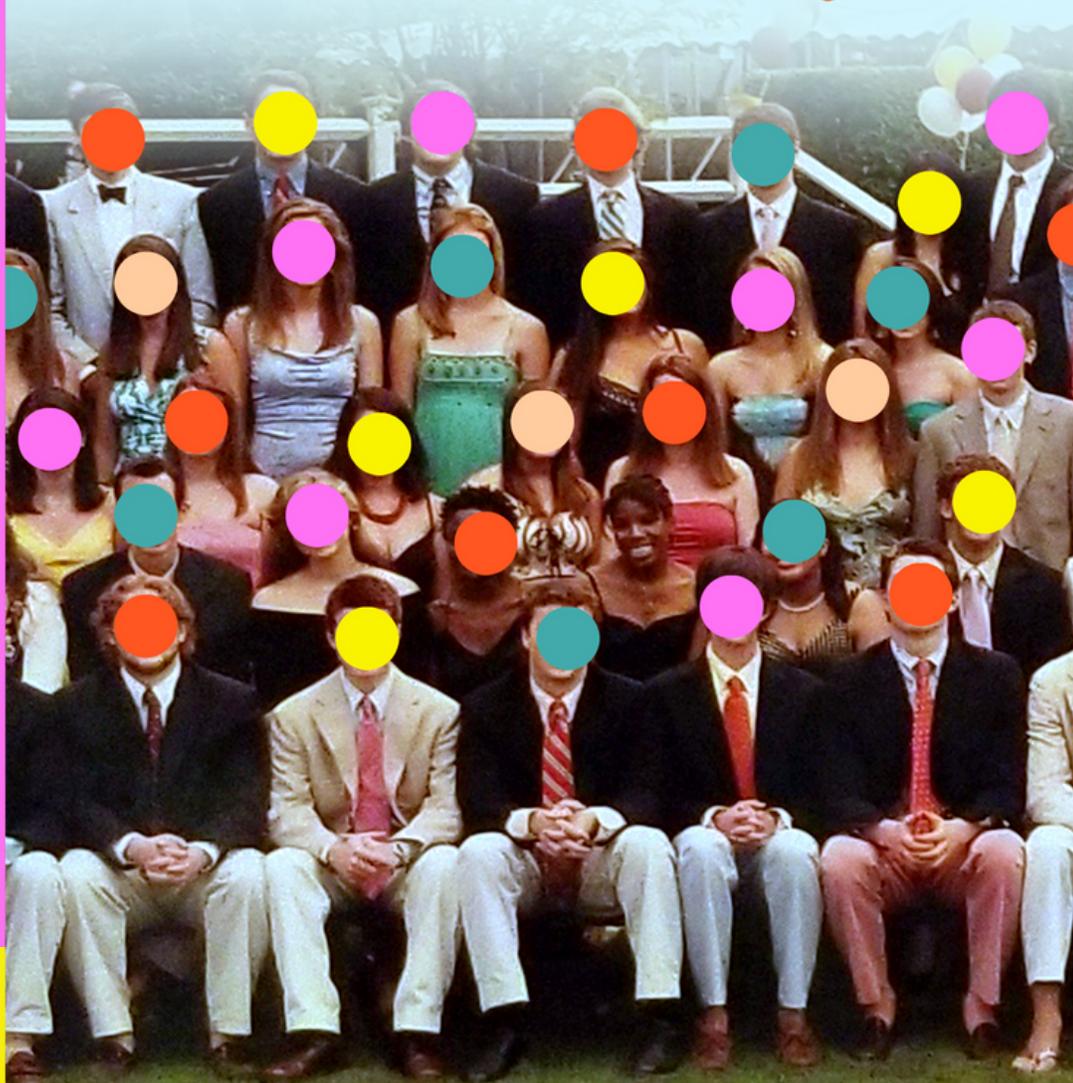


# ADMISSIONS

A Memoir of Surviving Boarding School



Kendra James

**BOOK CLUB KIT**

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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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**1** What other boarding school narratives have you read? How did they shape your beliefs about life in these rarified institutions? After reading about Kendra's experience, how has your perception of these stories and the schools they exalt changed?

**2** Scholars Striving 4 Success removed children from New York City public schools, rather than working to improve the school system itself. Why do you think they opted for that approach? What are other methods that the program could have employed to help a greater number of children?

**3** Kendra writes that her parents had to be overachievers just to accomplish what white, middle-class Americans might deem "normal." What were the social and institutional barriers that made the path to success more difficult for BIPOC individuals when they were growing up? And what barriers continue to impact achievement to this day?

**4** In many ways, Kendra's pleather trench coat was like an armor for her. Did you have a signature clothing item in high school? What did you hope it would say about you, and what did you hope it might hide?

**5** A few of Kendra's BIPOC classmates seem to buy into respectability politics in order to fit in at Taft. How does this strategy for integrating into the school's social scene fall short? What might the lack of engagement of Taft's other BIPOC alumni illuminate about its lasting effects?

**6** With different dining tables, hangout spots, and friend groups, campus segregation at Taft is evident. What steps do you think the white students could have taken to break down these barriers? How could other schools or workplaces implement a similar strategy?

**7** Kendra and Yara bond over a number of TV shows and movies. What pop-cultural touchstones have stuck with you since high school, or even longer? How did they resonate with you at the time and why do you think you remember them to this day?

**8** Kendra recognizes many of the privileges that give her a leg up in the college application process. In what ways does higher education in the United States work to reinforce existing inequality, not only with race, but with other marginalized groups? Who does the admissions process prioritize?

**9** Emma Hunter wrote her article about campus diversity over a decade ago, yet Kendra recounts numerous similar incidents at Taft in the years since. How might Taft, and other white institutions, have better addressed bigotry and intolerance within its student body to ensure they weren't perpetuated?

**10** Kendra notes that teachers at The Hartmann School created curriculums that didn't center whiteness. Thinking back on your own educational experience, how did your teachers and classes center dominant perspectives and stories? What historical moments or cultural narratives did you leave the American educational system with a skewed perspective about? Is there anything you wish you learned sooner?

# **Admissions Syllabus**

## **INTRO TO BOARDING SCHOOL LIT**

***Black Ice* by Lorene Cary**

***Prep* by Curtis Sittenfeld**

***How to Be Black* by Baratunde Thurston**

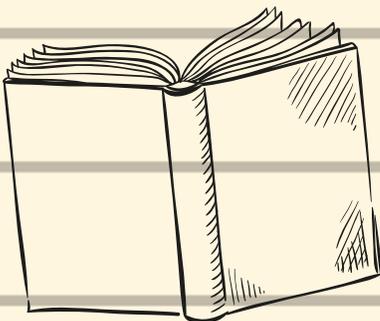
***Little Men* by Louisa May Alcott**

***Spying on Miss Muller* by Eve Bunting**

***A Separate Peace* by John Knowles**

***The Dear America Series* by Various Authors**

***The Outlander Series* by Diana Gabaldon**



# **Admissions Syllabus**

## **COMFORT FILMS 101**

***Dogma (1999)***

***The Band Wagon (1953)***

***Lord of the Rings (2001-2003)***

***Boys and Girls (2000)***

***Bridesmaids (2011)***



***Booksmart (2019)***

***Casanova (2005)***

***The Craft (1996)***

***Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (2004)***

***The Princess Bride (1987)***

***Elizabethtown (2005)***

***The Inkwell (1994)***

# **Admissions Syllabus**

## **MUSIC THEORY**

***The College Dropout* by Kanye West**

***Late Registration* by Kanye West**

***Speakerboxx/The Love Below* by Outkast**

***Lemonade* by Beyoncé**

***4* by Beyoncé**

***Pirates of the Caribbean 1-3* by Hans Zimmer**

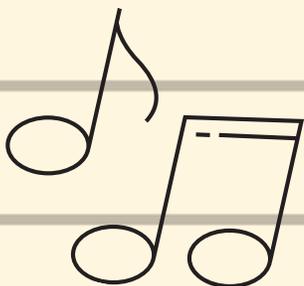
***American Idiot* by Green Day**

***Dizzy Up the Girl* by The Goo Goo Dolls**

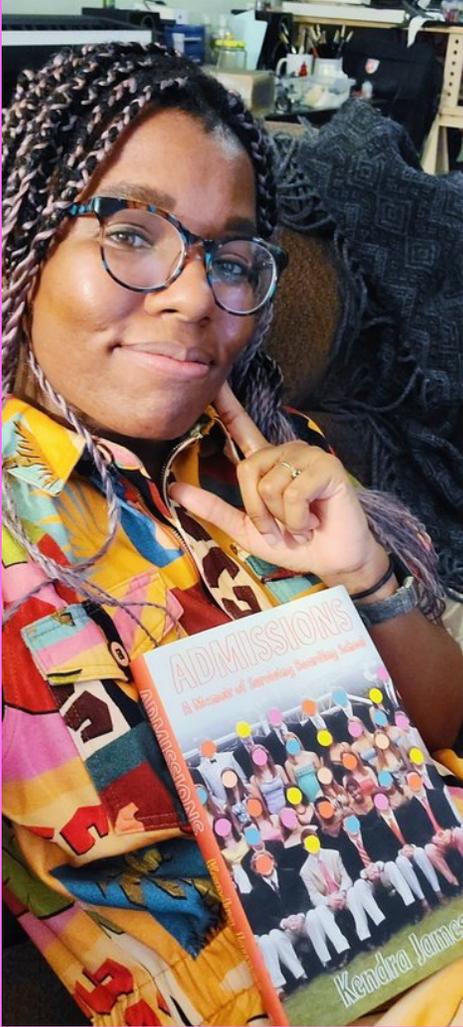
***Lifted* by John Legend**

***The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill***

**by Ms. Lauryn Hill**



# MORE RESOURCES FOR YOUR BOOK CLUB



LISTEN TO AN  
INTERVIEW WITH  
KENDRA ON THE  
STACKS PODCAST

READ THE  
ESSAY THAT  
SPARKED  
THE MEMOIR

