
Martin County Library System Book Discussion Kit:

Yellowface by R.F. Kuang

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Book Summary:

Authors June Hayward and Athena Liu were supposed to be twin rising stars. But Athena's a literary darling. June Hayward is literally nobody. Who wants stories about basic white girls, June thinks. So when June witnesses Athena's death in a freak accident, she acts on impulse: she steals Athena's just-finished masterpiece, an experimental novel about the unsung contributions of Chinese laborers during World War I. So what if June edits Athena's novel and sends it to her agent as her own work? So what if she lets her new publisher rebrand her as Juniper Song—complete with an ambiguously ethnic author photo? Doesn't this piece of history deserve to be told, whoever the teller? That's what June claims, and the *New York Times* bestseller list seems to agree. But June can't get away from



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Athena's shadow, and emerging evidence threatens to bring June's (stolen) success down around her. As June races to protect her secret, she discovers exactly how far she will go to keep what she thinks she deserves. With its totally immersive first-person voice, *Yellowface* grapples with questions of diversity, racism, and cultural appropriation, as well as the terrifying alienation of social media. R.F. Kuang's novel is timely, razor-sharp, and eminently readable.

Source: Harper Collins (<https://www.harpercollins.com/>)



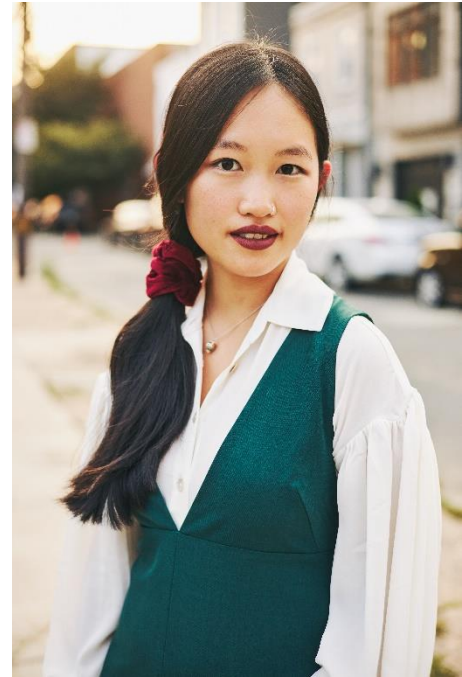
Yellowface

by R.F. Kuang

Meet the Author:

Rebecca F. Kuang is the #1 *New York Times* and #1 *Sunday Times* bestselling author of the *Poppy War* trilogy, *Babel: An Arcane History*, and *Yellowface*. Her work has won the Nebula, Locus, Crawford, and British Book Awards. A Marshall Scholar, she has an MPhil in Chinese Studies from Cambridge and an MSc in Contemporary Chinese Studies from Oxford. She is now pursuing a PhD in East Asian Languages and Literatures at Yale, where she studies diaspora, contemporary Sinophone literature, and Asian American literature.

Source: Author website (<https://rfkuang.com>)





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Discussion Questions:

1. What was your overall impression of June? Why do you think the author chose to stay in her perspective for the entire novel?
2. Were June and Athena ever really friends? If June held such contempt for Athena, why did she always agree to spend time with her?
3. What were your thoughts when June witnesses Athena choke to death on a pancake? Could June have done more to intervene?
4. Why did June steal her manuscript?
5. June gives herself excuses for everything. For instance, in her perspective, Athena's success is only due to her race. And when June steals her manuscript, she tells herself it isn't necessarily stealing as she made her own edits to the book. What do these delusions say about June's mental state and perspective on life?
6. June is full of micro aggressions toward the Asian community, especially any time she is questioned for covering Chinese history as a White woman with no prior connection or shown previous interest in the time period. What do you feel the author was trying to convey with June's attitude and reactions?
7. The publisher decides that June should now go by Juniper Song—complete with an ambiguously ethnic author photo. What are your thoughts about this and what does this say about the publishing industry?
8. This provided such a look into the publishing world—including the efforts it takes to help a book become a bestseller. Why do you feel some books are pushed more in the public eye than others? What are some of the qualities that makes a book a bestseller—is it simply better marketing or it is more complicated than that?
9. Another aspect of the novel is the pitfalls of social media, especially Twitter and Instagram. When June starts to face criticism, she spends her time reading the negative comments more than positive ones. Why do you think people like June are so obsessed with social media? Do you feel social media will always be around or do think society may one day reject it?





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10. When trying to write her next novel, June comes up blank. Until she finds ideas from Athena, and she steals from her again. Why was June so addicted to stealing from Athena?
11. What were your thoughts on Athena as a whole?
12. What was your impression of the climax, including the reveal that the former literary assistant Candace recorded June's confession about stealing Athena's work?
13. What happens next for June? Will she ever stop her manic obsession with literary success?
14. What do you think was the goal of the author with writing *Yellowface*?

Source: bookclubchat.com

(<https://bookclubchat.com/books/book-club-questions-for-yellowface-by-r-f-kuang/>)

Recipes:

Mini Very Berry Pancake Skewers

- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup unsalted butter, melted
- 2 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon white sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil, or as needed
- bamboo skewers
- ¼ cup fresh raspberries, or as needed
- ¼ cup fresh blueberries, or as needed
- ¼ cup fresh strawberries, or as needed
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon powdered sugar, or as needed (Optional)



Stir rice vinegar into milk. Set aside to "sour", about 5 minutes. Combine milk mixture, flour, butter, eggs, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Whisk until lumps are gone. Combine milk mixture, flour, butter, eggs, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Whisk until lumps are gone. Place 3 to 5 mini pancakes on each skewer. Top with raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries, drizzle with some syrup, and sprinkle with some powdered sugar.

Source: All Recipes

(<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/280042/mini-very-berry-pancake-skewers/>)

Chop Suey

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1-pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
- 1/2 medium white onion, chopped
- 2 medium carrots, cut into 1/4-inch coins
- 1/3 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons oyster sauce
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 8 to 10 shiitake mushrooms, stemmed
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 ribs celery, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 ounces snow peas, trimmed
- 2 green onions, sliced into 1 1/2-inch pieces
- 3 ounces mung bean sprouts
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 1/2 teaspoons water, to dissolve cornstarch
- Salt, to taste
- 3 cups steamed rice, for serving



Add the oil to a wok or a large, deep non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Heat the oil just until it starts to smoke, about 1 minute. Add the chicken thighs. Stir fry until the chicken is no longer pink, about 5 minutes. Add the onion, carrots, chicken broth, oyster sauce, soy sauce, sugar, and sesame oil. Stir fry over high heat for 5 minutes. The sauce should be bubbling. Add mushrooms, bell



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pepper, and celery. Stir fry until the celery has softened to crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Add the peas, green onions, and bean sprouts. Stir fry until well-mixed and heated through, about 2 minutes. Add the cornstarch and water to a small bowl and stir to dissolve. Add the cornstarch slurry to the pan and stir fry until the sauce has thickened to your liking, 1 to 2 minutes. Taste and add salt, if needed. Serve with rice.

Source: Simply Recipes
(<https://www.simplyrecipes.com/chop-suey-recipe-7229832>)

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