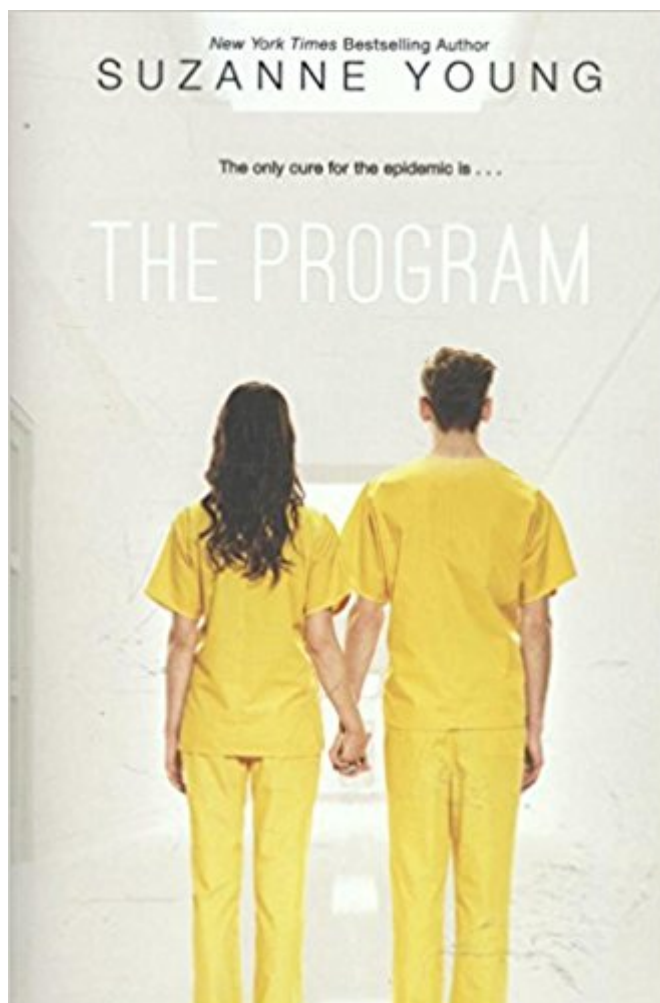


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# The Program



## Synopsis

In this gripping tale for lovers of dystopian romance (Kirkus Reviews), true feelings are forbidden, teen suicide is an epidemic, and the only solution is The Program. Sloane knows better than to cry in front of anyone. With suicide now an international epidemic, one outburst could land her in The Program, the only proven course of treatment. Sloane's parents have already lost one child; Sloane knows they'll do anything to keep her alive. She also knows that everyone who's been through The Program returns as a blank slate. Because their depression is gone—but so are their memories. Under constant surveillance at home and at school, Sloane puts on a brave face and keeps her feelings buried as deep as she can. The only person Sloane can be herself with is James. He's promised to keep them both safe and out of treatment, and Sloane knows their love is strong enough to withstand anything. But despite the promises they made to each other, it's getting harder to hide the truth. They are both growing weaker. Depression is setting in. And The Program is coming for them.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 10 Up-Four years ago, teen suicide became an epidemic, affecting one in every three teens. To combat it, a school district in Oregon developed "The Program," where teens are treated for their depression by erasing their memories and secluding them from their peers. As an increasing number of her classmates are taken away for treatment, 17-year-old Sloane Barstow knows better

than to show emotion to anyone other than her boyfriend, James, especially since her brother drowned himself two years earlier, leaving her parents constantly on edge. But when her friend commits suicide and James is taken away, Sloane begins to slip into a depression that forces her into The Program, where she is gradually stripped of all memories of James and her past. As she struggles to start over, she finds herself questioning the integrity of The Program and why she is inexplicably drawn to a troublemaker named James. The story is intriguing, and while a little slow at times, teens will find themselves racing to the finish to see what happens to Sloane and James. Young has created strong characters that readers will fall in love with and has developed a captivating world that will not soon be forgotten. Recommend this one to fans of Lauren Oliver's *Delirium* and Veronica Roth's *Divergent* (both HarperCollins, 2011).-Candyce Pruitt-Goddard, Hartford Public Library, CT (c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** Imagine that suicide is a contagious condition affecting only teenagers. The early warning signs are negative emotions, depression, and despair, and infected teens are driven quickly to the point where they can think of nothing but suicide. This is Sloane's world. She watched her beloved brother kill himself before her eyes. If not for the love of her boyfriend, James, Sloane is sure that she would kill herself, too. But she and James have vowed to each other that they will fight the disease, and love and comfort each other through grief. Teens seen demonstrating negative emotions are reported to The Program, where they receive the cure for the suicide infection but at a terrible cost. When Sloane finds herself swept into The Program, she realizes with a growing dread that everyone seems to know more than she does. Readers will devour this fast-paced story that combines an intriguing premise, a sexy romance, and a shifting landscape of truth. With big questions still unanswered and promising twists, this first volume in a new series will leave readers primed for more. Compare to Lauren Oliver's *Delirium* or Ally Condie's *Matched* series. Grades 10-12. --Diane Colson --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

I picked up this book after researching it for about a year (yeah, that's how cheap I am. If a book's over \$2.99 I refuse to jump into it without scouting it first). I REALLY enjoyed this book! The writing is clear, crisp. The plot nice! The beginning is better than the end, but I think that tends to happen when you're trying to tie up loose ends. Now, everything beyond this point is why this is not 5 stars. MINUS ONE STAR! I originally planned to rate this book with 5 stars, but I didn't feel that would be honest. I have three reasons for thinking this way: 1) Sloane (the main character) is not very

likable and is very annoying. She's the plain girl that gets the hot guy, but treats him like boo boo. She's childish, immature and selfish. She's a people pleaser without a backbone. She kisses Realm because he's upset....though she knows she doesn't return his affections and loves James (before he's erased from her memory). She doesn't want to go back into the program...but she skips school, spends the night with Realm (because that's just what girls like her do. Think "Bella Swan") and continually puts herself in dumb situations without thinking them through (i.e. She arrives at Realm's house at the end of the book and she sees a black Escalade with blacked out windows. NATURALLY she wants to talk to the lady that's leaving the house. Smart). I just...didn't like her.2) The relationship between James and Sloane: Pre-erasing and after We are giving a blow-by-blow of their relationship...but then it's erased and we're supposed to just forget the over 200 pages of talking about their relationship, so that we can read another 200 pages of them trying to find their memories...though we already know what they are because they've been explained??? That was my GREATEST frustration with this book.3) The ending *deus ex machina* Sooo...Realm has a sister that just happens to have a car to give to Sloane? How is she getting away? How is SHE not on the map? How does SHE know so much? How is that Realm only had ONE memory pill...but not more? Wouldn't he think to grab more than one? Since he works for the program and all...if any of the above typically bugs the mess out of you, DO NOT READ THIS BOOK! But if you can hang in there, getting a pretty good story along the way, I think this is worth a read! I will be picking up book two!

Before I get into the full review, I just wanted to comment on the cover art, which is stunning. It really captures the essence of the story, the bright canary yellow uniform is meant to make the residents in The Program feel happy and awake, but it's quite creepy if you ask me. It's like the brightness of the uniform is supposed to combat the sadness in these teens. Also, the stark white walls meant to symbolize a clean slate just looks plain and empty. I would go crazy, staring at those walls all day-so devoid of feelings and character. What I love the most about this book, is how quickly I was sucked into this world. It's quite ironic how The Program is sought out to be a sort of savior, to help teenagers rebuild their life and that is why they are constantly on the look out for those who might need help. Yet, the constant watching and propaganda is causing anxiety and paranoia for these teens; thus, making them feel as if they cannot express any sort of feeling that doesn't mirror happiness. But the truth is, no one can be on the happy side of the spectrum all the time, it's impossible. If I was constantly being watched and monitored, I'd be scared and depressed too! So I found it really strange that the public would support this program because it seems a bit absurd and really far fetched, but then again I guess that's what dystopian novels usually do-answer the: What if

question. I really related to the students in this book, and felt as if, if I was there in high school with them, I would feel exactly how they would. Plus, not being able to grieve or vent is horrible and consuming. I really did like Sloane and James' relationship, and I like them both individually as well. They are so strong and really smart as well-moving their way around the system, and just trying to survive. Their will to not get captured and to stay grounded for each other, was a strength that I admired. It wasn't all about the physical aspect, but it was built just the way any normal relationship should start: with friendship. Obviously, from the title alone, I knew they were going to get sent to The Program but every moment leading up to it or after it was nerve wrecking and exhilarating. It's like these characters are faking it till they make it everyday of their lives, and pretending not to feel is exhausting them, and me as a reader too! I constantly worry for them, as much as they worry for each other. Once I have that bond with characters, I know I'm hooked on the story. What I didn't understand, is that The Program seems to be a scientific based organization; yet, how could they not understand the root of depression? It's not feasible to treat depression by wiping memories, depression is caused by a chemical imbalance in the body. Even people who have happy lives can be diagnosed with depression, so I don't understand how-despite this not being real-could even be argued for and approved in this world. This book is a really quick, fast paced, and emotional read. I thought that the concept of memory wiping is so interesting-if we don't remember the things that happened in our past, are we destined to repeat them? Is it better to start over new and not remember sometimes? So many questions! The Program was a great read, but man was it depressing-the fake people, fake smiles, fake memories-it was all too consuming. Imagine, that's how the characters feel all the time \*shudders\* Can't wait for the next book though, with the way this book ended I don't know what's going to happen or if there can even be a happy ending with this one. :/

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