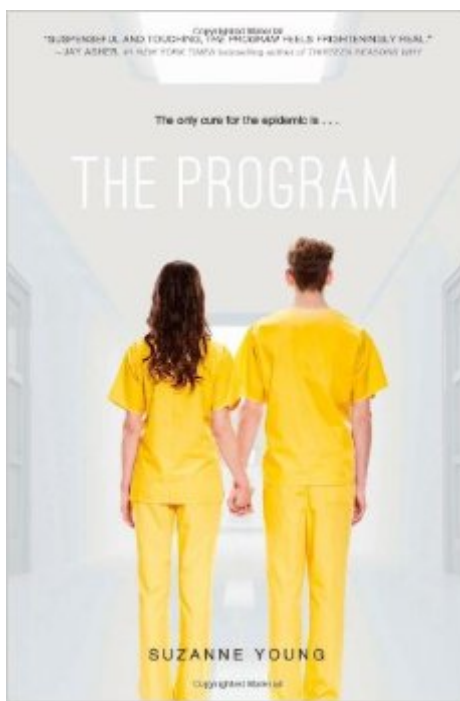


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# The Program



## Synopsis

In Sloane's world, 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

Suicide rates are higher than ever in the time period for this book. Seems mostly similar to current time but medical technology is higher and civilization control it tighter. Why? because 1 in 3 teens are offing themselves. Right from the beginning the program annoys me in how high risks are decided. I see why people are concerned... But they are asked these daily questions such as "Are you overwhelmed or lonely?" Who isn't, once in a while at least, 1 of those things. Ugh...they need a better set of standards to filter people. You can't cry in public that is bad. If you know someone who

died that is bad and if you dare contact with someone just out of The Program, WATCH OUT! The Program is there to take away teens that an adult considers a suicide risk (see the paragraph above for what can quickly get you there). They take you in and six weeks later you are re-introduced to society, happier than ever. Sounds good, right? Except for one major catch. The Program strips you of many of your memories. So students return not knowing their classmates and friends. Sloane has had one of her good friends taken away. Not she only has 2 left. One of them is her steady boyfriend James. But when she loses them what happens to her? You got it...into The Program. For this I hate her mother. I understand not wanting to lose your daughter but just because others are gone does not okay what she does. I can't say too much without spoiling things so I will leave it off there. Now I get that suicide is bad. I get wanting to get it under control but there is one thing that is in this book adults seem to have no control over. QuikDeath. A drink you take that will kill you in minutes. Why don't adults work harder to get rid of something students can buy (even at school) that can easily kill them? They lock windows and ask you questionnaires and have you living in constant anxiety but can't work to remove a drink or get better control of it?! In the program Sloane is harassed by a scummy handler, monitored by nurses, questioned by therapists and makes a few new friends. But the ultimate questions are what is going on and who is being honest with her and does she have any hope of remembering when all is said and done... This book was emotionally hard for me at times. Having to deal with a loved one with amnesia once. It is beyond a horrible feeling to look at one you care for and see a totally blank stare and know they have no idea who you are to them. I think this alone could break a person. No wonder suicide is on the rise! If you don't lose someone to death, you lose them in your life and you always need to wear an emotional mask in case adults begin to wonder if it is your turn. Sloane is actually a very strong character. I feel so bad for all she has to endure. There were many times I was cheering her on, others biting my fingernails out of worry and others smacking the book for her reactions or lack thereof or those moments she is too naive for her own good. Overall, I really enjoyed this book. It hits on levels of adult and government control, fear, love, loss and so much more. Lots of depth. Suzanne Young did an amazing job in getting me to empathize with Sloane. I will be sure to read the next book!

The Program exists to save youth from the suicide epidemic that has now grown to an international level. Sloane is passing by with the help of her boyfriend James, which seems to get harder with each passing day with handlers taking those infected to The Program, or others succumbing to the illness. Reading The Program was like a breath of fresh air in the YA world. So much of this book reminded me of MATCHED, and yet at the same time it didn't. Even the simplistic cover reminded

me a bit of it. You've got two people, standing together in solidarity in what seems to be Program uniforms. In the book we have Sloane, fighting against Society for not only her memories but also her friends and family. I don't want to spoil too much, but at times she's even fighting against herself it seems. Young tackles some pretty deep issues in *The Program* with everything from teenage love, depression to even sex. The last part surprised me a bit as I couldn't really remember the last, if any, young adult book I read that directly mentions sex like this one does. And I think that's what made this book even more relatable. Young doesn't shy away from these teen issues that are relevant even today. She gets what teens are like, and that comes across so well in the voice of the characters. The book is set in three parts, each as riveting as the next. There wasn't a single moment in this book where I felt bored or unsure of where things were going. I loved the experience of getting to read this one and can see it as a book I would gladly even re-read.

Why has this genre gone so wrong? Dystopians were what really drew me into young adult literature, but I've had such a string of disappointments that it's making me start to wonder what I saw in young adult literature in the first place. Then again, I've read some excellent young adult novels in other subgenres, so what I really think is going on is that what started out as a promising genre turned into a trend in which everything that had the faintest whiff of "dystopia" about it was rushed to press. This book is but the latest example. Some spoilers to follow. First off, there's an important point that I think needs to be driven home to any author who is thinking about writing a book in this genre: a dystopia should be built from the ground up and then peopled with characters who provide a lens for examining the dystopia. This book, like many of the other young adult novels I've read lately, misses the mark entirely. The characters in this book feel like they were plopped into the middle of the dystopia. Dystopians should be all about gradually peeling back the layers of a supposedly perfect society, so that the reader is shocked and horrified by what they see, so shocked and horrified that it makes them think long and hard about whatever aspect of society the dystopia is exploring. The characters in the dystopia should not run around talking about how awful the dystopia is--because it's not a dystopia. What makes a dystopia a dystopia is the fact that it seems to be perfect until the characters either gradually realize it isn't or until the reader does, due to the casual way in which the characters navigate their world, a world that strikes the reader as utterly foreign. *The Program* could have done this, it really could have. There were times when I was reading it where I thought it could have provided a compelling springboard for discussing how mental health issues are treated in our society, particularly when it comes to the use of medications. It's a topic that I think needs some serious discussion. Had this book served as a means of

exploring the implications of drugs for depression and how they affect those who take them, it could have been very powerful. But I didn't think the book did touch this topic in any real way. Instead, what this book is is a romance. There's nothing wrong with that in and of itself, but I wish that these books would label themselves more accurately. When the dystopian setting is just there to complicate the romance, I'm not interested. It's not to say that the premise of the book is without merit, because I think that it is. Exploring what it means to lose memories--particularly those of someone you love--is an interesting topic. And if it needs to have a dystopian setting, fine. But it should be clearly labeled as a "dystomance". This is not the sort of book I want to read when I'm looking for a dystopian. When I'm looking for a dystopian, what I want is something where world-building is essential because it's meant to provide a means of dissecting something about society. Another big problem I have with this book is with the love interest, James. I never connected with him. At the beginning of the book, I thought he was kind of a jerk, and I didn't like how everything he said to Sloane had a sexual component. I don't want this portrayed as "typical" teen boy behavior because not every teen boy behaves this way and, more importantly, it's not okay if they do. I felt like James treated Sloane more like an object, and that turned me off immediately. I don't like the message it sends. I'm not saying that every YA should be about perfect boys who are on their best behavior at all times, but given the number of teen girls who stay in abusive relationships or who have sex before they're ready, I really dislike the way many YA novels portray boys who mistreat their girlfriends as hot. There's nothing hot about a boy who treats his girlfriend with disrespect, just as there's nothing hot about a girl who treats her boyfriend with disrespect. My dislike for James only increased at the end of the book, and I almost quit reading because I was so angry about his character. Not that Realm is any better, really. My other big issue with this book was my inability to suspend disbelief. I can buy the idea that some parents would be so desperate to save their children they'd be willing to strip those children of everything that makes them who they are, but I can't buy the premise that all parents would. There is a clear dichotomy in this book: everyone thinks the program is wonderful except for the savvy teens. Maybe this will be fleshed out and given some shades of gray in future installments, I don't know. But it should have been done in this book. I don't buy that some adult somewhere wouldn't take issue with the methods used by The Program, wouldn't be upset when their child came back to them a shell of who they once were. The dumb/absent/gullible adults are a common trope in YA, one that was rather freely abused in this book. It probably goes without saying, but I'm stepping off this train here and now, and I'm going to have some serious reservations about reading any more YA dystopians in the future. Honestly, it pains me to say this because I love this genre, but I kind of hope the YA dystopian trend dies out.

It's not so much that it's been overdone but that it's been repeatedly done badly.

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