Awake

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tic and handled well. Flo turns to religion, joining a youth group and finding peace at church. Renée, who has her own questions about faith and loss, assumes this is a “Flo-fad” (Flo has taken up—and dropped—many hobbies). Further separating the friends is a relationship Renée has with a guy in his 20s; he slut-shames her (“Women can’t behave like men when it comes to sex,” he says), an occurrence unfortunately not dated for this book set in the 1990s. A tragedy meanwhile reminds the girls what’s important, and readers are again left hoping that O’Porter writes more about the pair.

This smart, touching, and often funny book will appeal to teens, especially those on the cusp of adulthood. VERDICT While it’s not essential to have read Paper Airplanes in order to enjoy Goose, this book will be most appreciated by those familiar with the characters.—Amanda Mastrull, Library Journal


Gr 9 Up—In the vein of E. Lockhart’s We Were Liars (Delacorte, 2015) and Gillian Flynn’s Gone Girl (Crown, 2012), Panitch’s novel delivered a heart-pounding, emotion-ally charged story that proves that not everything is what it seems. Julia Vann faces a story that proves that not everything is what it seems. Julia Vann faces an elite family (the Akakuchibas) to become heir of the family business. What follows is a tragic mystery reminiscent of Cassandra from Greek myths (except Manyo remains a flawed thesis). The latest author to tackle unrelatable narrators, Panitch combines heart-twisting realities with a good old-fashioned mystery.—Amanda C. Buschmann, Atascocita Middle School, Humble, TX


Gr 9 Up—Pierson packs AIDS, abortion, suicide and more into her message-heavy 1989 romance. Quinn and Seth have different viewpoints on most things, as evidenced by their heated classroom debates. They’ve met their match in each other, and a mature and respectful first love story follows—although the plot is secondary to the setting. The author’s passion for the period is clear. The narrative is built around the events of the decade, instead of starting with a compelling story and then setting it in a specific time frame. Instead of delving deeply into a few issues, numerous big themes are only touched upon at a surface level. Stylistically, Pierson makes curious choices as to what details she provides in the story line and pacing and which ones are left out. Quinn’s pregnancy reveal and the internal conflict that ensues on whether she should have an abortion is given short shrift while a sex scene with Seth garners pages of excruciating detail. Also, Quinn’s breakup with her best friend seems rather abrupt. Politics, not the personal, drives the story. Pierson’s novel reads like a primer on the 80s through the eyes of likable, although unmemorable, characters. VERDICT An exploration of the recent past with uneven pacing and ill-defined characters.—Laura Falli, McNeil High School, Austin, TX


Gr 8 Up—Scarlett Garner has a gap in her memory. She can’t remember anything before her fourth birthday and because she always develops a headache when she tries, she is starting to accept that her memories are likely lost for good. When Scarlett meets Noah, the new guy at school, she falls hard and fast; Noah is just as smitten as she and quickly begins helping Scarlett work toward regaining her memory. But when Scarlett is in a car accident and starts to have flashbacks, she isn’t sure that she wants to remember after all. Fortunately, Noah is the very definition of emotional support. Unfortunately, his motives may not be as pure as they seem. Although centered on Scarlett, if it weren’t for the love interest, the novel’s interesting but far-fetched plot—can anyone really remember their first four years?—would fall completely flat. Noah dictates the pace of the work and Noah creates and sustains the mood; readers quickly learn that he isn’t as he seems and as each chapter reveals just a little more of who Noah really is, readers will find themselves questioning every minute he spends with his would-be victim. Although the progression of Scarlett’s relationship with Noah is unrealistic and the thoughts of both characters are repetitive at times, Noah’s internal crisis and ultimate decision will keep readers intrigued. VERDICT An engaging but flawed thriller.—Maggie Mason Smith, Clemson University R. M. Cooper Library, South Carolina


Gr 10 Up—Manyo, abandoned by the mythical “Mountain People,” is adopted by the Tadas, whom she affectionately refers to as the “young couple.” Not only is Manyo an outlander, she is also illiterate, making her the target of ridicule and bullying. Blessed (or cursed, depending upon perspective) with clairvoyance, Manyo is chosen by an elite family (the Akakuchibas) to become the family matriarch and give birth to the heir of the family business. What follows is a tragic mystery reminiscent of Cassandra from Greek myths (except Manyo remains mostly silent about her prophecies). Told from the perspective of her granddaughter, this volume is the story of the Akakuchiba family’s dominance in Japan during the post–World War II industrial boom and the trials of their offspring in the years of civil unrest, technology upsurge, and the end of the Cold War that followed (1953–92). Part mystery, drama, and supernatural, this title is full of characters and intertwining stories that occasionally get lost in one another.