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LOVE STORIES  
GLOW when the  
LIGHTS GO...

# BLACKOUT

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BLACKOUT PACK



## ABOUT BLACKOUT

Anything can happen during a blackout in New York City on a sweltering summer day. An ex-couple competing for an internship can figure out what happened to their relationship and whether they want to try again. A girl who's had her heart broken can meet someone who might be worth the risk of being vulnerable again. Best friends can become a couple, or a couple can become best friends. Even strangers thrown together can discover they have too much in common not to give it a shot. In this dynamic collection of linked short stories by six acclaimed authors of young adult fiction, Black teens dare to give love a chance in new ways.

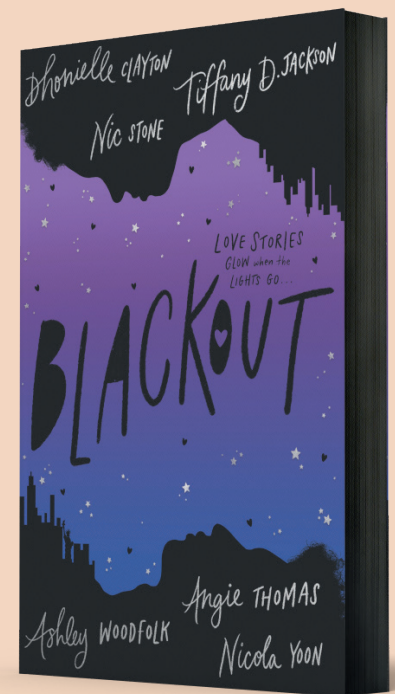


Photo by: Amir Lowery

**DHONIELLE CLAYTON** is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Belles* series and the coauthor of the *Tiny Pretty Things* duology (now a Netflix original series). She is COO of the nonprofit We Need Diverse Books and owner and co-founder of CAKE Literary.



Photo by: Andrew Ferrell

**TIFFANY D. JACKSON** is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Grown; Allegedly; Monday's Not Coming*, a Walter Dean Myers Honor Book and Coretta Scott King New Talent Award winner; and *Let Me Hear a Rhyme*.



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**NIC STONE** is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of William C. Morris Award finalist *Dear Martin*, *Dear Justyce*, *Odd One Out*, *JackPot*, and *Clean Getaway*.



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**ANGIE THOMAS**'s award-winning, acclaimed debut novel, *The Hate U Give*, is a #1 *New York Times* bestseller and major motion picture from Fox 2000. She is also the author of *On the Come Up* and *Concrete Rose*.



Photo by: Cassidy Chin

**ASHLEY WOODFOLK** worked in children's book publishing before becoming an author full-time. Her novels include the highly acclaimed *The Beauty that Remains* and *When You Were Everything*.



Photo by: Sonya Sones

**NICOLA YOON** is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Everything, Everything* and *The Sun Is Also a Star*, both of which have been adapted into major motion pictures, and *Instructions for Dancing*. She is a National Book Award finalist, a Michael L. Printz Honor Book recipient, and a Coretta Scott King New Talent Award winner. She's also co-publisher of Joy Revolution, a Random House young adult imprint focused on love stories starring people of colour.



## QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What gets in the way of relationships? Pride? Fear? Miscommunication? Change? Use examples from the stories to discuss where characters make brave, smart, unhealthy, or cowardly moves in their relationships.
2. Looking at the patterns in these stories, what do you think are some keys to positive, healthy relationships?
3. Tammi and Kareem let a big misunderstanding get in the way of their relationship. What decisions caused the misunderstanding? What decisions allow them to open up again?
4. Tristán tells Lana he “never thought you had space to love me back” (p. 160). Mr Wright advises Kayla to give her heart “space to speak” (p. 202). What do you think they mean? How can you make space for others? For yourself? Discuss ways in which space can help or hurt a relationship.
5. Several characters share important stories about historical blackouts, like the love story from Nella’s Pop (p. 73), and Kareem’s hip hop origin story (p. 110). Discuss how the stories of the historical blackouts inform the way characters view the current blackout.
6. Discuss how the setting – New York City in a blackout – affects the action, the emotions, and the internal and external journeys of the characters. What happens in this setting that might not have happened without the blackout?
7. What is the source of JJ’s fear about coming out? What do you think it would take for sports culture to change? If you were Tremaine, do you think you would forgive JJ and want to be with him?
8. Discuss the idea of commitment in light of the reality that people change. When Grace realizes that she has, in fact, changed, she stops blaming her ex-boyfriend for ending their relationship. Is it ever fair to expect your partner not to change? What kinds of changes are too great for a relationship to sustain?
9. Seymour and his friend had a falling out because their paths diverged. Grace and Seymour have a lot in common, but their paths are also quite different. What do you think it will take for their relationship to work out?
10. In some of these love stories, the reader knows more than the characters know. In other stories, the reasons for a character’s reticence are kept from the reader until later in the story. Do you prefer knowing characters’ secrets before they share them, or do you prefer a mystery? Which makes a more satisfying set-up for the characters to end up together?
11. What role do family members – especially parents and grandparents – play in the characters’ stories? To what extent do you believe family backgrounds influence future relationships? How?
12. Is love a process or an outcome? Use examples from the stories to support your point of view.

#WhenTheLightsGo



## QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

**Twists and Turns.** Several of the stories reveal information in pieces so that the reader's opinion changes over time. Pick one story and, with a partner, describe one or two of the story's main plot twists without naming the characters or their genders. Read your summary aloud to the group and see if they can guess which story you chose.

**What's your Type?** People often describe their "type" in physical terms. Seymour describes his type in personality terms. List the most important qualities you would look for in a partner in terms of personality, then write what you consider your most important qualities that a partner would have to value. Date your paper and place in a sealed envelope, where you can find it the next time you are wondering if someone is right for you.

**The Longest List.** Identify and write down as many different kinds of love as you can think of, including familial, romantic, and platonic varieties. Share your lists with others, then see if you can brainstorm more kinds. Be creative with this. Do words like *nostalgia* and *homesickness* represent particular kinds of love?

**Competition: A Love Story.** Choose two kinds of loves from the above brainstorming session. Write a short story in which characters must grapple with conflicting forms of love.

**What Is Love?** Listen to some songs that question what love is (for example, "What is Love" by Haddaway, or "What's Love Got to Do with It" by Tina Turner). Come up with a list of five or more questions about what love is or means, or how to recognize it. Ask people of different ages for their answers to your questions. Compare how life experience affects their answers.

**Birth of Hip Hop.** Kareem credits the blackout of the 1970s for the birth of hip hop. Learn more about this incident and write it up as a short story, a monologue, a poem, a skit, or a rap.

**What Happens in the Dark?** Choose a historical blackout or a natural disaster, like an earthquake, storm, or flood, and look up newspaper articles and first-hand accounts of the event. See if you can find as many positive stories as you can negative stories. Share one of the most hopeful, uplifting stories you can find. Do you think emergencies bring out the best or the worst in most people, or both? Why do you think that is?

Guide prepared by Autumn Allen, EdM, MA-MFA, educator, writer, and critic. Visit her online at [AutumnAllenBooks.com](http://AutumnAllenBooks.com).

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