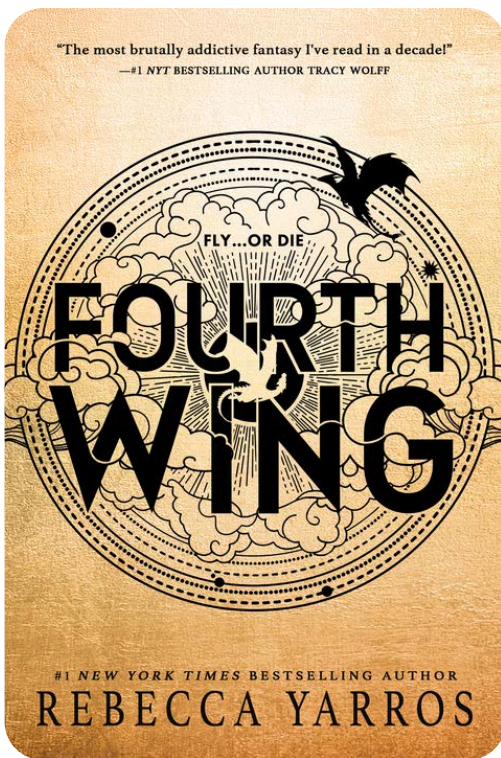
## Book Review:

No Longer Human is a semi-autobiographical novel in which we follow the life of Oba Yozo. Starting in his childhood, he is faced with the trouble of needing to mask his true feelings, leaving him feeling estranged and isolated from other people. In his high school years, he takes on the persona of a clown, one that his classmates enjoy, never showing his true self. He later stops trying to hide it and goes around as a depressed alcoholic. He survives two suicide attempts and addictions, eventually accepting that he does not feel happy or unhappy.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I like how it shows the complexities of humans and the need to feel like they belong. I personally relate to his high school experience. I've always felt as if I could never truly express myself, and the only reason people kept me around was because I could crack a joke or two. As a person also struggling with clinical depression, the book personally resonated with me, as did the fact of never having a true human connection.

I would recommend the book to anyone suffering from depression or a feeling of alienation. Yozo is also a good example of a realistic human being. He goes through rough times in his life, overall showing how low a person can go to the point of not caring anymore. It might be a hard read as it goes over topics of sexual abuse, suicide, mental illness, etc. However, I like how Osamu Dazai does not write the abuse graphically and only refers to it happening. Overall, I think it is an excellent novel that you should read.





# FOURTH WING

## BY

# REBECCA YARROS

CALL #

FIC YARROS

COLLECTION:

FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

FANTASY

### Book Review:

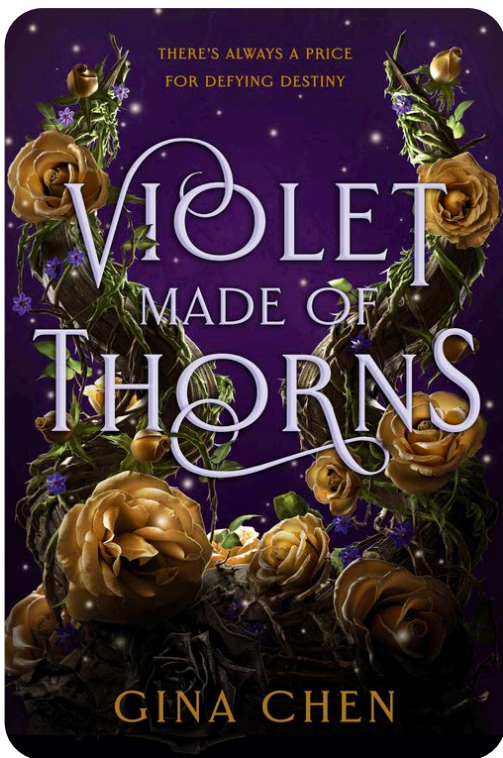
Fourth Wing follows the story of Violet and her journey in the Riders Quadrant. In this world, there are multiple professions and quadrants one can join when one comes of age; two of the most significant in this story are the Scribe Quadrant and the Riders Quadrant. The Scribes are those who document the history of this country, and the Riders are the ones who defend it with their almighty dragons. Violet was meant to join the Scribe Quadrant, as a disease she contracted young that affects her strength would make it nearly impossible to survive her time in the Riders Quadrant. Still, her mother, who is the general of the Riders, forces her to join so as not to sully the family name. The book follows her infinite struggles in the Quadrant, struggling to catch up to her competition and survive while also proving herself worthy of the title of “Dragon Rider.”

(You definitely need to read this book, as I didn’t do it nearly enough justice in the description above.)

The world-building in this novel is absolutely insane: beautiful terrains and governments, quadrants and war colleges galore, and so much good plot. The author makes you feel genuine terror as you realize what Violet has to face in the Riders Quadrant, a Quadrant where it’s normal for students to die before graduation. She also does a good job of giving the readers what they want (or at least me). We get an annoying and arrogant character, whom Violet proves she is better than, the “underdog” of the pack coming out one of the strongest, and of course, a beautiful found family.

I’d recommend this book to everyone who loves fantasy. This book was absolutely amazing in ways I can’t even describe, and it does an excellent job of making the world seem real and intricate without throwing too much information at you, simple while not being bland. This book is whimsical and thrilling and perfect for anyone who loves action in their stories.





# VIOLET MADE OF THORNS BY GINA CHEN

CALL # YA FIC CHEN

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

DARK FANTASY

## Book Review:

Violet Made of Thorns follows the story of Violet, the seer of her kingdom, who must ensure that the future king marries before a prophetic curse descends upon him and his kingdom. It tells us how she starts seeing glimpses of this curse coming true, her orders by the king to ensure the fake marriage looks real in order to break the curse, as the prince refuses to marry, and her struggle as a new love between the two blooms.

I really enjoyed this book because of pretty much everything. We get a funny, relatable female lead, an intricate and interesting plotline, and escapism in the form of a fantasy novel. I also love the seer side of the story. The author does a great job of illustrating the magic of this world and how it comes to play. We get really good explanations for how systems work and what the kingdom is like. Overall, it's a very whimsical book that's also very well put together.

I'd recommend this book to people who love a strong female lead. I connected with Violet from the start, with her sense of humor and sarcasm, but also the realistic choices she makes. The author does a good job of showing how she feels when she needs to make a decision. Although you can definitely disagree with some of her actions, knowing her backstory and her life, you can definitely see the reason for them and understand why she made her choices.



# THE SONG THAT MOVES THE SUN BY ANNA BRIGHT

CALL # YA FIC BRIGHT

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING: ★★★★★

GENRE: FANTASY

## Book Review:

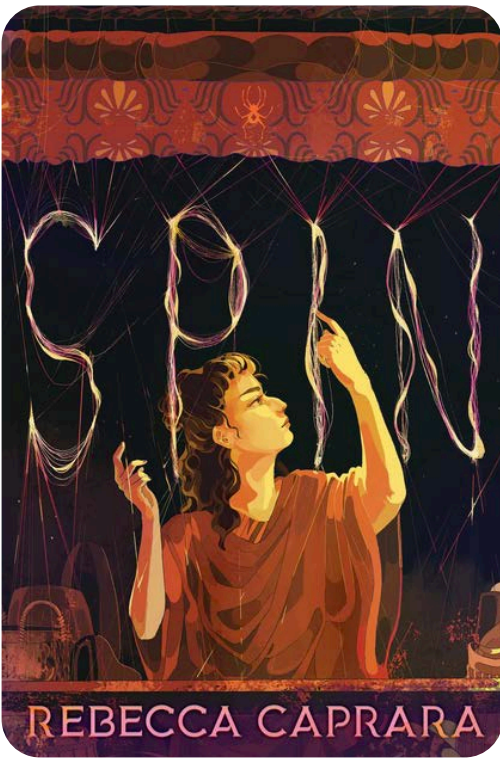
The book, The Song That Moves the Sun by Anna Bright, is about a teenage girl named Rora who's tired of facing too many problems in her life. Her friend, Claudia, tries to help ease her pain, but she has problems in her life that she needs to take care of herself, too. But one day, when they both go to a concert, they meet two boys, Major and Amir. They say that there is disharmony between both magical worlds, and Rora and Claudia must fix it. That's when Rora and Claudia must go on a journey between both magical worlds filled with magical secrets and romance, and on the way, they learn the history between two people, Beatrice and Dante, who studied all about these magical worlds.

I really like how this book is written from three different perspectives and that it adds a good amount of romance and fantasy. The story is easy to follow, and I like how the author adds a lot of details so that you can feel like you are in the scenes that both the characters talk about. When I read this, I felt a lot of mixed emotions, and overall, I enjoyed it a lot. My favorite character is Claudia because she is the smartest in the group and helps everyone find details about the history of Dante and Beatrice.

I would recommend this book to all teens who like a lot of romance and fantasy. It was a really great and fun book to read, and reading this would take teens into a magical world in their minds because of the details of the book. I have never read books like this before, but I hope to find more books that relate to this.



# SPIN BY REBECCA CAPRARA



CALL #

YA FIC CAPRARA

COLLECTION:

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING:



GENRE:

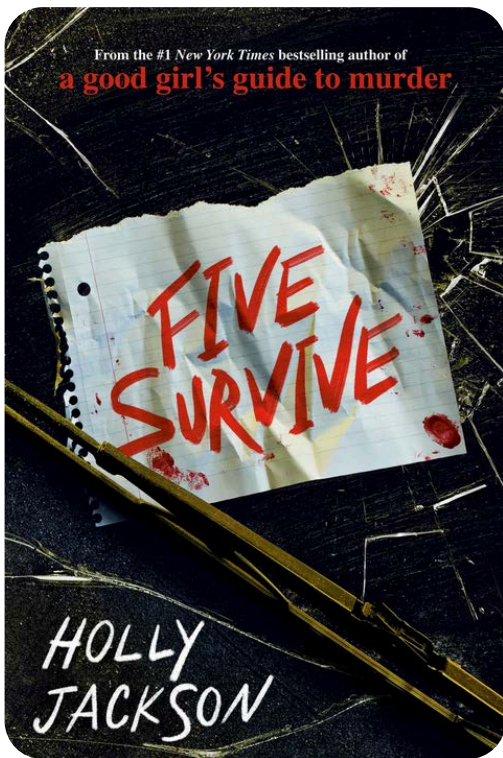
MYTHOLOGICAL FICTION;  
NOVELS IN VERSE

## Book Review:

Spin by Rebecca Caprara is the reimagining of the tale of Arachne, the spider woman. The book is written from Arachne's perspective and her life to the point where she challenges Athena. Since she was small, Arachne watched her mother weave on their loom until slowly learning how to weave and learning how to express her voice. After tragic losses, Arachne's best friend, Celandine, and Arachne escape to the city of Colophon. Her talent is shown to the city, and word of her talent spreads. Eventually, Arachne challenges Athena to a weaving competition where many things happen.

I enjoyed how the book was written in poetry and how the book was about a different perspective of the tale of Arachne. I enjoyed how the poetry, containing a lot of metaphors, conveyed the character's feelings and what they thought. What I didn't really like about the book was how some sections were very short while others were quite longer. My favorite character was Arachne's mother because of how caring and wise she was for Arachne. The book made me feel empowered, and I felt like Arachne was misunderstood.

I would recommend this book to people who enjoy Greek mythology or reimaginings. Though I think mythology fans would enjoy this more, this book was short to read and can be read by most teens.



# FIVE SURVIVE BY HOLLY JACKSON

CALL # YA FIC JACKSON

COLLECTION: YOUNG ADULT FICTION

RATING: 

GENRE: PSYCHOLOGICAL SUSPENSE

## Book Review:

Five Survive, by Holly Jackson, is a young adult thriller that follows Red, an 18-year-old girl, and her friends. The group embarks on an RV road trip to get to a beach where they plan to spend their Spring Break, but the road trip doesn't go the way they anticipated. The RV breaks down on a back road in the middle of the night, with no cellular connection and nobody around. Their chances of escape are completely erased when all the tires are shot out, at which point the friends realize this isn't an accident. A sniper is waiting for them, waiting for one of them to reveal a secret-- one he is willing to kill for. The group desperately tries to form an escape plan and figure out who is hiding their secret.

Despite being a YA thriller, this book is filled with so many complex stories and twists. I was on the edge of my seat the entire time, formulating theories of who I thought the sniper might be. Still, I found myself shocked at the ending. Jackson does an immaculate job of making the twist so layered- just when you think you've figured out the end, she throws another twist at you. Additionally, each character has their own unique story, adding to the suspense. Typically, I never feel attached to the characters in thrillers, primarily because their backstories seem to exist simply to propel the story and suspense. However, in this book, I found myself intrigued by the lives of each of the six main characters. How Jackson unfolds each character's story little by little makes the story so much more intriguing.

This book was the perfect palette-cleansing, quick read. I think it'd be a fun book to binge in one sitting during the summer. I would definitely recommend it, particularly to anybody who's looking to get into reading or is in a slump.