



BOOK RESUME: THE DOWNSTAIRS GIRL

BOOK SYNOPSIS

By day, seventeen-year-old Jo Kuan works as a lady's maid for the cruel daughter of one of the wealthiest men in Atlanta. But by night, Jo moonlights as the pseudonymous author of a newspaper advice column for the genteel Southern lady, "Dear Miss Sweetie." When her column becomes wildly popular, she uses the power of the pen to address some of society's ills, but she's not prepared for the backlash that follows when her column challenges fixed ideas about race and gender. While her opponents clamor to uncover the secret identity of Miss Sweetie, a mysterious letter sets Jo off on a search for her own past and the parents who abandoned her as a baby. But when her efforts put her in the crosshairs of Atlanta's most notorious criminal, Jo must decide whether she, a girl used to living in the shadows, is ready to step into the light. With prose that is witty, insightful, and at times heartbreaking, Stacey Lee masterfully crafts an extraordinary social drama set in the New South.

Title: The Downstairs Girl

Author: Stacey Lee

Imprint: G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers

Publisher: Penguin Young Readers

On sale date: August 13, 2019

ISBN: 9781524740955 and 9781524740979

Format: Hardcover and Paperback

Age Range*: 12 and up

Grade Range: Gr 7 Up
(Recommended by School Library Journal)

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ "Luminous . . . An optimistic, sophisticated portrayal of one facet of Chinese-American—and simply American—history." —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "This spectacular, voice-driven novel raises powerful questions about how we understand the past, as well as the ways our current moment is still shaped by that understanding." —*Booklist*, starred review

★ "Unflinching in its portrayals of racism yet ultimately hopeful and heartfelt, this narrative places voices frequently left out of historical fiction center stage." —*School Library Journal*, starred review

★ "This captivating novel explores intersectionality, conveys the effects of restrictions placed on women and people of color, and celebrates the strengths and talents of marginalized people struggling to break society's barriers in any age." —*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ "A compelling domestic drama with a winning heroine." —*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, starred review

"Vividly rendered, intriguingly plotted . . . Jo's example of resistance and hope is sure to resonate with today's readers." —*The Washington Post*

Updated 3.25.2024

Penguin Random House

Contact BannedBooks@penguinrandomhouse.com

*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

“Holds a mirror to our present issues while giving us a detailed and vibrant picture of life in the past.” –*The New York Times*

“A joyful read . . . *The Downstairs Girl*, for all its serious and timely content, is a jolly good time.” –*NPR*

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- *A People Magazine* Best Book of the Year
- *A Washington Post* Best Children’s Book of the Year
- An NPR Favorite Books of the Year
- A YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults Pick
- *A School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year
- *A Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year
- *A Booklist* Editors’ Choice
- *A BookPage* Best Book of the Year
- A New York Public Library Best Book for Teens
- A Bank Street College of Education Best Children’s Book of the Year
- A Crystal Kite Award Winner
- A Virginia Readers Choice Book Award selection
- A Washington Evergreen Teen Book Award selection
- A Northern California Book Award selection
- A Westchester Fiction Award selection
- A Vermont Green Mountain Book Award selection
- A Washington D.C. Capitol Choices selection
- A Texas TAYSHAS Award Selection

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Discussion Guide](#)
- [Books for All: Teen Banned Book Club: *The Downstairs Girl* by Stacey Lee](#)
- [PEN America: Stacey Lee and Padma Venkatraman Discuss *The Downstairs Girl* and Book Banning](#)

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