

Author: Joya Goffney
Title: *Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry*
Genre: Young Adult Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Zahra V., 8th Grade

Date Reviewed: June 20, 2022

Excuse Me While I Ugly Cry is the debut novel of Joya Goffney. It follows Quinn, a seemingly perfect girl who has everything: a rich family, social standing in a private school, and a bright future ahead at Columbia University in the coming fall. However, Quinn has a secret: she was rejected by Columbia and has a hard time dealing with the pressure to succeed from her prosperous parents, as well as being one of the five Black students in a majority white school. While she may seem perfect on the surface, Quinn hides the truth from everyone and instead writes down her fears to alleviate the pressure she feels in her beloved journal. This journal plays a central role to the story as it contains lists that are very personal to Quinn. For example, some of the lists in her journal include her biggest fears, things she would never admit out loud, and boys she'd like to kiss. The plot thickens when her journal mysteriously goes missing and a journal entry of Quinn's biggest fears is anonymously posted online. To protect her secrets, Quinn is blackmailed into facing her fears, or else her entire journal will go public. Desperately, Quinn teams up with Carter Bennett, a fellow classmate she may have a crush on that was featured on one of her infamous lists. However, Carter, another Black student, cannot stand Quinn because he believes she has it all and is completely oblivious to her privileges as an affluent person of color. Despite this, they work through their differences and slowly learn more about each other and the power of courage, honesty, love, and truth. This book also delves into issues regarding race, class differences, privilege, and coming to terms with reality and focusing on living in the moment instead.

Questions:

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?

I enjoyed the plot of this novel a lot because it was very different from books I have read in the past. I enjoyed learning about Quinn's upbringing and how she had privilege despite being a person of color in a majority white private school. I also enjoyed the suspenseful plot of the missing journal and how the event allowed for Quinn and Carter to grow closer despite their differences.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

I think the pace of this book was just right. The beginning of the novel was a little slow, but as you continue reading, the plot thickens and keeps readers interested in what will happen next.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

I believe this book is appropriate for all readers in 8th grade and up. While it is a humorous and wholesome story, it also delves into serious topics of race, pressure from family, and class differences that I think mature readers would be able to appreciate.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book for readers who enjoy young adult romance and people who are interested in the mystery aspect of the novel in which Quinn has to face her fears to prevent her entire journal being leaked to the public.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

I believe it is important to understand Quinn as a Black, female main character and how she has her strengths and weaknesses. For example, although Quinn faces many challenges being one of the only people of color in her majority white private school, it is also important to recognize the privileges she has being the daughter of two successful parents that are affluent and have the means to give Quinn a happy life. This is further highlighted through Carter, another Black classmate who believes Quinn is oblivious to the privileges she has in life thanks to her parents.

Rating:

5 stars: I'm really glad I read this book; it was awesome!

Overall, I really enjoyed this book because it successfully addressed a variety of important topics while still maintaining an interesting plot line. I especially enjoyed reading how Quinn and Carter developed as characters and how they slowly learned more about each other.