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# Pride, Prejudice, and Diversity: The Retelling Culture The Development and Analysis of Best Practices for Diverse Modern Re-imaginings of the Classics

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# Pride, Prejudice, and DIVERSITY:

*The Retelling Culture*

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The Development and Analysis of Best Practices  
for Diverse Modern Re-imaginings of the Classics

*Hannah Boettcher*  
*Spring 2021*

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## *Research Question*

Are there “best practices” when adapting a classic novel, recasting it to feature diverse characters? Using four diverse modern publications of *Pride and Prejudice* retellings, is there a baseline for success that can be applied to the genre as a whole?



## Abstract

It is a truth universally acknowledged that the publishing industry—in possession of predominately white authors, characters, and staff—must be in want of more diversity. At least, it should be such a truth because understanding is the first sentence of a much longer novel: the industry as a whole must be recast to represent all readers. From classic works to current bestsellers, there is an inherent need for not just more diverse books, but also an acceptance that the system requires more than just “surface level” solutions. This paper proposes four diverse modern retellings of *Pride and Prejudice* as a case study of the diverse retelling genre—set against the backdrop of a white-centered publishing industry—in order to reveal potential best practices for future inclusive re-imaginings.

Analysis of the four *Pride and Prejudice* retellings revealed that there are ten potential best practices that can be applied to the genre as a whole. One half of the best practices focuses on the content of the books, while the other centers around marketing techniques. Each best practice comes with both analysis and support from industry trends and the case study. This paper also examines future diverse retellings currently in the works and how they have already applied the developed best practices, as well as why they are essential and successful in the current market. In its entirety, this paper concludes that diverse modern retellings sell because they marry both the past and present, with direct sights on a more inclusive future.

## Introduction

When a book is marketed as a classic retelling, there is inherently an audience predisposed to read it, react to it, and review it for others. Classic novels have large fan bases and readers who consistently interact with the canon text—listing it as their favorite novel or even memorizing it from cover to cover. However, having a guaranteed audience does not necessarily provide or even encourage a favorable reaction to the retelling. Most readers of the classic novels and their intimate involvement with them, can often make readers critical of retellings for a variety of reasons. Problems mostly center on the central and explicitly stated theme of a modern retelling—the modernity itself, which jars fundamental aspects of the canonical version. Therefore, modern retellings can seem like a reliable bet for book publishers seeking brand recognition, but adapting classics is fraught with potential pitfalls.

Yet, there have been four successful modern *Pride and Prejudice* retellings published within the last four years all with a common theme: diversity. Recasting the classic novel to feature diverse roles, does something most classic works fail to do, position the Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) community at the center of history. Diverse modern retellings offer the ability for BIPOC readers to see themselves as main characters in the classics, finally proving just how timeless the stories are. In diverse *Pride and Prejudice* retellings specifically, one of the greatest love stories is not centered around the white experience. Diverse re-imaginings also introduce important conversations about how inclusivity is the only natural progression in the publishing industry as it stands, as they prove there is a strong market for non-white experiences in all genres.

The four modern retellings of *Pride and Prejudice* have been recent successes. Each is a modern re-imagining that has reworked the classic canon text to feature diverse main characters, penned by diverse authors. After creating a general set of guidelines for the selection of four diverse *Pride and Prejudice* retellings, four titles were selected: *Unmarriageable: A Novel*, by Soniah Kamal (2019); *Pride, Prejudice, and Other Flavors: A Novel*, by Sonali Dev (2019); *Ayesha at Last*, by Uzma Jalaluddin (2018); and *Pride: A “Pride and Prejudice” Remix*, by Ibi Zoboi (2018). The former three are adult contemporaries, while the latter is contemporary young adult. The publication and reception of these novels pose the question of what the books got right, how they did it, and what they say about the current and future trajectory of the book market. These retellings pinpoint a key shift within the persistence of literary strongholds such as *Pride and Prejudice*, highlighting a significant need for more diversity in the publishing industry itself.

Through the case study analysis of positively rated (above 3.50/5.00 stars on Goodreads) diverse retellings, this paper creates a baseline method of best practices for a successful modern retelling that has been recast to feature diverse characters. Further, it attempts to measure the value of a modern retelling within the current book publishing market as well as the necessity for even more diverse published works by diverse authors, featuring diverse characters. There is a wide net of readers who are underrepresented not only in current

novels, but also distinctly in the classics. There have been publicity attempts by booksellers such as Barnes & Noble to diversify the look of their books with new covers, leaving the antiquated content completely unchanged and just as white.<sup>1</sup> The real issue stems from not only the lack of actual content within the books, but also the lack of people within the organization who objected to the mistake. The best practices for publishing a diverse retelling developed within this paper intend to create a model for successful future releases.

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1. Concepción de León, "Barnes & Noble, Criticized for Book Covers, Pulls Plug on Diverse Editions Project."



## Methods\*

For this paper, I have applied both qualitative and quantitative research methods to fully capture the phenomenon of diverse retelling in modern publishing. My method of reasoning was inductive, starting with the observation that multiple *Pride and Prejudice* retellings have been released with truly diverse characters and plot lines. With that, I observed similarities and differences between four *Pride and Prejudice* retellings to develop an explanation for the positive reception of each title. I focused specifically on the sales data, marketing plans, and the book covers of diverse retellings in order to gauge best practices when recasting a classic novel with diverse characters.

First, I was concerned with the qualitative understanding of the landscape of the publishing industry as it stands, with special regard to diversity and established best practices of modern retellings based on classic works. Using four diverse *Pride and Prejudice* retellings as a case study, I created a baseline for comparison between the novels, further speculating on the successes of the genre as a whole.

Second, I was quantitatively concerned with the sales data of the four diverse *Pride and Prejudice* retellings, in order to gauge the real-world sales results of my qualitative evidence. When aligned with the comparisons and contrasts between the four books, I hoped to use the sales data as further evidence of the best practices baseline established from the qualitative research. Thus, the discovered best practices are divided into two groups: content based and marketing based. Coupled together, both methods revealed a pattern of successes within the diverse retelling genre, helping to inform the future success of such books within the industry, as well as creating guidelines for recasting classic novels with diverse characters.

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\*The qualifications for accepting each of the four retellings for research can be found in appendix A.

## *State of Diversity in Publishing*

In his article, “Widening the Gates: Why Publishing Needs Diversity,” Chris Jackson talks about the question of diversity within the publishing industry as well as ways to achieve that are fluid and expandable.<sup>2</sup> When he was entering the business out of high school he reflects on the lack of popular, mainstream publishing for Black readers. Inherently, lower income and young adults of color are being overlooked by the publishing industry at the gates, since they were never given the keys to unlock the publishing world. Jackson stresses the importance of risk-taking: “There is no better way to sustain the status quo than to refuse to take chances, even chances that might put us as some risk.”<sup>3</sup> Risks are needed in the industry when it comes to diversity—smart and viable risks—and yet, hiring diverse workers should not even be viewed as a risk to be taken. Instead, it is a fundamental necessity if the publishing industry intends to flourish.

A more diverse workforce offers an apt backdrop for books featuring people of color (POC) characters. Potentially, if there was a workforce at Barnes & Noble with a better insight into the needs of POC readers, they would have understood that the diverse covers were only a Band-Aid and would be viewed as insulting rather than inviting. This insight about a key faction of readers not only requires a more diverse front list, but also a more diverse hiring processes to help aid the necessary changes of the industry. Because frankly, as seen with Barnes & Noble, it does not help a book or a publisher if a novel is only diverse in concept or cover design; the content needs to be true and recognizably relevant to an ever-growing diverse readership.

In 2014, after releasing a study which found that 89 percent of the publishing industry was white, *Publishers Weekly* spoke of that distinct need: “The dearth of minority employees directly affects the types of books that are published . . . there needs to be more advocates for books involving people of color throughout the business.”<sup>4</sup> In her 2019 study of the fifty most frequently used comparative (comp) titles, Laura B. McGrath found that not only are people of color being hired less by publishing companies, but that the industry also values white authors substantially more than their POC counterparts.<sup>5</sup> McGrath addresses *Publishers Weekly’s* statement saying that the numbers are bad, yes, “but they are only one part of a large, institutional problem—a by-product of an industry that is discriminatory by design.”<sup>6</sup> However, the work in overtaking and reshaping the publishing industry should not fall solely on the shoulders of the POC community. It must also be inherently understood

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2. Chris Jackson, “22. Widening the Gates: Why Publishing Needs Diversity.”

3. Jackson.

4. Jim Milliot, “Publishing’s Holding Pattern: 2014 Salary Survey.”

5. Laura B. McGrath, “Comping White.”

6. McGrath.

and undertaken by every member of the publishing industry, or at least the publishing houses that want to be rebuilt with bricks and not straw.

Further, the content of books published for POC readers can also be an issue within itself. In her essay about prejudice and microaggressions faced in daily life, publisher Sharmaine Lovegrove underlined the fact that the simple act of finding a book to read perpetuates such underlying detrimental acts.<sup>7</sup> Lovegrove recalled being a voracious reader as a child, always searching for characters who not only resonated with her, but also looked like her. As a teenager and throughout adulthood, she realized that it was far harder for her to find a general fiction book that depicts Black British experiences on the page.<sup>8</sup> In a 2014 PEW study, it was discovered that college-educated Black women are a major demographic of readers who buy romance novels,<sup>9</sup> while the majority of characters and authors of romance novels are white.<sup>10</sup> More broadly, in their *Immersive Media and Books 2020* report, Rachel Noorda, Ph.D., and Kathi Inman Berens, Ph.D., found Black and Latinx millennials to be the most avid book buyers, while citing that men, millennials, and non-white people of all generations are the demographics to watch.<sup>11</sup>

Diversity is necessary in modern retellings, general fiction, thrillers, self-help, romance, and every other genre not because it looks good on paper or meets a benchmark, but for the sole purpose of inclusion and recognition for all readers. It can further be presumed that a diverse modern retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* would not only repaint an inherently white genre with a new brush, but also inspire generations of readers who, like Sharmaine Lovegrove, want to read about themselves. Clearly, readers enjoy diverse titles, but they can only enjoy what they are given by the (major) publishers, which is simply not enough. Since both classic novels and current works heavily favor white characters from white authors, there is a distinct hole in the publishing tapestry, ready to be patched by diverse retellings of classic novels.

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7. Sharmaine Lovegrove, "Publishing Diversity."

8. Lovegrove.

9. Katherine Rosman, "A Genre of Romance, Not Diversity."

10. Bea Koch and Leah Koch, *The State of Racial Diversity in Romance Publishing Report*.

11. Rachel Noorda, Dr. and Kathi Inman Berens, Dr., *Immersive Media and Books 2020*.

# Research Qualifications\*

## SALES DATA

Four questions were used to gauge and assess the sales data as well as any other sales circumstances and future events of the four selected books:

- ❧ **Who is the publisher?**
- ❧ **What are the RTD (retail to date) sales numbers (comprised of gross paperback and hardcover sales)?** Note, the two books published in 2018 have a sales period from publication to April 4, 2020. The two books published in 2019 have a sales period from publication to April 3, 2021. Each sales period is roughly two years and does not favor books published earlier (which have had longer on the market to sell).
- ❧ **What is the listed genre?** Note, genres come from the BISAC codes provided by the publisher via Edelweiss.
- ❧ **What is the retail price?**

## COMPARISON QUESTIONS

Seven questions were asked of each of the four diverse *Pride and Prejudice* retellings, in order to compare the titles and to discern any possible reasons behind the success of each book:

- ❧ **How prominent is the connection to *Pride and Prejudice* on the front cover of each novel?**
- ❧ **Are there blurbs on the front/and or back cover?** If so, do any specifically mention the retelling nature of the book?
- ❧ **Does the back cover summary reference *Pride and Prejudice*?**
- ❧ **Was an “author’s note” or a self-assessment of *Pride and Prejudice* and the relationship to the author included in the back of the book?**
- ❧ **Are there any book club questions or reading group guides provided by the publisher?**
- ❧ **Was the author debuting with this book?**
- ❧ **What is the Goodreads star rating for each book?**

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\*The front covers and back cover transcription of each book can be found in appendix B; the sales data and answered questions can be found in appendix C. Further, there is space devoted to the marketing plan and key selling points of each book, as entered into Edelweiss by the publisher. The information is listed in full, with sections highlighted as they pertain to potential best practices. The following “Best Practices” section features both analysis and synthesis of the sales data, comparisons, and marketing plans.

## Best Practices

The following ten best practices are meant to aid both the content and marketing procedures when an author or publisher is attempting to recast a classic work to feature a diverse cast of characters. The best practices have been established through industry research and a case study of four modern and diverse *Pride and Prejudice* retellings. Some best practices do not specifically need the retelling to be diverse, but it is implied for the purposes of this paper. Reimagining a classic can be a tedious process with built-in critics, and yet diverse retellings address a major lack of diversity in classic works, making them a valuable resource for writers, publishers, and readers alike. All best practices are educated and informed, but only recommendations, and by no means encompass every possible factor of success.

### CONTENT BASED

While this best practice may seem obvious to most, it has not always been followed within the publishing industry. In terms of diverse modern retellings, it is critical for the book to be written by an Own Voices author.<sup>12</sup> There are many instances where authors write about situations they personally have not experienced, and while that is okay in many circumstances, it cannot be disregarded that major authenticity and sales factors of the four included *Pride and Prejudice* retellings owe credit to being able to attach the Own Voices tag. The four authors wrote personal essays about their individual connections to *Pride and Prejudice*, adding a level of security and genuineness to their interpretations. The marketing plans of the books place value on their authors being diverse, with Own Voices specifically referenced in the key selling points of *Pride* and *Unmarriageable*.

 **BEST PRACTICE 1:** The author must be Own Voices.

While this paper is focused on modern retellings of *Pride and Prejudice*, there are numerous other versions of retellings and adaptations. Within that, it seems that there are already established best practices within the industry of retellings and adaptations. Simone Murray's book, *The Adaptation Industry*, offers a look at adaptations of classic literary novels in the realm of films and an array of other media formats.<sup>13</sup> While this book focuses on film adaptations, comparisons can be drawn between those and the modern retelling adaptations. Specifically, covering the process of adapting iconic texts such as *Pride and Prejudice*.

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12. For reference, #OwnVoices (Own Voices) is a hashtag term created by writer Corinne Duyvis and refers to writers from under-represented groups writing from an inside perspective of the marginalized characters. See Claire Kirch, "Q & A with Corinne Duyvis."

13. Simone Murray, *The Adaptation Industry*.

Screenwriter Deborah Moggach described the adaptation process: “Adaptation is a ruthless process—you have to dismember the book and reassemble it, so it must be approached with huge love and integrity. But when it’s done well, it is an act of creativity between everyone involved.”<sup>14</sup> It is clear that there needs to be the heart of the classic within the adaptation, but there also needs to be a creative process that adapts it to modern times and modern cultures.

✿ **BEST PRACTICE 2:** The heart of the classic must remain within the retelling.

Further, *The Adaptation Industry*, compares some adaptations to fan fiction in a broad sense.<sup>15</sup> Authors and directors are able to exercise a certain amount of creative control and reinvent a classic that aligns to their vision, much like the fundamental basics of fan fiction. While a modern retelling of a classic must have enough recognizable attributes in relation to the canonical text, there is a distinctly creative aspect to reimagining the novel in the author’s own vision. Each author recounted their creative interpretations and experiences:

“I began to write *Ayesha at Last* when diverse, representational stories were few and far between, particularly the joyful romantic types featuring South Asians and Muslims.”  
– **Uzma Jalaluddin**<sup>16</sup>

“As a writer, I needed something to take my mind off the heavy politics of the day, and I wanted readers to be able to do the same. I want to give them a moment to breathe—especially teens of color—and some moments to be able to dream, shut out the world, and dive into something sweet.”  
– **Ibi Zoboi**<sup>17</sup>

“I’ve always wanted to play with Jane Austen’s stories and to attempt retelling them. Not in terms of women and men in want of spouses, but in terms of people navigating the structure of society in more contemporary ways. Because look at our world: it’s more heterogeneous than ever before.”  
– **Sonali Dev**<sup>18</sup>

“As I read and reread *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth Bennet and every other character ceased to be English—to me, they were Pakistani. In reading English literature through a Pakistani lens, it seemed to me that all cultures were concerned with the same eternal questions and that people were more similar to one another than they were different.”  
– **Soniah Kamal**<sup>19</sup>

In a way, all four authors reimagined one of their favorite novels to better represent themselves

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14. Murray.

15. Murray.

16. Uzma Jalaluddin, *Ayesha at Last*.

17. Ibi Zoboi, *Pride: A “Pride and Prejudice” Remix*.

18. Sonali Dev, *Pride, Prejudice, and Other Flavors: A Novel*.

19. Soniah Kamal, *Unmarriageable: A Novel*.

and their cultures—to cater to their needs as a reader first, by creating a story they want to see in the current publishing landscape, a story they would want to read or wish they could have read when they were younger. There is also the distinct recognition that these books can also be a safe space for people of color to come and immerse themselves in a different history. While not true of every retelling, *Pride and Prejudice* offers the ability to recast a love story to fit diverse characters and themes. It is a story with a guaranteed happy ending, with the possibility of love at its core.

✿ **BEST PRACTICE 3:** Think in terms of fan fiction to establish what a reader is most looking for in a retelling.

Classic novels are thought to be timeless, to a certain degree, which can lend to the experience of Soniah Kamal. The characters in *Pride and Prejudice* were appearing Pakistani to her because she not only saw similarities between the issues in the 1800s and present day, but within cultures as well. The timelessness of the text is important for a lover of the canonical text to transfer their knowledge and inherent interest to the new work. It is important to show the reader just how alive the classic is in modern times—to convince them to view the new reimaged work not as a competitor of the original, but as an ally, as well as introduce them to a set of new characters continuing and expanding upon the cultural commentary of the old. *Entertainment Weekly's* editor, David Canfield, said it plainly: “Re-imaginings shouldn’t ask us to compare an original author to their adapter; the best ones reveal the story’s timelessness.”<sup>20</sup> Those remarks came from a positive review of *Pride*. Canfield’s words fit directly into the discourse started by Kamal. Ibi Zoboi wrote of this evergreen nature herself in a letter to her readers: “I never thought that a literary classic like Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, set in nineteenth-century England, could’ve provided such an excellent template for addressing some of the issues Black teens grapple with today.”<sup>21</sup> Classic canonical texts do not offer a blank slate for current authors to paint over, but rather, they provide a base set of colors with which modern authors can mix and add to, creating newer more diverse portraits of timeless questions.

✿ **BEST PRACTICE 4:** Call attention to the timeless nature of the original work, showing how it seamlessly adapts to current cultures and issues.

When a book is labeled as a retelling, there are roughly two paths an author can take: a loose interpretation or a strict one. As long as the author follows Best Practice 2, either approach is fine. However, it can be necessary to preface the story and alert the reader to whichever path the author chose. Retellings come with a lot of expectations and addressing the scope of the retelling early on can help alleviate “false advertising” claims and inform

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20. David Canfield, Esme Douglas, and Aja Hoggatt, “EW Talks YA.”

21. “*Pride* Author Letter,” Ibi Zoboi to Readers.



the reader as to whether the book is a good fit; not everyone is a target audience for every book. Sonali Dev prefaces *Pride, Prejudice, and Other Flavors* herself: “I’m going to start with alerting you, Dear Reader, that Trisha and DJ’s story is only loosely inspired by the themes that Ms. Austen explored so very deftly.”<sup>22</sup> Conversely, *Unmarriageable* features a back cover summary following very closely to that of *Pride and Prejudice*, while blurbs push the book further towards “devout Austenites.”<sup>23</sup> Another key selling point of the book is quite explicitly targeting an audience that wants a close stricter retelling: “This retelling is faithful to the original with an original twist—it is the first to reimagine the classic set in a Muslim country.”<sup>24</sup> Blurbs, book summaries, cover copy, and prefaces are all ways to help inform the reader.

✿ **BEST PRACTICE 5:** Be up front with the reader about the scope of the retelling; clearly communicate if it is a loose or strict interpretation.

## MARKETING BASED

A book cover is usually the first point of interaction a reader has with a book. Thus, the key selling point of the book being a retelling should be prominent somewhere on the cover. Three out of four of the selected re-imaginings feature *Pride and Prejudice* on the front cover; two books reference *Pride and Prejudice* within the title or subtitle. Tangentially to Best Practice 5, the cover copy, book summary, and blurbs can also reference the general retelling nature of the book. Based on the four books, it appears as if referencing that the book is a retelling on the front cover—as well as including any or all of the examples listed in the previous sentence—is the most effective marketing tactic. A main selling point of each book is the retelling aspect, so it should be clearly conveyed on the cover.

✿ **BEST PRACTICE 6:** Cover should clearly indicate the relation to the work being retold.

While a retelling already has established fans of the original work to market to, in order to maximize sales, there needs to be a marketing push that targets new readers as well. Further, a reader should be able to read the retelling without having read the original. This ensures that a new reader can enjoy and understand the book, just as well as a fan of the classic can. Being able to comp contemporary titles is an asset to almost any modern retelling. The marketing team on *Ayesha at Last* specifically targeted readers of Jasmine Guillory’s *The Wedding Date* and Helen Hoang’s *The Kiss Quotient* because it opened up the potential

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22. Dev.

23. For full quotation, see appendix B, page vii.

24. For full quotation, see appendix C, page xvi.



reader market. Both marketing teams for *Ayesha at Last* and *Pride* list key selling points focused on being perfect for both Austen fans and new readers.

🌀 **BEST PRACTICE 7:** Target both contemporary audiences and fans of the original work.

Following the approach of Best Practice 7, it can also be beneficial to establish a multi-genre crossover appeal of the retelling. Much like targeting old and new readers, an approach targeting more than one genre helps key into various different audiences. All but one of the four books list multiple genres for the titles. Since *Pride and Prejudice* features a romance with a happy ending, it solidly lands in the realm of romance, at least it can if it is marketed that way. The *Ayesha at Last* team noted the crossover appeal, while the *Pride, Prejudice, and Other Flavors* team spoke of focusing on the women's fiction and romance genres as a deliberate choice to help "break her [Dev] out in a bigger way."<sup>25</sup> Most classics are multifaceted to begin with, but further highlighting the diverse appeal of them through a retelling can be a key tool in advancing sales. Most of the marketing plans specifically referenced the volume of topics housed within each book, establishing myriad talking and selling points.

🌀 **BEST PRACTICE 8:** Establish a multi-genre crossover appeal.

Three out of four books had author notes at the end, specifically included to establish the relationship the authors had with Jane Austen. *Pride* only had a short insight at the end, but the publishers did release a second letter to readers, showing the value they saw in giving Zobo's perspective. Such insights were even marketed on the cover of *Pride, Prejudice, and Other Flavors* as including "insights, interviews, and more." The inclusion of an author's note also harks back to Best Practice 5 (scope of retelling) as such notes are normally shortened defenses of their creative approaches. Most of the authors recounted creative licensing decisions they made, as well as ensured the reader that they cherish and respect Jane Austen and her work. Since the retellings are recast to feature diverse characters, it is useful to see the author's relationship to the classic work, while also making it more culturally reflective.

🌀 **BEST PRACTICE 9:** Include an author's note, specifically focused on establishing the relationship between the author and the classic.

In a similar vein as an included author's note, three out of four of the retellings included guided discussion questions for book clubs and other groups. *Pride* did not, which could be due to it being a YA title, while the rest are adult. *Unmarriageable* even informed readers of the Random House book club, featuring a book insert and a logo on the back cover. Guided discussion questions are apt for modern retellings because a portion of all questions

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<sup>25</sup>. For full quotation, see appendix C, page xv.

engaged the reader with the retelling aspects as well as the diverse recastings. Two of the books also feature recipes mentioned in the book, which can also make the act of reading the book a special event, or even group experience. Targeting book groups leads to both genuine discussion of a book's important topics, but it also spikes sales and library check-out rates. Including the discussion questions in the book itself makes the book a perfect tool for discussion, debate, and introspection. Further, Ann Cox, with Ingram Library Services, recognized the market for diverse retellings.<sup>26</sup> Her advice to fellow librarians is to acquire more diverse retelling titles: "Catch your patrons' attention and give them a new (and needed) perspective on stories they thought they already knew." Specific library marketing not only increases readership, but can also influence book club picks. Only *Pride* focused on library outreach, so they could be a future avenue for adult retellings, not just young adult.

🔗 **BEST PRACTICE 10:** Target book clubs, especially by including guided discussion questions within the book itself.

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26. Ann Cox, "Diverse Retellings of the Literary Canon."

## Conclusion

Diverse modern retellings of classic novels offer so much more than an old story with a new cover. They are a cultural revolution for a large portion of readers, remixing some of the most beloved stories to feature characters that represent readership, issues that reflect society. They themselves can be new classics, versions for new and old readers to read when they want to feel and be represented in an industry that still undervalues them. Introducing diversity into classic works creates connections and draws parallels between the past and the present, which can reveal a lot about the future shared experiences. To thrive in a market that is desperately looking for non-white representation, a diverse retelling should be a paint palette of culture, mixing both from the original and from the current climate of the modern retelling. Black and Latinx readers are some of the most avid consumers of books—with all non-white readership on the rise—and they deserve the same representation as white readers.<sup>27</sup>

As of March 2021, there are several new Jane Austen re-imaginings making their way into the publishing world.<sup>28</sup> There is a distinct market for diverse retellings of classic staples as evidenced by more and more book deals being made. Talia Hibbert, *NYT* bestselling author, is embarking on a trilogy of Jane Austen inspired rom-coms, beginning with none other than *Pride and Prejudice*.<sup>29</sup> As more modern retellings are expected to make their way into the world, this paper's analysis of both sales data and content, helps to show why the popularity of diverse retellings has only just begun.

Since January 1, 2021, *The Great Gatsby* has been within the public domain, meaning it can now be retold without permission. A quick search already shows two re-imaginings in the works, both diverse in myriad ways. *The Chosen and the Beautiful* by Nghi Vo (June 2021) from TorDotCom, follows a queer Vietnamese socialite set in the Jazz Age.<sup>30</sup> From a first glance on Edelweiss, *The Chosen and the Beautiful* already features a marketing plan promoting the multi-genre crossover appeal—literary fiction and fantasy—targeting multiple fan bases, includes a letter to the reader, is Own Voices, and has already garnered considerable press and trade publication reviews.<sup>31</sup> Given the same patterns discovered within this paper, it can be estimated that the rest of the aforementioned retellings will follow similar patterns, adhering closely to the best practices.

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27. Noorda and Berens.

28. Carina Pereira, "6 Brand New and Upcoming Jane Austen Retellings."

29. Via *Publishers Marketplace*, via Twitter, "Talia Hibbert's *SKYBRIAR*, a series of contemporary Austen-inspired rom-coms, to Nicole Fischer at Avon. In an exclusive submission, in a three-book deal, for publication in fall 2022, by Courtney Miller-Callihan at Handspan Literary (world)."

30. Macmillan Publishers, "*The Chosen and the Beautiful*: Nghi Vo."

31. Edelweiss, "*The Chosen and the Beautiful*: Nghi Vo."

An untitled work from Anna-Marie McLemore (fall 2022), casts Gatsby as a transgender man in the 1920s.<sup>32</sup> Further, the same publisher of McLemore's untitled work, Feiwel and Friends, also acquired a *Romeo and Juliet* retelling (winter 2023) from a queer perspective, by author Caleb Roehrig. Both McLemore and Roehrig's books are part of the publisher's new "Remixed Classics" young adult series.<sup>33</sup> This series already includes three diverse remixes and is marketed from Macmillan as "both a series of fun, engaging reads as well as a subversive overall look at what our society has deemed 'classic'—works that are overwhelmingly cishet, white, and male."<sup>34</sup> Hopefully, gone are the days of Barnes & Noble only diversifying the covers of classics; a new dawn of truly diverse and expansive retellings are entering a market that has been ready to reflect its readers for far too long.

With new copyrights expiring every year and an extensive set of already available works, the scope of material for modern retellings is always growing. The time has never been better to analyze the retelling genre, market, and audience. The best practices developed within this paper do not necessarily come with the prerequisite that the book needs to be culturally diverse, but it is implied that when the cultures of today are mixed with those of the past, diversity cannot be overlooked. Based on recent and future publications, almost all retellings attempt to recast history with characters who represent *all* readers, from all walks of life. Diverse retellings sell not because they are a niche market, but because they understand the past and future of an evergreen industry and its *entire* audience.



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32. *Publishers Weekly*, "Rights Report: Week of January 25, 2021."

33. *Publishers Weekly*.

34. Macmillan Publishers, "Remixed Classics."

# Acknowledgments

To begin, I absolutely cannot believe that this paper exists. My normal writing process takes place in libraries and coffee shops, where I can balance each sentence with the reward of people watching and latte sipping. Do I also hope that a handsome stranger will spill his cappuccino on my laptop and propose marriage for the inconvenience? Yes, but that is neither here nor there. This paper, however, was created entirely in my bedroom, typed in the spaces between '80s power ballads, procrastination by romance novel, and about a hundred viewings of—you guessed it—*Pride and Prejudice* (2005). On paper, this experience should have been a very solitary thing, but I am lucky enough to have been surrounded by so many wonderful and supportive people—I never once felt alone.

First and foremost, I am so grateful for the wonderful Book Publishing faculty at PSU. The skills I have learned throughout my courses and Ooligan Press will stay with me forever, and so will you. To Dr. Kathi Inman Berens, I want to thank you for being such a calming influence and unwavering sounding board. You were there from the start of my research question all the way through my defense, and so much of what I have accomplished during this past year is because of you. To Robyn Crummer-Olson, my marketing beacon that brightened every Monday afternoon, thank you so much. You inspired my love of marketing and have guided me through so many challenges and accomplishments. To Dr. Rachel Noorda, you are simply so wonderful; without fail, you had an answer to any question, no matter how panicky and googly-eyed I became. To Jessie Carver, thank you so much for serving on my defense panel and being so insightful and considerate, both in class and out. To Kelley Dodd, your book design course will live on with me in so many ways, this paper being just one of them—thank you a million times over. I am so honored to have been taught by those mentioned above and the rest of the faculty.

Now, to my wonderful classmates and comrades-in-arms, I will never forget the battles we fought together and the friendships we made along the way. Specifically, to all of my fellow managers, “look at us, hey, look at us, who woulda thought?” I am counting down the days until I can see all of your lovely faces again. To Alix, my forever sushi date, my best friend, I am so happy that I have a terrible sense of direction and that you knew exactly where I needed to go (FMH to get my PSU ID on the second day). To Mary, my map buddy extraordinaire, we’ve laughed (and cried) so many wonderful times it’s rather remarkable that we got any work done. To Alex, my other half during Wednesday lessons, you’re the only person who is allowed to tell me I can’t use an Oxford comma.

Next, to my family and friends in Minnesota—Mom, Dad, Grandma Phyllis, Grandpa Randy, Dylan, Heather, Emily, Scout, Gertie, Mel, Lauren, and Maddie—you have known, loved, and supported me the longest and with fiercest hearts. No matter where we end up, I will know, love, and support you always.

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# *Appendixes*

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# Appendix A

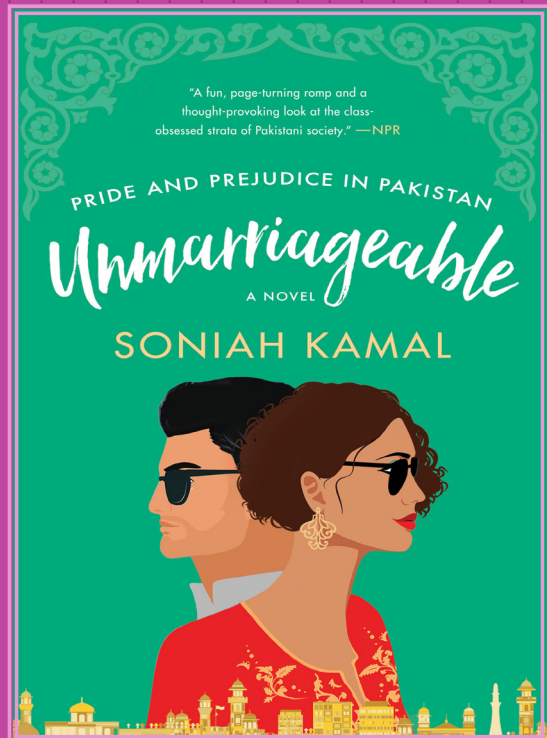
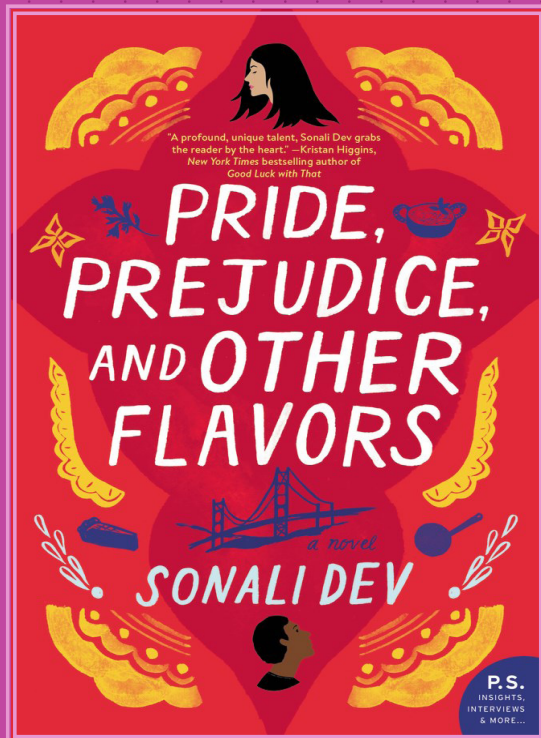
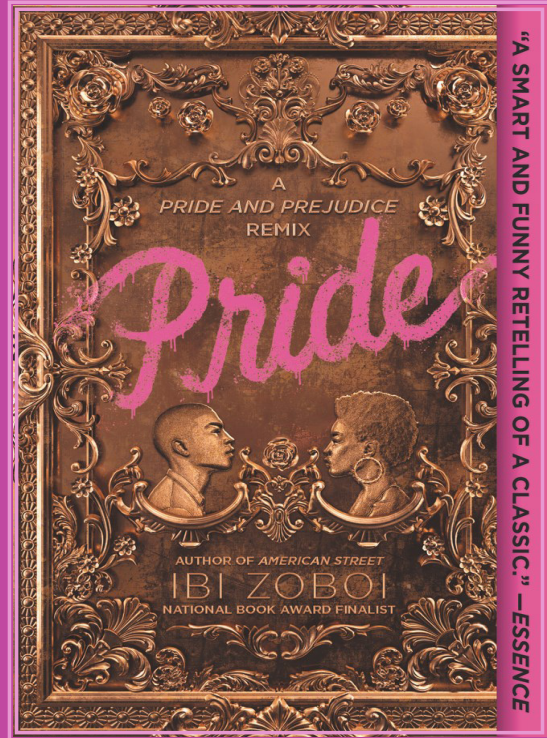
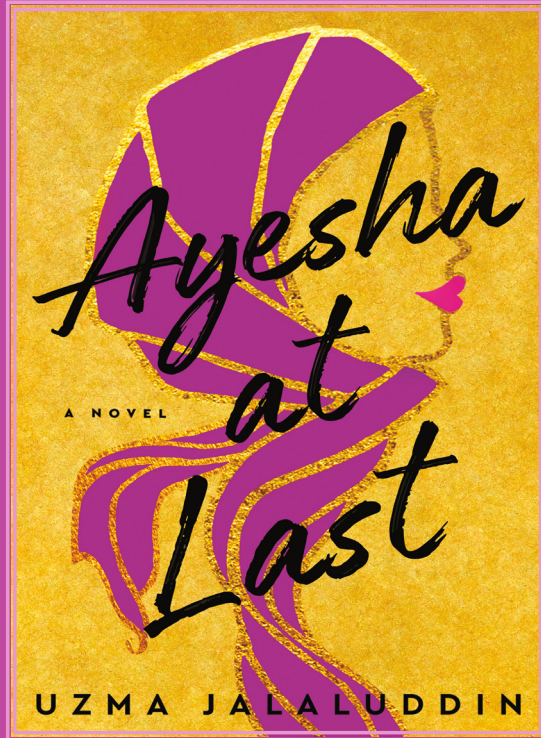
## STANDARDS OF ANALYSIS

Through assessment of the main selling factors and other common features, the four *Pride and Prejudice* retellings were chosen based on eight standards:

- ❧ ***Pride and Prejudice* must be specifically referenced via publisher back cover copy or other advertising of a selected title.**
- ❧ **The four books must have been published in either 2018 or 2019.**
- ❧ **Sales data must be listed on NPD Decision Key.** For fairness and consistency, most sales data will be from Decision Key. It must be noted that Decision Key is not 100 percent accurate and does not list sales data from every retailer nor eBooks, therefore all data is partial. Further, for publication on PDXScholar, all specific numbers have been replaced with their respective sales rank, numbered one through four.
- ❧ **All four of the books must be listed on Edelweiss.** Marketing plans, key selling points, BISAC codes, and trade reviews will all come from Edelweiss, as each publisher saw fit to share.
- ❧ **Each selected book must be written by an Own Voices author.** #OwnVoices is a hashtag term created by writer Corinne Duyvis and refers to writers from under-represented groups writing from an inside perspective of the marginalized characters. Authenticity is critical for the analysis of the four recent diverse retellings, hence it is necessary that all authors be Own Voices.
- ❧ **Each selected book must include at least one diverse main character.**
- ❧ **Each book must be published under the name or imprint of a Big Five publisher.** Most imprints of Big Five publishing houses have similar marketing budgets and to keep the playing field even, indie and self-published books have not been considered for analysis.
- ❧ **There must be a paperback version of each book.** While hardcover sales are included in the RTD numbers, each book must be available in paperback form for cover analysis, as not all books were published in hardcover.

# Appendix B

## TRADE PAPERBACK FRONT COVERS



## TRADE PAPERBACK BACK COVER TRANSCRIPTIONS

### *AYESHA AT LAST*

**A modern-day Muslim *Pride and Prejudice* for a new generation of love.**

Ayesha Shamsi has a lot going on. Her dreams of being a poet have been set aside for a teaching job so she can pay off her debts to her wealthy uncle. She lives with her boisterous Muslim family and is always being reminded that her flighty younger cousin, Hafsa, is close to rejecting her one hundredth marriage proposal. Though Ayesha is lonely, she doesn't want an arranged marriage. Then she meets Khalid, who is just as smart and handsome as he is conservative and judgmental. She is irritatingly attracted to someone who looks down on her choices and who dresses like he belongs in the seventh century.

When a surprise engagement is announced between Khalid and Hafsa, Ayesha is torn between how she feels about the straightforward Khalid and the unsettling new gossip she hears about his family. Looking into the rumors, she finds she has to deal with not only what she discovers about Khalid, but also the truth she realizes about herself.



UZMA JALALUDDIN is a teacher and also writes a funny parenting column named “Samosas and Maple Syrup” for the *Toronto Star*, Canada’s largest daily newspaper. *Ayesha at Last* is her debut novel.

**READERS GUIDE INCLUDED**



*PRIDE: A “PRIDE AND PREJUDICE” REMIX*

**ZURI BENITEZ HAS PRIDE.**

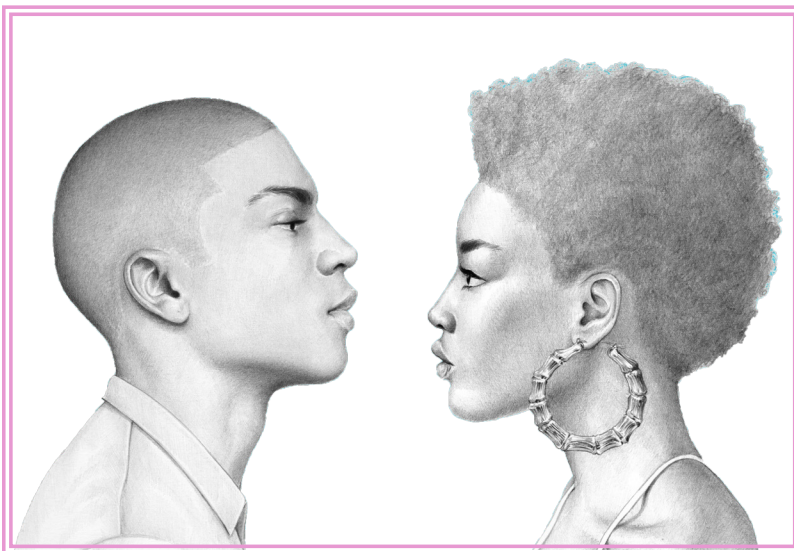
Brooklyn pride, family pride, and pride in her Afro-Latino roots. But pride might not be enough to save her rapidly gentrifying neighborhood from becoming unrecognizable.

When the wealthy Darcy family moves in across the street, Zuri wants nothing to do with their two teenage sons, even as her older sister, Janae, starts to fall for the charming Ainsley. She especially can't stand the judgmental and arrogant Darius. Yet as Zuri and Darius are forced to find common ground, their initial dislike shifts into an unexpected understanding.

But with four wild sisters pulling her in different directions, cute boy Warren vying for her attention, and college applications hovering on the horizon—Zuri fights to find her place in Bushwick's changing landscape or lose it all.

In a timely update of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, critically-acclaimed author Ibi Zoboi skillfully balances cultural identity, class, and gentrification against the heady magic of first love in her vibrant reimagining of this beloved classic.

PHOTO INSERT



*PRIDE, PREJUDICE, AND OTHER FLAVORS: A NOVEL*

**AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR SONALI DEV LAUNCHES A NEW SERIES ABOUT THE RAJES, AN IMMIGRANT INDIAN FAMILY DESCENDED FROM ROYALTY, WHO HAVE BUILT THEIR LIVES IN SAN FRANCISCO . . .**

It is a truth universally acknowledged that only in an overachieving Indian American family can a genius daughter be considered a black sheep.

Dr. Trisha Raje is San Francisco's most acclaimed neurosurgeon. But that's not enough for the Rajes, her influential immigrant family who's achieved power by making its own non-negotiable rules:

- Never trust an outsider
- Never do anything to jeopardize your brother's political aspirations
- And never, ever, defy your family

Trisha is guilty of breaking all three rules. But now she has a chance to redeem herself. So long as she doesn't repeat old mistakes.

Up-and-coming chef DJ Caine has known people like Trisha before, people who judge him by his rough beginnings and place pedigree above character. He needs the lucrative job the Rajes offer, but he values his pride too much to indulge Trisha's arrogance. And then he discovers that she's the only surgeon who can save his sister's life.

As the two clash, their assumptions crumble like the spun sugar on one of DJ's stunning desserts. But before a future can be savored there's a past to be reckoned with . . .

**A family trying to build home in a new land.  
A man who has never felt at home anywhere.  
And a choice to be made between the two.**



Award-winning author SONALI DEV writes Bollywood style love stories that let her explore issues faced by women around the world while still indulging her faith in happily-ever-afters. Sonali lives in the Chicago suburbs with her very patient and often amused husband, two teens who demand both patience and humor, and the world's most perfect dog.

**P.S. INSIGHTS, INTERVIEWS & MORE . . .**

*UNMARRIAGEABLE: A NOVEL*

“A joy to read! I loved everything about these characters and spending time in their world.” —JASMINE GUILLORY, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Wedding Date*

The second and most practical of five sisters, Alys Binat long ago made peace with her lot in life. A ruinous scandal in the family destroyed their fortune and her prospects for a desirable marriage, but Alys has found happiness teaching English literature to school girls. Knowing that many of her students won't make it to graduation without dropping out to marry and start a family, Alys teaches them about Jane Austen and her other literary heroes and hopes to inspire them to dream of more.

When an invitation arrives for the biggest wedding their town has seen in many years, Mrs. Binat excitedly sets to work preparing her daughters, certain that their chance to find eligible bachelors has finally arrived. On the first night of the festivities, Alys's older sister, Jena, catches the eye of one of the most eligible of all. But his friend, Valentine Darsee, is clearly unimpressed by the shamelessly marriage-hungry Binat sisters. Alys accidentally overhears his unflattering assessment of the family, turning her against him and his snobbish ways for good. As the days of wedding parties unfold, the Binats wait breathlessly to see if Jena will land a proposal—and Alys begins to realize that Darsee's brusque manner may be hiding a man she would very much like to get to know.

“This inventive retelling of *Pride and Prejudice* charms.” —PEOPLE

“If Jane Austen lived in modern-day Pakistan, this is the version of *Pride and Prejudice* she might have written.” —SHELF AWARENESS (starred review)

“[Sonia Kamal] observes family dramas with a satiric eye and treats readers to sparkling descriptions of a days-long wedding ceremony, with its high-fashion pageantry and higher social stakes.” —MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE

“[A] funny, sometimes romantic, often thought-provoking glimpse into Pakistani culture, one which adroitly illustrates the double standards women face when navigating sex, love, and marriage. This is a must for devout Austenites.”  
—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (starred review)

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[randomhousereaderscircle.com](http://randomhousereaderscircle.com)

*Appendix C*

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*Gathered Research*

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# Sales Data

■: *Ayesha at Last*, by Uzma Jalaluddin  
■: *Pride: A “Pride and Prejudice” Remix*, by Ibi Zoboi  
■: *Pride, Prejudice, and Other Flavors*, by Sonali Dev  
■: *Unmarriageable: A Novel*, by Soniah Kamal  
 TP: Trade Paperback  
 HC: Hardcover  
 RTD: Retail to Date

Key

<i>Pride: A “Pride and Prejudice” Remix</i> , by Ibi Zoboi (2018)	Balzer + Bray	TP: \$10.99 HC: \$17.99	Sales Rank: #1	YOUNG ADULT FICTION / Diversity & Multicultural
<i>Ayesha at Last</i> , by Uzma Jalaluddin (2018)	William and Morrow	TP: \$16.99	Sales Rank: #3	<span style="color: yellow;">FICTION / Women</span>  <span style="color: yellow;">FICTION / Romance / Multicultural &amp; Interracial</span>  <span style="color: yellow;">FICTION / Cultural Heritage</span>
<i>Pride, Prejudice, and Other Flavors: A Novel</i> , by Sonali Dev (2019)	Berkley	TP: \$15.99	Sales Rank: #2	<span style="color: red;">FICTION / Contemporary Women</span>  <span style="color: red;">FICTION / Romance / Contemporary</span>  <span style="color: red;">FICTION / Family Life</span>
<i>Unmarriageable: A Novel</i> , by Soniah Kamal (2019)	Ballantine Books	TP: \$17.99 HC: \$27.99	Sales Rank: #4	<span style="color: green;">FICTION / Contem- porary Women</span>  <span style="color: green;">FICTION / Family Life / Siblings</span>  <span style="color: green;">FICTION / Literary</span>
Title	Publisher	Retail Price	RTD Sales	BISAC Codes

## Book Comparisons

**How prominent is the connection to *Pride and Prejudice* on the front and/or back cover of each novel?**

**FRONT:** There is no mention of *Pride and Prejudice*.

**BACK:** Above the back cover summary is the following phrase: “A modern-day *Pride and Prejudice* for a new generation of love.”

**FRONT:** *Pride and Prejudice* is referenced in both the title and subtitle of the book.

**BACK:** There is no mention *Pride and Prejudice* aside from the summary.

**FRONT:** *Pride and Prejudice* is alluded to within the title.

**BACK:** There is no mention *Pride and Prejudice* aside from the summary.

**FRONT:** *Pride and Prejudice* is mentioned above title.

**BACK:** There is no mention *Pride and Prejudice* aside from the blurbs.

**Are there blurbs on the front/and or back cover? If so, do any specifically mention the retelling nature of the book?**

**NO**, there are no blurbs on the cover. There is an insert page featuring praise right after the front cover.

**NO**, there are no blurbs on the cover. However, there is a two-page spread stepback included in the paperback version. It is visible as it is wider than the front cover. Along the visible edge reads, “A smart and funny retelling of a classic.” Four out of six reviews mention the merits of the book as a retelling. Awards are also listed.

**YES**, there is one blurb on the front cover; it does not mention the book being a retelling.

**YES**, there are multiple blurbs on the covers, one on the front and five on the back. Two back blurb reference Jane Austen and one specifically references the retelling aspect. The general theme is “a must read for devout Austenites.” There is also an insert page featuring praise (seventeen blurbs) right after the front cover. Eleven reference Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, and/or the style of retelling.

**Does the back cover summary reference *Pride and Prejudice*?**

**NO**, the summary does not reference *Pride and Prejudice* specifically. However, the plot laid out is clearly reminiscent of the classic work and since *Pride and Prejudice* was mentioned above, it is implied.

**YES**, the book is called a “timely update of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*.” The names and plot referenced in the summary also allude to the classic.

**YES**, the copy starts with the famous *Pride and Prejudice* line: “It is a truth universally acknowledged . . .” The plot also follows a similar structure to *Pride and Prejudice*.

**NO**, the summary does not reference *Pride and Prejudice* specifically. However, the plot is clearly similar to that of the original. There is an overbearing mother, five unmarried daughters, and relationships of both of Jena (Jane Bennet) and Alys (Elizabeth Bennet). Structurally, this summary adheres the closest to *Pride and Prejudice*.

**Was an “author’s note” or a self-assessment of *Pride and Prejudice* and the relationship to the author included in the back of the book?**

**YES**, a “Dear Reader” letter.

**YES**, briefly in the acknowledgments section, and then there was a separate “Dear Reader” letter circulated by the publisher.

**YES**, a “Behind the Book” essay was included. There is also an “Acknowledgments” section at the beginning of the book, telling the reader that the book is only “loosely inspired” by the themes Jane Austen wrote about.

**YES**, a “*Pride and Prejudice* and Me” essay was included.

**Are there any book club questions or reading group guides provided by the publisher?**

**YES**, there are discussion questions and a recipe.

**NO**, there are no included questions.

**YES**, there is a “Reading Group Guide” and a recipe.

**YES**, there is a “Questions and Topics for Discussion” section. Four out of sixteen questions ask the reader to engage with *Pride and Prejudice* and its relation to *Unmarriageable*. There is also a page at the end calling attention to the Random House online book club community.

### Was the author debuting with this book?

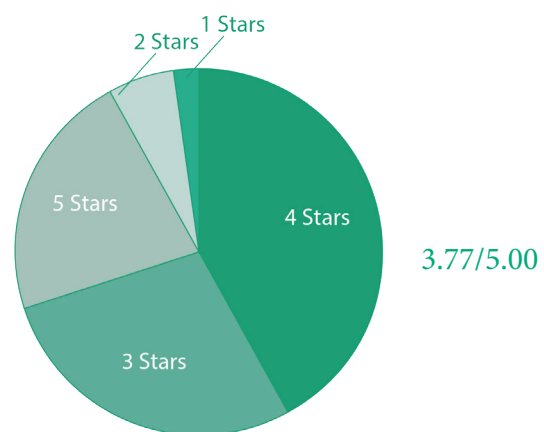
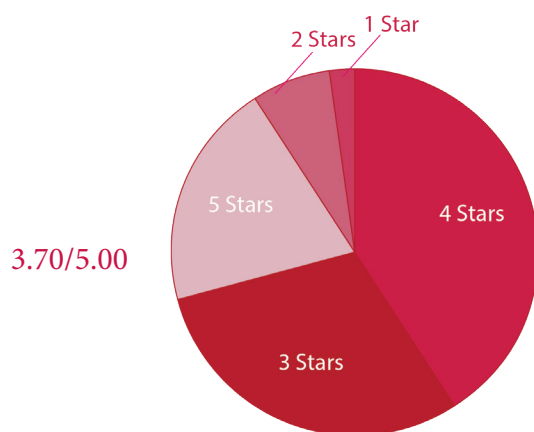
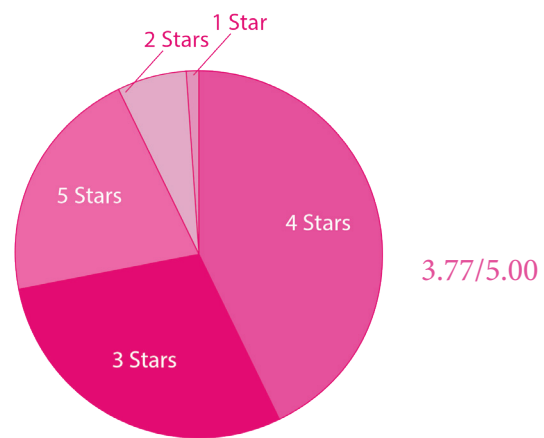
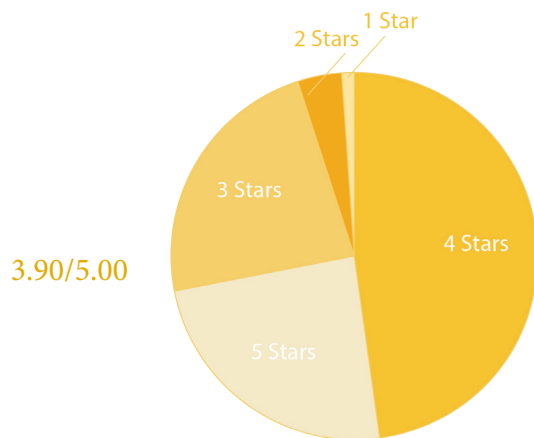
**YES**, Uzma Jalaluddin debuted with a modern retelling.

**NO**, Ibi Zoboi was previously established.

**NO**, Sonali Dev was previously established.

**NO**, Soniah Kamal was previously established.

### What is the Goodreads star rating for each book?



# Marketing Plans

## **AYESHA AT LAST, BY UZMA JALALUDDIN**

### **MARKETING PLAN:**

Pre-pub trade advertising; Online advertising campaign; E-mail marketing campaign; ARC distribution and giveaways; IndieBound campaign; Goodreads campaign; NetGalley campaign; Early reader review campaign; Social media campaign; Consumer sweepstakes; Library marketing campaign; Book club outreach; Discussion guide bound in book; Feature on PRH programs and verticals, including “Read It Forward,” “Signature Reads,” and “First to Read.”

### **KEY SELLING POINTS:**

**OPTIONED FOR FEATURE FILM:** Amy Pascal from Pascal Pictures and Sony has bought the option for *Ayesha At Last*.

**PUBLISHED BY HARPERCOLLINS CANADA** June 2018 and they shipped 15,000 copies of their trade paperback edition.

**ONE OF PUBLISHERS WEEKLY’S BEST BOOKS OF 2019** in the romance category.

**RECEIVING FABULOUS BUZZ:** The Canadian publication was covered by *ELLE Canada*, *Canadian Living*, CBC, CTV and the *Toronto Star* as well as other major publicity outlets.

**PERFECT FOR JANE AUSTEN LOVERS** as well as for a new, younger audience that are fans of Jasmine Guillory’s *The Wedding Date* and Helen Hoang’s *The Kiss Quotient*.

**A CULTURALLY RICH DEBUT** about arranged marriages, debts, spoken word poetry, gossip, and exhilarating self-discovery, all played out against a background of clashing cultural and familial expectations.

**A DELICATE ROMANCE** is effortlessly woven throughout the narrative which will give this book crossover appeal.

**A COLUMNIST FOR THE TORONTO STAR:** Uzma writes a regular column about modern Muslim life named “Samosas and Maple Syrup.”

## **PRIDE: A “PRIDE AND PREJUDICE” REMIX, BY IBI ZOBOI**

### **MARKETING PLAN:**

Top account galley mailing; Edelweiss e-galley promotion; Online trade advertising campaign; National consumer advertising campaign; Targeted social media advertising campaign; Promotion on HarperTeen consumer website, EpicReads.com; Epic Reads exclusive book and author content; Extensive social media outreach; Stylized photos to use in social promotion; Shareable social media assets; Extensive librarian and educator outreach; Reading community consumer promotion; Cross-promotion on author’s website and social media profiles; Featured on HarperCollins.com.

### **KEY SELLING POINTS:**

**PRIDE AND PREJUDICE & CHARACTERS OF COLOR:** Readers of all ages love retellings of this Jane Austen classic, but *Pride* takes things to a new and deeper level, as Ibi has written a version full of characters of color. Starring Zuri Benitez, an Afro-Latina who’s lived in Bushwick her whole life, and Darius Darcy, a wealthy black teen who’s moving from Manhattan to Bushwick.

**HIGHLY ACCLAIMED DEBUT, AMERICAN STREET:** *American Street* was a National Book Award finalist, a *New York Times* Notable Book, garnered five starred reviews, glowing author blurbs, and a spot on almost every year-end list. *Pride* is poised to be Ibi’s breakout book.

**MEATY DISCUSSION TOPICS—GENTRIFICATION AND RACE:** Set in Bushwick, *Pride* is also a book about the timely topics of gentrification and race in New York—Zuri’s passionate anger about Darius and other rich people changing her neighborhood will open readers up to the discussions of appropriation and conformation. Ibi grew up in Bushwick, and her experiences lend authenticity to this depiction.

**FOR AUSTEN FANS AND NEW READERS:** The push-pull romance between Zuri and Darius will have readers swooning, just like they do over Lizzy and Mr. Darcy. And there are lots of great nods to the classic in this story.

**#OWNVOICES AUTHOR ON THE RISE:** Ibi has been attending conferences and speaking across the country on panels for *Pride* and *American Street*. She is brilliant, poised, and unafraid to take on tough topics. She has gained a terrific reputation as a coveted speaker to have and she has a steady stream of invitations coming in.

**A TRULY STUNNING PACKAGE:** The *Pride* jacket, designed by Jenna Stempel-Lobell, is an absolute knockout. It’s fresh, eye-catching, and totally unique—sure to get industry folks buzzing. The endpapers feature gorgeous portraits of Zuri and Darius.

## ***PRIDE, PREJUDICE, AND OTHER FLAVORS: A NOVEL, BY SONALI DEV***

### **MARKETING PLAN:**

National advertising, including Facebook and Goodreads; National print and online media campaign; 10-Stop blog tour, including reviews, features and giveaways; Pre-pub online buzz campaign, including teasers and content releases; Online outreach to book bloggers; Major reading group outreach, including reading group guide and features on Book-ClubGirl.com and in the “Book Club Girl” newsletter; Features and promotion in Avon “From the Heart” newsletter and social media platforms, including AvonRomance.com; Special features on “The Secret Ingredient” social media platform; Early galley giveaways to consumers; Social networking campaign; Targeted email marketing based on consumer browsing and category interests.

### **KEY SELLING POINTS:**

**WITH FOUR PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED ROMANCE NOVELS FROM KENSINGTON PUBLISHING,** Sonali is already an established and popular voice in the romance community. She is taking this new series in a direction that will appeal to women’s fiction and romance readers alike, and **we see this as an exciting opportunity to break her out in a bigger way.**

**SONALI’S PREVIOUS NOVELS HAVE BEEN ON *LIBRARY JOURNAL’S*, *NPR’S*, *KIRKUS’*, AND *WASHINGTON POST’S* BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR LISTS.** She has won the American Library Association’s award for best romance, the RT Reviewer’s Choice award for best contemporary romance, the RT Seal of Excellence, and is a RITA Finalist.

**WE HAVE THE NEXT BOOK FOLLOWING *THE RAJE SIBLINGS SIGNED UP*,** currently scheduled for summer 2020.

**DEV IS A NOTED VOICE IN THE ROMANCE COMMUNITY**—most recently the featured speaker at the 2018 RWA Librarians Day—and a strong advocate for diverse fiction and inclusivity, which makes her a fantastic addition to our list.

**INCLUDES A P.S. SECTION** containing insights, interviews, and more.

## **UNMARRIAGEABLE: A NOVEL, BY SONIAH KAMAL**

### **MARKETING PLAN:**

Pre-pub consumer outreach and review push; Online marketing outreach; Social media campaign; Targeted email marketing; Random House e-newsletters and websites; Major book club outreach; National/local review and feature print attention; Online review and feature attention; Targeted blogger outreach.

### **KEY SELLING POINTS:**

This retelling is **FAITHFUL TO THE ORIGINAL WITH A UNIQUE TWIST**—it is the first to reimagine the classic set in a Muslim country.

**AN OWN VOICES NOVEL WITH A FRESH SETTING:** Soniah Kamal grew up in Lahore, Pakistan, and vividly brings to life the sights, sounds, and customs of the country, including the lavish details of a days-long Pakistani society wedding.

**CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED AUTHOR:** Kamal's first novel, published by Fingerprint Publishing, an imprint of Prakash Book Depot in New Delhi, was nominated for a Townsend Prize for Fiction finalist and was hailed as "a wonderful novel" and "riveting and deeply engaging" by Khaled Hosseini, author of *The Kite Runner*. Her short story "Jelly Beans" appears in the *2017 Best Asian Short Stories* anthology, and her writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, and on *BuzzFeed*, among other publications.

**PERFECT FOR BOOK CLUBS:** *Unmarriageable* is in conversation with Jane Austen's original novel, inviting readers to consider themes of class, race, gender, and love across cultures and time periods.

**AUSTEN EXPERT:** Kamal leads a 200th anniversary special Jane Austen Book Club in her home state of Georgia, and is a member of the Jane Austen Society of North America and the National Book Critics Circle.



# Appendix D

## Compiled List of Best Practices

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 1: THE AUTHOR MUST BE OWN VOICES.**

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 2: THE HEART OF THE CLASSIC MUST REMAIN WITHIN THE RETELLING.**

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 3: THINK IN TERMS OF FAN FICTION TO ESTABLISH WHAT A READER IS MOST LOOKING FOR IN A RETELLING.**

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 4: CALL ATTENTION TO THE TIMELESS NATURE OF THE ORIGINAL WORK, SHOWING HOW IT SEAMLESSLY ADAPTS TO CURRENT CULTURES AND ISSUES.**

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 5: BE UP FRONT WITH THE READER ABOUT THE SCOPE OF THE RETELLING; CLEARLY COMMUNICATE IF IT IS A LOOSE OR STRICT INTERPRETATION.**

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 6: COVER SHOULD CLEARLY INDICATE THE RELATION TO THE WORK BEING RETOLD.**

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 7: TARGET BOTH CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCES AND FANS OF THE ORIGINAL WORK.**

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 8: ESTABLISH A MULTI-GENRE CROSSOVER APPEAL.**

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 9: INCLUDE AN AUTHOR'S NOTE, SPECIFICALLY FOCUSED ON ESTABLISHING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AUTHOR AND THE CLASSIC.**

☞ **BEST PRACTICE 10: TARGET BOOK CLUBS, ESPECIALLY BY INCLUDING GUIDED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITHIN THE BOOK ITSELF.**