

Committee Member's Vote	Reason for Vote	Other Comments
Remove		<p>Feel free to take this review with a grain of salt, as I have not read the book. But also please take consideration how, as a student, [REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>I had not done the research before agreeing to the quorum for this; it's required that a person who has received the book fills out this survey. In the future, this probably won't be an issue. Sorry for the inconvenience.</p>
Remove	It's a historical fiction, however, there are lots of other ways of disclosing to YA the racial discrimination during those ages. Novel requires detailed/vivid description, but too many sexual scenes here in the book definitely not suitable for high school kids.	Very heavy novel, hope that high schoolers could be guided to read such novels if they have to read some historical fiction.
Remove	This book crosses some legal boundaries with the adult/child abuse and rape scenes. It is very detail, vivid, and graphic. It includes descriptive scenes of the main character being sexually abuse by her father. There isn't any healthy themes or solutions.	The book could give our teenagers a illusion, and make them be fearful to face the real world.
Remove		<p>Plot Summary: Girl's dad dies, girl's mom remarries a guy who sexually abuses the girl. He later causes her mother's death and he leaves. Years later, the girl and her siblings are forced to go live with the abusive stepdad. In the town, racism abounds. The girl falls in love. A horrific explosion at a school kills hundreds of people including the girl's 6 year-old sister. The girl's stepdad rapes her and murders her and her boyfriend in front of her 6 year-old brother who then shoots the stepdad in the head.</p> <p>Violence: This book is incredibly violent. It graphically depicts a tragic school explosion that killed 300 people, but the violence does not end there. As a movie, it would be too violent to receive an R rating. There are depictions of distraught parents gathering the body parts of their dead children and putting them in baskets. The book describes the severed leg of a 6 year-old girl (a main character), later her twin brother clinging to her dead cold hand (p.294). "Rows and Rows" of bodies of dead children (p.302), a dead girl whose face is twisted and melted (p.305). "Some of us came out of the school painted with our classmates's insides" (p.328). "Harry fell backward (after being shot in the head). A good part of his head was on the trunk of the tree where he had been standing" (p.389). By the end of the book, the reader has experienced not only a horrific school explosion, but also child abuse, violence against women, violence against Black people, rape, pedophilia, bloody pistol-whipping, multiple incidents of emotional abuse and bullying of a child, and deaths from gunshot wounds. This includes the violent deaths of three of the four main characters in the book that the reader comes to know and care about. This book is too violent for high school students.</p> <p>Offensive Terms: Over and over, not just in dialog but also in the narrator's voice, the book uses offensive terms like "nigger" (20+ times) "negro" "coon" "sambo" "darkie" "dirty Mexican" "greaser" "nigger-loving-cunt" "black as a nigger's nipple" "Mexican animal urges" "totem pole" and "retarded." Cursing and profanity are rampant as are crude references to "tits" and "pussy" and "queer" as an insult. These terms go against HCPSS policy of providing an inclusive environment and respecting others.</p> <p>Degrading to Women: There are multiple examples of viewing women as nothing but sexual objects. Black and white teenage boys objectivize white, Black, and Hispanic girls' bodies including discussing wanting to grab and rape the main character (p. 33). Boys talk about girls' bodies, bragging about having sex, scheming about "how to get in her" (p.59-60). There is a Black teenager who the author herself describes as having "womanizing ways." He "made a point of knowing every pretty black girl within walking distance—knowing in whatever sense he could get away with, Biblical if possible" (p.15). These are the traits of one of the main, sympathetic characters that the author wants us to find likeable. This is treated as just the way things are. It is definitely not the language and attitudes we want to instill in any of our students or subject them to reading and feeling uncomfortable or worse, feeling that it is normal civilized behavior.</p> <p>Promotes Religious Prejudice The book portrays negative stereotypes of clergy and church-goers as people who are untrustworthy, wouldn't believe reports of abuse if they were told them (the main character doesn't attempt to tell them). Students of faith will feel uncomfortable or even attacked by the terribly negative depictions in this book. Other students will be taught prejudices by this book.</p> <p>Models Keeping Sexual Abuse A Secret This book models for students the idea that you shouldn't tell adults about sexual abuse. The abuse survivor doesn't tell her grandparents, doesn't tell a trusted neighbor, doesn't tell clergy or church friends—it is taken as a given that none of these people would believe her or help her. This is a very dangerous and negative message. No one in our community should be convinced that sexual abuse (or any other abuse) must be hidden. All lot of the training and reporting requirements and genuine concern of teachers, staff, and other community members is contingent on abuse survivors feeling they can confide in a trusted adult. The message of this book is that they cannot. Reading this book might discourage an abuse survivor from seeking help. In the hopefully unlikely case that a potential abuser reads this book, the message is that abusers will not be caught.</p> <p>Disturbing, Graphic Images The book contains disturbing, graphic images: Bloody, traumatic miscarriages with a description of the fetus and the crying bleeding mother, a stepdad forcing a 6 year old to shoot and kill a bird as he cries and watches the half dead bird struggle, and the horrific descriptions of the explosion victims (as well as other images described above or below).</p> <p>Sexually Explicit Passages The author herself admits that her editor encouraged her to make it sexually explicit</p> <p>"Andrew Karre (my editor for Out of Darkness as well as for The Knife and the Butterfly and What Can't Wait) has always seemed more interested in pushing or crossing boundaries than in upholding them. He's probably one of very few YA editors who sends emails that say things like, "could the sexual details in this scene be a little more explicit, not so coy?" <a href="https://latinosinkidlit.com/2015/09/06/qa-with-ashley-hope-perez-about-out-of-darkness/">https://latinosinkidlit.com/2015/09/06/qa-with-ashley-hope-perez-about-out-of-darkness/</a></p> <p>As a movie, this book would be X-rated. In addition to all the crude sexual objectivizing of women, masturbation (8 separate incidences), oral sex, rape, a grown man forcing a girl's hand to pleasure him are all in this book. The book depicts sex and violence together. In just one of the horrible incidents, the stepfather repeatedly punches his daughter in the face, rapes her in front of her 6 year-old brother and her boyfriend (who he has tied to a tree), pistol-whips the boyfriend till his whole body goes limp, and murders the two main characters, also in front of the 6 year-old who then shoots the stepfather in the head.</p> <p>Disturbing Themes Blaming: The stepfather blames the main character for her mother's death. The six year-old boy blames himself for the death of his twin sister and others and no one challenges this. Readers who identify with this character may feel drawn to blaming themselves for bad things that they did not directly cause. Unresolvable guilt can cause serious mental and emotional issues.</p> <p>Death is the only possible "Happy Ending": The reader gets to know and care about the characters, then they are murdered. But for a moment before they die, they are happy. This is not something I would want anyone with suicidal ideations to read. In this story, Death is the "happy ending" and the only way the problems are solved. This is not just the death of three main characters but also the death by gunshot to the head of the stepdad.</p> <p>Overall, if this book were taught in a university setting, it would be prefaced with a vast number of trigger warnings. It is not appropriate for high school students as part of the curriculum or as a high school library book. The fact that it is very loosely based on one historical incident (the school explosion) while all of the characters and the entire story come from the author's imagination is barely enough to even classify it as "historical fiction." The setting is a time and place where racism was rampant, but there are many other books that could teach students about racism without all of the disturbing, fictional, non-racism related horrific storylines in this book.</p> <p>In his review of this book, Damien Cave, NYT international reporter and bureau chief with experience covering Mexico, Central America, and Baghdad, used the phrase "soak in anguish" calling the final third of the book "hard to bear" He said, "I actually had to close the book at one point to seek respite with Facebook. And puppies." A book this traumatic for an adult does not belong in high school libraries and classrooms. NYT book review: <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/08/books/review/out-of-darkness-by-ashley-hope-perez.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/08/books/review/out-of-darkness-by-ashley-hope-perez.html</a></p>
Retain	My recommendation is that this book be removed from the school curriculum and from school libraries because it is brutally violent, offensive, sexually explicit, and contains disturbing themes	
Retain	It shows a different culture, historical events, and accurate hardships.	My only concern was the sexual content.
Retain	A lot of high schoolers use the language that is said in the books, so it is appropriate in that aspect. Also, it is based on a real-life event, which teaches history.	It makes the reader walk around in someone else's shoes, which helps people empathize with others.
Retain	It is a very well-written book, written accurately for the time period in which it takes place.	From School Library Journal: Set against the backdrop of an actual historical event, Pérez's young adult novel gives voice to many long-omitted facets of U.S. history

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Retain	-the book has 4 or more positive reviews from approved sources, - the book meets the library's collection policy, -the freedom to read a variety of books is essential to our democracy, -the book is about a time period and actual events in history in America, -our students deserve to have access to books that reveal difficult and challenging periods in our history, -reading stories such as this will hopefully help generations to learn from the experience and shape a different future.	Thank you for allowing us to meet and discuss this challenged book.
Retain	Out of Darkness is a good reading selection for high school students. It is well written and Perez captures an historical event while acknowledging the the diverse background of its characters and the social struggles they experience. The language adds depth to the story and is not gratuitous. At the end of the story, it encourages its readers to examine the events leading to the devastating last scene and encourages them to examine the connection to our world today—this reflection is an important process for our students.	N/A
Retain	Explicit language should not be a reason to withhold a book from students, particularly a book that depicts an important and compelling story.	n/a