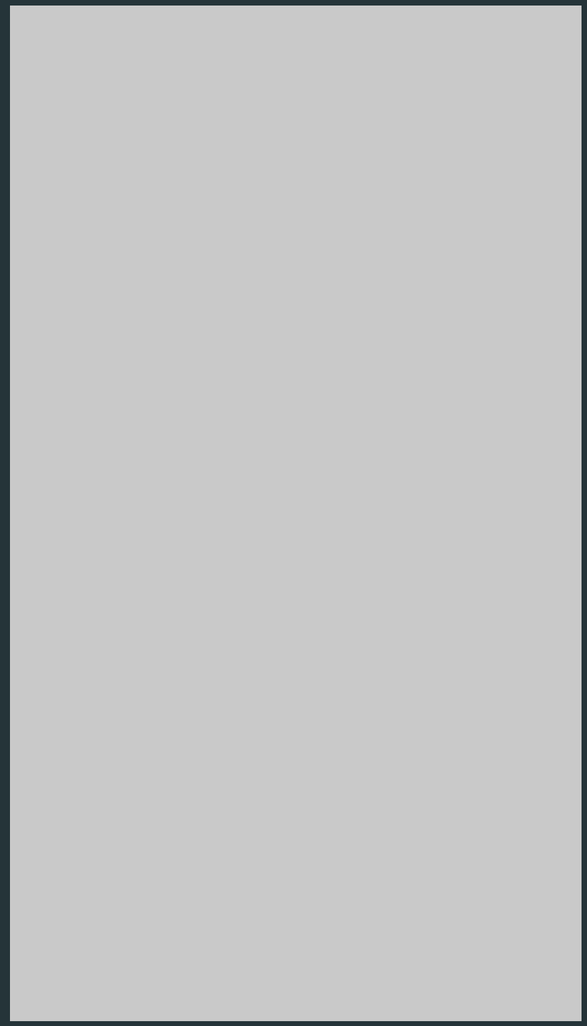
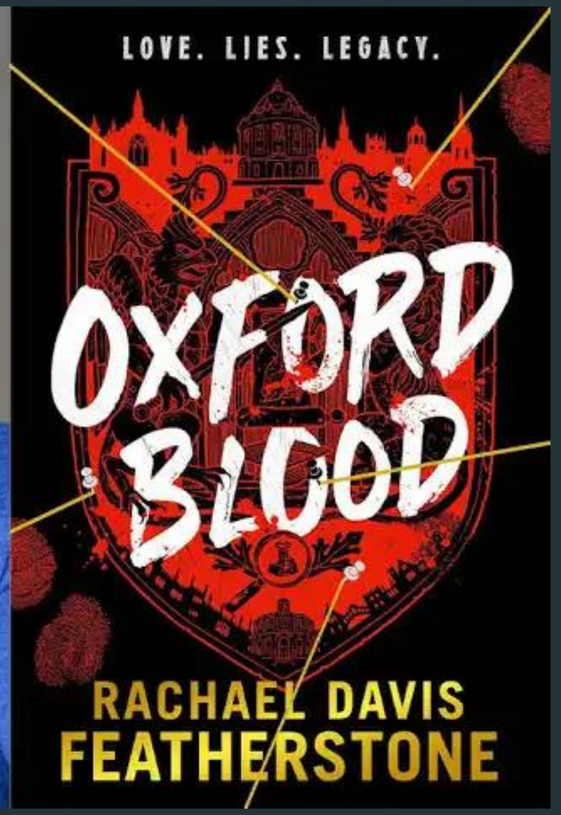
Oxford Blood



The next gripping, must-read, YA crime mystery for readers of Holly Jackson and Karen McManus, and fans of The Secret History & Ace of Spades





About the Author

Rachael Davis-Featherstone is a mixed-raced Black British multi-award-nominated author, literary agent and co-founder of Creative Roots Studio.

She has published over twenty books, ranging from picture books to commercial fiction, and has been translated into seven languages.

I Am NOT a Prince (2022) was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize. Rachael was also longlisted for the Diverse Book Awards and shortlisted for the Inclusive Books for Children Awards.

Many of her books explore authentic representation of the Black British mixed-race experience, including Oxford Blood (2025).

Rachael champions diversity in literature and was a judge for the inaugural Jericho Prize. She is a Non-Executive Director for ALCS and a Trustee for English PEN. In 2024, Rachael co-founded Creative Roots Studio, which helps writers and illustrators build sustainable careers.

Plot Overview

Eva has set her sights on studying English at Oxford University. Atmospheric old libraries; secret societies; eccentric professors – it's the stuff of her dreams.

When she and her best friend (who she's also secretly in love with), George, are invited to Interview Week, it seems like those dreams are coming true.

But only a day in, George is found dead on the steps of a university statue. And it is Eva who finds him.

All eyes are now on her as she races to clear her name, uncover the truth – and take back her



Main Characters

Eva Dawkins: The main protagonist and narrator, a clever, high-achieving, mixed-race state-school student with dreams of studying English at Beecham College, Oxford.

George: Eva's best friend, fellow English/Classics applicant, and secret romantic interest. Had a lot of secrets about his family background.

Lily: A scholarship student and a mixed-race peer who is one of the candidates interviewing alongside Eva, at Beecham College.

The Interview Candidates: A competitive, pool of private-school applicants at Beecham College whose secretive behaviour and prejudices make them prime suspects.

Inspector Dawkins: Eva's overprotective and decorated police detective father

OxSlay / Oxford Slays (Community/Forum): An anonymous, gossipy student social media forum that acts almost like an overarching antagonist/chorus, tracking and fueling the hysteria and suspicion surrounding Eva.

Xander: comes from a wealthy, private-school background, but he does not belong to the elite secret societies himself; instead, he serves as an outsider who helps Eva expose corruption.

The Reapers: a group of elite families connected to Beecham College's secret society that uses nepotism, money, and illegal sabotage to guarantee their own success.

Themes

Class and Privilege

- Socioeconomic Division: The novel highlights the stark contrast between working-class, state-school students and wealthy legacy applicants.
- Institutional Power: It examines how elite networks and secret societies protect their own members while maintaining systemic inequality.



Prejudice and Identity

- Race and Representation: The story explores the experiences of marginalized students navigating traditional, predominantly privileged academic spaces.
- The Cost of Access: It questions whether superficial diversity or meritocratic access schemes truly fix elite institutions or just create

Themes

Ambition and Belonging

- Desire for Success: Eva's deep yearning to succeed academically clashes with her awareness of a rigged system.
- The Allure of Academia: The tension between loving the aesthetic and history of Oxford versus recognizing its exclusionary dangers and legacy of racism.

Grief and Trust

- Coping with Loss: Eva must process the traumatic death of her closest friend while under public and police suspicion.
- Betrayal: The narrative relies on shifting loyalties, rumors spread by anonymous apps like OxSlay, and the challenge of knowing who to trust.



Genre: Dark Academia

Dark Academia is a popular literary genre which romanticizes higher education, classic literature, the arts, and an idealized, melancholic pursuit of knowledge, while exploring the dark, morally ambiguous, and often destructive undercurrents of elite academic institutions.

Key Characteristics of the genre

- **Setting:** Elite private boarding schools, secluded ivy-league universities, or gothic campuses featuring old libraries, stone architecture, and dim study halls.
- **Themes:** Obsession, intellectual elitism, secret societies, moral ambiguity, unyielding pressure, and tragic events like murder or mysterious deaths.
- **Subjects of Study**: Classical languages (Latin and Greek), philosophy, art history, poetry, and literature.
- **Characters:** morally ambiguous, and often destructive undercurrents of elite academic institutions.

The Statue



Statue of Cecil Rhodes at Oriel College Oxford

In *Oxford Blood*, the statue of college founder and known enslaver Sir H.C. Glanville serves as the chilling physical center point of the mystery.

Role in the Plot

- The Crime Scene: George's body is discovered at the base of the statue on the second morning of interview week.
- The Catalyst: Finding him there makes Eva the prime suspect, forcing her to investigate the murder herself within a tight one-week deadline.

Thematic Significance

- Symbol of Privilege: The monument depicts a historical figure tied to slavery, sitting prominently in the (fictional) Beecham College quad.
- Institutional Critique: The statue acts as a physical embodiment of the dark side of elite academia—highlighting ongoing themes of systemic privilege, power, and the weight of painful historical legacies

Video of the Author Introducing and reading Oxford Blood

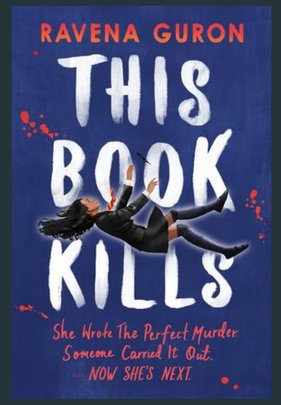


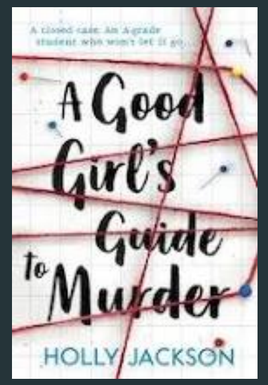
Guess what's next?

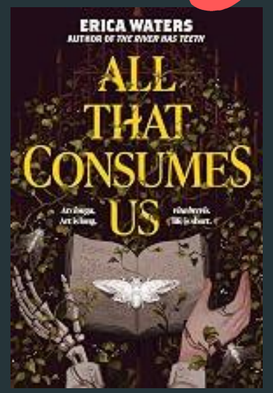


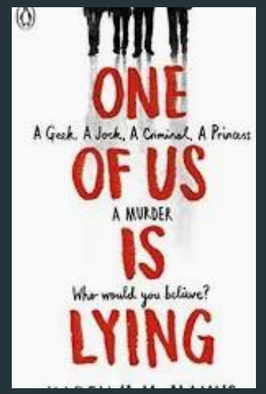


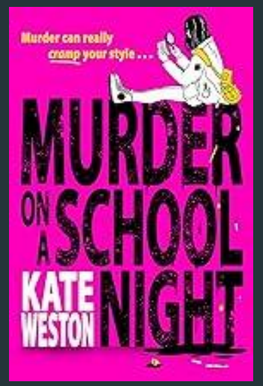
If you Like Oxford Blood you might like:

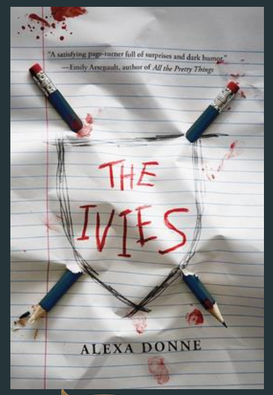


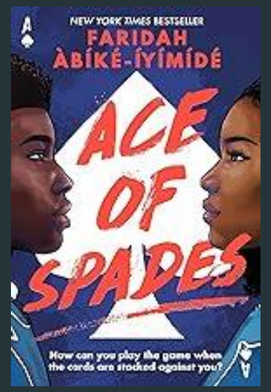


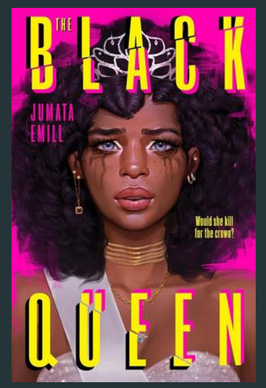


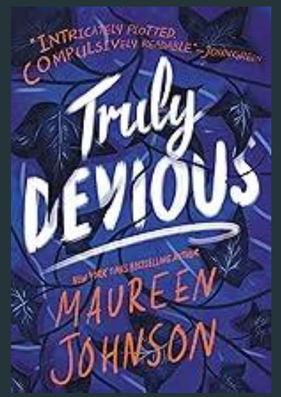
















Sources

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_academia?scrlybrkr=1340a3a7

https://www.readingzone.com/authors/rachael-davis-featherstone-introduces-her-ya-thriller-oxford-blood/

https://www.walker.co.uk/9781529519853/oxford-secrets/

https://thenerddaily.com/rachael-davis-featherstone-oxford-blood-author-interview/

https://www.stimolaliterarystudio.com/news/school-library-journal-calls-oxford-blood-by-rachael-davis-featherstone-a-well-paced-mystery-thats-difficult-to-put-down-in-starred-review

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/02/rhodes-scholarship-trust-refuses-to-back-calls-to-remove-oxford-statue?scrlybrkr=1340a3a7