



Pull

B.A. Binns

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Chicago high school senior David Albacore is dealing with major upheaval after his father murders his mom. David blames himself for not saving their mom that night; after being injured in a basketball game, he was given strong painkillers and slept through the shooting. In the terrible aftermath, he changes his name and moves to a tough new inner-city Chicago high school when he and his sisters Barney and Linda move in with their aunt. Barney, who found their moms body, is barely able to cope. With their mother gone and their father in jail, David tries his best to take care of his sisters. When hes forced to join the basketball team or be expelled after getting in too many fights, it cuts into the after-school construction job that he takes to help support his family. Then David begins falling for Yolanda, the hottest girl in schoolwho is also Malik's, the school player and bullys girlfriend. They flirt and spar, but going after this fashion loving Mighty Mite spells big trouble for David. And as he ponders trying for a basketball scholarship or keeping the construction job he loves, Aunt Edies stroke eliminates most of Davids options. He can keep his family together by working full time, or follow his moms dream of college, which would send Barney into foster care. Teen readers will hold their breath as David weighs his options about the kind of life he wants to live.

Pull Details

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Author : B.A. Binns

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From Reader Review Pull for online ebook

Amanda says

Realistic, urban fiction with good characters and strong story. David is a very compelling character and readers will empathize with his struggles. Good read for fans of Walter Dean Meyers and Paul Volponi.

Karen DelleCava says

David Albacore is burdened with extreme guilt caused the night his mother was murdered by his father. He's been uprooted, is living with his aunt and sisters and starting senior year in a new city. I was pulling for David as he tried to keep his sister, Barney, out of harm's way at school and struggled to contribute financially to the household. David recognized the signs of domestic violence among his peers at school and my heart pounded when he stepped up to confront his nemesis. B.A. Binns illuminates the troubling topic of teen dating violence through David's wonderful character. I think the gritty street language will hook young guy readers. An important book for any teen in an abusive dating relationship.

kwain says

I really liked this book, I tried reading it about a month ago but couldn't get into it. I retried again and liked it very much. I would recommend this book to those who like a story of family, courage, and a story that breaks through what most view as young black male stereo typing. I think the author did a good job with the characture of David and the whole plot in general.

K's out ...peace

Telah Mitchell says

I wanted to love this book, but I didn't. I didn't hate it either. I thought it was raw, and it made me feel so bad for his situation but then there was something about the way he talked that didn't ring true. It didn't really sound like someone my age. I don't know. It was just off.

Diana says

Great Rec from CM! Highly recommend this for all adults and YA readers.

Courtney Milan says

Pull by B.A. Binns is one of the most powerful Y.A. books I've read all year.

David, the protagonist (you notice I don't include his last name), is dealing with a lot for a kid in his senior year of high school. You see, a few months ago, his dad murdered his mother. His father's in jail, and David himself, as the eldest in the family, has gotten the job of keeping his family together. Without the money he makes from an after school construction job, his sisters and he would have been split up around the globe, sent to distant relatives, many of whom don't really seem to care about the family.

So David finds himself the man of his family, when he's not even a man himself. And David does not know how to deal with what has happened to him. He changes his last name. In part, so that people at his new school (one that's in a poor part of town, instead of the wealthier area where his parents used to live) don't recognize either his skill at basketball or his father's name. But in larger part, he doesn't want to keep his father's last name—just as he doesn't want to visit his father in jail, doesn't even call him “father” anymore.

But David's suffering from post traumatic stress disorder as a result of the murder. And he's struggling from a lot of things that feel absolutely real: He doesn't want to go to college, doesn't enjoy school, and does like girls—and as much as he likes them, he also blames them for the way they make him feel.

David is never a comfortable character, and he won't make you feel comfortable (especially if you, like me, wince at the thought of someone not getting an education). And that, I think is what makes this book so raw and powerful. It is simply too easy to believe that David is real. To buy into what is a complex mix of teenage anger and angst and hope and self-hatred and arrogance all at once—and even though those things sound contradictory, when David lets you know how it is, in his short, terse, no-nonsense style, it's real.

His character is so strong, so powerful, that even through (especially through) his terse denials, you can feel so much. I got more raw emotion from one of David's curt “I don't cares,” delivered at the right time than I do from most books.

And just to give you a taste of what he's like, this from the first few pages of the book, after David has just had a traumatic flashback in the middle of gym class when the sound of the basketball hitting the court reminds him of a gunshot wound:

The gym teacher's whistle sounds, the shriek knifing through my ears. He runs over from the sidelines where he's been talking with another man while the inept group of students practiced passing the ball. His pale face holds wide, worried gray eyes. You'd think he'd never seen a guy downed by a basketball before. Probably hasn't been teaching in the inner city very long. Probably still has ideals and intends to do some good or something.

Probably needs to get the hell out of my space.

And that's David for you.

Like I said, this is not a comfortable book. But the day I got it, I was up until 1 AM reading, even though I had a 6 AM flight the next morning, and I got up half an hour early just so I could finish.

This book is seriously, utterly, powerfully compelling. And so I'm giving away a copy to one random commenter.

Katie says

Recap:

After his father shoots and kills his mother, it's up to David to keep his family together. Determined to reinvent himself at his new school, David changes his last name and works to keep a lower profile. But even the best of intentions aren't enough to hide who a person really is inside. And for better or for worse, keeping a low profile just isn't in the cards for someone like David.

But as David stands out more and more - battling with Malik, aggravating the principal, dazzling on the basketball court, and winning the attention of the tempestuous Yolanda - will he continue being able to protect his family? Or is he only pushing them away?

Review:

Yes, Pull fits pretty perfectly in my February personal reading challenge, but I also picked it up because the boy on the cover looks exactly like one of my former students. The resemblance is just incredible. He's only in 7th grade now, but once he hits high school, I am recommending this book! Once he gets over his reflection on the cover, he is going to love David's story.

I was shocked to learn that author B.A. Binns was a woman. She has 100% nailed the voice of a teenage boy. Check out this article from Ms. Binns on how she learned to "write like a boy." In fact, she wrote so convincingly, that sometimes I actually wished we could hear less of David's thoughts. For example, do I really need to hear a detailed description of the...effect...Yolanda has on him every time that she comes close? No, I do not. But that (frequent) over-sharing is my only David-complaint. His voice was aggressive, strong, and at turns both arrogant and aching guilt-ridden - depending on the topic of his thoughts. Just when he got a little too cocky, Binns would show David hard at work at his night job - a construction site - or give us a tender scene with David and his sisters and I would be back on his side again.

The general premise of David's story revolves around his mother's shooting, his and his siblings' guilt over not being able to stop it, and David's efforts to start over. While threads of that tragedy run throughout the entire novel, it gradually becomes much more about David's relationship with a girl named Yolanda and her boyfriend, Malik. It still turns my stomach a little just to write Malik's name down. He was a true villain - literally using and abusing any girl who would let him, and they all let him. That aspect of the plot was a sad, sad commentary on the role that far too many young girls think they have to play in order to get status today. Yolanda was veery different from the way that she was initially portrayed, and she eventually became my favorite character.

There were a few aspects of the plot that just bothered me all the way through. Like... David's youngest sister completely stopped speaking after the shooting, but no one ever makes an effort to connect with her or get her in counseling. Really?? And Barney's (the older sister's) insistence on pretending that David was her boyfriend at school. Did she seriously think that no one would ever find out? And Yolanda Dare's supposed nickname "The Dare." I just thought it was a little too corny for such a stand-out character.

But, do those things mean that I didn't care for Pull? Absolutely not. In fact, I read the entire novel in a day because I was so anxious to find out what would happen with David, Barney, Malik, and Yolanda. The ending was not at all what I expected, but it was all the more satisfying because of that.

Recommendation:

High school readers who appreciate contemporary, urban stories will get addicted to Pull. But when recommending the book, keep in mind that there is plenty of profanity, sexual innuendo, and compromising sexual situations. Pull is not a book for younger readers.

Jill says

David Albacore is a seventeen-year-old high school senior at a new school, and his sister Barnetta (“Barney”) is a freshman. They transferred after their father murdered their mother. The father went to jail, and David and his sisters moved in with their Aunt Edie in Chicago. David didn’t even want to go back to school, but he has vowed to take care of Barney, who is still emotionally scarred from finding her mother in a pool of blood.

I think this book offers a huge amount to think about and debate. I liked the characters a lot in this book, and found it to be a good read. David is complex and thoughtful and trying hard to understand what it means to be a grownup and a man. I loved the way he took care of his sister Barney. I think this book would be a great choice to assign in high schools. It would be an entertaining and provocative selection for adult book clubs as well.

Nance says

Strong character and good plot. I thought it was an easy reading with a good message of survival as David learns to deal with his past and move into a future. David was a strong character; Brandy was a little flat. The school coach/psychologist was too flat.

Terry says

This is one book I really wanted to love. We need more great books about kids who are seen as athletes but whose self-image is of something more. We need more books about teens struggling with the realities of survivors guilt. We need more books that show both the bravado and the sensitivity of young men. We need more books that show African-American kids at the center of compelling stories. "Pull" does all of this, just not as well as I would have liked.

At times it moved slowly, setting up a school cast system that seemed unlikely. Sometimes the plot wandered between several interesting sub-plots without real purpose. Often, it felt like a knock-off of a Chris Crutcher book. There was way too much telling, and not enough showing.

On the plus side, the vocabulary won't put off struggling readers. There's violence and profanity and some sex, all of which may appeal to High School teens.

Emily says

It could have been a good story, it was an interesting premise but I felt the teen voice was not authentic. It felt like an adult writing what she thought a teen boy would feel and that is exactly what it was. Young adult fiction should not feel that way. I don't know if this was the author's debut novel or not but that might explain why the book just didn't work.

Debra Landay says

Not a good book at all. Author writes poorly: I found the language offensive, and I don't mean swearing. Author is irresponsible in the ending.

Leslie says

Nerds <3 YA book 1

Warren-Newport Public Library says

Realistic, urban fiction with good characters and strong story. David is a very compelling character and readers will empathize with his struggles. Good read for fans of Walter Dean Meyers and Paul Volponi. (Amanda)

Alex Stiner says

This book was a really good book, I would give this book a very good review. The book started really complex and fun. This kid David was lost his Mom had been killed and his dad was in jail for killing his mom. He had to find work and a good paying job to keep him and his two sisters alive. He goes to this new school trying to blend in and not talk much. But he finds a girl who he really likes and that makes a bunch of problems. Then he was forced to join the basketball team and he is amazing but has a lot of problems. This was a good book but I didn't really relate to it very much. I would rate this book at a 3 star it was pretty good.

Ari says

Monday, October 25, 2010
Male Monday: Pull
Pull by B.A. Binns 2010 (ARC)
WestSide Books

Release Date: October 27, 2010

Rating: 4/5

IQ "People think cakewalk means easy. But real cakewalks were difficult as hell according to my grandmother. They required endurance, balance and training, and only the best lasted until the end." David pg. 30-31

David Albacore has moved from his small-town California home to Chicago. He had to move once his father murdered his mother and went to jail, forcing David and his two younger sisters to move in with their unwilling Aunt Edie. Aunt Edie lives in a tiny apartment and is barely making ends meet on her own, David works every day after school to make sure his family is provided for. He's an extremely talented basketball player and so David has to make a decision. Go for a basketball scholarship or quit school and work in construction full time. It was his mother's dream for him to go to college, but he's sure that she wouldn't want the family to be split up either (which would happen once David moved away for college since he would no longer be able to take care of them). In addition to juggling work and family, David has a growing attraction to Yolanda Dare, the girlfriend of the school's "king" and major player. David doesn't believe he can have it all, so he's going to need to pick and choose.

In all honesty, I was skeptical about this book, based on the cover alone. Yet another book you can't judge based on its cover. I really really liked it. It was beyond refreshing to have a guy male character who is not a "lovable nerd" or a "playa with a soft interior". David seems to fit in the middle of these two extremes. He's not a playa, nor is he particularly good at school and he's surprisingly not hopeless when it comes to girls (it most likely helps that his mother was a good example and that he has two sisters). I was afraid that David would try and play the "noble hero" throughout the novel. He does try it, but he soon realizes that he does resent his sisters. Because of his sisters he can't keep his paycheck for himself or take The Dare (as Yolanda is known) out on fancy dates along with a host of other things. The noble thing about David is that he acknowledges his resentment, but fights to keep it under control. Much like David, Pull is a frank story that does not hesitate to talk about sex, swear or even gay relationships (I was grinning from ear to ear when I read a certain scene between Carl and Neill. They were underdeveloped minor characters sure, but they were gay and it was NO BIG DEAL. Yes!).

Not gonna lie, at first it was a bit jarring at how much David thought about sex. But eventually I shrugged it off because I have no doubt that it's realistic and it's really not that important. And in the story it's not discussed graphically anyway. You know how they say that a guy is worth keeping around based on how he treats his mother and sisters? David is awesome in that respect. Not perfect, but the way he treats his sisters (especially his freshman sister Barney) is so tender. I shared his pain at not being able to reach his youngest sister, Linda and at his frustration over Barney's obliviousness towards a certain character. As you can tell, I have a bit of a crush on David ;) Asides from David's personality, I was impressed at how each of David's siblings portrayed a different style of grieving. David does not know how to help his sisters and they don't know how to help him. It's a long and painful process, filled with denial, anger and immense sadness. It's also about guilt and debt, how much do we owe our loved ones, living and deceased? There's no easy answer.

Pull is a straightforward read that places a refreshing emphasis on sibling/family relationships over romantic ones. I did have a really hard time understanding Aunt Edie, the explanation for her actions seemed to convenient and implausible, there was not enough evidence to back up her actions. I wanted more character development of David's acquaintances (he doesn't allow them to get close enough to be friends) and his youngest sister Linda (how did she handle school??). It covers a lot, but none of the issues drown the book. From domestic violence to bullying to the ultimate decision about college, no issue is rushed, it flows naturally in the story. The marriage class was incredibly transparent (do those classes exist in high school?) but it was cool to see issues of family and marriage discussed in a high school setting. There is no moralizing in this narrative. David makes a hard decision and it's not one that everyone will make, but I completely understood why he made it. That's what makes this story so notable. I'm sure writing this story was no cakewalk (oh look a reference to the Incredible Quote! heehee), but the whole novel reads like a testimony to one. Excellent.

Incredible Quote: "People think cakewalk means easy. But real cakewalks were difficult as hell according to my grandmother. They required endurance, balance and training, and only the best lasted until the end."
David pg. 30-31 (ARC so quotes subject to change)

Katrina Burchett says

David Albacore is a young man forced to grow up too fast. He's a high school senior and he also has an after-school job in construction. He feels responsible for his sisters' material and emotional needs since his mother died and he's more like a parent to them than an older brother. When David's mother was alive she made him promise to get a high school diploma. With so much going on in his life, will he make it to graduation?

I liked David. He was wise beyond his years and a decent guy. I felt bad for him whenever he blamed himself for things that weren't his fault. And the way he longed for his mother to still be around saddened me. I liked that he was sensitive to females needs and I'm sure that was because of what he experienced with his mom and sisters. He did remind me of a playa –something he said he used to be- for a moment there, but then the David I liked was back again. And I understood why David would question God about what happened to his mother, but here's the thing: There is God and there is also Satan. Satan is the one who comes to kill, steal and destroy and his voice is the one David's dad was listening to when he killed David's mother. The author clearly shows the emotional damage that comes from losing a loved one to domestic violence and I hurt for David and his sisters, Barnetta (Barney) and Linda.

David's sister, Barney, was looking for someone to make her important and she thought she'd find that in a guy, but what she needed was a true friend. I was concerned for her when she started hanging with the wrong group of students. Her brother had her back, though, which was admirable. But the game she and David were playing; there was something too weird about that.

Malik Kaplan wasn't a likeable character at all. He's the kind of guy girls need to stay away from... far away. And Yolanda Dare: Her choice of friends wasn't the best, but she had more common sense than anyone would think. It's respect for herself that she was lacking. Even though she was strong enough to speak her mind she didn't seem to care enough about herself to not allow Malik to use her. She also had very little confidence in her creative abilities and that was a shame, because she was talented. When I think of this character I think of how appearances can be deceiving and I don't mean in a bad way.

David had his reasons for taking The Sociology of Marriage and Family class and, again, I felt for him. I liked the assignment the teacher, Mr. Martin, gave David and Yolanda to work on together. And I really liked something Mr. Martin said to the class: "You guys keep wanting to grow up too soon. Slow down; be glad you live in a time and place where you're allowed to still be young. Adulthood will catch up to you soon enough."

B.A. Binns wrote an interesting story that made me shake my head with disbelief at some of the things certain teen characters chose to do; the main thing being the mention of a threesome. It was disappointing to even think something like that is happening with teenagers today; I was glad there were no vivid details. The story did get me to laugh a bit, but it would have been more entertaining for me if there hadn't been so much profanity. I was surprised that David used profanity as much as he did. He was a responsible, intelligent young man; certainly smart enough to express himself without using vulgar words. And I was surprised and disappointed when Coach Kasili used profanity while speaking to David. Does that happen in the real world? If members of school faculty are cussing when they talk to students, they shouldn't be. Thinking about quite a bit of the dialogue: Pull is too gritty for my taste, but once I started the story I wanted to finish because I liked David and I had to know how things turned out for him. I'm not sure how I feel about the choice he made in the end.

Melissa Conway says

On the face of it, the title of Binns' debut young adult novel, 'Pull,' seems ambiguous. It wasn't until I was immersed in the main character's story that I decided the title refers to the multiple directions a person on the cusp of adulthood can be pulled in life.

Pull is told in first-person point of view by seventeen-year-old David Albacore...except that's not his real name. David wants nothing to do with his real surname, because it links him to his father—the convicted murderer of his beloved mother. He and his sisters are in foster care, living in inner-city Chicago with his aunt, and he's managed to register himself in school under an assumed name. New city, new school, new (understandably bad) attitude about life. David just wants to fly under the radar for the rest of the year—something kind of hard to do when you're six-foot-seven inches tall and refusing to join the basketball team.

Right away David feels the irresistible pull of Yolanda Dare, a girl with “a double dose of that thing girls have that makes a guy's legs shake and teeth clench until we're praying for relief.” Too bad Yolanda belongs to Malik, the reigning self-inflated, bullying king of the school. David also feels the pull of protectiveness for his younger sisters. Barnetta, or Barney, is a freshman desperate to hang with the cool crowd. Since they have different last names, she convinces David to pretend to be her boyfriend, which gives her instant status and gives him peace of mind that she won't be targeted by any of the boys in her orbit.

The characters meander down a familiar road of teenage indecision, fluctuating loyalty and confusion. David is caught up in his attraction to Yolanda, who is giving him mixed signals. Her motivation isn't clear at the outset, but Binns slowly lets the line on her true personality reel out. Malik is vicious and malicious; in stark contrast to the selfless girl David is coming to know.

David's motivation for not wanting to play basketball is tied to his guilt in the part he believes he played in his mother's murder. The terrible circumstances leading to her loss colors every decision he makes. He's pulled, too, by the hopes and dreams she expressed for his future, which involve a college degree he's just not that into getting. David has a true talent for working with his hands and his mind in construction, but the culmination of all the external pressures on him means he can't envision anything but a life of sacrifice to protect his sisters from the system.

On Binns' website, the subtitle is: 'Stories of real boys growing into real men.' She accomplishes this through uncensored characterization; not glossing over the fact that teens are exposed to drugs, alcohol and sex, and they use strong, often offensive language to express themselves. In Pull, Binns depicts the struggles a teen goes through fighting peer pressure and hormonal urges—and building strength of character and moral courage—all without sounding like a preacher on a pulpit. I very much enjoyed this gritty, realistic coming-of-age tale.

[Free review copy. Review originally posted to Booksquawk]

Camden Buckles says

David Albacore and his two sisters were forced to move to Chicago with their aunt after their mom was murdered by her ex-husband, and David's dad. David, a senior in high school will have to now keep a source of income, stay in school, and look after his sisters at the same time to keep them all safe.

The book was very interesting, the characters and plot couldn't be any better. I was sucked in the entire book.

Possibly the most significant component of the story "Pull" is the plot. The plot was very engaging because of how interesting it was and no parts were boring or left me feeling confused. The plot is unpredictable because the reader never knows what is going to happen. (view spoiler) The pacing is just right as well. It also builds suspense for all of David's conflicts, such as his job, his freshman sister, Barney, who starts hanging out with the antagonist, Malik, as well as the girl he is interested in throughout the whole book, Yolanda.

The ending left a lot to be desired as well.(view spoiler) Overall, I thought the ending was pretty satisfying because all questions readers would have during the book were answered. However, I felt that David did not need to move away from everyone; this made me feel the ending was not resolved well. This leads me to give the ending only ? stars.

Furthermore, "Pull" is a great book with few downsides. It is a must read book if you like basketball because that is a major part of the book. Also, if you like suspense because that is used throughout the book. Lastly, if you like teen romance because that goes on in the entire book between David and Yolanda.

Kelly says

The story was underdeveloped in the first 100 pages, and the writing itself was a bit clunky. Together, those things pushed me out of the story, since I couldn't develop a connection or interest in any of the characters. David is fairly well developed, but with the other 50 or so underdeveloped characters, I couldn't keep track of them.
