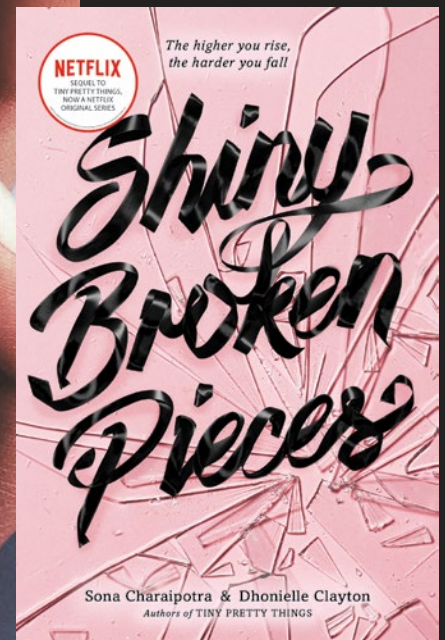


Perfection
comes at a price.

TINY PRETTY THINGS

SONA
CHARAIPOTRA *and* DHONIELLE
CLAYTON

NETFLIX
A NETFLIX
ORIGINAL SERIES



TINY PRETTY THINGS + SHINY BROKEN PIECES
EDUCATORS' GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK: TINY PRETTY THINGS



Black Swan meets *Pretty Little Liars* in this soapy, drama-packed novel featuring diverse characters who will do anything to be the prima at their elite ballet school.

Gigi, Bette, and June, three top students at an exclusive Manhattan ballet school, have seen their fair share of drama. Free-spirited new girl Gigi just wants to

dance—but the very act might kill her. Privileged New Yorker Bette’s desire to escape the shadow of her ballet star sister brings out a dangerous edge in her. And perfectionist June needs to land a lead role this year or her controlling mother will put an end to her dancing dreams forever.

When every dancer is both friend and foe, the girls will sacrifice, manipulate, and backstab to be the best of the best.

Season One of *Tiny Pretty Things* TV show debuted on Netflix in December 2020. (Educators, please note that the series is TV-MA.)

ABOUT THE BOOK: SHINY BROKEN PIECES



June, Bette, and Gigi have given their all to dance at Manhattan’s most elite ballet school. Now they are competing one final time for a spot at the prestigious American Ballet Company. With the stakes higher than ever, these girls have everything to lose... and no one is playing nice.

June is starting to finally see herself as a prima ballerina. Getting what she wants might cost her everything—including the only boy she’s ever loved. Legacy dancer Bette is determined to clear her name after she was suspended and accused of hurting her rival, Gigi. Even if she returns, though, will she ever regain the spotlight she craves? And Gigi is not going to let Bette—or the other dancers who bullied her—go unpunished. But as revenge consumes her, Gigi may be the one who pays the price.

After years of grueling auditions, torn ribbons, and broken hearts, it all comes down to this last dance. Who will make the cut? And who will lose her dream forever?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: SONA CHARAIPOTRA & DHONIELLE CLAYTON

Sona Charaipotra is author of the YA doc dramedy *Symptoms of a Heartbreak* and co-author of the YA dance duology *Tiny Pretty Things*, a 2020 Netflix original series. A former *People* reporter and editor at the dearly departed *TeenPeople*, she writes for publications like *Bustle.com*, the *New York Times* and *Cosmopolitan* and was the editor of the beloved Barnes & Noble Teen blog. Sona is the co-founder of CAKE Literary, a boutique book packager focused on delicious, diverse reads. She has a masters in screenwriting from NYU and MFA in fiction from New School. Next up: *How Maya Got Fierce* and *The Rumor Game*. Find Sona on Twitter: @sona_c

Dhonielle Clayton is a *New York Times* Bestselling author of *The Belles* series, the co-author of the *Tiny Pretty Things* duology, a Netflix original series, and the author the middle grade fantasy series *The Marvellers*. She hails from the Washington, D.C. suburbs on the Maryland side. She taught secondary school for several years and is a former elementary and middle school librarian. She is COO of the non-profit We Need Diverse Books, and owner of CAKE Literary, a creative kitchen whipping up decadent—and decidedly diverse—literary confections for middle grade, young adult, and women’s fiction readers. She’s an avid traveler, and always on the hunt for magic and mischief. Next up: *The Rumor Game*, *Blackout*, and *Shattered Midnight*. Find Dhonielle on Instagram and Twitter: @brownbookworm.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Common Core Standards push readers to look closer when reading a text including examining author’s craft and analyzing word choice and narrative elements. The *Tiny Pretty Things* series includes social justice and mental health topics; figurative language and imagery; complex characters that lend to character analysis and reflection; a well-crafted plot that allows the reader to deeply delve into the text; and the French, Russian, and Korean language. This teaching guide include discussion questions and activities to be used in grades 9 and up as this series is read as a whole group, small group, or a combination. This guide could also be modified to be used with a student who is reading the novel independently.

The Common Core Anchor Standards in English Language Arts that can be addressed using the discussion questions and activities in this guide are:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2
Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3
Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4
Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7
Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10
Read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions throughout the *Tiny Pretty Things* series.

TINY PRETTY THINGS

- How did the first chapter from Cassie’s point of view foreshadow the rest of the story?
 - *Why would the authors choose to have the first chapter from the point of view of a character that is not in the rest of the book?*
- On page 8, Cassie explains that when the music starts, her mind quiets and she is able to focus only on the music and ballet. What is something you do that you find quiets your mind and lets you focus on just it?
- On page 11, Bette shares what used to be the best part of ballet for her. Think of your favorite thing and explain, with descriptive language including adjectives and figurative language, what the best part of your favorite thing is.
 - *On page 163, Bette also describes the “scent of ballet.” Thinking of the same favorite thing, how would you describe the scent of it?*
- Gigi shares her Mama’s calming technique on page 21. What do you do to calm yourself when anxiety is high?
- When Alec questions the instructors, June states, “Only blond and blue-eyed Alec can get away with that.” What is she insinuating with this question? Why does Alec have special privileges that others may not?
- On page 319, Gigi says butterflies are the “dancers of the animal world.” What metaphors would you create for other insects?
- Why is the threat of the psychologist something that June so desperately wants to avoid? Why would she be afraid of going to the psychologist?
- How does June’s multi-racialism lead to her feeling even more excluded from others in the ballet world?

Gigi was diagnosed with Ventricular Septal Defect at birth. After learning about VSD, have students discuss this heart defect and how it would affect Gigi when dancing.

- *Resource:* <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/congenital-heart-defects/about-congenital-heart-defects/ventricular-septal-defect-vs-d>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions throughout the *Tiny Pretty Things* series.

SHINY BROKEN PIECES

- How did the acts of the characters in the first book affect them in the second book?
- How did the addition of Damien change the storyline? Why would the authors introduce him?
- Bette placed a tiny video camera in Gigi's room, yet this is never dealt with. What punishment do you believe Bette should have received for doing this?
- Bette and Gigi, in the end, get the two spots as apprentices. Many would argue that Bette did not deserve the spot and many would argue that Gigi did. Do you agree or disagree with those statements? Why or why not?
- Both Jayhe and June's mom give her tough love to help her deal with her eating disorder. How did this combination of toughness and love help lead to June's ability to work on overcoming her eating disorder?
- How did June's eating disorder affect more than just her weight?
- How was the reality set forth for us in *Shiny Broken Pieces* different than what we assumed at the end of *Tiny Pretty Things*? (Example: Bette did not push Gigi, June killed the butterflies, etc.)
- Cassie gets punished for all of her decisions in *Shiny Broken Things*, but Henri does not. Do you believe that he was an equal part in the bullying and abuse in the series? Why do you think he got away with it and she didn't?
- The book's exploration of *Swan Lake* centers the contrasts between the Black Swan and the white swan. How does that imagery grapple with concepts of light and dark, and of race and racism within the world of the Ballet Blanc? What other moments within the book tackle the racism inherent in the ballet world?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions throughout the *Tiny Pretty Things* series.

THE SERIES

- During many incidences throughout the series, we see the power of a person’s inner voice: both as a negative and as a positive. Find examples of this and discuss how the character’s inner voice affected them.
- On page 55 of *Shiny Broken Things*, June shares that she is “not the same girl who did that,” referring to her killing of Gigi’s butterflies. Can people be forgiven for doing a very bad thing? Or does the bad thing define them forever? Does doing a bad thing make you a bad person?
- How does June’s lack of knowledge of her father’s identity lead to her feeling like her own identity isn’t complete?
- Why do you think the authors chose to tell the story from 4 different points of view?
- Throughout the books, food is described with particularly mouth-watering or disgusting imagery—usually one or the other. Why would the girls view food in this way?
- What secondary character would you like to know more about and why?
- Gigi compares ballet to a drug. What are the comparisons that you noticed in the books between ballet and drugs?
- Many characters throughout the two novels are very ambitious, which is often seen as a good trait; however, there is peril that comes with ambition. What are examples of times that perils came with ambition in these novels? How are the ballerinas’ level of success affected by the perils they face?
- Ballerinas are not often thought of as athletes; however, one of the topics within this series is the trials and tribulations on the ballerina’s body. How does a ballerina’s routine and overall athleticism compare to other athletes?
- One specific example of a character grappling with gender expectations in ballet is the dancer Will whose gender presentation and sexuality frequently affects his success as a dancer and his life as a student. How does this play out in the text?

CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS

Use these activities to extend your students' thinking and experience with the *Tiny Pretty Things* series.

TINY PRETTY THINGS

Nutcracker

Mr. K, when assigning characters like he does for *The Nutcracker* starting on page 13, describes each character then assigns the role based on who best fits that character. Have students do this same thing but with the characters of *Tiny Pretty Things* using actors as who they would assign to each role.

<i>Tiny Pretty Thing</i> Character	Description of this character	Who you would assign this role and why
Gigi		
Alec		
Bette		
June		
Henri		

Tiny Pretty Things pays particular attention to the dances by the Sugar Plum Fairy, both her solo and her dance with her prince, as it is the coveted part in *The Nutcracker*. After reading the first half of *Tiny Pretty Things*, where *The Nutcracker* is the focus, have students complete this activity:

- First, have students complete a quick write with the following prompt: Based on what you've read, how do you visualize the Sugar Plum Fairy solo and duet with her prince? Use sections of the text to support your visualizations.

- Next, have them watch both dances from the Royal Opera House:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qy6dlGpC3Ns>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zV1qLYukTH8>
- When finished watching the dances, have them add to their quick write: Did the ballets fit how you visualized the dances from the book? Explain.
- Finally, have students discuss: Do you believe Gigi and Alec were the best choices for these roles? Why or why not?

Giselle: Simplified Story versus the Heart of the Story

- On page 248, when Mr. K asks the dancers to tell him about Giselle, the dancers summarize the story but in an objective way. Mr. K was looking for a summary with more heart (subjective).
- Have students summarize *Tiny Pretty Things* first objectively (simple summary with plot and character information) then subjectively (include the heart of the story).
- Extension: Students can complete this activity with *Shiny Broken Pieces* or any other text as well.

SHINY BROKEN PIECES

Swan Lake

- Have students read the synopsis of the Swan Lake ballet: <https://www.classicfm.com/composers/tchaikovsky/pictures/beginners-guide-tchaikovskys-swan-lake/swan-lake-performed-mariinsky-opera-and-balle/>
- Have students answer the following question using text evidence from *Shiny Broken Pieces* and *Swan Lake*: Looking at the story and *Shiny Broken Pieces*, are Gigi and Bette the perfect choices for the part that they are cast in?

Gigi and Cassie

Have students complete this character comparison:

Cassie

How did you assume Cassie was after reading the prologue to book one?	How would you describe Cassie in <i>Shiny Broken Pieces</i> ?	Which Cassie that we saw do you believe is the real Cassie?

Gigi

How would you describe Gigi in <i>Tiny Pretty Things</i> ?	How would you describe Gigi in <i>Shiny Broken Pieces</i> ?	Which Gigi that we saw do you believe is the real Gigi?

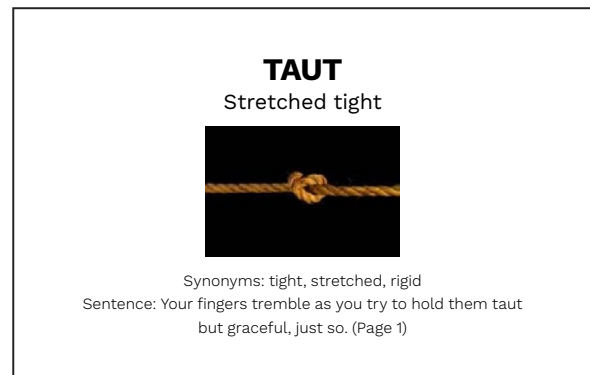
THE SERIES

Intriguing Words

- Research shows that finding, defining, and discussing vocabulary within the context of reading is one of the most effective ways to learn vocabulary, and the authors use very specific word choice in the series.
- While reading, have students mark words that intrigue them. Intriguing words can be words they like, words they didn't know, words that they can tell were specifically chosen by the author, medical terms, etc.
- Using these words that are identified by your students, have your students create a word wall of the vocabulary from the *Tiny Pretty Things* series by picking five words that they liked learning the most and putting them with their student-worded definition and a drawing/symbol to post on the word wall. They should also put what page the word is on in the book.

You can have them add anything else on the word wall index card as well such as synonyms, antonyms, the word in a sentence from the book or created, etc.

- Before posting the word wall vocabulary on the wall, have students get in small groups and share their words with peers, making sure to share why they chose the word and where it is in the book.
- Example of word wall index card:



- Some examples of words (page #) that may be chosen are:

Book 1:

- taut (1)
- falter (4)
- noncommittal (5)
- luminous (16)
- spiel (26)
- pedigree (26)
- consummate (26)
- doting (27)
- tirade (47)
- frenetic (155)
- palpitation (158)
- jitney (161)
- succulence (162)
- curtly (173)
- glint (244)
- psychosomatic (268)
- marring (272)
- lavishing (275)
- brusquely (275)
- decipher (281)
- monstrosity (282)
- jargon (284)
- incessant (341)
- wellspring (361)
- ethereal (389)
- fester (390)

Book 2:

- tedium (25)
- expat (33)
- elongate (45)
- resilient (49)
- legion (54)
- quavers (55)
- succulents (71)
- incessant (86)
- menagerie (91)
- intangible (91)
- wistfulness (100)
- solemnly (107)
- churns (109)
- congealed (110)
- battlement (114)
- stressors (115)
- remorse (130)
- successive (135)
- scalding (138)
- livid (141)
- lumbers (162)
- dredge (239)
- imperceptible (265)
- amends (269)
- tulle (270)
- lull (275)
- snivel (318)

- **Extension Activities:** Using the student-chosen words, create a list of "intriguing words" that your students found and challenge students to use some of the words in their own writing.

- Ask students to answer the following standards-based question about their intriguing word(s):
 - *Why would the author choose to use this word over a synonym?*
 - *How did the author’s choice of this word change the tone or mood of the section the word is found in?*

- **Extension Activity: Russian, French, and Korean words**

Throughout the book, Russian, French, and Korean are used, so students could specifically look for words/phrases in other languages and create a similar word wall index card including a translation of the word/phrase.

Figurative Language

- The authors used figurative language and imagery throughout the books to bring the scenes to life.
- While students read the texts, have them mark their favorite incidences of figurative language throughout the book.
- When finished, have students pick their 5 favorite uses of figurative language and 5 favorite uses of imagery and complete:

Phrase (book, page #)	Imagery? Or type of Figurative Language?	Why did you choose this phrase?	How did the author’s use of this phrase positively affect the prose of the book?
Example: “constellations of blisters and bruises” (1, 1)	Imagery	I chose this phrase because it helps the reader visualize what a ballerina’s body looks like below the perfection that they put forth. It shows the pain behind the beauty.	This use of imagery positively affects the prose because it connects the reader to the pain that the character is feeling.
Example: “occasional whisper is a firework” (1, 17)	Metaphor	I chose this phrase because it helps the reader feel and understand the tension in the room.	The use of this metaphor positively affected the prose because it took something that most people know, a firework, which is loud and makes you jump and compared a whisper to it which is usually gentle. This comparison allows the reader to feel how a character would react to a whisper.
Example: “If Mr. K is the moon or the sun in this world, then Damien is the sky—endless and all encompassing.” (2, 53)	Metaphor		
Example: “My heart bangs against my rib cage.” (2, 59)	Personification		

Who is the villain?

- TW: Abuse, Bullying
- In these stories of backstabbing and ambition, many different girls are made out to be the villain; however, throughout the books, each and every one of them make poor choices.
- Many researchers have found that people who bully are often the victim of bullying or abuse, and the characters in these books are no different. While this does not make bullying excusable, it does give a reason for bullying.
 - Research: <https://news.siu.edu/2018/09/090518-research-shows-bullies-often-victims-of-bullying.php>, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/aug/29/bullying.schools>, <https://www.washington.edu/news/2006/09/12/violence-in-the-home-leads-to-higher-rates-of-childhood-bullying/>
- As a class, discuss Bette.
 - **Example:** *Bette is abusive and bullies many; however, as we learn more about her home life, we realize that Bette’s attitude about herself is caused by the verbal abuse, food neglect, and alcoholism of Bette’s mom. This abuse has led to a pill addiction, self-hatred, and insecurity. Because of this, Bette then chooses to bully others in a last-ditch attempt to give herself a solid foot forward.*
 - Have students find actual pieces of text evidence to support this analysis.
- Then, have students complete a similar character analysis for June looking at her childhood, mental health, eating disorder, and bullying.

A Look at Ballet

- Ted-Ed has videos and lessons that introduce the origin of ballet, a look at pointe shoes, and the physics behind a move in ballet.
 - **Origins of Ballet:** <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-origins-of-ballet-jennifer-tortorello-and-adrienne-westwood#watch>
 - **What’s the Pointe of Ballet?:** <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/what-s-the-point-e-of-ballet-ming-luke>
 - **Physics of the “Hardest Move” in Ballet:** <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-physics-of-the-hardest-move-in-ballet-arleen-sugano>
- Use these videos with a station-to-station gallery walk activity, so each group will need a large sheet of paper or a digital site like Padlet or Google Jamboard.
 - Divide students into three groups and have each group start with a different video.
 - Each group should have a discussion leader, recorder, and reporter.
 - *There can be multiples of each job, and they will just split the duties.*
 - Once the group watches it, they should “Dig Deeper” and “Discuss” as a group.
 - Discussion leader(s) keep their group on track and lead the discussion.
 - As they discuss, the recorder(s) should take notes on the discussions on the paper or website.
 - Allow students at least 20 minutes for this activity the rotate them to the next video.
 - Here they will repeat the activity; however, they will already have the first group’s notes written, so they’ll be adding their own thoughts or sharing if they agree and why on the discussion.

- Then repeat one last time, so all groups see all three videos.
- Have the students go back to their original station to see all that was added.
- Finally, have the class discuss what was learned and make final conclusions about what they realized and discussed.
 - Reporter(s) can be called on to share for each group.
- To connect this with the series, ask students to connect what they learned with aspects within the novels.

Gender in Ballet

- Ballet has very set gender roles where a man is meant to be masculine and strong while a ballerina is petite and graceful. This is how ballet has been throughout its history, but there is a debate over if the tradition should change or stay the same. Have students read the following articles or other articles of your finding:
 - <https://medium.com/gbc-college-english-lemonade/the-problem-with-gender-in-dance-122d4d68fb75>
 - <https://www.tv.org/article/how-gender-roles-in-ballet-are-evolving>
 - <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/features/ballet-sexist-marius-petipa-swan-lake-nutcracker-sleeping-beauty-a8700486.html>
- After reading the articles, have students write their own op-ed article sharing their thoughts on gender roles in ballet.
 - **To help students create a well done op-ed column, you may use these guidelines from Harvard:** https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/hks-communications-program/files/new_seglin_how_to_write_an_oped_1_25_17_7.pdf

Racism in Ballet

- The racism that Gigi faces, both macro and micro aggressions, are very prominent in the ballet world, even in 2020. Use this very true fictionalization to discuss privilege and racism with students, bringing up specific incidents from within the text and defining and discussing the concepts of “microaggressions” and “macroaggressions.”
- The National Association of School Psychologists has created a lesson plan for secondary students which talks about race and privilege and can be used as a way to open up this discussion: <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity-and-social-justice/social-justice/social-justice-lesson-plans/talking-about-race-and-privilege-lesson-plan-for-middle-and-high-school-students>
 - National Association of School Psychologists. (2016). *Talking About Race and Privilege: Lesson Plan for Middle and High School Students* [handout]. Bethesda, MD: Author.
 - Please note: Not all support privilege walks. Please read criticism before taking part in that aspect of the lesson plan. <https://www.ubunturesearch.com/blog/2017/11/20/why-i-dont-do-privilege-walks-anymore>

- Next, ask students to find examples in *Tiny Pretty Things* of times when privilege played a part.
 - Examples: Nepotism with Alec, Cassie, and June; Bette’s mother’s tirades about donations; etc.
- Then ask students to read about racism in the ballet world using these articles or articles of your choice:
 - <https://www.post-gazette.com/ae/theater-dance/2017/09/25/Misty-Copeland-American-Ballet-Theatre-Hill-House-Association-Kaufmann-Center/stories/201709250047>
 - <https://time.com/5098808/misty-copeland-raven-wilkinson-book/>
 - <https://www.dancemagazine.com/racist-remarks-in-ballet-2645241123.html>
 - <https://abcnews.go.com/US/misty-copeland-takes-stand-prominent-russian-ballet-companies/story?id=67821895>
 - <https://www.pointemagazine.com/behind-ballets-diversity-problem-2412811909.html>
- Finally, ask students to answer the following questions. They should cite text evidence from both articles and *Tiny Pretty Things* when completing:
 - How did *Tiny Pretty Things* correctly represent the racism that BIPOC ballerinas face in the ballet world?
- **Enrichment:** By contrast to Gigi’s experience as the sole Black student, June is one of many Asian students at the ballet school. However, she too grapples with race in complicated ways. How does June’s experience differ from Gigi’s, and how does her biracial background inform her identity as a person and a dancer?

This guide was created by Kellee Moye, a middle school teacher-librarian in Orlando, FL. Kellee is the author of various teaching guides for all levels; the co-author of the blog [Unleashing Readers](#); a jury member then co-chair of the 2020-2021 Schneider Family Award Jury; on the 2016-2018 ALAN Board of Directors and past social media chair for ALAN; a member then chair of the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award committee from 2012-2014; and a member of NCTE, ALAN, and ALA. Kellee can be reached at Kellee.Moye@gmail.com.