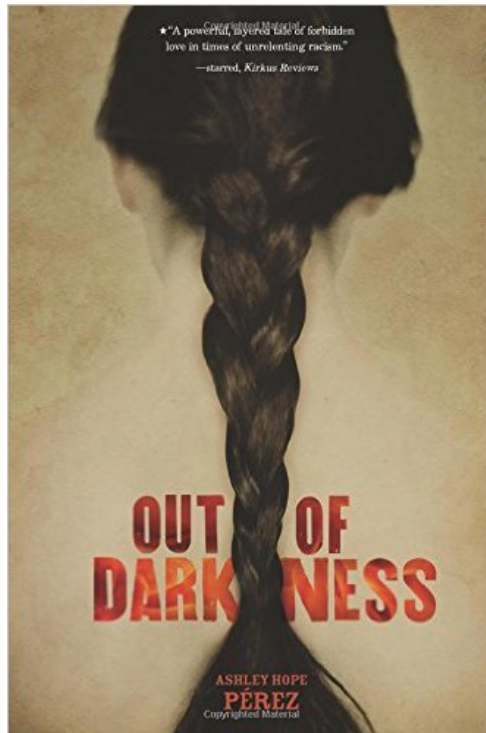


**Children and Young Adult Book Review**  
*High School*  
**Out of Darkness**

Educator Reviewer: Margaret A. Robbins  
Student Reviewer: Ryland Poole



Perez, A. H. (2015). *Out of darkness*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publishing Group.

ISBN: 978-1467742023

Pages: 408

### **Educator Review:**

Naomi and her younger twin siblings Beto and Cari move from San Antonio to East Texas in 1936 to live with Henry Smith, Beto and Cari's father and Naomi's stepfather. Naomi adopts the last name Smith, and Beto is called "Robbie" at their European American school in New London. The children miss their San Antonio home and the presence of their loving grandparents, as Henry proves to be an unreliable and sometimes very cruel father figure. Then, an African-American teenager named James Washington "Wash" Fuller comes into their lives and makes their East Texas world much brighter. Naomi and Wash form a forbidden romance, as the racial lines in their area are pronounced. The two make plans for their future, but then, a disastrous school explosion changes everything. This is a moving, dark, and beautifully written novel about the importance of every life decision and the ability of love to transform.

Ashley Hope Perez skillfully takes the factual school explosion in New London, Texas, in 1937 and weaves together a narrative with fictional characters that shows the essence of life in East Texas during that time period. The novel tackles important issues of both race and gender that high school students need to discuss. All of the characters are complex, interesting, and complicated. The plot is engaging and fast-paced, and the book is hard to put down. High school students will appreciate the novel and the importance of the story it tells. It touches on narratives and perspectives that might not otherwise receive sufficient attention.

*The novel tackles important issues of both race and gender that high school students need to discuss.*

Educators should consider the maturity level of the students before recommending this novel to students younger than high school age. It includes harsh language and a couple of sexually explicit scenes. The story is important to tell for reasons of history and social justice, and I hope many high school and college librarians will include it on their shelves.

Margaret A. Robbins  
The University of Georgia, Athens, GA  
Ph.D. Student

### **Student Review:**

*Out of Darkness* is about love in a dark and hateful time. It allows the reader to see the dark past of American history. With the viewpoint switching between the main characters, the reader sees both sides of racism and what it can cause. It will leave the reader guessing whether the darkness inside us will ever be conquered.

Readers who like dark secrets, forbidden love and an unrelenting hatred for stepparents will not put this book down until the explosive final, a final that will not be forgotten.

Ryland Poole  
Travelers Rest High School, Travelers Rest, SC  
11<sup>th</sup> Grade