

HIGH SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

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If You Want Resources About YA Literature, This is Your Shopping List (A Resource List for High School Teachers and Librarians)

In our previous annual columns we have focused on recommended YA literature for high school students and on some strategies for incorporating YA books in the high school English classroom. In this column we turn our attention to resources for teachers.

Typically, English teachers have no trouble locating resources about classic (or at least more “canonical”) books and authors, but until relatively recently there was not much available as secondary sources for the study of YA literature. Happily, that situation is changing. In this column, we suggest resources—organizations, Web sites, and print materials—that high school teachers might find useful. All would be appropriate for a high school media center; some of them teachers may want to own. In the case of Web sites, we realize that by the time you read this, the site may be gone. Still, an increasing amount of information is out there—we make no pretense of having done an exhaustive search.

First Stop: Join this Organization!

Of course the premiere organization for scholars, mavens, and fans of YA literature is ALAN. You knew we would say that, right? You’re already reading the journal, so you probably agree. Even so, we honestly believe that belonging to the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents/NCTE is still the best way to “get connected” to what’s happening in this often-mercurial corner of our profession. Membership (still only \$15 a year) includes three issues per year of *The ALAN Review*, a helpful journal that contains interviews with authors, both analytical and “how-to” articles by teachers, and dozens of book reviews. And, as they say, if you like the journal, you’ll LOVE the annual workshop held the Monday and Tuesday after NCTE’s fall convention. We admit that we are ALAN Workshop groupies! We love learning about new books, meeting authors, learning from colleagues about their successful teaching strategies, and reveling in a community that doesn’t think we’re weird for reading kids’ books on our own time. There is also a brand new Web site for ALAN (<http://www.alan-ya.org>) and another site (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/>) where many past issues of *The ALAN Review* are available.

One valuable publication that attempts to capture the excitement in this organization is *Two Decades of The ALAN Review* (NCTE, 1999), a compendium of pieces that have appeared in that journal over the years. In the first section of this book, editors Pat Kelly and Bob Small have included in-

terviews with, and articles about, eight key YA authors, including Robert Cormier, Sue Ellen Bridgers, Paul Zindel, and Virginia Hamilton. Part two contains sixteen articles by teachers and scholars about the treatment of various themes and issues in YA literature. The third section contains a history of ALAN by Ted Hipple and reflections by previous editors Alleen Pace Nilsen, W. Geiger Ellis, Arthea Reed, and Leila Christenbury.

Heinemann’s Young Adult Literature Series

Under the editorship of Virginia Monseau, Boynton Cook Publishers (Heinemann) has released a series of eight books since 1996 under the heading “Young Adult Literature Series.” In the interest of full disclosure, we note that our own book *Reel Conversations: Reading Films with Young Adults* (1997) is a part of that series, and we modestly offer it as a resource for high school teachers. The final chapters identify “YA films” in five different themes—coming of age, families, romance, belonging, and dreams—and suggest ways to connect these films to YA literature exploring the same theme. Other books in the series that are of particular usefulness to high school teachers include the following.

Isaac, Megan Lynn. (2000). *Heirs to Shakespeare: Reinventing the Bard in Young Adult Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

The two stated purposes of Isaac’s book are to show how the plays of Shakespeare inform many recent YA books and to demonstrate the power of reading the contemporary and classic texts together. As she states in the introduction, “Each may be a good story by itself, but knowing both texts makes them even better. Every new piece of literature has the potential to transform all the art that preceded it” (*Heirs* xi). The first three chapters deal with adaptations and editions of Shakespeare (including picture books) as well as YA books set during the Renaissance. Each of the next six chapters takes a particular Shakespeare play and shows how YA authors have borrowed or adapted certain elements—for example, *Hamlet* and Paterson’s *Bridge to Terabithia*, and *The Tempest* and L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time*. Two final chapters deal with controversial issues in Shakespeare’s *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Bard’s “lesser taught” comedies and histories. Our prediction is that reading this book will send you back both to the plays and to the YA novels for a fresh look.

Monseau, Virginia. (1996). *Responding to Young Adult Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

Monseau's book speaks directly to those high school teachers who want to teach young adult literature, but don't know exactly what to do with it once their students have read the book. Monseau presents a passionate rationale for using young adult literature in the high school classroom and then demonstrates ways to use young adult novels with high school students in basic level classes as well as in Advanced Placement classes. She describes a variety of assignments and provides sample student responses.

Monseau, Virginia R., and Gary M. Salvner. (2000). *Reading Their World: The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom*, Second Edition. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

Reading Their World is a collection of essays for teachers, both experienced and pre-service teachers, on the rationale for and the use of young adult literature in the high school classroom. Selections include essays from authors M.E. Kerr, Will Hobbs, and Sue Ellen Bridgers on why and how they write for young adults. Teachers will find particularly useful the variety of methods for incorporating YA books into the English curriculum—from connecting YA literature with the classics, to shaping classroom discussion, to finding time to include YA literature. Other chapters include information on gender and multicultural issues, sports books, teaching television, and handling censorship issues. This book comes with a CD-ROM containing a searchable database of over 1,700 reviews of YA novels.

Works on Individual Authors

Twynne Publishing Company, noted for its United States Author Series, has for several years published book-length critical studies of YA authors, including Robert Cormier, Mildred Taylor, and Virginia Hamilton. Many of these are still in print; other such works are recently published and forthcoming from Scarecrow Press, under the editorship of Patty Campbell.

Books for You

NCTE's *Books for You* Series is an important resource from NCTE which appears every three years and lists current titles of fiction and non fiction books recommended for high school students. The latest edition of the series is *Books for You: An Annotated Booklist for Senior High*, (NCTE 2001). This edition provides an annotated list of over 1,000 books for young adults published during the years 1997, 1998, or 1999. Categories such as "Fantasy," "Family Relationships," "Poetry," and "War and the Holocaust" aid teachers and students in locating books for class study or pleasure reading. The appendices also are a great resource for teachers as they give lists of award-winning YA books for 1997-1999 and URLs for awards and booklists. Teachers looking for multicultural books will want to consult the list of titles in Appendix C, where books are listed by author and then cross-referenced by category and culture, race, or geographic area.

Other Books

Atwell, Nancie. (1998). *In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning*. Second Edition. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Heinemann.

Don't let the title fool you. Nancie Atwell's ideas are equally applicable to high school teaching as to middle school. If you're teaching one of the "big" English courses (I-IV, AP, etc.), you may not have the time to devote to reading workshop that you would prefer. Still, there is no more compelling image than Atwell's vision of a classroom designed to support students' development as readers. Also, check out Appendix L, in which her students recommend hundreds of books that run the gamut from Francesca Lia Block's *Weetzie Bat* to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Bodart, Joni Richards. *The World's Best Thin Books*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2000.

The subtitle of this book, *What to Read When Your Book Report is Due Tomorrow*, gives no doubt as to the intended audience for this book. Teachers, however, will find this a handy reference volume; in fact, the author suggests ways teachers and librarians can use the book. In this volume books are divided into three categories: thinnest, thinner, and thin. No book listed has more than 200 pages. Beginning teachers and teachers who are looking to learn more about young adult literature will want to add *The World's Best Thin Books* to their libraries. The majority of the books listed were published prior to 1990, but an appendix lists titles of more recent books. Other appendices give students tips for writing book reports and give teachers suggestions for preparing book talks.

Gallo, Donald R.(Editor). (1990). *Speaking for Ourselves: Autobiographical Sketches by Notable Authors of Books for Young Adults*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

_____. (1993). *Speaking for Ourselves, Too: More Autobiographical Sketches by Notable Authors of Books for Young Adults*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

These two volumes contain a total of 176 autobiographical sketches by noted YA authors. Each is two or three pages long and includes a photograph and a list of all books written up to the date of publication. The authors generally describe their early lives, their beginnings as writers, and what they like to read. If your students display curiosity about the lives of the authors they read, these sketches are a great starting point for them.

Kaywell, Joan F. (Editor). (1993). *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

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In this column, we suggest resources—organizations, Web sites, and print materials—that high school teachers might find useful.

_____. (2000). *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics, Volume 4*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

As the proliferation of volumes in this series indicates, these books are popular with teachers! In each chapter, a noted teacher/scholar of YA literature presents a unit plan that integrates the study of at least one "classic" title (such as *Oliver Twist*, *My Antonia*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Our Town*, or *Pride and Prejudice*—to name just a few in Volume 4) with related YA novels. The connection may be one of theme ("Search for the American Dream"), subject matter ("Young and Black in America"), or genre ("Biographies in the Classroom"). The lessons themselves are models of integration—not just of classic and contemporary literature, but also of literature study and composition, of English and other content areas, and of direct instruction and collaborative learning. Appendices include separate bibliographies for the classic and YA works as well as a topic and title index. It's very easy for a teacher to approach these books and find lessons related to particular themes, titles, or literary elements.

Trelease, Jim. (2001). *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, 5th edition. New York: Penguin Books.

The audience for this bestseller is both parents and educators. For teachers who read aloud to their students or who would like to read aloud to their students, *The Read-Aloud Handbook* is an essential reference work. Trelease provides a rationale for reading aloud to young people and gives powerful statistics on the results of reading and not reading to children. For the uninitiated, he outlines a program for reading aloud and offers tips for reading aloud successfully. The annotated bibliography contains hundreds of titles of poems and books that make good read-alouds. The majority of the books listed are more appropriate for elementary and middle school students than for high school students, but the book, taken as a whole, is the best guide we have found on reading aloud to students of all ages.

Internet Resources

Amazon.com (www.amazon.com)

For teens, teachers, or anyone who reads young adult literature, Amazon.com's teen section is a treasure. To access this page, select "Search Books" then on the next page that appears, click on "Teens" in the left-hand column. Here readers will find links to lists of favorite teen books from Amazon.com's editors, links to prize-winning books, and lists of top sellers. As with its adult pages, Amazon.com provides editorial and reader reviews of books and offers readers suggestions for other titles by listing books that "Customers who bought this book also bought . . ." Under "Listmania!" Amazon.com also includes lists of certain customers' favorite books, invites teens to add their lists to the site, and provides specific directions for building and submitting lists. You can also subscribe to a monthly e-mail newsletter specifically about teen books. Whether you buy or just browse, Amazon.com is arguably the most up-to-date resource for finding YA books.

Children's Literature Comprehensive Database (CLCD) (www.clcd.odyssey.com/welcome.html or www.childrenslit.com)

This resource, available after a 30-day free trial by subscription, provides 600,000 catalog records of children's and adolescent literature. Users can easily search the database for over 50,000 reviews of children's and adolescent books, including reviews found in *The ALAN Review*, *VOYA*, *Kirkus Review*, and *KLIATT*. Approximately 1,000 reviews are added monthly.

NoveList (EBSCO Publishing)

This Internet-based resource, available to school libraries by subscription, gives teachers, librarians, and students access to a database of over 75,000 novels. Students access book titles by choosing one or more of four levels—adult, young adult, children's, or easy—and then searching the database by matching a "favorite author" or "favorite title." Those interested in a certain type of book choose "Describe a plot," "Browse subjects," or "Explore fiction." NoveList also provides reviews or descriptions for approximately half of the books listed. Other features include resources and activities for high school English teachers, help in preparing book talks, interviews with authors, and notes for book discussion leaders. The Fall 2001 release has been revised by Michael Cart, young adult literature scholar and teacher at UCLA. For a free trial, contact EBSCO Publishing at 1-800-653-2726, and ask to speak to a sales representative.

YABooks.about.com (<http://yabooks.about.com>)

This site features interviews with authors, reader reviews, a chat room, and "Mini-Webs" that provide in-depth information on YA authors, excerpts from new novels, and examples of television show and movie/book tie-ins. Links send readers to lists of award-winning books, banned books, and genres of books as well as provide information for librarians, teachers, parents, and writers. Contests give participants the opportunity to win copies of books and other prizes. The audience for the site is young adults, but any fans of YA literature will find something to love about this web site.

YABO: Young Adult Books Online

(<http://yabonline.com> or <http://yabo.thinkforge.net>)

In addition to selling books, YABO provides interviews with authors and reviews of YA books. Visitors to the site are given the opportunity both to join YABO and receive periodic e-mail messages as well as to write reviews and to vote on "best" YA books. The site also provides visitors with news about the YA community. For example, information about the NCTE Annual Convention and ALAN Workshop, complete with a preview of YA authors at both the convention and workshop can be accessed at YABO.

Authors4Teens (www.authors4teens.com)

This by-subscription site is Greenwood Publishing Group's entry into the Web market. Editor Don Gallo talks with popular YA authors about their art and their lives, and provides photographs and other memorabilia from the interviewed

authors' lives. The tone is conversational and intimate, the information engaging. See a partial authors4teens interview that Gallo conducts with YA author Randy Powell excerpted in this issue of *The ALAN Review*.

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