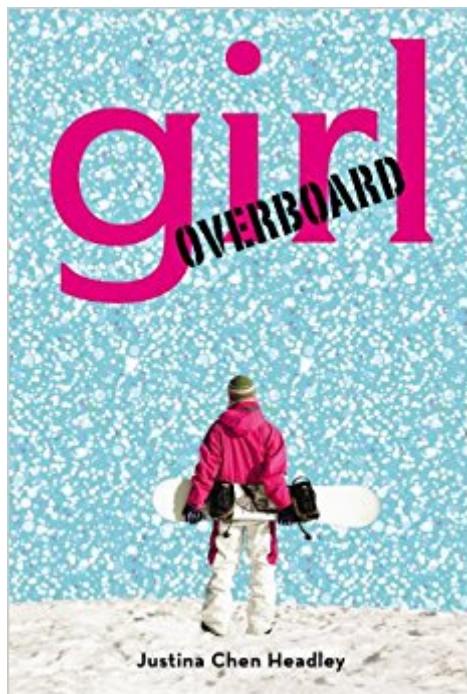


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# Girl Overboard



## Synopsis

Everybody thinks Syrah is the golden girl. After all, her father is Ethan Cheng, billionaire, and she has everything any kid could possibly desire: a waterfront mansion, jet plane, and custom-designed snowboards. But most of what glitters in her life is fool's gold. Her half-siblings hate her, her best friend's girlfriend is ruining their friendship, and her own so-called boyfriend is only after her for her father's name. When her broken heart results in a snowboarding accident that exiles her from the mountains-the one place where she feels free and accepted for who she is, not what she has-can Syrah rehab both her busted-up knee, and her broken heart? Justina Chen Headley writes with an engaging wit and a powerful, distinct voice. Her first novel, *Was a Border's Original Voices* nominee, a Book Sense pick, and received a starred review from

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

From the moment that "snowboarding became as natural as walking," 15-year-old Syrah Cheng has wanted to be a professional rider. But after she narrowly survives an avalanche, her parents bar her from the sport. Syrah misses the anonymity and escape she found on the slopes. As the daughter of a billionaire cell-phone magnate, she feels misunderstood in public and abandoned at home by her workaholic, absentee parents, and her isolation intensifies after her only close friend, Age, stops returning her calls. Then Syrah develops a close friendship with fellow-student Lillian, whose sister is dying of cancer. A project to help Lillian's family becomes the energizing force that pulls Syrah toward new discoveries about her own family,

cultural heritage, and strengths. Writing in Syrah's witty, engaging voice, Headley offers a stirring, layered novel about a Chinese American girl who rejects the false glitter of her superrich Seattle community and resolves to use her advantages to create large-scale change and relationships that are deep and true. Grades 7-11. --Gillian Engberg

Justina Chen Headley grew up near Buffalo, NY and San Francisco. After attending Stanford University she spent time in New York and Sydney, Australia before settling near Seattle, Washington, where she currently lives with her two children. This is Justina's second YA novel. Her first, *Nothing But the Truth (and a few white lies)*, was a Book Sense pick, and her third novel, *North of Beautiful*, garnered critical acclaim with three starred reviews.

I'm not quite sure how I ended up with this ebook, but it turned out to be a real favorite. I say it stretched me because it took me into the Chinese culture, foods, languages, customs, beliefs, as well as the spoiled rich girl friends that Syrah Cheng is around. The author creates a careful world, one of hidden motives and complex characters who change as the book progresses. VERY well done.

It is a very slow book, but it's a fantastic story with a different point of view. I did like that the author was very descriptive in her words.

Good book from a good writer!

I didn't like the first few chapters very much and I kept putting off reading them but I am so glad I finally read them. This is a great book.

2.5/5 I didn't particularly enjoy this book. It's about Syrah, who hurt herself while snowboarding. She doesn't really feel at home with her family, and everything isn't perfect even if her family has lots of money. She's dealing with her family, and then she makes a new friend who volunteers at a hospital with all of the little kids. Plus, her friendship with Age isn't working because of his girlfriend, plus she has a boyfriend that doesn't really want her. First, I didn't really like Syrah. She seemed to complain, or think, about things a lot without doing anything about them. Like with her mother, for example. Her says things that bother her, but she never does anything about it. This is one of the things that really bothered me. Some of it might be because I could relate to the not doing anything, but I didn't

really sympathize with it. There wasn't much romance, either, and it wasn't very exciting. I did kind of like the scenes in the hospital with the kids. Also, I don't really care for snowboarding, but it didn't take up as much of the book as I expected it would. So, I didn't particularly care for this book. Mostly because of Syrah, I think, 'cause I just didn't really like her.

If nothing else, the Chungs know how to save face. So to everyone else, Syrah Cheng's life looks like a dream come true. Her father is a billionaire, her mother is beautiful and always buying her fancy clothes (and custom-designed snowboarding gear). Between that and the mansion and private jet, it really seems like Syrah has it all. But . . . The worst part of having it all is having to deal with it all--the good, the bad, and the just plain weird. Syrah knows better than most that appearances can be deceiving. She almost never sees her parents, her half-siblings hate her, and it turns out real friends are not that easy to find when you can buy everything else. What Syrah doesn't know is how to change any of that, especially when she's been deceiving herself for so long. *Girl Overboard* (2007) is Justina Chen Headley's second novel (following *Nothing But the Truth* (and a Few White Lies) from 2006). The writing here is snappy and really moves the text along, so much so that the story very quickly demanded my full attention to better catch the nuances of Syrah's narration. The writing here is also grittier than a lot of books I have read lately. Syrah's loneliness and depression are so tangible in the early stages of the book that, at times, reading it was painful. After years of being a loner with a one-track mind for snowboarding, Syrah's snowboarding accident and resulting knee injury force her to look at her entire life in a new light. If one bad accident can leave Syrah terrified of her chilly home away from home, what else has Syrah misinterpreted? It turns out the answer is a lot. This book deals with many themes in addition to snowboarding and overcoming a really scary injury (partly inspired by the author's own bogus wipeout). A first-generation American herself, Syrah's family still bears the scars of their past in China during the Cultural Revolution. The story also provides an interesting commentary on the cost of keeping up appearances and friendship. At its core though, *Girl Overboard* is about a girl who has found herself adrift and, while trying to get her own bearings, realizes she can help those around her at the same time. In this novel Headley spends a lot of time in Syrah's head, partly because the book is narrated in the first person, but also because Syrah is a solitary creature--especially after her accident. For this reason, Headley is really able to trace Syrah's growth as a character. At the beginning of the novel Syrah is lonely, sad, and desperate for a way out of her life. But as the story progresses, Syrah learns that before you can ask for help you have to think you deserve it. In fact, you have to think you deserve it all because if you don't who will? In short, *Girl Overboard* is the

latest example of what a CLW book should be not just because Syrah Cheng is an awesome, strong girl but because this book details how she became that girl.

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