

The DUFF Study Guide

The DUFF by Kody Keplinger

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Plot Summary

The Duff, by Kody Keplinger, is a novel of transformation and offers the reader a myopic view of life as a teen-aged outsider. The novel begins as the protagonist, Bianca Piper, goes with her best friends, Jessica and Casey, to the local teen nightclub. While there the reader sees the two girls take off and immediately start dancing with the cute boys on the dance floor while Bianca hangs out at the bar and talks to the bartender, Joe. Bianca orders a Cherry Coke, her usual, and resigns herself to being a wallflower, watching her better than average and beautiful friends have a good time.

She's only there for a few minutes when a boy approaches Bianca. His name is Wesley Rush and he is a notorious womanizer, so Bianca is confused when he sits down next to her and begins a conversation. After a few minutes the confusion is cleared when he tells her that he's trying to be friends with her, the DUFF, in order to get closer to Jessica and Casey. Bianca asks what DUFF is and Wesley tells her that it is an acronym for designated ugly fat friend. Bianca is mortified and horrified. Already suffering from low self-esteem issues, this just knocks her down a few more pegs. She throws her Cherry Coke all over him. She gets her friends and they leave.

At Bianca's home the reader learns that her mother has written a self-help book and is a motivational speaker, and is not there most of the time. Her father is a recovering alcoholic, though she sees him with booze in his hands most nights. She thinks about the DUFF title that Wesley has given her and is angered that it hurt her so badly. She determines not to let it get to her, but when she goes to school the next day and sees Wesley, she remembers the whole humiliating incident and is hurt by it all over again. To make matters worse, the boy that she has been secretly crushing on has a new girl on his arm.

Later that evening she finds herself back at the bar with her friends, though she hadn't wanted to go. Her father told her that he wanted to be alone. While at the bar she runs into Wesley again and they engage in some verbal sparring. He tells her that girls really like it when you are nice to their DUFFs and that he'll score more with them if he is nice to Bianca. Angered beyond belief and upset with her father, Bianca impulsively kisses Wes. He's shocked at first, but goes along with it. She instantly regrets it, but her friends tell her that it is no big deal the next day.

Casey and Jessica agree that they will all sit out Homecoming this year, as none of them have dates. Instead, they decide that they will have a girl's night at Jessica's house. While there, Bianca walks past Jessica's brother's room and Bianca remembers the very brief and very sexual relationship she had with Jessica's 17-year-old brother when she was a freshman. He used her and dumped her and, because of that, she's hated relationships and dating ever since.

She gets paired up with none other than Wesley for an English report and she invites him over to get the paper finished. However, when she comes home from school the house is trashed and she finds her father passed out drunk on the couch. She



concludes that he has fallen off of the wagon and is horrified at the thought of Wesley coming over to see all of this. She quickly calls Wesley and goes to his house...which is a huge mansion. Bianca is so upset at her father that in a moment of weakness while she's at Wes's house, she initiates sex with him. She quickly regrets it, but also admits that it was nice. She is conflicted about how she feels about it since she knows he doesn't really care for her.

At school the next day Bianca learns that Jessica's brother, Jake, is coming back into town with his Fiance. She's devastated and when she sees Wesley later on in the day, pulls him into a janitor's closet and makes out with him. She also makes arrangements to come over to his house later that day to have sex with him again. He agrees, but is surprised since she seems to hate him. When Bianca goes home after school she learns that her father's downward spiral is the result of her mother serving her father with divorce papers, but he tells her that it is all just a big mistake and that he'll talk to Bianca's mother and it will be all right.

Bianca goes over to Wesley's and have sex. Wesley knows that she's using him, and he goes along with it, but at the same time has become intrigued as to why she would be behaving this way. She tells him about Jake. Later, they go to the Nest (the teen dance club), separately, and Joe the bartender picks up on the fact that they are in to each other. Bianca vehemently denies it.

Valentine's Day Bianca ends up with the dubious honor of helping the school secretary deliver all of the flowers and gifts to everyone. The day turns better when she finds out that Toby, the boy she has had a crush on, is also handing out the Valentine's Day gifts. He tells her that he broke up with his girlfriend, and Bianca is happy. He asks if she will sit with him in AP Government class. Then the day goes south when her mother checks her out of school to tell her about the divorce, which is still very much happening. After listening to her mother she realizes that the divorce had to happen and that her father is more flawed than she thought. She tells her mother that she's going to spend the night at a girl's night out at Casey's but she goes, instead, to Wes's.

While there Bianca learns that Wes's home life sucks, too. His parents travel all of the time, his sister lives with his grandmother, and the grandmother hates Wes. He's very much alone. They both confide in each other and grow closer. He stops calling her Duffy.

Casey and Jessica are upset with Bianca because she ditched them on Valentine's Day for the girl's night out. Bianca tells them that her family are getting divorced and that seems to soothe their feathers somewhat. Meanwhile, Toby reaches out to Bianca and then asks her out. Bianca feels as if she should be excited, but she's not. She keeps comparing Toby to Wesley in almost every category.

Her car breaks down and Wes offers to give her a ride. When they get to her house she invites him in and they go up to her room. They start to make love but then they hear Bianca's father come home early. They decide to stay up in her room and stay quiet until her father fell asleep. They play scrabble for four hours. Later, when she thinks the



coast is clear, they come down the stairs. Her father is definitely drunk, but not asleep. He attacks Bianca, slapping her and knocking her to the ground. Wes defends her and punches her father. He takes Bianca and the two go back to his house. They grow closer as a result of the incident, but in the morning Bianca is confused and embarrassed by everything. She calls Casey to come and get her, leaving Wes confused and stunned at her behavior.

Bianca tells Casey everything and the two reconcile. When Bianca gets to her house she realizes that she's left her keys and can't get in. She is forced to knock on the door. Her father, now sober, opens the door and pulls her inside. He apologizes profusely and praises Wes for stepping in to defend her. They talk for a long time about things.

Bianca gets ready to go out on a date with Toby and her friends help her do her hair and makeup. They are excited for her because they know that she's liked Toby since the fifth grade. They promise to wait up for her for details. Toby comes over to Bianca's house and they go up to her room to work on an AP assignment together. While up there Bianca decides to see if he wants to have sex, thinking that doing so will remove Wes from her life and mind forever. Just as things are heating up someone knocks on her bedroom door. It is Wes. He leaves upset and hurt. The next day she finds a note in her seat at school from Wes telling her that he doesn't normally chase girls, but that he is going to chase her. Then, a few days later, he sends a huge bouquet of flowers with a longer note. The note tells her that he loves her and that she loves him, but just won't admit it.

The next day at school, Wes's sister, Amy, pulls Bianca aside and says that whatever she's been doing to change Wes that she and the family are grateful. Bianca can't think of anything she's done, but is flattered. They have been avoiding each other and Toby asks her to go to the Nest that evening with him. She agrees. When she gets to the dance club she orders a diet coke, not her usual cherry coke, and talks with Toby. Wes shows up. He can't take his eyes off of Bianca. Toby sees this and tells Bianca to go to Wes. He admits that he's also not over his ex-girlfriend. They part as friends and Bianca goes to find Wes. They reconcile and admit their love to each other.



Chapters 1-2

Summary

Chapter 1

The book opens with the main character, Bianca, at the local club, The Nest, with her two gorgeous friends. She very quickly realizes she hates this place and on top of that a very rude guy tells her she is the DUFF (designated ugly fat friend). She wants to leave quickly and takes her friends with her. She heads home later and comes to her usual empty house and her dad asleep. Bianca's mother is off touring the country.

Chapter 2

In this chapter Bianca heads to school on Monday. Her friend rushes to her to say she is grounded and can't go to homecoming. Bianca doesn't see the big deal but as a friend she comforts her 'distressed friend'. Bianca bumps into the rude guy from the club who just makes her mad again. Later Bianca learns that her crush, Toby, actually has a girlfriend and this deeply upsets her. Bianca heads home and her father is on the phone with her mother and a violent argument ensues because she's not home and the family misses her.

Analysis

Chapter 1

This is where the reader is first introduced to all the main characters in the story. The Nest is the local teen nightclub where Bianca first meets up with Wesley (the rude guy) who introduces her to the word DUFF (Designated Ugly Fat Friend). This word follows Bianca through the whole book and is her basis for her own feelings of low self worth. This demonstrates the theme of Prejudice, in that Bianca is judged based on her body type and clothing. The reader finds later on that Bianca's mother is always gone and the reader can see the obvious strain it is having on her family.

The theme of Family is demonstrated when Bianca states that the house is quiet and dull without her mother since she and her dad don't really voice their issues or concerns, they instead bottle it up. The reason her mother is gone is because she is a self-help motivational speaker, which is ironic in the fact that her daughter really needs self help throughout the book as well as her father.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 starts with Bianca at school and she is still dealing the the DUFF label Wesley bestowed upon her. She uses this word as a crutch and a reason to not pursue a guy (Toby) she is actually interested in and has been interested in for some time now.



When she finally learns that her crush (Toby) has actually been in a relationship for a while this depresses her but she makes it okay in her head because she's the DUFF and why would anyone want her.

When she goes home she walks in on her father having a loud argument with her mother about never being home and how the family needs her back. This is the first real proof the reader sees of the family issues and consequences of her mother's absence. They both, Bianca and her father, sit down and watch TV. It is evident that her father really loves her.

Discussion Question 1

How does Bianca experience prejudice when she is at The Nest Club?

Discussion Question 2

How does the label, The Duff, affect Bianca at school?

Discussion Question 3

What is Bianca's family and home life like?

Vocabulary

converted, rickety, syncing, pulsing, techno, womanizing, ogre, sensitivity, flabbergasted, splattering



Chapters 3-4

Summary

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 opens up with Bianca at the bar, again. She had wanted to stay home but her dad insisted on her going out since he was sad and wanted to be alone. While Bianca was there Wesley Rush came down to talk again with her, and in the midst of his and her interactions and with all the stress Bianca is under she kisses Wesley. She is mad at herself for it but seems to enjoy it a little bit.

Chapter 4

Chapter four takes place up in Casey's room. Bianca had spent the night and can't get to sleep because all she can think about is kissing Wesley and how mad she is that she has. Eventually she wakes Casey to tell her of the events and Casey, much to the dismay of Bianca, states that the kiss was a good thing and shouldn't be hated or even be thought of as a big deal. Later Bianca goes home to find her dad, who is home from his job at a tech store. He jokingly vents about his day there and Bianca suggests they watch TV. She tries to forget everything from the night before by spending time with her dad but just can't keep the events out of her mind. She starts to believe that since she is a DUFF she isn't datable material.

Analysis

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 the reader sees that Bianca's dad has been drinking again and Bianca finds out why. Divorce papers. He had them on his nightstand and Bianca reads them. She cleans up and goes to her room. Later her dad emerges and acts like nothing is wrong and says it must be a mistake made by a hasty lawyer. Casey wants Bianca to come out to the Nest that night but since he is sad she doesn't feel like she should since her dad seems to be in denial. It is clear that her dad still loves her mom and feels like it was really a mistake, Bianca's father insists that she go out. He deals with his problems on his own and alone, like Bianca does, and it is clear that this might be where she got that habit. Once at the club she can't get the whole divorce thing out of her head and on top of that Wesley is aggravating her. In the heat of all the stress she panics and kisses Wesley, and, to her displeasure, she likes it.

There is one major theme that is demonstrated in this chapter. First, there is the theme of Family, in that divorce is imminent. Her father is in a state of denial and doesn't want to talk about it. In this instance, it is Bianca who is more like the parent, offering consolation and understanding to her father, who is obviously hurt and devastated. Her own thoughts are influenced by this in that she thinks having a relationship, dealing with



the pain, seeing the messiness of everything, is not worth it. She hates that she kissed Wesley and makes a point to never put herself in that sort of situation again.

Chapter 4

In Casey's room Bianca wakes her up to discuss what happened at the Nest. Bianca tells Casey about the kiss and Casey just tells her to blow it off because kisses aren't any big deal honestly, and that Wesley was hot, she should be excited about it. The reason Bianca is upset about it is because she secretly did like it a tiny bit deep down inside and this repulsed her because she hated him and everything he stood for. Later on she comes home to find her dad surprisingly home from work. After the divorce papers he didn't go in for a few days, and he vents about work. Then the two cuddle up to watch TV and still don't talk about the divorce papers, Bianca believes since she is the DUFF she probably will be a lonely spinster lady.

The theme of Forbidden Love is demonstrated in this chapter in that Bianca can't seem to get her mind off of 'the kiss' and Wesley. She hates herself for it because Wesley represents everything she detests about high school and boys in general. The fact that some part of her really enjoyed the kiss appalls her and she tries all sorts of things to erase the event from her memory. Casey doesn't help matters, and actually tells Bianca that it was 'okay' to kiss him. In many ways the reader begins to see that Casey is a foil to Bianca, often doing and saying what Bianca wishes she could do and say.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Bianca's father so devastated upon receiving the divorce papers?

Discussion Question 2

How does Bianca feel about her interaction with Wesley?

Discussion Question 3

Based on her feelings about the kiss with Wesley, what conclusions does Bianca come to in regards to relationships in general?

Vocabulary

caffeine, impress, wallowing, aggressive, vent, persisted, outlet, agonizing, surged, technically, resist, flurries, browsing



Chapters 5-6

Summary

Chapter 5

The chapter starts with Bianca waiting on Casey to get done with cheer practice and is recollecting the first time she and Casey met and became close friends. Bianca had fallen off the monkey bars when she was little and the only person who wasn't laughing and came to help her was Casey. After that they were inseparable. When Bianca gets startled out of her daydream by Wesley they talk about the other night's interaction between them. She gets upset and runs to the gym to wait on Casey. Casey lets it slip that Bianca kissed Wesley and Jess hadn't known. Bianca lets Casey know that they aren't coming to the Homecoming dance and instead they all decide to have a girl's night in.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 opens up with a brief explanation of how Bianca and Wesley became partners for an English assignment (a five page report on any topic in the Scarlet Letter). Wesley corners Bianca at her locker to discuss the report. When they get to Casey's house to have the girl's night, Bianca follows the other girls until she stops by a room (from the explanation of the room it seems like a boy's room). Bianca stops and stares into it and remembers a boy named Jake she apparently had a relationship with when she was 14. But she quickly is called back into Casey's room.

Analysis

Chapter 5

Bianca up to this point had been thinking non-stop about kissing Wesley. She was waiting in the cafeteria that afternoon for Casey to get done at cheer practice and begins musing over how she and Casey even met. Her friendship with Casey formed after Bianca fell off the monkey bars in the fifth grade and hurt herself. Everyone laughed but Casey stood up for her and helped her up. This act caused their long friendship, and allows the reader to understand the kind of person that Casey is. It is clear that while she adheres to some of the conformity that she sees around her, when it comes to the important things, Casey is her own person and shows a courage and bravery that both she and Bianca share.

Wesley comes into the cafeteria and they begin a one-sided conversation where it is mainly Wesley talking about her reason for kissing him the night before. Flustered, Bianca runs to the gym to wait on Casey and when cheer practice gets done they meet up with Jess and Casey lets it slip about the kiss. They decide to all stay in and have a



girl's night in on the day of the homecoming dance since Jess can't go to homecoming because of grades.

The theme of Friendship shows up in this chapter in that the reader sees and understands how Casey and Bianca came to be friends. Additionally, the reader gets to see how much Bianca relies on and values her friend's thoughts on things. It is clear that Bianca is also friends with Jess, but that she is closer and trusts Casey more.

Chapter 6

Wesley and Bianca become partners for the English assignment, due to how they are seated and their last names. They are going to be working together for this essay to analyze the Scarlet Letter and Bianca is not pleased. Wesley stops by Bianca's corner to talk about the report, much to the surprise of Bianca, but the visit is uncomfortable for Bianca. Later on Bianca and her friends go to Jessica's house for the slumber-party and as they were heading to Jessica's room Jess's brother's room causes Bianca to stop and remember a flashback of when she and Jess's brother dated and how he hurt her.

The theme of Prejudice is demonstrated in this chapter as the reader clearly sees that Bianca had some sort of relationship with Jess's brother, and that it ended so badly and was so traumatic to her that she has become calloused to all forms of love. Whatever happened in that relationship is at the heart of what feeds her DUFF mindset.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Bianca's friends.

Discussion Question 2

Why did Bianca's previous relationship with Jess's brother change her mind about dating?

Discussion Question 3

What is Bianca's self image like at this point in the book?

Vocabulary

traumatic, heap, locks, epitome, pageants, isolate, misery, psychedelic, calculus, harassment, pegged, spontaneously, combust, shiver, mischievous, plaguing.



Chapter 7-8

Summary

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 opens with Bianca coming home to find her house destroyed on the inside and beer bottles everywhere. At first she thinks burglary but hears her dad snoring and realizes he's gone back to drinking and is sleeping his hangover off. She finds out her mom has signed the divorce papers and has sprung it on them without warning. She is terribly upset and realizes Wesley is coming to write the paper so she quickly calls him and says she'd meet him at his place to do the essay. Wesley lives in a huge house, as his family is wealthy, and when they get inside they go up to his room to type the report out. Bianca is so stressed about her father and in a moment of weakness has sex with Wesley.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 starts with Bianca remembering her first boyfriend. He was older than her and Jessica's brother. He used her and it hurt Bianca until this day. After they have sex, Wesley and Bianca finish the paper and she comments how having sex with the guy she hates makes her feel gross. Wesley realizes something is bothering Bianca and tries to figure it out. Bianca just leaves.

Analysis

Chapter 7

Bianca returns from Jessica's house to find that her house is an utter wreck and beer bottles litter the floor. Her father is snoring in the next room and she realizes he has done this, which offers almost no relief. Bianca finds out that her parents are going through a divorce and her mom sprung it on them with no warning at all, just the papers on the kitchen sink, which causes Bianca to despise her mother. She believes her mother could care less and has abandoned them.

Through all this drama she realizes Wesley is coming over, due to him calling her to remind her of the assignment. Ashamed of the state that her father is in, she quickly tells Wesley that she will come there to write it instead. When she gets to his mansion of a house they go up to his room to type it out since he is faster on a computer. They start to talk and Bianca loses control again and kisses him more and more until it leads to sex. She is using Wesley much in the same way her father uses booze to forget about troubling things for a bit. Ironically, she is very judgmental towards her first boyfriend, who used her in much the same way that she's using Wesley. She does not see that she is doing this, but part of the reason that she feels so 'dirty' and 'bad' about being



with Wes is the fact that she is not treating him any better than people have treated her in the past.

What the reader begins to see in this chapter is a transformation, and the theme of Transformation, is introduced as Bianca's previously held notions about relationships, love, and perspectives are changing. Her notion of who Wes is, what he represents are beginning to shift, and she is resisting the changes, due in large part to the fact that her parents are breaking up. Bianca's whole world is shifting and redefining itself and she feels out of control, which makes her angry at everyone.

Chapter 8

It is clear that Wesley is NOT the stereotypical womanizer that Bianca (and others at the school) have made him out to be. The reader sees that not only is he an A student, but that he cares about his grades, is actually concerned about Bianca's feelings, and that he also has family issues. After the sex that occurred in the previous chapter Wesley realizes something is up with Bianca, troubling her.

The theme of Prejudice is demonstrated when Wesley tries to figure out why Bianca took things to the level that they did, but Bianca gets mad and leaves feeling disgusting for having sex with a guy she hates. She also starts to think she is a whore for sleeping with a guy whom she wasn't even dating. Even though this first encounter ends poorly, it is the first of many changes that will drive Bianca to finally realize that she can actually trust Wesley.

The symbolism of the Scarlet Letter paper is introduced in this chapter, too. While they work on it, Bianca reacts negatively to Hester's 'indiscretion'. The reader sees that perhaps it is hitting too close to home, or that the discussion of sex angers to because she believes Wesley is trying to seduce her...which isn't true, either. Their discussion of the book becomes, really, a discussion about Bianca and her problems, which leads to her using him, once again, to block out the bad things that are going on in her life.

Discussion Question 1

How does Bianca feel about her parents and how they are handling the divorce?

Discussion Question 2

How does Bianca exercise extreme prejudice in regards to Wesley?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Bianca angry in chapters 7 & 8?

Vocabulary

atonement, tragedy, devastation, burglary, numb, sober, manila, literally, shards, thrashed, compute, mourning, lavish, cliché, hypocritical



Chapter 9-10

Summary

Chapter 9

In this chapter Bianca's dad still hasn't come out of his room, and to make matters worse, Bianca can't keep thinking about Wesley. Later on that day she found out that Jessica's brother, the one who used and broke Bianca's heart, is coming into town and this deeply hurts Bianca in many ways. Bianca pulls Wesley aside at lunch and makes out with him in the janitor's closet. She makes arrangements to meet at his house for sex later on.

Chapter 10

In this chapter Bianca is struggling to pass the time while waiting to go over to Wesley's. When she gets out of school she waits until Jake leaves with Jessica. Bianca gets home to find her dad on the couch eating popcorn. They talk about the divorce papers and her father says that obviously Bianca's mother's lawyer jumped the gun and he just needs to talk with his wife... that's all. Finally it is time to go to Wesley's and she speeds to his house after lying to Casey about her plans for the evening.

Analysis

Chapter 9

Since the divorce papers appeared in the house Bianca's father had been a recluse. He hadn't left his room in several days and Bianca was beginning to worry. Fortunately she also couldn't fully concentrate on him due to the fact that Wesley was still swimming around in her head all week. This makes her feel bad since the bigger issue was her dad and the divorce, not Wesley. Bianca became disheartened when she learned Jake (who is in his twenties) was coming into town; Jake is Jessica's older brother whom Bianca had dated in 9th grade but it turned out he was only using her for sex and cheating on his real girlfriend with her. This causes Bianca to become really upset inside and goes to Wesley to tell him to make arrangements for her to come over to have sex. She does this by taking Wesley to a janitor's closet to make out and get him to agree to their sexual 'arrangement'. Jessica never actually knew about Jake and Bianca, only Casey does, so Jessica is bringing him up constantly, which hurts Bianca.

Chapter 10

Bianca is trying her best to avoid Jake and his new fiance, the girlfriend he cheated on with Bianca. Bianca waits in the cafeteria, and this causes her to have more anxiety about Jake and going to see Wesley. When Bianca eventually leaves she goes to her house and her father is there, finally out of his room. At this point he reaches a point of



denial about the divorce papers possibly leading to the bad reaction later on in the book. The whole mood is awkward since she totally forgets that her father was home and then they talk about the divorce papers. Her father brushes them off as a mistake. Bianca feels badly for leaving him but heads out to Wesley's place and lies to Casey about her plans, which will lead to friendship problems later.

What is evident is that Bianca is on a self-destructive path and that there aren't a lot of good ways it can end. She's lying to her closest friends, using someone for sex, and is closing herself off from her father. The theme of Family is strongest in Chapter 10 when Bianca realizes that her father has come out of his room and is functioning, somewhat. Bianca is not ready to realize and acknowledge that her parents are people with emotions and messy relationships, still choosing to view them as a child would, instead of a mature young adult who understands the intricate nature of romantic relationships. Using sex to deaden and escape her inner emotional turmoil is shown to only make her stress level rise higher, afterwards.

Discussion Question 1

How does Bianca's father react to the divorce papers?

Discussion Question 2

What does Bianca do to help her father through the sadness he is feeling?

Discussion Question 3

How is Bianca coping with her mother's decision to leave the marriage?

Vocabulary

murmured, refusal, emerged, undisguised, nausea, stampeding, slouched, legible, sulkiness, indulgent, halfheartedly, woes, vague



Chapters 11-12

Summary

Chapter 11

This chapter opens in the scene just after Bianca's romp with Wesley. The two were still in Wesley's room and he has picked up on her sadness. After questioning her he finally gets her to talk about Jake. She tells him how she accidentally became the wing girl when he had been dating Tiffany all along and how Tiff had gotten really angry at her when she found out. Wesley seemed to really actually care about Bianca, and is upset that someone would use her like that. Later that next day at the Nest, Joe the bartender figures out that Bianca is in to Wes and says something to her about it. She denies it but Joe tells her that he knows love when he sees it.

Chapter 12

This chapter takes place at a school game where Bianca and Jessica were sitting on the sidelines waiting for Casey. They see the other cheerleaders being mean to a freshman cheerleader, just as it had happened to Jess. Before Bianca and Jess can save her from them the game is over and so is their chance to make a difference.

Analysis

Chapter 11

At his point in the story Bianca is starting to really have self doubts caused by being called the DUFF, made worse by the fact that Jake is coming back to town. Jake was a boy whom she had been with in the ninth grade (Jessica's brother). Bianca was 14 and Jake had been 17, and he was her first kiss, love, and sexual partner. So when Bianca hears he is coming to town she freaks out and does as she has been doing the last few weeks....goes to forget about life by having sex with Wesley. When Wesley finds all this out he seems genuinely sorry for her and even caring, showing that he is also starting to develop feelings for Bianca. In the same chapter she heads back with her group to the Nest. She bumps into Wesley there and they have a little spat and he walks away. Joe the older bartender talks to her and can see right through her act. Bianca is angry to be found out so she leaves.

The theme of Transformation is demonstrated in this chapter as Joe the bartender points out the change in Bianca. As an outside observer, he's seen Bianca, talked to her, and knows some of her story. He also knows teens and can tell when they are interested in one another. His observation about Bianca liking Wesley, and vice versa, angers Bianca because, as has become evident, Bianca hates change. Ironically, it is change that she 'says' she wants, but when it presents itself, she doesn't like it. This is because Bianca likes to be in control of things...such as her sexual liaison's with



Wesley. When she isn't the one calling the shots, making the grades, or determining her own destiny, she becomes belligerent and erratic.

Chapter 12

Chapter 10 takes place at a football game and this setting sets up for Bianca to remember how she became friends with Jessica by seeing a freshman cheerleader getting pushed around by the older ones. Casey and Bianca met Jessica at lunch one day when they stepped in to save her from the other cheerleaders. She had been pushed around and tortured verbally by everyone on the squad. When they saved her it sparked their ever lasting friendship. By the time she is done thinking on all this the game is over and the girl is out of sight. They did not have a chance to save her either.

Discussion Question 1

What self destructive behavior is Bianca engaged in with Wesley?

Discussion Question 2

What might cause Bianca to view relationships as something to be avoided?

Discussion Question 3

What does Bianca become angry when Joe tells her she's in love with Wesley?

Vocabulary

incriminating, distraction, superbly, facetious, lopsided, smirk, suspicious, faulty, eerie, retract



Chapters 13-14

Summary

Chapter 13

This chapter opens with Bianca and her friends deciding to spend Valentine's Day together since they are all single. Bianca has saddled up to hand out Valentine's gifts to those who ordered them from the school. Bianca hates the whole holiday and thinks it's stupid. This is a hellish errand for her. When she arrives at the front she is greeted by Toby, her crush before she was involved with Wes, and then finds out he is single again. They both help hand out flowers and gifts, and he eventually asks her to join him and his friend at the front of the AP gov. class. Bianca then gets a note that she is being signed out of school. Confused, she goes up front to find her mother waiting for her.

Chapter 14

Fourteen starts up in Bianca's mother's car where she is trying to explain everything, including the divorce papers. Bianca finally understands her mother's actions and has the realization that her mom hadn't pushed her father back to drinking...that he had done that. Bianca goes to Wesley's later that night and her mom goes to confront her now ex-husband. Bianca stays the night at Wesley's and the girls are mad at her for skipping their Valentine's Day party.

Analysis

Chapter 13

In this chapter the reader sees that none of the girls who are close to Bianca have dates for Valentines Day so they decide to be each other's date, and go have a movie night. Valentines Day is a day that just simply reminds Bianca she is an unwanted DUFF. She is then called to pass out roses at her school to those who had gotten them. The symbolism of the roses, in this section, is not only representative of love, but indicates that Bianca doesn't have any in her life. She's reduced to making others happy...instead of herself. This constant reminder of what she doesn't have in her life makes her feel tragically ugly, since no one ever got her roses. She also learns her partner to hand out the roses is Toby Tucker. She has had a crush on him for several years and had just learned he had actually been dating someone. Now she learns, while passing out roses, that he's single again. This excites her but then she defeats herself by reminding herself that she is a Duff and doesn't deserve someone as nice as Toby.

Bianca's mother finally makes an entrance into the book, much to the dismay of Bianca. Ms.Piper shows up at the end and checks out a very angry Bianca. To say that this chapter is volatile is an understatement as Bianca must face those things that she's been trying the most to avoid. Her parent's divorce looms large, as does her lack of a



significant relationship with anyone. To make matters worse, having to view everyone else's happiness makes it impossible for her to believe that she deserves or can have any of that for herself. She is in a downward spiral, and seeing her mother at school completes the day perfectly. In order to 'numb' herself, she goes to Wesley's house.

It should be pointed out that at this point, both Bianca and her father have similar problems. Both use an external object to deaden their emotions, and to avoid facing things they don't want to face. Both of them are using addictive behavior patterns to avoid facing the disintegration of their family. Her father uses alcohol, while she uses sex. Neither can see that it is destructive and hurtful to more than just themselves. It impacts everyone around them, even if they don't think it does, even if they think they are hiding it well.

Chapter 14

Bianca's mother surged into the last chapter and this chapter sets up for a long talk between the both of them. Ms. Piper shares with Bianca her side of the story, a story that Bianca hadn't been privy to before. Here is when Bianca decides no one can make people do things, and it's their fault for doing it. In other words, she views her father in a different light. Instead of being the victim, she sees him as a weak individual, whose predicament was his own fault. Ms. Piper also confronts her husband, soon ex-husband, about the divorce and drops off Bianca at the school where instead of going to Casey's for their Valentines Day plans she goes to Wesley instead.

This is one of those tipping points for Casey and Bianca's relationship, Casey has started to notice that Bianca is skipping out a lot more and it is starting to cause tension between them. Casey is aware that Bianca is keeping something from her, but she can't determine what that might be. At one point Wesley tells Bianca that she should hang with other friends so that she wouldn't be The Duff any more, but Bianca staunchly refuses to be that shallow just to be the 'pretty one' in the group. This shows that Bianca is loyal to her friends, but it also indicates that she doesn't think that what she's doing with Wesley, and keeping it from her friends, is going to be a problem later on.

Discussion Question 1

How are Bianca and her father alike?

Discussion Question 2

As a result of speaking with her mother, what conclusions does Bianca come to regarding her father?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Bianca ditch her friends and go to Wesley's?

Vocabulary

materialistic, departure, contagious, hordes, verge, privilege, wrangled, moronic, eloquent



Chapters 15-16

Summary

Chapter 15

Bianca is wakened by her mother calling her to tell her about her dealings with Bianca's dad the night before. She tells Bianca that things didn't go well. Her mother assumes that Bianca has spent the night at one of the girls' house, and thankfully has had her hands full with Bianca's dad to double check anything. Bianca had slept over at Wesley's and she learns that his parents are literally never home and his sister lives with her grandmother, who hates Wesley.

At some point in the middle of the night, Bianca gets up and tells Wesley he can tell her things about himself, that it won't go any further than the room. He seems to change towards her and she notes that he kisses her in a different way that is more tender and loving. Most notably, he doesn't call her Duffy, and he tells her 'thank you'.

Meanwhile, Casey is very upset with Bianca's absence from the group and demands an explanation. Bianca tells the girls about the divorce and it seems like everything is okay with them for the time being.

Chapter 16

In this chapter, Bianca realizes that Casey has been avoiding her and seems really upset. Toby, having reacquainted himself with Bianca during the Valentine's Day rose handout at school, comes to Bianca for moral support as he opens a letter from Harvard. He's afraid that it is a rejection letter. He is relieved to see that he's been accepted and hugs Bianca..making her day. Bianca sees Wesley flirting and becomes mildly jealous, and wonders why. She is upset with herself for feeling that way.

Later that day, Bianca and Casey are at each other's throats. Casey confronts Bianca about hugging Toby and then they start yelling. Bianca's car stops working so Wesley takes her home, dropping his sister, Amy, over at the grandparent's house. Bianca meets his grandmother and she is a foul woman, degrading Wesley in every way.

Analysis

Chapter 15

This is the chapter where Wesley finally opens up and reveals that he is home a majority of the time, alone. The reader can see the theme of Family demonstrated here as Wesley's reality is that he doesn't really have a family. Though he knows that Bianca's family is breaking up, he still envies the relationship that she has with both her



mother and her father. Subconsciously, he wants what Bianca has, even though he may not be aware of it. This is part of the attraction for him.

Bianca also learns that Wesley and she are similar in that their families have issues. Bianca responds in kind and opens up to tell Wesley, also telling him that he can tell her stuff if he needs someone to talk to. He thanks her by name instead of Duffy, and this goes a long way with Bianca. Bianca learns that her mother and father had a less than pleasant meeting in regards to the divorce papers. Casey also confronts her about the absences from their social lives and Bianca tells them everything.. with a few spared details, mainly Wesley since she is embarrassed by it.

Chapter 16

Casey is avoiding Bianca because she can tell that Bianca is lying to her about something. Toby finds Bianca to help him open a acceptance letter from Harvard, which is a huge change from this character. What the reader sees at this point, even if Bianca doesn't, is that she has changed. The theme of Transformation is demonstrated in this chapter. Though she is not aware of it, Bianca has developed some self-confidence in who she is, and this strength is attractive to those that previously never gave her the time of day. The case in point, of course, is Toby.

This is the first time the reader sees a hint of Toby liking Bianca at all. He chooses her to come to instead of anyone else. Casey sees him hug Bianca, and Casey thinks she has been ditching them to hang out with Toby. She confronts Bianca and this really upsets both parties. Bianca's car doesn't start up so she reluctantly gets a ride home with Wesley.

When Bianca meets Wes's grandmother she is floored by the vehemence that comes from the woman. The theme of Prejudice is evident in this chapter as Bianca sees that Wesley is being treated as a 'player' and a 'man whore' by his own grandmother. Bianca realizes that Wes does what he does because he is lonely and surrounding himself with friends and girls is the only way he has of having someone in his life, since no one in his family cares to.

Discussion Question 1

What does the reader learn about Wesley's life?

Discussion Question 2

How is the theme of Prejudice demonstrated in Chapter 16?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Casey upset with Bianca?

Vocabulary

sobriety, sponsor, gullible, bombard, steering, appalled, optimist, defiant, muffled, retort, beam, millennia, repulsive, twinge, naive, swiveled



Chapter 17-18

Summary

Chapter 17

In this chapter Wesley drops Bianca off at her house and Bianca invites him in. She is self-conscious about how tiny her house is in comparison to Wesley's house, but Wesley likes the coziness of it all. The two go to her room since her dad isn't home, and they begin to make love. Bianca's father comes home early, clearly already drunk. He calls Bianca a whore and accuses Wesley of all sorts of foul things. Bianca's father becomes so out of control and angry that he slaps Bianca, and Wesley steps in to stop it. He punches Bianca's father. Wesley takes her to his home and she tells Wesley everything about what has been going on. They go to bed and make love.

Chapter 18

This short chapter opens with Bianca waking up at Wesley's house, recalling what had happened the day before, and being embarrassed and confused. She calls Casey to pick her up and breaks things off with Wesley, leaving him stunned.

Analysis

Chapter 17

The symbolism of their houses is evident in this chapter, as Bianca's house is noticeably much smaller. But Wesley likes it, saying that his house is so big he feels out in the open and small, not to mention lonely. It almost seems as though he wishes he had her house to live in. When Bianca's father comes home their activities in her room cease and they stay in there, hiding, for hours. They are afraid what to say to her dad or how he will react to Wesley being there.

When they do emerge her dad had already started drinking, hours before, so he is already severely drunk. He starts venting his frustrations on Bianca and Wesley and calls Bianca a whore and even strikes her. This is in contrast to every interaction we have seen the two have, where her father is always mild-mannered and very loving. This outburst is completely out of character so far, but has been hinted at by Bianca's mother. Bianca is now seeing a side of her father that only her mother saw, and it is ugly. Wesley, demonstrating his feelings for Bianca, hits her father back, gathers up Bianca and leaves. Bianca has a breakdown and Wesley calms her down. Later, back at his place, they make love, and Bianca notices that it is more tender and caring...not like just having sex.

The symbolism of folding clothes in her room occurs in this chapter when they first start to have sex in Bianca's room and Wesley asks her what she's running from this time. In



other words, he wants to know what he's 'distracting' her from this time. She avoids the question by sitting on the floor at the base of her bed and folding clothes. In a very real way she's trying to make things orderly in her mind and in her life by folding them back into nice neat little piles....but Wesley won't let her.

Chapter 18

In this chapter Bianca tries to break things off with Wesley and realizes she needs to come clean with everyone about what is going on and stop using Wesley as a tool to mask her emotions. The theme of Transformation is demonstrated in this chapter as the reader sees Bianca come to the understanding of how she used Wesley, even if he was a willing participant. After they made love the previous night, she understands her 'addiction' to him, and hates that she used him like that. She is disgusted that she used sex like her father used booze, to hide from her problems. She's done doing that and by deciding to come clean to all of her friends, her transformation is nearly complete. She breaks things off with Wes because she believes it is being fair to him, that she can no longer simply 'use' him as a distraction...nor does she want to. Even though Bianca still has feelings for Wesley she feels that breaking up with him is the right thing to do for them both. This is a first for Wesley, as he is not used to girls not wanting him.

In every way Bianca is a different girl than any that Wesley has ever contended with. She calls him out on things, she doesn't blithely accept his requests, and she is blatantly honest with him. She is interested in him for sex, but more than that, they are friends. This is a different relationship that the ones he's had before with any girl and it seems the more she doesn't want him or tries to pull away, the more he desires her.

Discussion Question 1

What does Bianca realize about herself in Chapter 18?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of both Wes and Bianca's houses.

Discussion Question 3

What side of her father does Bianca see in Chapter 17?

Vocabulary

sulky, corrupt, degrading, elastic, creaking, wedging, assumed, gasped, quixotic, hegemony, occurrence, accusations, ridiculous, surge, empowered, bizarre



Chapters 19-20

Summary

Chapter 19

This chapter opens with Bianca getting into Casey's mom's old truck. They talk and Bianca tells Casey why she has been so elusive and avoiding answering her questions. Casey is less mad but understands. The two drive around for a bit and Casey drops Bianca off at her house.

Chapter 20

This chapter opens with Bianca having to knock on her own home door because she left her keys the night before. Her dad quickly answers the door and apologizes non-stop for the remainder of the day. Bianca's dad says he isn't mad at Wesley for the punch but was grateful that he was so brave to save Bianca.

Analysis

Chapters 19 and 20 are short, but both cover and demonstrate the themes of Family and Friendship. In Chapter 19 Bianca does what she should have done many chapters ago, and tells Casey everything. The sympathy, support, and understanding that she receives from Casey does more to bolster Bianca's self-esteem than anything has in a while. Casey promises to be there for her and takes her home.

The theme of Family begins when Bianca enters into her own home again for the first time since her father struck her. He opens the door quickly and pulls her into a big hug. He is profuse with his apologies, praises Wesley for standing up for her, and attempts to make things up to her. What this chapter indicates is that one of the key characteristics of a family is that when a member makes a mistake, the others support them in correctinh it, and then forgive them. Bianca is very willing to forgive her father, but also wants to make sure that he doesn't continue to engage in the same behaviors that led them both to that point. The same message is the one that Wes gave to Bianca the night before: You are not alone.

Discussion Question 1

How does Casey react to Bianca's confession?

Discussion Question 2

What does Bianca's father do when she returns home?

Discussion Question 3

How is the theme of Family and Friendship illustrated in Chapters 19-20?

Vocabulary

revved, rickety, despised, wring, ditching, suburban, complicated, tainted, excruciating, snorted, petite, interjected, yearning, skeptical



Chapter 21-22

Summary

Chapter 21

In this chapter Bianca is asked out by Toby, the boy she had a crush on since 5th grade. He asks her to the prom. She quickly declines and he asks her out on an actual date to which she says yes. Wesley is still prominent in her mind though. Jessica and Casey are swarming Bianca to get her ready for her date and they are staying until she gets back so they can talk about Bianca's first date with Toby.

Chapter 22

This chapter opens with Bianca coming home after dropping off her friends, to find Toby on her front porch reading a book. They were going to work together on their essays for AP Gov. Wesley tries calling her again and she decides to preoccupy her mind with Toby. Since her father isn't home, she invites Toby up to her room. She thinks the best way to get Wesley out of her mind is to have sex with Toby. They are about to engage in the activity when there is a knock on her bedroom door....she opens it and there is Wesley.

Analysis

Chapter 21

What is interesting to see in this chapter is the theme of Friendship demonstrated by the way that Bianca's friends help her get ready for her date with Toby. At one point, Casey and Jessica tell Bianca that she is 'smokin' hot' in that she looks REALLY nice for her date with Toby. Casey tells Bianca to put all of the DUFF stuff out of her head. Jessica hasn't heard about it and after Casey fills her in, they both disagree with the DUFF remark. In fact, what Bianca learns is that both of them have insecurity issues, too. Casey believes that she is too tall and that boys don't like girls that are taller than them. What Bianca realizes is that she accepted a label that she didn't have to.

Chapter 22

In this chapter the reader sees Bianca falling back into some of her old habits, like using sex to forget or block out things. She acknowledges the fact that Toby is a gentleman, and is kind and sweet. She believes that if Toby will want her then she's not really a DUFF after all. She has rationalized that with Wes it was all purely physical and that they hadn't even really been dating, so therefore not in a real relationship. She believes that with Toby she can have all of that. She finds herself becoming frustrated, though, because Toby isn't as skilled or aggressive in the bedroom as Wes had been. Without realizing it, she is comparing him to Wes. And, then, Wes appears.



Discussion Question 1

How is the theme of Friendship demonstrated in Chapter 21?

Discussion Question 2

Compare Bianca's relationship with Toby to her relationship with Wes.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Bianca want Toby to be with her so badly?

Vocabulary

anxious, ringtone, derail, nonescapist, feminism, atrocious, chagrined, impressed, obvious, blushing, fumbled



Chapters 23-24

Summary

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 starts with Wesley standing in the doorway of Bianca's room clearly having interrupted something between Bianca and Toby. Bianca jumps up and takes Wesley outside and yells at him and it is revealed that Wesley cares for her. She accuses him of using her as much as she used him, but he disagrees. He argues that if that were true he wouldn't be there. He explains that since he hadn't seen her since the episode with her drunken dad he had been worried. Bianca throws some very hurtful things at Wesley about his family and situation, stating that he's there because his bruised ego can't take that a girl actually walked away from him. Hurt and upset, he leaves. However, Bianca isn't able to pick up where she left off with Toby, and instead suggests that they actually do their homework.

Chapter 24

This chapter starts with Bianca being even more upset than usual and her friends have noticed. And to make matters more confusing, Amy, Wes's sister pulls Bianca aside in the library and thanks her for whatever she did to Wes. Bianca asks Amy what she's talking about and Amy says that Wes is less of a jerk these days. Later, Jessica pulls Bianca aside and tells her that she loves her, but that she's just not happy with Toby. Jessica also tells her that she knew about Jake and what he did to her as a freshman. Bianca is astounded that she knew. Jessica reaffirms that she is Bianca's friend for life and they walk to class. Bianca is still struggling with her emotions for Wesley even though Toby is the better and more obvious pick for her. When she gets to her desk later on in the day there is a note sitting in her seat. Usually when Case or Jess left her a note they put a smiley face for the i in her name. This one does not and she doesn't recognize the writing. She opens it up and it is a note from Wesley. He tells her that he doesn't chase girls, but that in her exception, he will chase her.

Analysis

Chapter 23

The theme of Transformation is demonstrated in this chapter by Wesley's appearance at Bianca's house. Prior to this he would never have cared about one of the girls he'd slept with, never told them the things that he's shared with Bianca, and certainly never cared. The fact that he is in her house, standing there angry and hurt indicates that his entire perspective on relationships has changed. Bianca tries to remind him of his former self and demeanor, but he is unwilling to go back to that way of existing. Bianca is left confused.



Chapter 24

The symbolism of the first note is significant. It is an indicator of Wes's transformation. Wesley Rush doesn't chase girls, he has always told Bianca....and yet, here he is admitting that he is chasing her. Intellectually and logically, Toby is the best choice for Bianca as they have many things in common. And yet, Wes, as damaged as he is, is truly who her heart belongs to, even if she isn't ready to admit it.

It is also interesting to note that it is Jessica who credits Bianca with saving her from utter humiliation when the preppy girls were picking on her their freshman year. She tells Bianca what a great friend she is, demonstrating the theme of Friendship. Jessica tells Bianca what she has needed to hear all along, that she knew about Jake, that he was sorry for the way he treated Bianca, and that Bianca is actually someone to be admired.

Discussion Question 1

What indicates that Wes has changed from the way he was at the beginning of the novel?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of the note that Wes leaves for Bianca.

Discussion Question 3

Why is Toby not the best choice for Bianca?

Vocabulary

scarlet, pretentious, crane, intimidate, proximity, flings, eavesdropping, offended, egotistical, ambushed



Chapters 25-26

Summary

Chapter 25

This chapter starts off with Bianca talking about how being the DUFF was originally easier than it is now since boys are now all over her. She compares the two boys, Wesley and Toby, and goes over what makes them special to her. Eventually there is a knock at the door and a man delivering a bunch of real roses hands them to her. The roses are from Wesley as the reader finds out in the note that accompanies them. The reader finds out that Wesley is falling in love for real with Bianca, since she is the only girl who stands up to him and calls him out. While all this is going on Bianca gets a call from Toby to see if she wants to go on a date the next day. She agrees to it trying to let Wesley go.

Chapter 26

This chapter begins on the day of Bianca and Toby's date night. At school Bianca overhears that a girl she is friends with might be pregnant, Bianca talks with the girl and finds out that she is, in fact, not pregnant. But, hearing her talk about the casual sex that she's been having, not caring about the consequences makes Bianca instantly judgmental....until she realizes that at one point, she was just like that.

She comes to terms with herself through the girl's life lesson, understanding that at some point in her life every woman feels like the Duff, or the Slut, or some other label, but that women have the ultimate choice to determine whether or not they will allow it to stick.

Later on Bianca hears a knock at the front door. It is her Mom. Bianca's mother had driven in to offer motherly advice on her date which she heard about from Bianca's father. After they talk and Bianca spills all her feelings of confusion about Toby and Wesley, Toby comes to collect Bianca for their date. She tells Toby that her mother wrote a book on self-esteem. Her mother gives her a B necklace.

Analysis

Chapter 25

In this chapter the author uses an allusion in the form of an excerpt from *Wuthering Heights*. It is a selection that says how deeply the heroine is in love with Heathcliff, even though she 'should' be in love with Linton. Identifying with them completely, Bianca begins to realize and acknowledge her own feelings towards Wesley. When Wesley sends roses to her, and she reads the note from him, she begins to quit running away from her feelings and discovers that what she likes about Wesley is that he allows her to



be herself, and that even though Toby is 'perfect' she doesn't have feelings for him like she does for Wes. Still, she's convinced that it is in her own best interests to leave Wes behind, despite how she feels. She agrees to go on a date with Toby, again.

The theme of Transformation is demonstrated when Bianca reads Wesley's note. It is sensitive, honest, and indicates that Wes understands her, and he acknowledges that she understands him better than anyone else. He also tells her that she can continue to run like Hester, in the Scarlet Letter, but that in the end, she will come to the same conclusion that he has....that they are in love.

Chapter 26

Ironically, the reader learns that Mrs. Piper has written a book about self-esteem. The irony being that her own daughter is suffering from extreme low self-esteem.

In this chapter Bianca's mother drives seven hours to visit with Bianca (and she had another appointment in town) because she has a boyfriend. She reminds Bianca to be herself and never to compromise that. Bianca receives a necklace from her mother with a large B on it, which represents who she is and to remember to be herself. She breaks down and tells her mother everything and ends up feeling terrible that she's shared the information with her mother, who looks like it is overload. When Toby comes to pick her up for her date she is struck by how 'perfect' he is, but also realizes that she doesn't want or need perfect

Discussion Question 1

What does the note from Wesley indicate?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Bianca coming to the conclusion that the 'perfect' guy isn't who she wants?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the allusion to Wuthering Heights.

Vocabulary

foliage, resembles, eternal, feverishly, propriety, omen, avert, hypocrite, scarily, sexist



Chapter 27

Summary

Chapter 27

This chapter opens with Bianca and the gang heading to the Nest where Jess and Casey break away from Toby and Bianca. While they are there Wesley shows up and goes to sit at the bar alone. Bianca and Toby finally have a heart-to-heart about how they actually feel and as it turns out Toby isn't over his ex either. So they mutually end the relationship and Bianca goes to Wesley. She tells Wesley that their relationship will have to go slower than it has before and that she will be bossy and moody, etc. he silences her by kissing her, passionately.

Analysis

Chapter 27

In this chapter Bianca is still trying to be who she isn't, forgetting her mother's advice. However, when she and Toby have a truly honest conversation they both agree to break it off. Earlier she'd asked Toby to order to a diet Coke, but her favorite was really Cherry Coke. Refusing to order her usual drink represents the fact that she's still being someone other than herself. However, when she approaches Wesley and they agree to try and be together, taking things slower, he orders her a Cherry Coke, and she smiles. He does know her, and she can be herself around him.

One of the major themes of Transformation occurs when Bianca tells Wesley that everyone in the world is a DUFF at one point in time, and that knowing it is a powerful thing. To own it is to reduce the power that the slur has over a person, and with this realization and her determination to slow things down with Wesley, the reader sees that Bianca has transformed from the girl she was at the beginning of the novel, and that her feelings about herself have elevated her to someone who is confident in herself and her future.

Discussion Question 1

What do Toby and Bianca agree to?

Discussion Question 2

What are Bianca's conditions for getting back with Wes?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the significance of Bianca's choices of beverages while at the Nest.

Vocabulary

unsettling, apparently, afflicted, sidled, concealed, inexplicable, critique, unwavering, automatic, zigzag



Characters

Bianca Piper

Bianca Piper is the main character and is different from her friends. She is a larger girl and is considered a DUFF (designated ugly fat friend). Her best-friends are the stereotypical pretty girls and Bianca is a cynical, analytic, level-headed girl who is just into quiet nights with a book, unlike her friends who love to go out to clubs.

Bianca struggles with self image issues and an inability to talk to guys she's interested in. Bianca's home life is broken due to her mother never being home due to her self help lectures. Ironically, it is Bianca who needs the self help assistance. Her father is loving but tragically flawed due to his alcoholism. Bianca is constantly having an identity crisis due to her being the DUFF, and she feels like she is a 'whore' for using Wesley as a aid to escape her reality. Wesley Rush is her enemy but as the story progresses she ends up in an enemies-with-benefits agreement, which eventually ends up with her having feelings for him.

The reader can see that Bianca is highly intelligent but that since the beginning of high school has had a hard time fitting in. Before Wes told her she was a DUFF she hadn't really verbalized how she felt. Now, with a label, she believes that she is the ugliest one of her friends. Later on in the book, Bianca transforms when she realizes that at some point everyone is a DUFF and everyone feels like the outsider. When she figures this out and realizes that true friends want you to act like yourself, she is liberated from the title.

Wesley

Wesley Rush starts out the novel as an egotistical, over-sexualized, jerk with money and looks. Bianca hates him, not only for who he is and what he does, but what he represents to her. He is always seen with the shallow and vapid types of girls that laugh at everything he says. She also knows that he sleeps with all of them. It is Wes that first gives Bianca the DUFF title.

Later, as Bianca and Wes grow closer, the reader sees that this persona that he projects at school is a ruse. He is actually quite intelligent and is extremely lonely. His parents travel all of the time and his sister doesn't even live at home with him. She stays with their grandmother who has forbidden Wes to even come over. The one time that he does he has Bianca with him. She gets to see how horribly his grandmother treats him and she feels bad for him.

At first he enjoys the free sex with Bianca, but as the novel progresses he is willing to consider that it is something more....well before Bianca will admit it. It is because of a previous relationship gone badly that Bianca is unwilling to admit to feeling anything for anyone, even though she may feel it. After Wes saves her from her father's wrath, their



relationship takes a turn and Wes realizes that he truly loves her for who she is. He takes back the DUFF remark and pursues her avidly. In the end, Bianca realizes that she does love Wes and they are reunited. Wes has changed and everyone has noticed. He tells Bianca that they have both changed.

Jessica Gaither

Jessica is a friend to Bianca. She is a newer friend to Bianca than Casey. Jess is like Casey in body type and in the activities they do. Jess has long black hair and is grounded from the Homecoming dance due to grades. She has feelings for a guy named Harrison, who is gay, but that doesn't stop her advances. She is always there for Bianca. It is her brother, Jake, that Bianca fell for their freshman year and who used Bianca just to make his then-girlfriend jealous. Jessica tells Bianca many years later that she knew about the entire thing and that her brother is sorry that he treated her like that.

Mr. Piper

Mr. Piper is Bianca's father. He works as a laptop repair guy and loves Bianca and his wife. When the marriage ends he goes back to drinking and lashes out at Bianca. He goes back to AA and is very supportive of Bianca, even praising Wes for protecting Bianca the night he struck her.

Mrs. Piper

Mrs. Piper is Bianca's mother. She wrote a self help book that didn't go well at first but then she started getting booked to talk at places and she started traveling and taking more speaking jobs until she was gone for months at a time. She divorces her husband and moves to TN.

Toby Tucker

Toby Tucker is the Valedictorian of the school where Bianca attends. Bianca has had a crush on him since the fifth grade. Later, when they end up handing out gifts at school for Valentine's Day he tells her that he broke up with his girlfriend and that he would like to take her out. Toby is very intuitive, and after a while he realizes that Bianca isn't over Wes. He lets her go and wishes her well.

Jake Gaither

Jake is Jessica's older brother, and was the first boyfriend that Bianca ever had. He had been cheating with her and eventually his girlfriend found out and put an end to it. He broke Bianca's heart and he is the reason she hates dating and romance. He later apologizes for treating Bianca like he did.



Nest Joe

Joe is the bartender at the teen club 'The Nest'. For a while he was Bianca's confidant while she visited the club with Casey and Jess.

Amy Rush

Amy is Wesley's little sister whom he cares deeply for. She lives with her Grandparents who despise Wesley for his frivolous romps with girls and believe him to be a blight on the Rush family. Amy is quiet and very pretty. She pulls Bianca aside at school in the library to tell her that whatever she's done to Wes that it has had a positive effect on him.

Grandma Rush

Grandma Rush is the grandmother to Wesley and Amy. She disapproves of Wesley's behavior and thinks he is a stain on their family's name. " Bianca witnesses her hatred when they drop Amy off one afternoon.

Casey Blithe

Casey Blithe is the stereotypical cheerleader girl, and she is Bianca's oldest and closest friend. Casey is blonde with a cute pixie cut, she is tall and skinny. She met Bianca in 5th grade after Bianca fell off the monkey bars and hurt herself and no one would help her, Casey helped her back then, and the two forged a lasting friendship.

Vikki

Vikki is a popular girl that flirts with Wes incessantly. Later, a rumor begins about her being pregnant. Bianca, afraid that Wes has gotten her pregnant corners her in the bathroom to get details. Vikki tells her that the rumor was unfounded and the entire incident gives Bianca a wake up call.



Symbols and Symbolism

Bianca's car

Bianca has an old car that doesn't have heat or AC so it is very cold in the winter. This car causes her to go through a great deal of many things since it breaks down and causes her to have to ride with Wesley or call Casey to pick her up. It also represents her in that it is a nondescript car, easily ignored.

The Scarlet Letter

The Scarlet Letter was a book Bianca's class had read and had to analyze and write a paper on with a partner. This paper offers Bianca the chance to dissect her feelings about Wesley, at first offering the explanation that Hester slept with Dimmsdale as a distraction. She condemns Hester for the very actions that she engages in later on. The Scarlet Letter is one of the first connection points for Wes and Bianca, allowing both of them to be more honest with another human being than either of them have ever been.

Self Help Book

This book is what took Bianca's mother away from the household. It also serves as a bit of irony since her own daughter suffers from an extreme lack of self esteem.

Bianca's Hair

Bianca's hair is a symbol of her inner self. When she is with her friends or with Wesley it is natural and wavy and a mess, but around Toby she straightens it and trims it and makes it conform to what she thinks he would like. This is a inner reflection of her in that she doesn't have to hide or be anything other than herself with Wesley, but around Toby she has to become someone she's not to make him happy.

Folding Clothes

Bianca folds clothes at the end of each day as a ritual to relax herself. It is a way for her to control the order in her house and life where she believes there is no control. She folds to relax her mind and de-stress.



Wesley's House

Wesley's house is a monument to his loneliness. He has everything except love and a family that is close. The house shows how even though you have money and power it doesn't buy and get a person everything.

1st note

The first note was left on Bianca's desk in one of her classes. She originally thought it was from Casey but the lack of a smiley face showed it wasn't. The note was from Wesley Rush and it said: "Wesley Rush doesn't chase girls, but I'm chasing you". This shows that Bianca is more to him than a worthless conquest, and she meant enough to him that he broke a personal policy for her.

2nd note

The second note came to Bianca just before she got a call from Toby to go on a date. The note is accompanied by a bouquet of roses. The note goes more into detail on Wes's feelings for Bianca. Wesley Rush admits to having fallen in love with Bianca and tells her that he knows she feels the same way even if she won't admit it.

Roses

Wesley sends Bianca a huge bouquet of roses to her doorstep with a love letter attached to it. This is a significant gesture since in an earlier chapter Bianca had to hand out roses on Valentine's Day to everyone else around school, seeing their happiness and thinking that she would never have that. Roses have always been a symbol of love but this time they are a symbol of love and acceptance.

"B" Necklace

Bianca was given a necklace with a silver B on it from her mother as a symbol to remember who she is. This is important because she has been struggling with who she was the entire book. Bianca, The DUFF, or a whore? All of these things have been plaguing her and she loses sight of who she truly is. The locket helps her come to terms with everything and helps her find herself.



Settings

Nest

The Nest is a local teen club where all the High-school students meet up to dance and hook up. Bianca is first seen here and hates the place. Casey and Jessica love it.

The School

This is where a lot of the story takes place, as they are all still in High-school. This high-school holds around 400 people and is a quaint small town High-school.

Bianca's House

Bianca's house is another common area in the book. The house is lived in by Bianca and her father since her mom travels around and then divorces her father. This house is a small but cozy little suburban household. Not much detail goes into describing the house other than Bianca's room and the TV room.

Rush Household

A large part of the story takes place in Wesley's house. it is considered a mansion and very posh. It is described as marble on pretty much everything with two huge balconies. Wesley is the only one who lives there since his parents are always gone and his sister lives with his Grandparents when his parents are gone, which is most of the time. This is where Bianca and Wesley mostly meet up to have sex since they won't be disturbed there.

AP Government Class

This is where Toby and Bianca are in the same class together and the basis for where their intimate relationship starts. Had they not been in the same class they wouldn't have been together to work on reports at Bianca's house leading to them almost having sex. The first inclination that he likes Bianca is when he asks her to sit with him in the front of the class.



Themes and Motifs

Transformation

The theme of transformation is found through out the entire book. Many of the main characters go through some form of it. Bianca transforms from cynical wall flower into a girl who is all her own. At first, she is snarky and sarcastic, but she is loyal and caring to her friends. She is shown to be highly intelligent but very self conscious. This is due to her earlier missteps with a boy four years older than her. This early hurt has clearly wounded her and turned her away from ever pursuing any romantic relationship with anyone. And, when her parents announce their divorce she is doubly sure she wants nothing to do with love. It all ends the same way, she thinks.

However, the transformation begins when she is paired up with Wesley for an English assignment and they end up becoming intimate. At first it is purely recreational for them both. However, as they both begin to learn more about the other, Bianca begins to understand that many of her other relationships weren't true relationships. With this discovery and the discovery that everyone feels like 'the DUFF' at some point in their lives, she is well on her way to opening herself up for the possibility of love again. When she accepts the necklace from her mother, who tells her to be herself, Bianca realizes who she is and what she wants. She wants Wesley, who understands her and loves her even for her flaws, and in spite of them.

Wesley also goes through a short transformation, himself. At the beginning of the novel he is shown to be a cocky womanizing rich boy with little regard for anyone's feelings. Because Bianca can see through that facade and refuses to be bowled over by his money and looks, he becomes intrigued. Having sex with her is secondary to him as he begins to understand what makes her tick, and he begins to do something he's never done with another human being....trust. He tells her things that he's never told another soul and she keeps his secret. Having someone who loves you in spite of your mistakes is intoxicating and he realizes when Bianca starts dating Toby that he is in love with her...really in love with her. He stops chasing any other girls but Bianca. He changes from being self-centered to being caring and compassionate. At the end, when he sends her the second note he tells her that he knows that eventually she will figure it out and when she does, he will be waiting.

Forbidden Love

This theme plays a minor roll in the story since it is a self inflicted forbidden romance. Bianca struggles with her own hatred of Wesley which clouds her mind and confuses her. She has made it a personal policy to never allow someone to get that close to her again, because they could hurt her or use her again. As long as she is in control of everything she is fine. It is when she crosses the line and begins to have sex with



Wesley, then to have feelings for Wesley that the forbidden love becomes even more of a problem.

The forbidden love almost causes Bianca to lose her friends because she won't tell them what is going on. Later, when Bianca calls it quits with Wes she calls Casey and tells her everything. Other characters have forbidden love occurring as well. Jessica is in love with Harrison, who is gay. And initially Bianca was infatuated with Toby, though she could never have him.

This desire to have, but never quite having, sets the overall tone for the entire novel, and offers a catharsis moment at the end chapters when Bianca and Wes finally recognize that what they do have is true love and that they are, really, very good for one another. Throwing all teen-aged decorum aside, they begin to see one another in a real relationship, one that both Bianca and Wes want to be more than purely physical (which is what it started out to be).

Each of Bianca's friends, Jessica and Casey, as well as Bianca, move away from the forbidden loves toward something that is more lasting and real for them. At the end of the story, each girl has realized and released the person whom they had, had an attraction to, with the exception of Bianca, and have begun something resembling more mature relationships. Bianca wasn't infatuated with Wes at the beginning of the novel, and in fact was only using him. Later, when they truly begin to be interested in the other's life do they realize that they need one another and find in each other a caring companion.

Friendship

One of the strongest themes in the book is Friendship. Casey and Jessica are Bianca's best friends and they would do anything to help one another out as is seen several times. One such instance is when Casey has to pick up Bianca at Wesley's house even though they were fighting. Casey understood her friend needed her and looked past the anger she felt because Bianca reached out to her.

Jess and Casey had begun to worry when Bianca started ditching out on them. Even though they didn't know why at the time they still were worried that their friend might be getting into trouble or had something troubling her and they cared. Even Wesley had a friendship with Harrison, the only other guy that could stand to be around him since they weren't fishing out of the same pool.

Additionally, the theme of Friendship can be seen between Wes and Bianca as their relationship progresses. Bianca sees how Wes's grandmother treats him and immediately feels sorry for him, consoling him and telling him that his grandmother is wrong. She supports him and he reciprocates a few days later when Bianca's father attacks her. They are there for each other and a bond of trust is struck between them.

Toby and Bianca also have a friendship, but it really can't progress any further. Toby values her opinion and wants her to be with him when he opens his acceptance letter



from Harvard. Likewise it is he who tells her that she should go back to Wes, since he knows that this is where her heart truly is. He cares enough for her to tell her the truth, and he confesses to her that he's also not over his previous girlfriend, either.

Family

Family is an important theme to most teen books, and this one is no exception. The family dynamics are interesting to note in this novel because both are dysfunctional, though one possibly moreso than the other. Bianca's family shows concern and caring toward her; she knows they love her. Wes does not have that sort of consideration.

Bianca's family still want her around and stay with her. Her father is with her full time but it is obvious that she speaks to her mother very often via phone. Her mother drives many hours to come to see her when Bianca is torn between Wes and Toby. This is not something that Wes has with his family. In fact, he really has no family around. His grandparents have even turned their back on him, calling him the 'stain' on the family.

That Bianca is upset at learning about the impending divorce is important and significant because it is the catalyst that sets the wheels in motion for her to have sex that first time with Wes. This shows how deeply she takes the divorce news and that to her, her family was one of her strongest support mechanisms.

Wes, on the other hand, has never had this. He envies the Piper household, even with the uproar. It is suggested that he's been raised by nannies and staff rather than the family at all. He has been expected to play a role that he can't play and doesn't fit into those parameters. As such, his family has cast him aside, hoping that he will keep the embarrassment to them to a minimum.

When Bianca's father realizes what he's done to Bianca he apologizes profusely and can't begin to make amends for what he's done. It is a wake up call for him and shows how family members don't give up on each other. Bianca is there for him and he doesn't judge her for choosing to love Wesley.

Predjudice

The theme of Prejudice is shown to come in all shapes and sizes, colors, and heights. The first instance is when Wesley calls Bianca the DUFF, referring to the Designated Ugly Fat Friend. This implies that the only reason pretty girls are around those who are less so is that they need someone to make them look better. Bianca in this case was wrongly labeled, as each one of her friends thinks she is prettier than they are.

Prejudice happens again when Bianca and Wesley drop off Amy at his grandparents and his Grandmother comes out and implies Bianca is a whore simply because she is around Wesley. Thus being labeled by association is shown to be just as devastating as if one were actually engaged in the activity.



Later, Prejudice shows up when Vikki is assumed to be a slut because she might be pregnant. Though she does sleep around, Bianca learns that Vikki was used by an older boy in college and that she isn't really the low life everyone tries to paint her to be. Later, Bianca realizes that so many people in high school are judgmental and don't really have a right to be. She realizes that everyone has at some point felt ugly, fat, or incapable.

Styles

Point of View

The point of view of *The Duff* is that of first person, from the viewpoint of Bianca Piper. It is primarily through her narrative that the reader gets a glimpse into why she feels the way that she does and offers insight into her motives. The reader is also offered much of the backstory about Bianca's friends that otherwise would have been lost if told in a narrative third person, or omniscient viewpoint.

Language and Meaning

The language utilized in *The Duff* is modern in nature and scope. The reading level of the book, in and of itself, is geared toward early high school, but the language is still accessible to someone in junior high school. Because of the adult nature of some of the scenes, the book should be used with discretion as sexual content, swearing, and cursing are often utilized throughout the novel.

Structure

The book's structure was in a linear based writing style with limited backwards movement. All the events happened in order chronologically and flashbacks are at a minimum. Frequent dialogue is utilized to provide movement to the themes, symbols, and to drive characterization. With 27 chapters, of average length of about 10 pages or so (some are shorter), the novel is a quick read.



Quotes

Beauty really was skin-deep. Wesley Rush may have had the body of a Greek god, but his soul was as black and empty as the inside of my closet. What a bastard!

-- Bianca (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 6)

Importance: This internal thought quote shows that even though Wesley may look amazing and beautiful on the inside he was a manipulative heartless playboy and only after girls for one thing.

They believed he was a good guy they could tame, but I knew he was a jackass. I only wanted his body. No strings. No feelings. I only wanted the high.

-- Bianca (Chapter 10 paragraph Page 90)

Importance: This is something that Bianca is thinking to herself about her situation regarding Wes. Many of the girls who wanted to be with Wesley thought he was decent inside and they could save him. Bianca didn't care and in fact just wanted him for sex and nothing more.

His words sounded facetious, but his smile seemed sincere, not the lopsided one he wore when he thought he was being clever.

-- Bianca (Chapter 11 paragraph Page 92)

Importance: Wesley is normally trying to get his way but this time he was honest in caring about what she had to say.

She was a constant ray of light. The glass half full. She kept us balanced with that big smile and naive innocence that always shocked us. While sometimes it felt like Casey and I had both seen too much of the world, Jessica was, in a lot of ways, still a child. Virginal. Always full of wonder. She was our sunshine, and Casey and I were kind of in the dark without her.

-- Bianca (Chapter 12 paragraph 1)

Importance: This shows the kind of person Jess is. Jessica is always happy and doesn't dwell in the negative aspects of life too much or at all. To her there isn't a problem that can't be fixed. In comparison to the others who were more worldly, she was in many respects a child personality wise.

No matter where you go or what you do to distract yourself, reality catches up with you eventually.

-- Bianca (Chapter 18 paragraph Page 178)

Importance: This is in regards to everything that had been going on, how she was distracting herself with Wesley and it was time to face the reality that was her life. The angry friends, divorcing family and moving on from Wesley, were aspects that she realized had to be dealt with.



His voice simply faded into the distance, where I hoped to leave him forever.
-- Bianca (Chapter 18 paragraph Page 183)

Importance: Bianca had hoped to leave Wesley and all the things she had done with him. She had hoped her feelings and emotions would fade into the background and she would be able to move on from him.

Unfortunately, there were no weekly meetings, no sponsors, or twelve-step programs for what I was addicted to.
-- Bianca (Chapter 20 paragraph Page 198)

Importance: Bianca's father was going to go back to AA and Bianca knew there weren't any meetings to help her get over her addiction to Wesley.

We separated in the cafeteria, and I think I skipped — yeah, skipped like a little kid — to the lunch table, my bad mood totally forgotten.
-- Bianca (Chapter 21 paragraph Page 205)

Importance: Toby, the boy she had a crush on for a while, asked her out on a date and this made her so happy and full of emotion that she forgot all about Wesley and all her problems for a long while.

He didn't seem irritated or offended or dejected at all. Perfect manners. A perfect smile. The perfect boy. So why wasn't I perfectly happy?
-- Bianca (Chapter 23 paragraph Page 233)

Importance: She was upset at the fact that she finally had the perfect guy for her, but Wesley understands her on a level only another person going through her situation would know. He let her be her, and she didn't have to act like anyone else. She realizes that perfect isn't what she wants.

Wesley Rush doesn't chase girls, but I'm chasing you.
-- Wesley (Chapter 24 paragraph Page 243)

Importance: Wesley wrote this on a note to Bianca. It indicates that she has touched him in a way that no other girl ever has.

p.s.: I know you're rolling your eyes right now, but I don't care. Honestly, it's always been kind of a turn-on.
-- Wesley (Chapter 24 paragraph page 246)

Importance: This is showing once again that Wesley has become a better person in that he doesn't care how it may make him look. He loves Bianca and doesn't care about how he sounds. He knows she doesn't like the mushy romantic stuff but he had to tell her exactly how he felt and even though she hates romance he likes that about her.



The word was ours now, and as long as we held on to it, we could control the hurt it inflicted.

-- Bianca (Chapter 27 paragraph Page 265)

Importance: This shows that Bianca and other girls like her were no longer going to be hurt or put down by the label DUFF.