“Sugar in the Blood” was authored by Andrea Stuart, a woman of a mixed racial background, born and raised in the Caribbean island of Barbados. Stuart decided to write this book after coming across her earliest known ancestor while sitting in a brutally air-conditioned library at the Barbados Museum, looking through seventeenth-century census records. The author made great use of primary documents, such as census records. In the words of Stuart, “Genealogical research has its limitations: it yields the skeleton, not the body” (Stuart, 3). This meant that she only had an outline of how things were and needed to use secondary sources in order to “paint a full picture” of the colonial life of her ancestors. This created a sense of uncertainty in the novel, because instead of having actual evidence of the everyday life of her ancestors, she had to predict certain situations.

The purpose of this book was to show that the victims throughout Caribbean history were also the same people who made the colony successful. The thesis of this book states, “It is, then, more than a family history: it is a global story, too—one that fixes its gaze on the connections between continents, between black and white men and women the free and the enslaved—demonstrating that the individual is not just a victim of global history, but an author of it as well.” (Stuart, 4) She achieves this goal throughout the book by talking about how the victim, which was the enslaved, the “immigrant farmer of sugar cane,” and women positively built history through their hard work and oppression. This was done in a smooth manner in the second half of the book,
but the first third of the book was extremely boring and full of details that made it slow to read. Much of it was history pieced together by documents that the author, Andrea Stuart, found while doing research. It was important that she set the book in a historical context of the 1600’s, but I do not think the amount of detail was needed in order to get the point across.

Furthermore, the second section of the book was a better reading because it had more information about racial formation in the colonies and sexual relations between slave owners and the enslaved women and women of color on the island. The author spoke of instances of rape in very empathetic ways, often seeing both sides of the relations, ultimately humanizing and justifying immoral acts of rape on behalf of the slave owners.

Moreover, the author gave accounts on how the very mixing of the races brought about the very diverse make up of the Caribbean islands today. This literature can be used in ethnic and race relations’ courses to gain a greater understanding of the history of race on the islands. Although, the author speaks of the mixing of race in a very empathetic way, she effectively illustrates the way in which the spectrum of color came about in this particular place. It all connected to the slave trade, colonialism, and oppressive injustices that came with sugar cane harvesting.

Finally, the book set out to show that the victims of history are also the authors of history. This goal was achieved in an effective manner only after the first section of the book ended. The book did a great job of illustrating race relations and gendered issues like rape. At the end, the author brought it all back to the fact those events in history caused the victims to be the authors of history in the way that they built the economies of
Britain and Barbados, as well as racial makeups of Barbados. This goes back to prove the initial thesis of the author. While this book is extremely informative, I would only recommend the book to be fully read after the first section. Also, since the author is very objective, it is imperative for the reader to understand that many issues, like sex with slaves, should be considered rape and not a moral act. If these things are understood before reading the book, then this book is a great read.