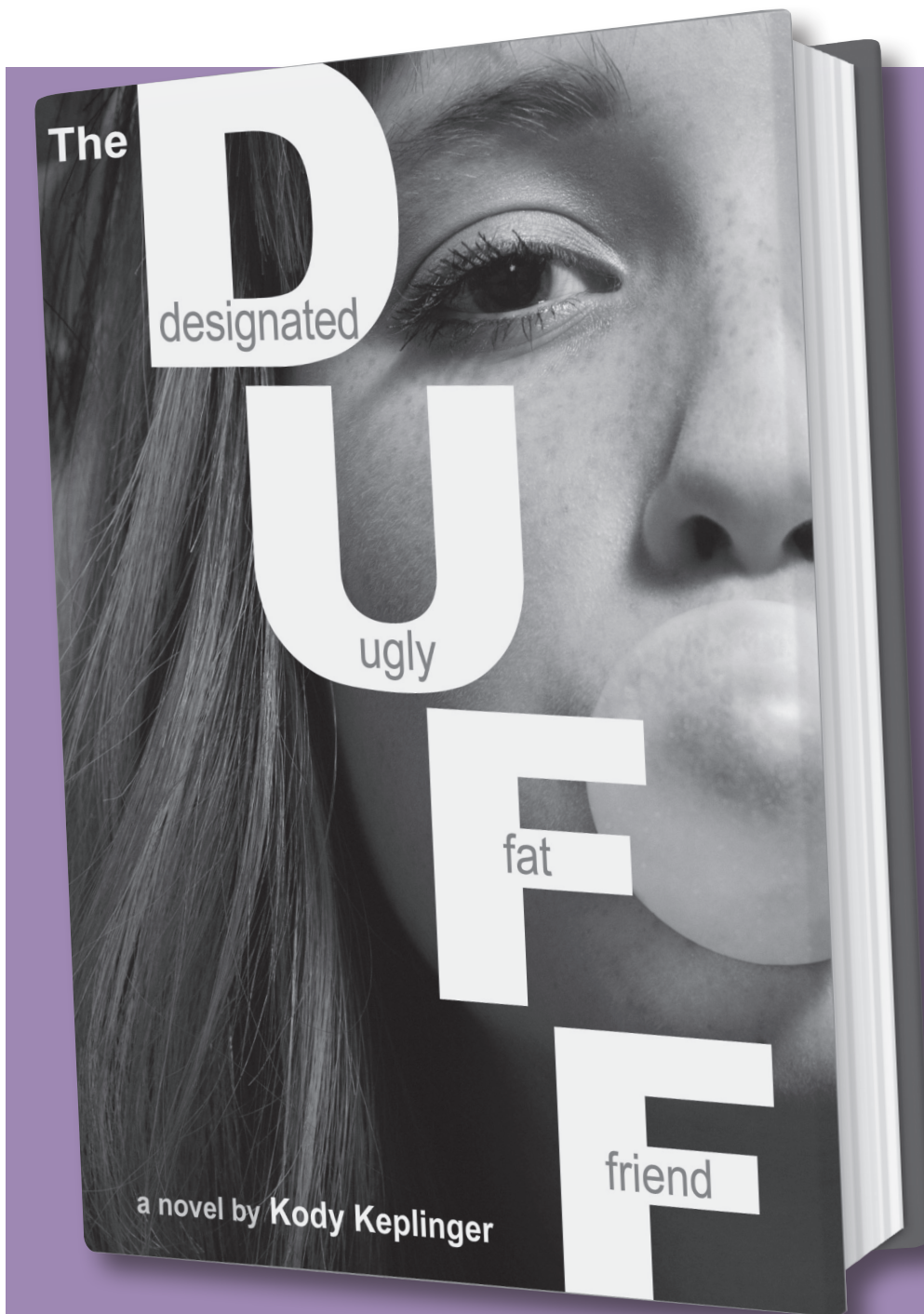


THE DUFF



curriculum connections

- ❖ Stereotypes
- ❖ Sexism
- ❖ Family Issues

Ages: 15+

by Kody
Keplinger

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is a Duff? According to Wesley, what makes Bianca the Duff for her friends Casey and Jessica? What are the advantages of having a Duff in high school? What are the agonies of being one? Are there such things as boy Duffs—why or why not?

Why does Bianca always keep a pile of laundry at the foot of her bed? What compels her to keep working on it? Does the physical relationship solve anything for either of them?

Bianca's mother travels around the country leading seminars on self-esteem. Why doesn't she stay home to tend her own daughter's battered self-image? Why does Bianca want to dislike her mom? Why can't she?

Why does Bianca's relationship with Wesley become so physical, so fast? What makes Bianca feel both ashamed and euphoric after their first afternoon together? What is Wesley's initial reaction?

Bianca and Wesley are working on a project about *The Scarlet Letter* for their English class. What does Bianca say is the real reason for Hester Prynne's illicit affair? In what ways does this apply to Bianca herself? How does she handle the possibility that she's like Hester?

What are the important differences between Wesley's home life and Bianca's? What are the similarities? What role do their parents play in their daily lives?

Who was Bianca's first boyfriend? How did he treat her? In what way was that relationship damaging for her? How did that experience change her future relationships with boys, including Wesley and Toby?

Bianca's father is a recovering alcoholic who hasn't taken a drink in years. What drives him back to the bottle? Why can't he and Bianca talk about it? What makes Mr. Piper finally decide to seek help?

"I'm fine," is what Bianca routinely says to Jessica and Casey when she's anything but fine. Why does she hold back her true feelings from her old friends? Why is it easier for her to be honest with Wesley? When is she finally able to confide in Jessica and Casey?

Is Bianca being cynical when she says that true love isn't possible in high school or is she being realistic? Why is Wesley so determined to change her mind about love? Do you think he succeeds?

Bianca has had a crush on Toby for years yet it is a let down to actually go out with him. Why is it so disappointing to finally achieve her dream? How does he compare to Wesley?

Wesley's very shy younger sister, Amy, seeks out Bianca to thank her. How has Wesley been affected by Bianca? How has Bianca been changed by Wesley? Why were Bianca and Wesley able to change each other when no one else could?

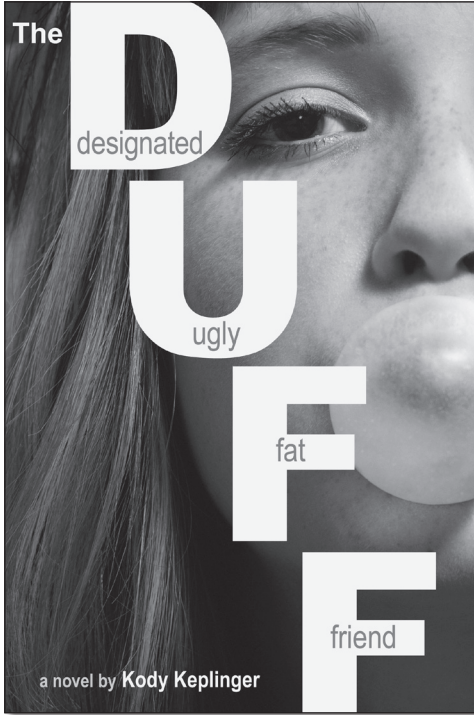
Duff is just one of many mean labels that get attached to teenage girls, as Bianca realizes in Chapter 26. Why are sexist labels so prevalent among high school students? What makes them so hard to shake off?

"So, maybe," Bianca wonders in that same scene, "every girl feels like a Duff, too." Do you agree? Have you ever felt like a Duff? Have your friends?

How do Bianca's thoughts about being physical with Wesley change over the course of the novel?

Kody Keplinger was still in high school when she wrote *The DUFF*. Is it easier to write about teenagers when you are a teenager yourself, or is it harder? Why? Could you write a novel about your high school? Would you?

about the book



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Seventeen-year-old Bianca knows she's not the prettiest of her friends, not by a long shot. She is also way too smart to fall for the charms of man-slut and slimy school hottie Wesley Rush. In fact, she hates him, and she hates his awful nickname for her, Duffy. But with things not so great at home, Bianca is looking for a distraction. One night she impulsively kisses Wesley, and she likes it, a lot, and so does he. Can a relationship that starts out as enemies-with-benefits end up as something like love?

Funny, smart, and sometimes a little heart breaking, too, *The DUFF* is the debut of an exceptionally talented and very young writer.

about the author



Kody Keplinger was 17 when she wrote this novel. Born and raised in small town Kentucky, she now attends Ithaca College. Her blog is *The Insanity of Writerhood: The True Adventures of a Teenage Novelist*.