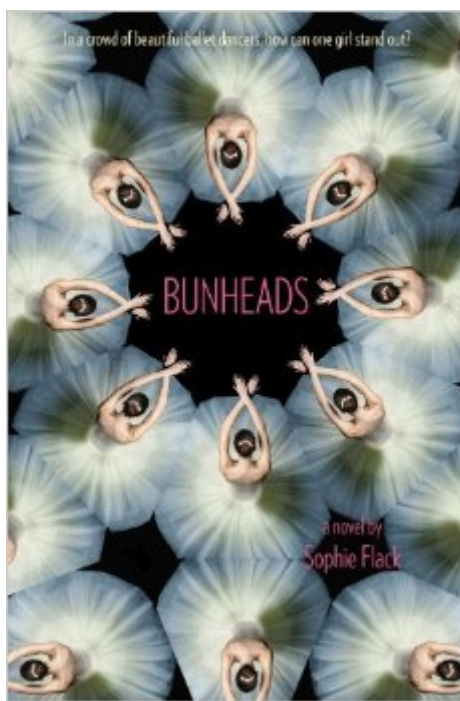


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# Bunheads



## Synopsis

In a crowd of beautiful ballet dancers, how can one girl stand out? As a dancer with the ultra-prestigious Manhattan Ballet company, nineteen-year-old Hannah Ward juggles intense rehearsals, dazzling performances, and complicated backstage relationships. But when she meets a spontaneous and irresistibly cute musician named Jacob, her universe begins to change. Until now, Hannah has happily followed the company's unofficial mantra, "Don't think, just dance." But as Jacob opens her eyes to the world beyond the theater, Hannah must decide whether to compete against the other "bunheads" for a star soloist spot or to strike out on her own.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Bunheads by Sophie Flack follows Hannah a dancer in the Corps of the Manhattan Ballet. Sophie's life is the ballet, she goes to rehearsal and class and performances every night and hopes to become a soloist. When she meets a guy outside of the ballet she finds herself struggling to find the time to see him and starts questioning her priorities. Is the life of a professional dancer really what she wants? I loved this book. It was a book about a dancer that was obviously written by someone with insider experience. I really felt like I was getting a peek into the life of a dancer in a serious ballet company. The descriptions of the dance and costumes were fantastic. The characters and the plot are entertaining enough but it's not exactly the most original plot. I was very happy to find that this wasn't a book about a girl who decides to give up everything for a boy, Hannah makes her own decision because of what is right for her. Appropriateness: Hannah is nineteen and has been living on her own since she was a young teen and acts like a nineteen year old. There is a large amount

of underage drinking and a bit of non descriptive sex. There is a large amount of weight talk in the book, much of which is unhealthy, as the company requires the dancers to have a super slim silhouette. While I suspect this book will be marketed as a romance the romance is only a small part of the story and readers should read this book as a look into the world of dance and not as a romance novel. I would recommend the book to teens and adults 14+ and I'd encourage parents of younger readers to address the alcohol and diet/eating disorder issues that are present in the story.

19 year-old Hannah Ward has given up most of her childhood in pursuit of her dreams... a spot in the corps de ballet of the famous Manhattan Ballet Company. As a very worldly teenager, she's already been living in Manhattan for several years, and is slowly but surely attempting to work her way to the top of the heap in her clique-ish, exclusive world. When I first heard about this book, I thought for certain it would be some kind of exploration of body issues, and maybe an anorexia book with touches of evil competitiveness a la Black Swan. That is the stereotype of the hard-driving, ambitious, slightly-crazy ballerina, right? I was pleased that the book dispels those ideas immediately. Hannah's not anorexic - she's always been naturally slim. It's just her natural body type. She eats healthy, but "cheats" every now and then with a big bowl of pasta or (thanks to lax city bartenders) the occasional glass of wine. She doesn't hate her fellow dancers - they are her best friends and constant companions. She doesn't even consider herself a true "ballerina." She's a ballet dancer, but she's not a star. For her, it's a living. Flack's own experience as a dancer lends lots of realistic details to the book. Hannah and her friends are heartily sick of The Nutcracker, a perennial audience favorite which is physically challenging yet artistically boring. They are tired of having to dance through filthy re-used plastic snow every night, which then winds its way into everything: hair, clothes, even the utensil drawer at home ends up with stray bits of dirty white fluff. Another detail I didn't expect, but found completely believable was the staff of professional masseuses and sports doctors on hand to treat the ballet dancers - massaging them into shape, even offering an ultrasound machine in the basement, where dancers are invited to wand their tired bones back into fighting form again. When Hannah meets Jacob, a gorgeous college-student musician, they are both instantly equally smitten. Hannah soon realizes just how all-encompassing her schedule really is as she struggles to make time for him. I loved how from her perspective, she sees Jacob, "all the time" - bending over backwards to call in favors and skipping classes in order to get in a simple date. From Jacob's perspective, he almost never sees Hannah. He likes her a lot... and he'll wait patiently for her, but even so, a man has his limits. In fact, Hannah is only seeing Jacob every couple of months - to her, with a jam-packed routine where every moment is either

devoted to rehearsals, auditions, performances or classes, it really does seem like time flies. It would be so much easier to continue to ensconce herself in the world of the "bunheads" - the serious ballet dancers, and date the charming son of one of the ballet company's most generous benefactors. As Hannah puts on a little weight, she's mortified to have to wear a bra for the first time. A few critical comments from her dance director leave her feeling shaky and unsure of herself. Again, I liked how this is a brief crisis of conscience, rather than an all-encompassing quest for her. I thought Hannah's main struggle was in how her ballet colleagues - who have been her entire universe - will most certainly judge her if she chooses to dial back on what is already a short-lived career for "some boy." Ultimately, Hannah has to do what feels right for her, and I liked being inside her head as she thoughtfully considers her options. Romantic, funny and totally absorbing, I loved this look into the life of a dancer who struggles with "work/life balance," on a grand scale. I highly recommend this book.

Nineteen-year-old Hannah Ward is not a ballerina, not yet anyway. A dancer with the Manhattan Ballet Company, Hannah knows this is her year to finally land a coveted promotion from corps dancer to soloist. It has to be. Recruited by the Company when she was fourteen, Hannah has been working toward this singular goal for her entire life. On a rare night off, Hannah meets a pedestrian--a non-dancer--named Jacob. A free-spirited musician, Jacob's life is everything Hannah's is not, filled with freedom from the regimen and commitments being a professional dancer entails. As Hannah spends more time with Jacob and moves closer to her ballerina dream, she starts to wonder if ballet really is enough. It always had been before, but now Hannah isn't so sure. Ballerinas are supposed to dedicate themselves to dance, but Hannah might be ready to dedicate her life to other pursuits in *Bunheads* (2011) by Sophie Flack. *Bunheads* is Flack's first novel. It was also a finalist for the 2011 Cybils in Young Adult Fiction. As a novel, 'Bunheads' falls short in several areas. Informed by her own experiences as a professional dancer (Flack danced with the New York City Ballet from 2000 to 2009) much of the novel feels indulgent and more like an exercise in wish-fulfillment on the author's part than an actual story. Hannah and Jacob's immediate connection never feels authentic which raises questions about both character's behavior throughout. Combined with a meandering, slow-paced plot the book often lacks the verve to keep things interesting. With Hannah and her friends being wholly consumed by dance, there is little room for character development. There are even fewer opportunities to make the characters distinguishable from each other as all of the dancers, Hannah included, feel interchangeable for much of the novel. Where 'Bunheads' really shines is in setting the scene for Hannah and her world. Flack brings a

professional eye to the story, expertly conjuring the narrow world of a corps dancer that is filled both with grueling monotony and brief moments of wonder found on the stage. 'Bunheads' is a moderately entertaining reminder of both the passion and the commitment that being a professional dancer demands. It is easy to admire the glitter and tutus of a ballet. This book reminds readers to remember the stamina and strength that makes every ballet look effortless on stage. Finally, and perhaps unexpectedly, 'Bunheads' is a beautiful example of the bravery it takes to dedicate years to a specific plan only to choose a completely different path leading into uncharted territory. A must read for ballet enthusiasts, athletes, and anyone trying to strike out on their own--even if they don't know exactly where they will be striking just yet. Possible Pairings: So Much Closer by Susane Colasanti, The Year My Sister Got Lucky by Aimee Friedman, 'Lola and the Boy Next Door' by Stephanie Perkins, 'The Secret Sisterhood of Heartbreakers' by Lynn Weingarten, 'Absolutely Maybe' by Lisa Yee

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