

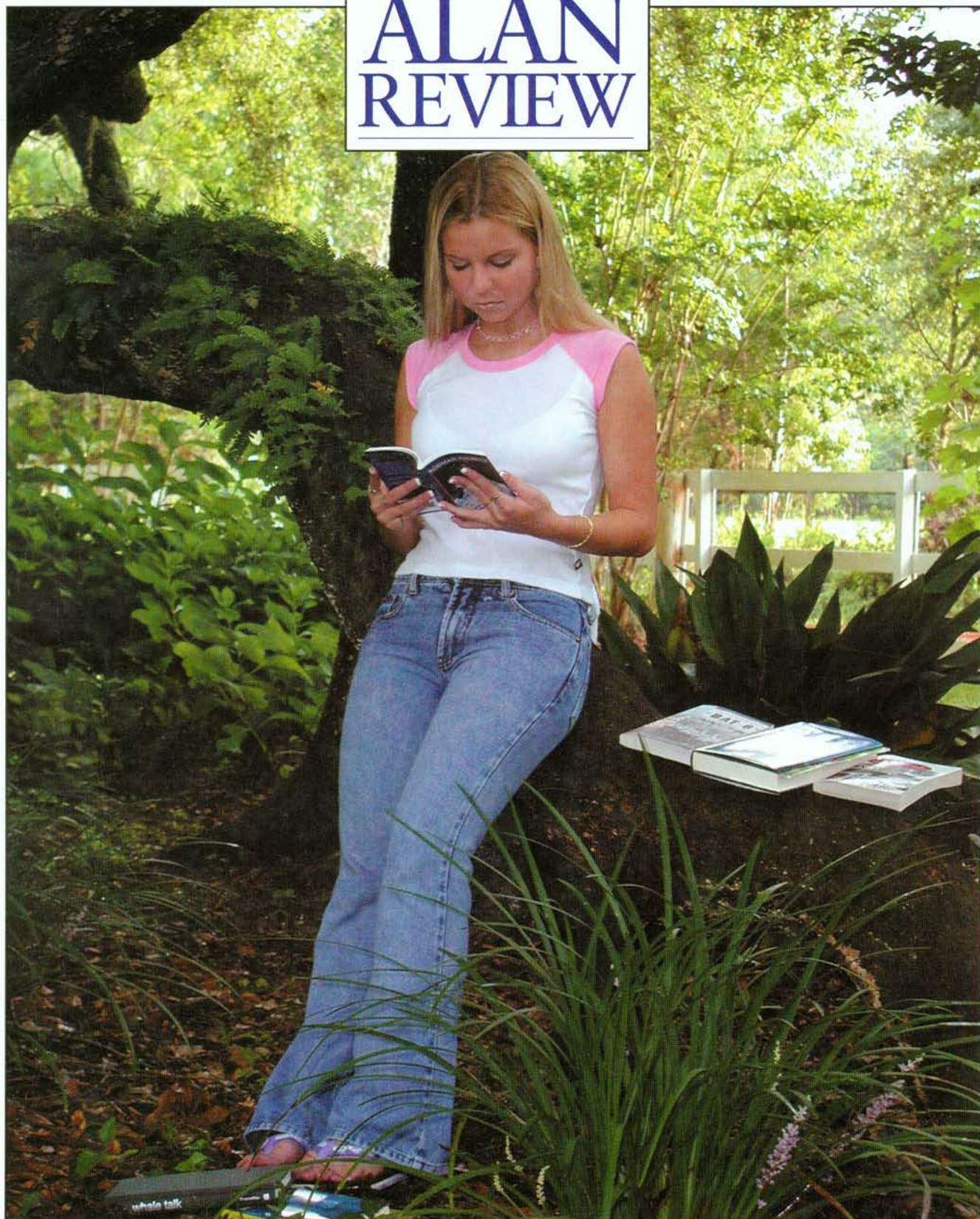
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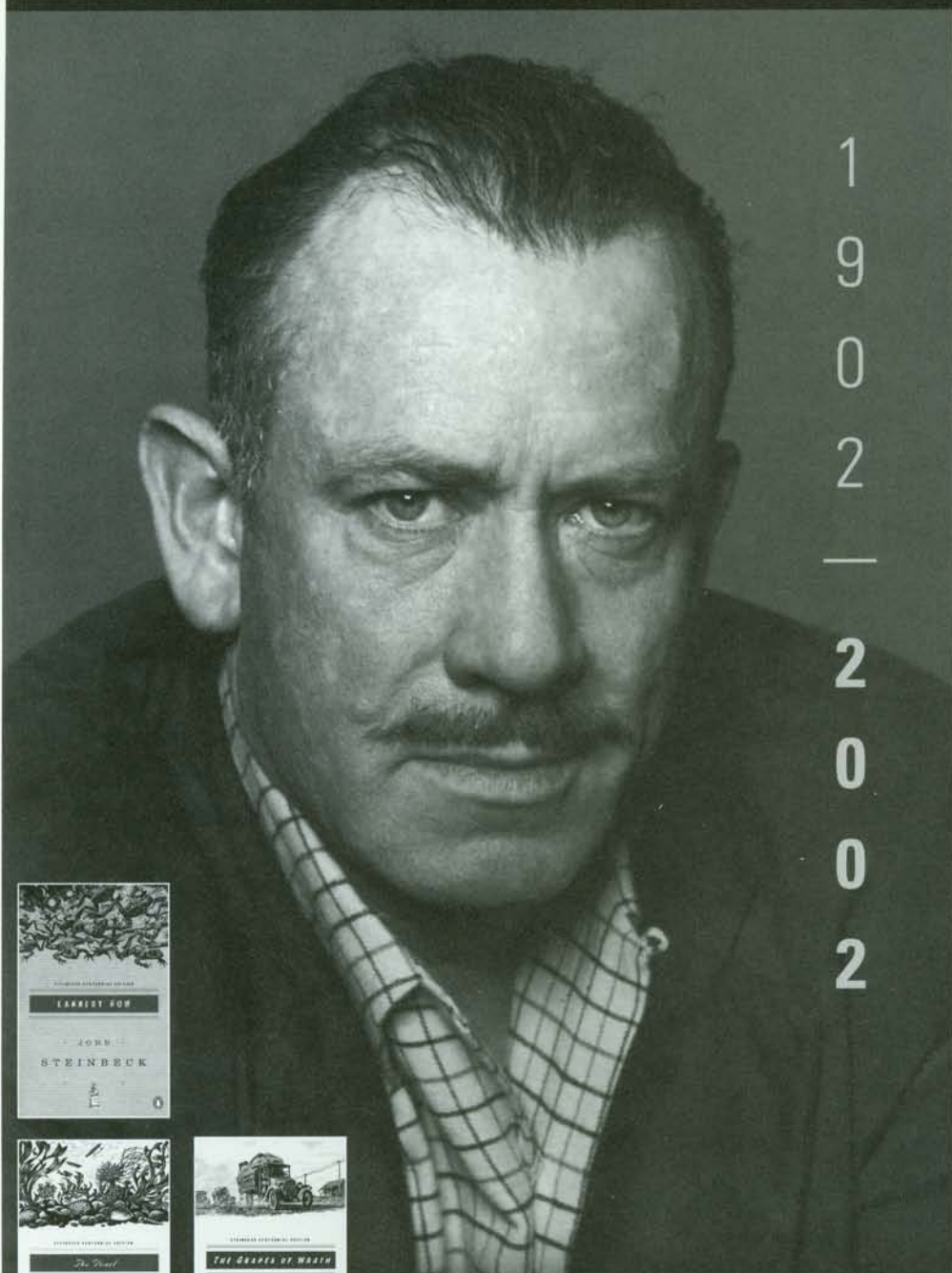
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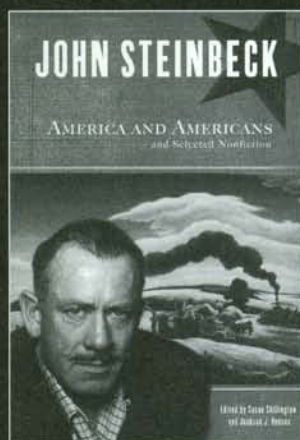


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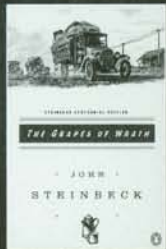
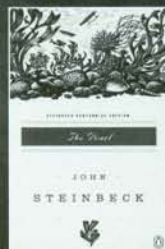
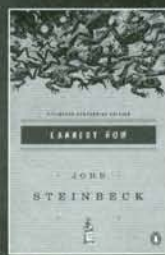
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## INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

**ABOUT THE ALAN REVIEW.** The ALAN Review is a peer-reviewed (refereed) journal published by the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English. It is devoted solely to the field of literature for adolescents. It is published three times per academic year (fall, winter, and spring) and is sent to all members, individual and institutional, of ALAN (The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE). Members of ALAN need not be members of NCTE.

**THE ALAN REVIEW** publishes reviews of and articles on literature for adolescents and the teaching of that literature: research studies, papers presented at professional meetings, surveys of the literature, critiques of the literature, articles about authors, comparative studies across genre and/or cultures, articles on ways to teach the literature to adolescents, and interviews of authors.

**AUDIENCE.** Many of the individual members of ALAN are classroom teachers of English in middle, junior, and senior high schools. Other readers include university faculty members in English and/or Education programs, researchers in the field of adolescent literature, librarians, authors, publishers, reading teachers and teachers of other related content areas. ALAN has members in all 50 states and a number of foreign countries.

**PREFERRED STYLE.** Manuscripts should usually be no longer than fifteen double spaced, typed pages. A manuscript submitted for consideration should deal specifically with literature for adolescents and/or the teaching of that literature. It should have a clearly defined topic and be scholarly in content, as well as practical and useful to people working with and/or studying adolescents and their literature. Research studies and papers should be treated as articles rather than formal reports. Stereotyping on the basis of sex, race, age, etc., should be avoided, as should gender specific terms such as "chairman."

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Please note that the journal will be organized to reflect the following focus in each issue, but that the focus will not restrict attention to other issues:

**Fall Issue:** Authors, Issues, and Concerns in YA Literature for High School Readers  
**Winter Issue:** Authors, Issues, and Concerns in YA Literature for Middle School Readers  
**Spring Issue:** Authors, Issues, and Concerns in Using YA Literature for Interdisciplinary Instruction

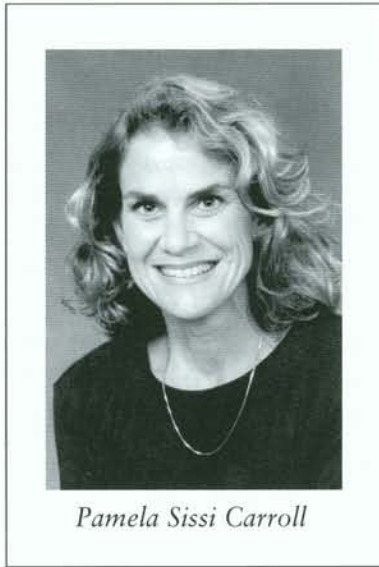
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## A Note from the Editor

Remember when you were a young adolescent—when nothing you wore or were, not even your own nose or arms, your own sense of humor or system of values—seemed to fit? Early adolescence is a tricky time for teachers, too; we want to intervene without interfering with students' intellectual, psychosocial, emotional development, but often we are unsure of how far to reach toward them, how much to reveal to them, how forcefully to nudge them.

This issue of *The ALAN Review* focuses a majority of its attention on books, authors, and suggestions for lessons that are appropriate for readers in the middle grades. One emphasis is on books related to the Holocaust, since the Holocaust is a required curricular feature in middle schools in many states. Canadian YA author Carol Matas, whose subject is the Holocaust, discusses her books in an interview with Ed Sullivan, who further suggests rationales and methods for incorporating Matas' books into classrooms and media collections. Holli Levitsky, currently a Distinguished Fulbright Scholar of American Literature at the University of Warsaw, Poland, continues the look at Holocaust literature by raising provocative questions about the ways we use the most popular of all YA Holocaust texts, Anne Frank's *Diary of Young Girl*. Other articles that discuss books popular among readers in the middle grades include Lois L. Warner's look at the magic of Francesca Lia Block's fiction, and Laura Apol's consideration of re-appearing fathers in the fiction of Virginia Hamilton and Walter Dean Myers. With section editor Jeff Kaplan's leadership, the Clip and File Book Reviews also spotlight many works of literature that may be particularly appealing to readers in the middle grades, including *Strike Two* (Amy Goldman Koss), *The Beguilers* (Kate Thompson), *The Babbs Switch Story* (Darleen Bailey Beard), *Benno's Bear* (N.F. Zucker), *Uncle Daddy* (Ralph Fletcher), *Daniel's Walk* (Michael Spooner), *Anna Casey's Place in the World* (Adrian Fogelin), and *Fair Weather* (Richard Peck).

Since collaboration is a characteristic of middle school programs, it is appropriate that there are several examples of collaborative efforts within the pages of this issue of the journal. Apol's attention to reappearing fathers in YA novels is balanced with attention to motherless daughters in an article by middle school administrator James Lovelace and middle school teacher Laura H. Smith. Marsha M. Sprague and Lori Risher report together on their project in which middle school students read and responded to fantasy literature. Lauren Groot and Martha Story consider together the reasons that *The Outsiders* still holds such appeal for middle school readers. Terry Martin and Tracey Brown provide us with a rich collection of ideas for teaching Sook Nyul Choi's *Year of Impossible Goodbyes*.



Pamela Sissi Carroll

Within the pages of this issue, we also offer suggestions that may help teachers find ways to (further) incorporate YA literature into their curricula. M. Linda Broughton shows us, in the Middle School Connection column, several reliable, useful, books to add to our professional collections. Pat Daniel provides a method for introducing prospective and practicing teachers to YA books by treating the characters as if they are friends. Greg Hamilton presents an overview of the history of thought about adolescence, and helps us firm up our rationale for teaching YA literature. Ted Hipple, long-time spokesperson for YAL, provides us with further rationale for treating the genre with respect by presenting an annotated list of ninety-nine outstanding articles about young adult literature.

Young adolescents strike me as humans who are eager to learn, but who are unsure, often, about how to reveal their interest and enthusiasm. Fortunately, those of us who know good books that are likely to appeal to middle school students don't have to wait for students to come to us; we are able to extend a book, an author, an idea to them, and in that gesture, we invite them to talk, think, and continue to grow.

# The Holocaust Fiction of Carol Matas

Ed Sullivan

Fiction writers who choose the Holocaust as their subject are faced with the daunting challenge of making the experience true for readers—to not only be accurate in depicting historical details, but also in conveying the intense emotional power needed to bring authenticity to these stories. The best Holocaust fiction includes those stories which make real for readers the inexplicable horrors of this darkest moment in human history. It brings those experiences to vivid life through characters and circumstances with which readers can empathize, and enables them to experience vicariously what it could be like to live in a world in which one's very existence is enough to warrant oppression, torture, and extermination. Canadian author Carol Matas has successfully brought these kinds of stories to life for young people several times over. I am struck by Matas' remarkable ability to craft compelling stories from real, but not very well-known events from the Holocaust, such as the struggle of homeless survivors to reach Palestine immediately following the war, or the dangerous attempt of an entire French Protestant village to save Jews from deportation. At the heart of these stories are adolescent protagonists who heroically confront their horrible circumstances with courage, dignity, and a fierce determination to survive.

Matas is an author I always recommend to teachers who are looking for alternatives to such standard Holocaust texts as Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, and Elie Wiesel's *Night*. Particularly suitable for middle school grades, Matas's fiction has strong appeal for young adolescents. The stories are relatively short in length, have fast-paced and engrossing plots, and always feature strongly developed adolescent protagonists whom readers can relate to and identify. For readers unfamiliar with the author's work, I have prepared a chronological overview of Matas's Holocaust novels.

*Lisa's War*, Matas's first Holocaust novel originally published in 1987, is about what is now one of the more familiar stories from the Holocaust—the largely successful attempt by the Danish Resistance to save its Jewish countrymen from deportation to the extermination camps. When the Nazis occupy Denmark, Lisa's family immediately commits themselves to fighting back. Her father, a doctor, secretly treats the resistance fighters, and her brother Stefan enlists as one.

Wanting to make a difference herself, Lisa joins the movement to seek revenge. The story asks the question raised in all of Matas's Holocaust novels: Can one person make a difference? The answer is yes. Lisa proves this through her decision to fight the Nazis, and the entire nation of Denmark proves it by saving nearly all of their Jews.

*Lisa's War* is inevitably compared to Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars*, the 1990 Newbery Medal-winning novel which also tells the story of the Danish rescue. In a review comparing the two novels, *The New York Times* cites *Lisa's War* as a "much more powerful book," and I am inclined to agree. What lends more power to *Lisa's War* is Matas's choice to tell the story through the perspective of a Jewish protagonist, compared to Lowry who, in *Number the Stars*, filters the experience through the perspective of ten-year-old Annemarie, a Christian who

bears witness to what is happening to the Jews in Denmark. Lowry's narrative distancing lessens the emotional impact of the story. Experiencing the story through Lisa, a Jew, gives the story more of a sense of immediacy and makes it more compelling for the reader.

*Kris's War*, originally published in 1989 as *Code Name: Kris*, is a sequel to *Lisa's War*. Jesper, the main character in this story, is introduced in the first novel as a young member of the resistance with whom Lisa falls in love. In this story, set in 1943 German-occupied Denmark, Lisa and Stefan have already escaped to Sweden. Jesper, whose code name in the resistance is Kris, is not Jewish so he is able to stay behind in Denmark and continue fighting in the underground war against the Germans. *Kris's War* is a fast-paced, action-packed story that also depicts a strong, courageous adolescent protagonist who risks his life to make a difference.

Matas was commissioned by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. to write her third Holocaust novel, *Daniel's Story*. The book was published in conjunction with an exhibit at the museum called "Daniel's Story: Remembering the Children," a poignant tribute to the Holocaust's youngest victims. Daniel is a fictitious character, but Matas's creation of the character and his story is inspired by the real experiences of many victims. The story opens with Daniel and his family living in Frankfurt, Germany, in the late 1930s, when Hitler is taking his first steps toward ridding the country of Jews. They lose their right to practice their religion, to education, to work, and finally their prop-

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*Matas is an author I always recommend to teachers who are looking for alternatives to such standard Holocaust texts as Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl, Lois Lowry's Number the Stars, and Elie Wiesel's Night.*

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erty. Daniel and his family are forced from their home and sent to live in the Lodz Ghetto. From there, they are sent to the Auschwitz death camp. Along this horrible journey, Daniel loses nearly his entire family to disease, the gas chamber, starvation, and other horrors. Miraculously, Daniel, an adolescent whose experiences have aged him well beyond his years, survives the war and is finally liberated from the Buchenwald concentration camp. It is in *Daniel's Story* that Matas first displays her remarkable ability to describe some of the worst horrors of the Holocaust. An example is this scene in which Daniel describes what he witnesses during the liquidation of the Lodz Ghetto:

It was a pitiful sight. Those who could walk were pushed out into the waiting trucks; others were carried out in stretchers. I could see people trying to escape, some running, some jumping from the windows. Everywhere around me people screamed, called out to relatives hoping at least to say goodbye, see them one last time, but we couldn't, we were too far away. And then, the worst . . . German soldiers threw babies, newborns, little children, out of the windows, and into the trucks below. I could stand no more. I turned, weeping, and stumbling back to our apartment (45-46).

Matas's horrific imagery captures the intense brutality and utter inhumanity of the Holocaust. Still, for all its bleakness, *Daniel's Story* will leave readers inspired by this young man's determination to find hope and life in the midst of relentless despair.

In *After the War*, Matas explores territory almost completely ignored in Holocaust literature in general, and entirely overlooked in books written for young people. What became of survivors immediately following their liberation from the camps? This is a subject seldom addressed in Holocaust studies, but Matas

brings it to life in a story about fifteen-year-old Ruth Mendelson. Recently liberated from Buchenwald, Ruth returns to her hometown in Poland to search for family and friends. She finds herself the sole survivor of over eighty relatives. With nowhere to go, Ruth joins up with an underground organization smuggling displaced Jews to Palestine, which at

this time in history is still controlled by Great Britain. She and several other young adult survivors lead a group of orphans on a harrowing, danger-filled journey that eventually brings them to their new homeland. In addition to being unique for telling a little-known but important story, *After the War* is also significant for showing that the persecution of European Jews did not end with liberation from the camps. When Ruth returns to her village, the Gentiles living there taunt and threaten her. The British would not allow displaced Jews to settle in Palestine. Jews like Ruth and her comrades who tried to enter Palestine did so at great personal risk.

That is a subject Matas addresses in *The Garden*, a sequel to *After the War*, which finds sixteen-year-old Ruth living on a kibbutz. Ruth is charged with tending the garden, and as

she begins to settle into a life of peace and spiritual awakening, her world is again shattered when British soldiers destroy the garden, looking for illegal guns. As the United Nations prepares to partition Palestine into two separate lands, one Arab and one Jewish, war breaks out with Arabs and Jews fighting one another, and factions within the Jewish community fighting amongst themselves. The British do little to stop the escalating violence. Ruth becomes a reluctant combatant in the conflict, caught between political extremism and her own desperate, personal desire just to live in peace. Like *After the War*, *The Garden* offers a rare perspective on this seldom told story of Holocaust survivors struggling to forge a new life in Palestine.

In *Greater Than Angels*, Matas returns to the subject of "Righteous Gentiles" risking their own lives to save Jews. Matas tells the story of the citizens of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in Vichy, France who courageously risk their lives to save the many Jews who took refuge there during the Nazi occupation. This fictional account is told through thirteen-year-old Anna Hirsch and her family and friends. Anna and her family are deported from Germany to Gurs, a refugee camp on the French-Spanish border. The journey is a terrifying ordeal during which Anna's grandmother dies. Her mother and aunt are deported to a concentration camp and never heard from again, but Anna and several other young people are saved from this fate by relief workers who arrange to have them sent to Le Chambon, where the citizens there allow them to live a life of relative normalcy and safety. Anna is one of the few members of her family who survives the war, thanks to the righteous Gentiles of Le Chambon. *Greater Than Angels* is an inspiring story of courage and self-sacrifice. It shows that, even in the midst of the overwhelming evil of the Holocaust, compassion and goodness can still prevail.

Matas's most recent novel, *In My Enemy's House*, explores a darker dimension of the Holocaust. Marisa is a Polish Jew whose blonde hair, blue eyes, and fair complexion enable her to pass as an "Aryan." When the Nazis invade Poland and arrive in Marisa's hometown of Zloczow, they immediately begin rounding up Jews and putting them into a ghetto. With all of her family either scattered or dead, Marisa steals a Polish girl's papers and goes to Germany to find

work as a laborer. After a terrifying ordeal working for an abusive farmer, Marisa travels to Weimar to work as a house servant for the Reymanns, a wealthy farm family whose patriarch is a high-ranking Nazi official.

Marisa finds herself in an extraordinary situation. Marisa is a Jew forced to live a lie so she can survive. She literally has to live among the enemy. Believing her to be a Polish Gentile, the Reymanns treat Marisa well. She becomes close to the children, and almost part of the family. Marisa even finds herself identifying with the Heymanns as time passes. When someone tells her how Aryan she looks, Marisa has a disturbing thought:

For a split second I swelled with pride at the compliments.  
For a moment I *was* the perfect German girl, ruler of the

universe. A shudder passed through me. ...But how easy it was to be seduced. For a moment, even after what they had put me through, I could feel the magic of that dream. How tempting to be better than anyone else in the entire world. Better, smarter, prettier, entitled to all the good things. Oh yes, how tempting. (84-85)

This is a powerful and disturbing revelation for Marisa—a Jew hiding among the enemy to survive suddenly finds herself admiring, envying the very people responsible for destroying her life. Matas depicts the seductive power of Nazi arrogance, their dark ethnocentrism that fueled their genocidal campaign for racial purity in Europe. Even a Jew, a victim of that very madness, can succumb. Matas makes an appallingly effective commentary on the human condition.

After seven novels, Matas will not stop writing about the Holocaust: there are too many stories to tell, and our young people need to know them.

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*Ed Sullivan manages the Children's Defense Fund's Langston Hughes Library and is an adjunct professor for the University of Tennessee library science program, where he teaches a course in young adult literature. He is the author of The Holocaust in Literature for Youth: A Guide and Resource Book (Scarecrow, 1999) and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Young Adult Library Services Association.*

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# A Telephone Interview with Carol Matas

*An Interview by Ed Sullivan*

*Author's note: Prior to our Spring, 2001, telephone interview, I sent the questions to Matas so she could have time to reflect on what she wanted to say. Matas' responses were taped and are transcribed here with minimal editing.*

ES: Do you have any personal connections to the Holocaust that you use in your stories?

CM: When I was growing up, I had no personal connection to the Holocaust. It was stories about my husband's family that first started me writing about the Holocaust, so I guess you could say there are personal connections that started me off on this journey. My husband is from Denmark and his father was twelve years old when Germany invaded Denmark. My husband was working at the Jewish Community Center in Montreal when an exhibit went through on the Holocaust, and he started telling me stories about his father and grandfather, who both ended up in the resistance. It was those stories that inspired me to write *Jesper*, which is also *Code Name: Kris* and *Kris's War* [titles under which the book was published in the United States].

A friend of ours gave us a book called *Rescue in Denmark*. It was a story I had never heard before. I found it absolutely astonishing that here was the story about the rescue of an entire people, and I thought it was unbelievable that a Jewish person who had gone to university and Hebrew school had never heard, never been told this story. I figured as a well-educated Jewish person, if I didn't know this story, probably 98% of kids in North America probably didn't know the story either. I immediately changed the idea of writing about a boy in the resistance. I decided to write about a girl who is involved in the rescue of the Danish Jews. I went on to write the story I was originally planning to write, which was the story about the boy in the resistance. So that was *Lisa's War*, and then came *Code Name: Kris*. It was that personal connection that really did get me started on this topic. I think it was also interesting at the time because I didn't suddenly decide to write historical fiction. It was really the themes that interested me, and they were very similar to themes I had already been writing about. I had written four science fiction books at that point. All the science fiction books had one central theme: that one person can make a difference. I simply thought of these books as stories that illustrated the same theme, so it wasn't that now I decided to write historical fiction. It was an incredible story that needed to be told and it was the kind of thing I

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*Those stories are just full of opportunities for the characters to wrestle with themselves and the choices they have to make. All of my books focus on that theme.*

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wanted to write about expressing those themes. It wasn't until I had written both of those books that I realized I had fallen into another genre and started to think of historical fiction specifically.

ES: Why do you return to the Holocaust again and again in your fiction?

CM: There are two answers to that. I return to it again and again in my non-Holocaust fiction as well as my Holocaust fiction. Even in my first science fiction book, the character was a Hitler-like figure, even though reading it you would not necessarily think that. I suppose I have been obsessed with the Holocaust all my life because of its incomprehensibility, its vast horror, and growing up Jewish, it had an effect on me. I never consciously wanted to write about the Holocaust. Even the two books on Denmark were not, in my mind, Holocaust books. They don't really deal with the horrors of the Holocaust. They dealt with a much more optimistic part of the Holocaust. I didn't really deal with the Holocaust head on until I wrote *Daniel's Story*. In terms of why I return again and again to the Holocaust, I would say that's because of *Daniel's Story*. Having to face it in *Daniel's Story* really changed many things for me, perhaps even my whole philosophy. After *Daniel's Story*, other stories inevitably grew out of that story, and it was really a case of one story leading to another.

ES: So you would not call *Lisa's War* and *Code Name: Kris* Holocaust novels? You do not think of them that way?

CM: I do, but I did not think of them that way when I wrote them. At the time, I thought of them as World War II stories. I did not think of them as historical fiction at all. I just thought of them as stories that I had to tell. I didn't categorize them at all when I was writing them. Now looking back on it I would say, yes, they are Holocaust stories. At the time I was writing them, though, that was not in my head. But when I wrote *Daniel's Story*, that was sitting down and saying, "I am going to write a Holocaust story."

ES: You said that the Holocaust is a subject that obsesses you. Where did that obsession come from?

CM: I don't know. I grew up in a house where social justice, doing the right thing, being a good human being were extremely important values and the Holocaust is the antithesis of those values. It just became a constant thing in my life that I know had happened and showed me how horrible the

world could be. That was upsetting to me. I was not one of those children that read Holocaust books, or wanted to talk about it. I really wanted to avoid the subject at all costs.

ES: How did you learn about it?

CM: I don't remember learning about it. I must have learned about it in Hebrew school. They didn't teach about the Holocaust in public school. I belonged to Jewish organizations when I was growing up and I may have learned about it there, but I honestly don't remember when or where. All I do remember is being very upset when I would think about it.

ES: What sort of research have you done for your novels?

CM: It varies. I've done similar research for all of my novels, except *Daniel's Story*. What I did for all the rest was I started off with interviews. For the Danish stories, I interviewed resistance fighters. I went to the Danish Club in Winnipeg where they were having an anniversary and people told stories about the war. I introduced myself and told them I was about to write this book and many of the people there invited me to their homes to interview them, so many of the incidents in both of those books come from actual incidents that these people told me about. There are two or three books I read thoroughly on the subject, but mostly that was done through interviews. I had a friend who, at the time, was running the Holocaust Center in Toronto and who would sort of advertise for people who had gone through what I was about to write. I would go to Toronto and interview those people. That was how I did *After the War* and *The Garden*, and *In My Enemy's House*. For *Greater Than Angels*, I went to New York because the survivors were there. I always start off with some reading, so I will know what questions to ask in the interviews.

ES: What kind of reading did you do?

CM: Well, for *After the War*, for example, I just got every book I could find on the illegal immigration to Palestine. I read everything I could find. I might find fifty or sixty books. I don't read them all, but I'll find a chapter here and there that really helps. There are usually three or four books that end up being really important. I go to the library and go online and find everything I can on the subject.

ES: What about using primary source documents?

CM: For *Greater Than Angels*, I went to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. and used their primary sources. Of course, I consider my interviews to be primary sources as well. Otherwise, the resources are secondary. I also try to do as much visual research as I can. For *After the War*, there were actual videos made of people crossing the Alps and going to Palestine by ship. You can find videos of some of these things. There are videos of people living in the Lodz Ghetto. Photographs are also very important. I do visual research so that I am accurate about how they look and how they dress. I try to get as much visual material as I can.

ES: Have you visited any of the concentration or death camps you depict in your stories?

CM: No, I have not. All of my research on those places has been done through books, photographs, and videos. ... I'm still not sure that I could handle [visiting those places]. I still find it so distressing. I'm not so interested in physicality

in my writing. It doesn't interest me as reader or a writer. It would give me a sense of place, but I don't like to write about place. It doesn't interest me. I like to write about the characters and their conversations. It's not like those places are the same now anyway. I did go to Denmark, but I don't think you could tell from reading those books if I had gone there or not.

ES: Are any of your characters based upon real people?

CM: No. I find the interviews I have done are very important. The interviews give me a sense of what the people were feeling, what they really went through, so although none of the characters is based upon any one real person, I feel like the emotion in the book is based upon what I have gathered in the interviews. In a book like *After the War*, for instance, I first envisioned an optimistic young girl going off to Palestine to help build Israel. She's spunky and idealistic. Then I did all the interviews. When I sat down and started writing about that character, it was completely different from how I had originally seen her. My books really change from when I first envision them to when I start writing them, and it's almost always because of the interviews I do. Sometimes it's very specific. In *Greater Than Angels*, I thought it was going to be about a French girl but it turned out that all of the people I interviewed were German. They were German people who ended up in France who had a very specific story, so I ended up telling their story. The interviews can affect the whole tone of the story.

ES: You wrote *Daniel's Story* to be published in conjunction with an exhibit at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Can you explain how that project came about?

CM: They [the publisher] called me in March, 1992, and they wanted a finished book by July so they could publish it by the next spring. They asked me to do it because of *Lisa's War* and *Jesper*. My editor at the time, Beverly Horowitz at Bantam, suggested me for the project. I did *Sworn Enemies* with her. For some reason, the Museum and Bantam could not come to an agreement so the Museum moved the project over to Scholastic. Scholastic had just bought *Lisa's War* and *Kris's War*, so they wanted to keep me with the project. They flew me out to meet with the three different parties involved with the project. There was Daniel Weiss, the packager of the project, the Museum, and Scholastic. They said they wanted the book done in three months. I had figured that the Museum would send me home with tons of materials to work with, but they didn't. They just said go home and write the book.

What they wanted was a book that complemented their exhibit. The exhibit was almost finished when they asked me to write the book, but they did not want the book to be based upon the exhibit. It's actually quite humorous because when the reviews of the book came out, it was described as a novelization of the exhibit, which it is not. That was in the United States. In Canada, the reviewers thought the exhibit was based on my book, which I found very funny. It is neither. The truth is that there is the exhibit and the book and they do have the same title, which is what the Museum wanted, but there is nothing similar about them, except that they wanted Daniel to follow the same path in the book that he follows in the exhibit. He starts off in Germany, but it was my decision where. He then has to go to the Lodz Ghetto, then to Auschwitz, and then to Buchenwald, and he has to survive.

But I could create the family and decide who of the family lives and dies. That was all they told me. The rest of the story was up to me. So, I then had to work backwards and had to find out which towns sent people to the Lodz Ghetto. I chose Frankfurt, which had a large Jewish community, and one that I could get a good understanding of in terms of the history. In fact, there are a couple of things in the exhibit the Museum took from my book. After I wrote the book, the Museum called and said they liked that I had made the mother a baker in the Ghetto and asked if they could use it. I said they could. The structure of the family they borrowed from the book. Of course, I am not acknowledged on the exhibit and Winnipeggers are very upset about this. When Winnipeggers go see they exhibit, they come back and call me or my mother and ask why my name is not up there.

ES: There are few Holocaust novels, especially for young people, that depict what life was like for survivors in the aftermath. In *After the War*, you tell the story of a small group of survivors trying to make their way to Palestine. Why do you think it's important to give attention to this often-overlooked dimension of the Holocaust?

CM: I think about it in slightly different terms. When I write a book there are always two things I want to do—there's a theme that I want to explore, and I want to write about something really interesting and exciting for the children to read, and that's usually something that's never been written about before. I think that's what contributes to their interest in reading about it. They haven't already read about this subject a million times. In the case of *After the War*, I wanted to explore the idea of how you live after you have survived. Is it possible to actually continue after you have seen and experienced so many horrors? I could have set a survivor story anywhere—in the U.S. or Canada. I turned on the TV one day and saw a documentary on the illegal immigration to Palestine and realized what a really amazing story it was. When I interviewed people, I told them I wanted them to talk about what happened after the war, but they inevitably talked about what happened during the war, and then conclude with "Then I went to Palestine," and I would say, "No, no, that's what I want to hear about." No one had asked them to tell that story, and it has paled beside what happened to them during the war, so I really had to get very good at my interviewing technique to get them to tell those stories, to help people remember. You can see that it really affected the book because I hadn't planned to have those flashbacks about the war, but it became such an integral part of the interviews. Everybody who told me about what happened afterwards also told me about what happened during the war. I soon realized that you could not do one without the other. They had never left behind those memories. Their memories were with them every second.

ES: *The Garden* is a sequel to *After the War*. Why did you feel the need to continue Ruth's story?

CM: Again, it was a story that had not been told. There was almost nothing written for adults or children about what was called the "undeclared war." They are compelling stories about the choices that we make. Those stories are just full of opportunities for the characters to wrestle with themselves and the choices they have to make. All of my books focus on that theme.

ES: There are a lot of great stories of "Righteous Gentiles" who helped Jews during the Holocaust, but Le Chambon-sur-Lignon is not one of the better known ones. What inspired you to tell the story of that village in *Greater Than Angels*?

CM: I first heard about it once when I was giving a talk on Denmark. I went to St. Paul for an interfaith conference and was asked to give a speech about why the Danes saved the Jews. I gave that speech and after mine, someone got up and talked about the righteous gentiles of Le Chambon. The story stayed with me. It was a number of years later that I saw an exhibit on Le Chambon at the museum and wanted to write about it.

ES: In your most recent Holocaust novel, *In My Enemy's House*, you convey the brutality and horrors of the Holocaust more vividly than you do in your other novels. What was it about this story that led you to bring out more detail?

CM: I think of *In My Enemy's House* as my best of them all, and I don't know why it turned out that way. I think it does capture why and how it could have happened. Setting it in Germany in this German family makes it very vivid. So many people think it was just a bunch of thugs, a few people, and of course it wasn't. It couldn't have happened without the complicity of the German nation as a whole. It was a few people who objected and were murdered for it in the concentration camps. The general population was complicit and that is very horrible. I think that's why you feel the horror of the story. You get to know the people committing the brutality. Marisa is working with these people, dealing with them up close. They are not faceless. They are real people doing these things.

ES: What do you hope readers will get out of reading your Holocaust stories?

CM: I hope that readers will think about the choices they make. In *Lisa's War*, you have a story about an entire country that chose to help the Jews and inside that story you have all the choices that Lisa has to make. Sometimes we look back at history and get blasé about it and say that was inevitable. In *In My Enemy's House*, I try to show how it was not inevitable, that the choices people made are responsible for the death of six million people. I don't think anything is inevitable. Every single choice we make is important. When I talk to children, I say often to them, "I hope that people will just think about these things." I don't want to tell them what to think. I want them to think for themselves. The problem with Nazi Germany was people did not think for themselves. They let the state do their thinking for them.

ES: What kinds of responses do you receive from readers of your Holocaust novels?

CM: Children almost always write me a letter that begins with, "Thank you." They thank me for writing a book that can make them feel what it must have been like to live in that time or to have been there. They often go on to say we have to be sure that nothing like this ever happens again. They tell me which parts they like, which make them sad. The wonderful thing is that the kids will always see hope in the book, whereas the adults usually do not. Kids always see that. They pick up on the love and the small miracles that happen in the story. I got one letter from a girl who got depressed because it seemed to her like *Greater Than Angels*

wasn't finished. She was really upset because she didn't know what happened to everyone and she's right because I was thinking about writing a sequel. I'd like Anna to come back because I want to write a book about the French resistance. I thought she was very clever. She knew there was more and she was frustrated because she didn't know what it was. Mostly, I try to wrap things up enough so readers are not left hanging. I get a lot of mail and it's all really, really positive.

**ES:** What is the typical age group of readers who write letters to you?

**CM:** I guess grades 5 through grades 8 or 9 are who is writing the most.

**ES:** Do you plan to write more Holocaust fiction?

**CM:** I actually do have one in mind. I would really like to write about the resistance. There hasn't been enough written about the fact that Jews fought back. They are always the victims. I'd like to write a story where they are not. They were fighting too, and you get a little bit of that in *Lisa's War*. There are a lot of amazing stories.

*Carol Matas*



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## Notes From Girl X: Anne Frank at the Millennium

Holli Levitsky

Anne Frank has not come to us without controversy. As the 1997 *New Yorker* article by Cynthia Ozick compellingly showed, questions about “ownership” of the Anne Frank story have dogged the diary from the beginning of its translation into English. It has been called “a song to life”; a “poignant delight in the infinite human spirit”; “a lasting testament to the indestructible nobility of the human spirit”; and “an everlasting source of courage and inspiration.” Ozick calls such ongoing *celebration* of a diary recounting the terrifying life of an adolescent Jewish girl in hiding from the Nazis “the shamelessness of appropriation” (Ozick 78, 79). Who has appropriated Anne Frank’s story in the past, and who owns Anne Frank’s story now? Should we, with Ozick, consider the diary owned still by its author, a girl by nature optimistic but thrown into terribly doomed circumstances? If we follow Ozick’s line of thinking, the diary should remain Anne’s private thoughts. However, if we follow the lead of any number of Anne Frank revisionists, we basically ignore both the specifics of authorship and its context by re-making Anne Frank as a universal figure of courage and nobility.

The question I raise at the opening of the twenty-first century is this: Is Anne Frank’s diary still viable? Has it been too far removed from its original author, its original context? Are we better off wondering, with Ozick, whether the diary should ever have been discovered? Of course, notwithstanding Ozick’s disingenuous remark, we cannot change history. Anne Frank’s diary *was* discovered, published, read by millions around the world. Clearly, public interest in the story provided by the diary is widespread and international. But the inevitable movement of time forward leaves history in the past. The diary, as a dated, historical document, is part of history. And history has changed Anne Frank.

### Ownership of Anne’s Diary

The story of the diary’s changing “ownership” begins with the Chicago-born novelist Meyer Levin, who, as a war correspondent attached to the Fourth Armored Division, was among the first Americans to enter Buchenwald, Dachau, and Bergen-Belsen. He of course could not fathom that which he saw: the repeated scenes of degradation and death, the piled up bodies. He wanted to act, to speak, to write, but he found that he could not tell the victims’ stories. These were stories

so personal they could only be told by the victims themselves. Yet by approaching the horrors of the Holocaust with a writer’s eyes, he was perhaps the first to see the need to *tell stories*, and thus among the first artists to question how we mediate the Holocaust. He dedicated himself to helping the survivors get to Palestine, in itself an almost impossible task at the time since the British had made such immigration illegal. Still, during the year following the war he reported on the uprising in Tel Aviv against the British rule, and in time produced several films on the survivors’ struggles to reach Palestine. In 1950 he wrote and published “In Search,” a narrative which examined the effects of the Holocaust on himself as an American Jew. When he received from his wife a copy of Anne Frank’s diary in French (just translated from the Dutch) he immediately felt that he had read the most personal and intimate story of the Holocaust, a story told from the mouth of a victim.

He contacted Otto Frank, offering to help secure American and British publication of the diary. While he assured Frank that there was no financial interest for him in the publication of the diary, he did ask permission to explore the possibility of producing a play or film from it. Frank encouraged Levin to go ahead with the idea with the understanding that a dramatization would necessarily differ in content from the diary. As Ozick points out, however, the real contents of the diary had already been radically altered by Anne’s father—in ways that suggest not just prudence and prudishness on his part but also a kind of deracination. One could guess (although we already know from the definitive 1991 edition published eleven years after Frank’s death) that the expurgations contained Anne’s budding sexual thoughts alongside other concerns, and, in fact, many contained such thoughts: Anne writes of contraception, describes graphically the development of female genitalia, rails against her mother. But Otto Frank had also already deleted numerous expressions of religious faith, of terrifying reports of Germans seizing Jews. As a result the diary was being read as a celebration of the human spirit (acknowledged by the oft-quoted line, “I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart” (quoted in Ozick 81)) rather than what it really was, and is: a tale of fear. The German edition was further bowdlerized by the translator’s removal of hostile references to Germans and statements of German culpability, alterations also approved by Otto Frank,

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who claimed to speak for his daughter, although the accommodation is not found in the diary itself.

While Levin was continuing to press for British and American publication of the diary and searching for a theatrical producer, the diary was slowly gaining independent notice. Although it was rejected by sixteen English language publishers, Levin finally attracted a London publishing house, but then Doubleday contacted Otto Frank directly and secured American publishing rights for the diary. However, Levin believed that Frank still supported him as the potential dramatist for the diary's theatrical debut.

The book was finally translated into English, then reviewed by Levin on the front page of the Spring, 1952, *New York Times Book Review*. Levin then joined Doubleday and the book's editor (with Frank's blessings) in the project of choosing a producer. The events following those moments were so full of recriminations, contradictions, and hostilities that they have lasted for years and are in fact the subject of two fairly recently published works of scholarship: *An Obsession With Anne Frank* by Lawrence Graver, published in 1995 and *The Stolen*

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*Legacy of Anne Frank*, by Ralph Melnick, out in 1997. While Levin toiled on a script, Doubleday withdrew as Frank's theatrical agent, and Frank moved away from his support of Levin. Finally the producer Kermit Bloomgarden (recommended by Lillian Hellman) and the director Garson Kanin were chosen, along with Hellman-recommended scriptwriters Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett (a married couple who also wrote *It's a Wonderful Life* and *Father of the Bride*).

Levin had hoped to help the survivors tell the story themselves through the voice of Anne Frank, but it was an impossibility from the start.

Otto Frank began the process by expurgating numerous passages from the diary which he felt were inappropriate (for several different reasons), then came editors, writers, a director, and a producer who felt that the story needed to be diluted and popularized for Broadway's ends: to entertain the public without depressing them. I quote directly from Ozick:

Where the diary touched on Anne's consciousness of Jewish fate or faith, [the writers, director, and producer] quietly erased the reference or changed its emphasis. Whatever was specific they made generic. The sexual tenderness between Anne and the young Peter van Daan was moved to the forefront. Comedy overwhelmed darkness. Anne became an all-American girl, an echo of the perky character in "Junior Miss," a popular play of the previous decade.

The Zionist aspirations of Margot, Anne's sister, disappeared. The one liturgical note, a Hanukkah ceremony, was absurdly defined in terms of local contemporary habits ("eight days of presents"); a jolly jingle replaced the traditional "Rock of Ages," with its sombre allusions to historic travail. (Kanin had insisted on something "spirited and gay" so as not to give "the wrong feeling entirely." "Hebrew," he argued, "would simply alienate the audience.") (Ozick 85)

Meyer Levin eventually sued Otto Frank in court, gaining small satisfaction from his triumph over accusations of plagiarism. But the Hacketts' drama went all over the world,

finding huge audiences even in Israel among populations of Holocaust survivors and in Germany, where theatre-goers in the fifties still belonged to the Nazi era. It was enthusiastically embraced wherever it was performed, eventually being adapted into an extremely successful film. It continues to be adapted even today.

Ozick's questioning of the ownership of Anne Frank in the *New Yorker* was not without its own critics. Theatre critic and academic Robert Skloot considered Ozick's essay "passionate and misguided" (20) in his own essay, "A Multiplicity of Annes" one year later in *The Nation*. He notes that "Ozick's 'answer' keeps its distance from the very question that provoked her ruminations" (20). Skloot's "A Multiplicity of Annes" gives us an important reminder about context. He sees a wiser response to the question of "Who owns Anne Frank?" in incorporating the knowledge that "historical interpretation and historical documents are neither fixed nor exempt from the pressures of culture and time, and that absent this awareness 'new cycles of misunderstanding and hatred will result'" (Skloot 20, quoting historian Albert Lindemann).

interpretation and historical documents are neither fixed nor exempt from the pressures of culture and time, and that absent this awareness 'new cycles of misunderstanding and hatred will result'" (Skloot 20, quoting historian Albert Lindemann).

#### Anne and History

Perhaps, then, there is a way to teach Anne Frank's story within the *context* of history, if we reach back to the historical Anne Frank through the prism of a contemporary Anne Frank. Several young adult novels compellingly bring the Holocaust to contemporary moments (Jane Yolen's *The Devil's Arithmetic*, among them). The best among these is Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld's *Anne Frank and Me*, a novelized version of Bennett's play of the same name. This finely crafted tale, carefully contextualized for a contemporary young adult audience, raises Anne Frank's story to the level of a pedagogy. That is, by retelling the story through contemporary issues the voice of Anne Frank reaches out from history to teach its readers *how* to read the Holocaust. Thus, a teacher wanting to construct a unit on the Holocaust for middle or high-schoolers might pair the unexpurgated *Diary of Anne Frank* with the recently published novel of *Anne Frank and Me*; teaching these pieces together will guide students through the historical Anne Frank directly into their own culturally and historically complex lives.

Skloot examines Bennett's 1995 play *Anne Frank and Me* in his essay. He is not so far from Ozick's position in his criticism of the drama: he finds the protagonist—a contemporary 14-year old American (Christian) girl who after a head trauma becomes a French Jewish girl in 1942 occupied Paris—awkward and sentimental, as he finds the play itself. His point is that Anne Frank's story is merely the framework to provide comparative images of white middle-class American adolescent trauma and the Holocaust. While I believe the play (which has won numerous awards) offers its viewers much more than a simple (and unwarranted) comparison between typical adolescent life-anxiety and the Holocaust, such a view, that Anne Frank's anxiety could be that of any teen-age girl, persists even after the publication of the original and complete diary in 1991. In the 1993 Introduction to *Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary*, Anna Quindlen writes that

Mortality is not what younger readers recognize when they

read the diary. Quite the contrary: Anne's odyssey of self-interrogation within the claustrophobic confines of the Secret Annex becomes an extraordinary metaphor for life, in particular for the life of the adolescent, bursting to be free while trapped in a close net of family, friends, and constant scrutiny, real and imagined. Any thirteen-year-old can instantly understand Anne's feelings in the first few pages, when she says she will call her diary Kitty because she really has no bosom friend—"just fun and joking, nothing more". (x)

Further, Quindlen repeats the lines from the diary which seem to suggest that Anne herself sees her situation less in terms of being a Jewish girl and more in terms of being ANY-girl.

Cooled up, misunderstood, she is every teenager when she bursts out, halfway through her time in hiding, "Would anyone, either Jew or non-Jew, understand this about me, that I am simply a young girl badly in need of some rollicking fun?" (x)

Would *any-girl*, however, need to say "all the fear I've ever felt is looming before me in all its horror...Let something happen soon...Nothing can be more crushing than this anxiety. Let the end come, however cruel...We are Jews in chains" (Frank, quoted in Ozick 78). Clearly, the deracination persists as well.

Returning to Ozick, however, we learn that for her the diary "cannot count as Anne Frank's story," since it is without end, and a story "may not be said to be a story if the end is missing" (Ozick 78). And since the end is missing, in the fifty years since it was first published, readers, critics, and teachers of the diary *as her story* have, according to Ozick, falsified it in numerous ways through bowdlerization, distortion, reduction, infantilization, Americanization, sentimentalization, and denial. Perhaps the most terrible part of these persistent revisions of Anne's story is that they glorify a subversion of history where Anne Frank could say meaningfully, "In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart," rather than what one might speculate a young girl hiding from the wrath of the Nazis might say, that is, "Everyday I am afraid for my life and the lives of my family."

Is the end what history gives us: on August 4, 1944 Anne Frank and her family were arrested in the Secret Annexe; on September 5, 1944 Anne Frank and her family arrive at Auschwitz-Birkenau; on October 28, 1944 Anne and her sister Margot are transferred to Bergen-Belsen; in February or March of 1945 Anne Frank dies of typhus in Bergen-Belsen? Should the diary be seen as a story with an end (that is, the death of Anne Frank), and subsequently conclude our discussion of it? Or should the diary persist as "unfinished" but within an historical context that speaks to the "everything" that her hopefulness was able to defer, resist, and repress? If we follow the latter line of thinking, how then can a teacher of the Holocaust keep from creating the same false hope while teaching essential truths of the Holocaust? For Ozick, "Anne Frank's story, truthfully told, is unredeemed and unredeemable" (Ozick 78). For Skloot, a play like *Anne Frank*

*and Me*, which uses Anne Frank as a character who becomes a foil for the teenage protagonist, is awkward and sentimental. As a teacher of Holocaust literature who still regularly uses the *Diary*, my concern is the following: is the *Diary* still powerful enough to engage this generation of students in a truthful, serious, and artistic conversation about the Holocaust?

### Beyond Anne's Diary

Supplementing the *Diary* with the adaptation of the Bennett play might offer a corrective to the false hopes generated by various other uses of Anne Frank's story. My experience is that *Anne Frank and Me* offers a pedagogy even while it entertains as art, raising the questions serious artists of the Holocaust raise, the questions which specifically and intentionally contribute new perspectives to our understanding of the Holocaust. At the same time, in a return to Meyer Levin's original wish, the authors let the victims speak for themselves. This novel *teaches us how to teach the Holocaust*, by re-creating an ordinary teenage life as a way for us to imagine the ordinariness of Anne Frank's life. Just as Anne Frank could only write the reality of her present and not the reality of her death, so too the protagonist of this novel remains deaf to history but perfectly tuned-in to her present in the way that only a fifteen-year old girl—across time—can be.

We first enter the novel *Anne Frank and Me* in the form of the journal, "Notes From Girl X." Using the journal format takes the reader back to Anne Frank's diary "Kitty"; it is soul-baring self-reflection. Yet we must remember that the diary also provided Anne with a kind of empowerment (she could construct her feelings for others through her words) and a form of resistance (she could offer Kitty the retorts, recriminations, and doubts that she could not verbalize to the others). In *Anne Frank and Me*, the form also looks forward. The diary is written as a Website—the book begins after all in the year 2000, where schoolgirls learn the mechanics of building Websites even as they learn their ABC's. In a recent *Los Angeles Times* article, it was pointed out that the proliferation

of online diaries gives teens "a forum for expression that is anonymous in origin...and international in audience...a virtually uncensored environment and interactivity." The anonymous Girl X—AKA Nicole Burns—immediately gives us entries for Day 1, 2, and 3 of her online diary, frankly assessing her achievements, her friendships, her potential Internet audience. She imagines her future—and why shouldn't she—just as Anne Frank did, including an assessment of her present and future love life. She writes the journal for many of the same reasons Anne Frank did: because she's a 16-year old girl who, like most teenage girls, is confused, typically unsure of herself, testing her limits in the world, and just figuring it out as she goes. And in the year 2000 it goes on-line.

In "Notes From Girl X" (Nicole Burns, year 2000), we get precisely the language of this generation—teens in the year 2000—which prepares them for later hearing the somber (and deadly) experiences of Girl X- (Nicole Bernhardt, years 1942-44) as she narrates her terrifying ordeal in hiding

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*Perhaps, then, there is a way to teach Anne Frank's story within the context of history, if we reach back to the historical Anne Frank through the prism of a contemporary Anne Frank.*

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from the Nazis, in the deportation camp, in Auschwitz, and finally in the gas chamber. These same experiences, and their narration, could have been Anne Frank's. The problem is that, without the contemporary context offered by the Bennett and Gottesfeld book, we move further away from Anne Frank's time—a different century now!—and her language and idioms shift, and become, for this generation, a foreign tongue.

Through the protagonist's use of the Internet, this novel brings the most timely and significant events of the Holocaust to its readership. Bennett and Gottesfeld take their readers on a journey through the dark world of Holocaust denial. It is a journey of discovery for Nicole, who is initially taken in by the intellectual-sounding title of the organization she finds as she searches for information on Anne Frank on the Internet: "The Center for the Scientific Study of Genocide: Bringing the past into harmony with the truth." They claim to offer her the "revisionist viewpoint on history" (Bennett and Gottesfeld 21). She gets the idea that perhaps this organization, which sounds so legitimate, could help her write her Anne Frank paper. When she begins to scroll around on the site, she discovers so-called scholars who believe the diary to be a forgery. She begins a conversation with one about historical accuracy and the Holocaust. Dr. Bridgeman, the historian on duty, tells Nicole that during the 1950's, "a Jewish man named Meyer Levin sued the writers of [the diary's] movie version, claiming that they had stolen his work. And he won...We won the war, so we get to write history. It lessens our guilt to think that what Germany did was more awful than what we did" (23). Of course, at this point Nicole has no means to contest Dr. Bridgeman's theories. Neither does the reader. But what is teaching if not a journey of discovery? We are all sucked in to the deniers' position in order to take that journey with Nicole.

Nicole Burns—Contemporary American Christian teenager—becomes Nicole Bernhardt—Occupied Parisian Jewish teenager—after an accident knocks her unconscious at the "Anne Frank in the World" exhibit she visits on a school field trip. At first, she remembers everything about her life in the year 2000, but soon those (limited) memories are replaced by her current life as a Jewish girl in occupied Paris. Her life quickly becomes extremely difficult, and in many ways mirrors the kind of life Anne Frank must have led. The family goes into hiding in a small attic room, Nicole writes an anonymous journal, also called "Notes from Girl X," the pages of which her friend Mimi distributes around Paris. Eventually they are betrayed to the police, deported, and sent to Auschwitz. After being offered an opportunity to escape, Nicole chooses to remain with her extremely ill sister Lizette.

The imagined meeting between Nicole Bernhardt and Anne Frank on the train from Westerbork, which seemed awkward

and sentimental to some critics of the play, here becomes a true moment of identification for the protagonist, whose own identity was confused even when she was clearly the Girl X of the year 2000. The two characters meet in the train after Nicole recognizes Anne (in a limited recovery of memory) from the cover of the diary she was supposed to have read for her English class (year 2000). Anne talks about her faith in God, Nicole talks about Anne's diary, both girls talk about the future. Anne tells Nicole, "Everything is possible. Don't you see?" (227). And an interesting thing happens. Nicole does begin to see, finally, the truth of history, the truth about the Holocaust.

Anne's eyes searched Nicole's, and Nicole saw herself reflected in them—grimy, hungry, lice-ridden. But this much she knew: she would not change places for a moment with the people who had made her that way. (227)

Nicole finally does see who she is. She *is* Anne Frank as we are all Anne Frank. And although she never finished *reading* Anne Frank's diary for her English class, she reads the

future for Anne as she waits in line to be gassed at Auschwitz: Nicole yells across to Anne: "I do know what happens to you!...You become a famous writer. And you break a million hearts" (234). This is the end Ozick claims was missing; neither falsified nor bowdlerized, the Anne Frank Bennett and Gottesfeld rewrite becomes a famous writer, proven by the continued interest in her diary, which breaks every heart that reads it. Nicole Burns begins as we all do in

ignorance, but from ignorance she moves to experience, the experience of witness, where one could say of her that, "She really had been there. And with that knowledge, she left behind the earthbound girl who had believed she would always revolve around someone else. She was free" (278). Transformed by Anne Frank's experience, she becomes free to think for herself: that is, free to remember history, free to teach the truth, free to deny the deniers.

In the final pages of the novel, Nicole Burns, now returned to the year 2000, realizes that every life has the opportunity to change the world. She writes another journal entry, naming herself, describing her new role as a teacher for her sister. When she was hiding in Paris, sending out her "NOTES DE JEUNE FILLE X" missives she did help change the world. She is offered proof of that at the end of the novel. But how do ordinary suburban teens like our students change the world today and tomorrow? By identifying with those who make the right choices. Clearly, Anne Frank's *Diary* needs to be taught today, perhaps more than ever. Teachers can maintain the historical integrity of the story by pairing it with a compelling novel that rewrites the story for a contemporary young adult audience without altering history. *Anne Frank and Me* offers historical accuracies about the Holocaust while placing its readers squarely at the millennium.

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*Editor's note: Please look for the interview with Cherie Bennet and Jeff Gottesfeld, co-authors of Anne Frank and Me, that Melissa Comer conducted, and which will appear in the spring/summer, 2002, issue of The ALAN Review!*

—psc

*We grieve the loss,  
yet celebrate the life and home going  
of Newbery-prize winning author  
Virginia Hamilton  
1936 - February, 2002.*

# The Motherless Daughter: An Evolving Archetype of Adolescent Literature

James Lovelace and Laura Howell Smith

The orphan has long been used as a device in adolescent literature to allow child protagonists to have wondrous adventures that would be stymied by the constraints of parents. Charles Dickens created a plethora of orphans whose parentless state allowed him to explore political, social and ethical issues of the time period. In *The Outsiders*, Ponyboy and his brothers lose their parents in an automobile accident. The boys band together to avoid the threat of foster parents who would change their lives. The parentless child remained a plot device. Often these parentless boys embark on journeys that lead them to maturity. The emotions accompanying such a loss were subtly alluded to but mostly ignored. Only in the past decade have we seen a marked change in how adolescent literature examined the emotional complexities of grief and loss, particularly for adolescent girls.

People are uncomfortable discussing grief. During the 1900s, a great silence settled on the subject of death (Aries, 1974). Though Edna St. Vincent Millay once identified childhood as "the kingdom where nobody dies," our students witness thousands of deaths each year on television, while few explore bereavement. The classroom is no exception. Through a student's schooling, teachers read tragic stories from *Charlotte's Web* to *Romeo and Juliet*. Yet, we do not deal with the aftermath of loss. We do not teach our students how to mourn for Charlotte the spider or Johnny Cade and Dally Winston or Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet. We silently close the book and move on. Our students who suffer personal tragedies have few models from which to draw in addressing their own sorrow. However, in the 1990s, a remarkable trend began in adolescent literature: an exploration of the nature of the grieving process in adolescents.

In this article, we focus on how adolescent literature can enable students to examine the specific experience of the motherless daughter. We acknowledge that the discussion of the death of a mother causes discomfort and resistance in some. While these adolescent novels are not the only titles on the topic, we feel they are powerful in reducing the threat of the situation and prompting meaningful dialogue. Each novel has been recognized as superior. We have each taught these books in middle school classrooms and found them to have merit. We will look at these novels in the chronological order of publication to see the evolution of the archetype of the motherless daughter from the 1960s to the present day. In addition, we will be utilizing the work of texts on grief and

loss and how they relate to the motherless daughter to examine the nature of both bereavement and acceptance as explored in adolescent literature.

## *Julie of the Wolves* (1973)

In Jean Craighead George's absorbing novel, *Julie of the Wolves*, Julie's mother died when Julie was but four years old. The character of the mother and her impact on Julie are only briefly discussed. In a short passage that opens Part II of the novel, Julie recalls a walk with her father on the day of her mother's death. She recollects not being sad, but rather being happy to be with her father. She remembers how her father said that the cries of the animals sounded as if they were grieving with him.

In *Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss*, Hope Edelman notes that young children do not have the understanding to deal with death. They do not understand the loss or the process of grief. Their bereavement process is often protracted. They often must wait to grieve until the surviving parent has mourned. Only then can the child grieve safely (1995). George acknowledges this through Julie's actions in the Newbery Award-winning novel. Her anger is directed at her aunt.

Edelman explains that a motherless daughter chooses a woman as a replacement figure. Instead of detaching from her lost mother, a daughter may try to quickly and directly transfer her feelings of dependency, her needs, and her expectations onto the nearest available adult. The woman can be a relative, a teacher, or a family friend who plays a strong role in the child's development. During adolescence, the motherless daughter will then rebel and gain autonomy from this woman. For Julie, that person is her aunt Martha. In early adolescence, Julie escapes from her aunt's home into an arranged marriage.

Yet, no effort is made in the text to further explicitly examine Julie's grief for the loss of her mother. She is only mentioned in passing. The text concludes with Julie's desire to reconcile with her father. The death of Julie's mother essentially remains a plot device to free the character for a wilderness adventure. Julie's grief is silenced.

## *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (1985)

Anna, 11, is one of the few motherless daughters in adolescent literature who is not an only child. She is the older

sister to Caleb. Edelman states that a motherless daughter who is also the oldest child assumes the role of family historian. Patricia MacLachlan's poignant novel, *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, opens with Anna recounting the story of Caleb's birth and their mother's subsequent death. Caleb is listening and offering details, indicating that Anna has told this story many times before.

The role of family historian is only one in a pattern of service this motherless daughter accepts. Edelman reminds us that early loss is a maturing experience. Another pattern of service is the daughter's assumption of her mother's role in the household, since no other older female relative exists to assume the tasks. Set in the prairie of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the story shows Anna labors in the home, undertaking many of the chores of her late mother.

MacLachlan does little to explore Anna's emotions regarding her mother's demise. In the opening passage, Anna ends her account of her brother's birth with her mother's dying words, "Is he beautiful?" Caleb answers for Anna, "And I was" (1985, 4). But Anna secretly and vehemently disagrees. She tells herself that he was homely and plain. He had a terrible holler and a horrid smell. She remembers going to bed thinking of how wretched he looked. In this sequence, we get a hint of the rage Anna feels about the death of her mother. Following this moment, Anna's grief, like Julie's in *Julie of the Wolves*, remains silent. It becomes secondary to the story of the arrival of Sarah Wheaton from Maine and her romance with Anna's father. For a long period, the cultural norm has been for the bereaved to be silent and move on (Stephenson 1985). Much adolescent literature prior to the 1990s reinforced this concept by keeping grief felt by protagonists unspoken.

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#### *Walk Two Moons (1994)*

Salamanca Hiddle lost her mother in a bus accident when she was twelve. Shortly after the death, Salamanca's father plucked her up like a weed and the two of them moved three hundred miles away to begin a new life. However, she has no interest living in a neighborhood of tiny homes jammed together like birdhouses. Nor is she interested in the stiffly dressed kids at her new school. She especially has no interest in knowing her father's fond new acquaintance, Margaret Cadaver. Sal simply wants everything to be like it was.

Sharon Creech's landmark story, *Walk Two Moons*, unfolds as Salamanca takes a week-long road trip with her grandparents to follow the steps of her mother's journey; a trip that ultimately leads to the site of Mrs. Hiddle's demise. It is a trip her father had made alone nearly twelve months earlier. Now it is Salamanca's turn to acknowledge the death of her mother.

The grieving process in adolescence is frequently characterized by an attack of emotions including fear, resentment, abandonment, guilt, and anger (Edelman, 1995). Creech's development of Salamanca's character allows her to illustrate

these feelings. For instance, Sal is afraid. When she and her father move to Euclid, the first thing she does is to unpack all of the gifts and remembrances from her mother and display them around the room. Without them, Sal fears the memory of her mother will disappear completely. Salamanca's fear continues to be seen as she suggests the journey with her grandparents is a trip she is not eager to take, but one she has to take. In fact, even though her grandparents describe the jaunt as an opportunity to "see the whole ding-dong country," Sal only wants to see her momma but acknowledges that she is also afraid.

In addition to her fear, Salamanca is angry, especially at the relationship developing between her father and Margaret Cadaver. Creech often characterizes Sal as feeling "particularly ornery" and accentuates the awareness of her behavior. She tells the reader, "Whenever anyone tried to console me about my mother, I had nearly chomped their heads off." Although she feels miserable and lost, she will never admit it. Instead, Salamanca feels she has to cry by herself.

Edelman explains ornery behavior like Salamanca's by reminding us that mourning hurts. It requires these girls to take a risk, to lose control of emotions. In order to take this risk, they need to feel a safety from the remaining parent who has already begun the healing process. Therefore, adolescent girls begin to grieve six to nine months after the death of their mother. Not until Salamanca visits the site of her mother's grave a year later that she is able to face her sorrow and begin to move toward acceptance. In fact, Salamanca buries her grief as she remains in denial about her mother's death.

Psychologist Judith Mishne writes, "The avoidance of the finality of the loss is supported by fantasies of the parents return" ("Parental Abandonment," 1987, 17). In the same way, Salamanca tells us, "When my mother did not return, I imagined all sorts of things. Maybe she had cancer and didn't want to tell us and was hiding in Idaho. Maybe she got knocked on the head and had amnesia and was wandering around Lewiston, not knowing who she was, or thinking she was someone else." Salamanca needs to feel that her mother is coming back and refuses to believe her father saying those reasons are "fishes in the air."

Even when the journey to Idaho begins, Sal expresses an extreme urgency in getting to Lewiston by her mother's birthday so they would have a chance at bringing her home. "I had been praying that a miracle would happen and my mother would come back and we would return to Bybanks and everything would be exactly as it used to be." But once Salamanca saw the wreckage of the accident, she knew things would never be the same. When Salamanca finally returns to Bybanks, she learns that she can still live on the farm, she still climb the sugar maple tree, and she can still miss her mother, too.

#### *A Girl Named Disaster (1996)*

In *A Girl Named Disaster*, Nancy Farmer's engrossing tale of a young girl's maturation in the rural Africa of Zimbabwe

and later Mozambique, we are shown how one motherless daughter utilizes idealization of the deceased as a normal response to loss. The tragic death of Nhamo's mother, Runako, haunts her daughter. A leopard killed Runako when Nhamo was three years old. The animal came into the hut, struck, and dragged the young mother's lifeless body back into the jungle.

The bereaved move toward acceptance when they can visualize the face of the deceased at peace. Virginia Woolf, who was thirteen when her mother died, wrote, "Youth and death shed a halo through which it is difficult to see a real face" (A Sketch of the Past 15).

Nhamo cannot recall her mother's face. She supplements her mother's face with that of a model in an advertisement torn from a magazine. The woman, clean and well dressed, is serving margarine and bread to a little girl. Nhamo treasures the picture. She speaks to it daily as if her mother were still alive. Rather than surmising her mother's face looks like one of the weather-beaten women of her village, Nhamo idealizes her mother as having the features of a magazine model. Edelman writes that because girls love their mothers they want them to be flawless when they lived. Girls honor their mothers by granting them posthumous perfection, and soothe themselves by creating the mothers they wish they had. One of the key reasons mothers cannot be replaced when they are gone is that there is confusion as to who is missed – the ideal mother or the real one (Davidman 2000).

Though deceased, Runako plays a vital role in a novel where spirits can and do converse with the living. When Nhamo is forced to flee her village in a leaking fishing boat and becomes lost on a great lake, she freely converses with her mother's spirit who responds. Nhamo hears her mother's voice as "sweet and low" (Farmer, 1996, 293). This is an idealized voice that would match the appearance of a model in a magazine advertisement. Later, after a severe illness, Nhamo comes to believe a female doctor is her mother, because of the physician's resemblance to the model in the advertisement. Nhamo transfers her mother's identity to the woman who cares for her during an illness. This idealized maternal figure is highly intelligent, a quality Runako was said to have possessed.

Only when Nhamo sees a photograph of her mother and hears the true story of Runako's life is Nhamo able to separate the image of her mother from the advertisement and to come to terms with her grief. Nhamo has established herself as an independent person without feeling she has abandoned the memory of her mother.

#### *Out of the Dust* (1997)

A daughter who is an only child suffers a different loss when her mother dies. Because she received more attention from her mother, her loss is greater, according to Edelman. That is true in Karen Hesse's remarkable novel, *Out of the Dust*.

The novel, written in first person, free verse poems, follows 14-year-old Billie Jo Kelby through a journey of healing that begins with her mother's accidental, yet horrific death. Set in the Oklahoma Dust Bowl, the community holds both Billie Jo and her father jointly responsible.

After the death of the mother, the relationship between a father and his only child changes. Billie Jo comments, "I don't

know my father anymore . . . I am awkward and irritated . . . We are both changing. We are shifting to fill in the empty spaces left by Ma." The effort is not successful. A nurturing, caring, unconditionally loving mother is so central to our idea of family that it is virtually impossible to have a family with out her (Davidman 2000).

Sometimes motherless daughters feel the impulse to become perfect so their father won't leave them too. During her first Christmas without her mother, Billie Jo aches that she never had mother teach her to make a special cranberry sauce. Billie Jo laments that being there without her mother would not have been so bad if she had remembered the cranberry sauce her father so enjoyed. In reality, it is not cranberry sauce that is creating distance between father and daughter.

The death of her mother has left Billie Jo and her father alone. Not knowing how to cope with the death, their relationship begins to disintegrate. Edelman reminds us that a child who loses a parent cannot exist alone emotionally without significant cost. Billie Jo desperately yearns for her father's love, but they no longer know how to talk with one another. Billie Jo states, "My father and I, we can't soothe each other. I'm too young, he's too old, and we don't know how to talk anymore if we ever did" (Hesse 153).

Time progresses and the relationship diminishes further. "I have given my father so many chances to understand, to reach out, to love me. He once did. I remember his smile, his easy talk. Now there's nothing easy between us" (Hesse 195).

Ultimately Billie Jo leaves her father. Unable to find solace, this motherless daughter hopes to abandon her loneliness when she latches on to an abandoned boxcar and heads west. She is not gone long. During her journey, Billie Jo learns a life on the road is even more lonely than the life at home. Upon her return, she and her father begin to find healing, acceptance, peace, and forgiveness:

As we walk together,  
side by side,  
in the swell of dust,  
I am forgiving him, step by step,  
for the pail of kerosene.  
As we walk together,  
side by side,  
in the sole-deep dust,  
I am forgiving myself  
for the rest.

(*Out of the Dust* 206)

#### *Dancing on the Edge* (1997)

Suicide brings with it a legacy of confusion, guilt, blame, hostility, stigma and feelings of rejection. Social stigma compounds problems created by a suicide. The potent mechanism of denial may prompt the bereaved to unconsciously create acceptable stories. That is all true for Miracle McCloy.

In a book that is controversial for its inclusion of Ouija boards and self-immolation, the effort undertaken by this motherless daughter to find inner peace is profound. Named by her maternal grandmother Gigi, Miracle was born immediately after her mother was killed. Sissy, nine months pregnant, was struck by an ambulance. "It didn't seem natural, a

live baby coming out of the dead body of a dead woman. Gigi said it was the greatest miracle ever to come down the pike," reads the opening passage of Han Nolan's powerful novel, *Dancing on the Edge* (3).

Children who have lost their mothers feel they no longer have a stable foundation in their lives (Davidman 2000). The narrative of this novel follows Miracle as she leads an unconventional life filled with isolation and unspoken grief. Her father leaves one night during Miracle's first attempt to connect with her dead mother's spirit using the Ouija board. The grandmother Gigi denies the truth of her son's departure as a rejection of her. She creates a fanciful tale that has Dane vanishing in the flames of the candles in his basement bedroom.

Miracle grieves the loss of both her dead mother and absent father until her torment is extreme. She sets herself afire to follow her father. While hospitalized and partaking in therapy, Miracle confronts the truth of her mother's death:

I saw Mama sad, the way she was in the picture of her on the iron gate. I saw her standing on the side of the street looking down the road to check for traffic. I saw her watching the ambulance, waiting for it to pass, its siren screaming, blocking out her own thoughts, her ability to reason, there wasn't time. There was just the screaming siren, the speeding truck, there was no time to think, she just did it, she stepped in front of the ambulance. She let it hit her, I saw it. I knew how it was. I had always known. I had always known! (*Dancing on the Edge* 217).

Children grieve differently than adults. Their process is lengthened, extending throughout their development as their cognitive and emotional abilities mature. Miracle and some of our students cannot address the death of their mothers before they are ready. Yet, as Edelman suggests, all ties, both positive and negative, have to be evaluated before a daughter can reconcile her mother's death and move on.

There is no more suitable time to discuss the concept of forgiveness than in the wake of a suicide. This is the teachable moment. Students can learn to forgive the deceased and forgive themselves for any guilt they may hold. This is critical to the healing process. Later Miracle proclaims, "I didn't need Mama to make me feel real . . . I was real . . . It was knowing the truth – all of it. The truth made me real" (*Dancing on the Edge* 234).

*Girlhearts* (2001)

In her landmark research and subsequent writings about death and dying, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identified the five stages of grief and loss – anger, denial, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kübler-Ross 1969). Award-winning author Norma Fox Mazer sends 13-year-old Sarabeth Silver on a journey through these stages following the untimely fatal heart attack of her 29-year-old mother, Jane Halley Silver.

Sarabeth changes following the death of her mother. "You're not the person you used to be. Jane would cry to see

you," warns Cynthia, Sarabeth's mother's best friend, and now Sarabeth's temporary guardian (*Girlhearts* 157).

Others notice the change. Her friend Patty, a sexual abuse survivor, tells Sarabeth, "You're all closed up; you're like a room with no doors and no windows" (*Girlhearts* 150).

The character of Chester Jay Travisino, Sarabeth's social worker, allows Mazer to speak directly to the grieving process and specifically to issues of anger present in one suffering from grief and loss:

This 'yeah, yeah' stuff is telling me you're depressed. You're mad, really mad. And we both know why. You're mad at your mother for dying. Simple as that. Listen you can admit it. Nobody'll put you in jail for being angry about her deserting you. (*Girlhearts* 93)

Through the narrative, Sarabeth does confront her anger, as well as her denial, her depression, and ultimately her acceptance. In the closing of the novel, Sarabeth has a dream of her mother. They share a moment together. Finally Sarabeth acknowledges the realization that she will never forget her mother nor will her mother forget her. "And the happiness I felt was extraordinary."

Traditionally we shield children from the grim finality of death. *Girlhearts* does not shield the adolescent reader from Sarabeth's raw emotions. Kübler-Ross spent her life writing about how death shapes experience. Advocating that children should not be hidden from a friend or a family member who is dying, she writes, "If we shield the canyons from the winds, we would never know the beauty of their carvings" (Kübler-Ross xix).

## Conclusion

In *Motherless Daughters*, Phyllis Silverman, M.D., director of the Child Bereavement Study at Massachusetts General Hospital, stated that asking girls to sever ties to the past may only confound bereavement. When one loses her mother, the intervals between grief responses lengthen over time, but the longing never disappears. Edelman explains that grief always hovers at the edge of her awareness, prepared to surface at any time, in any place in the least expected ways.

As educators, we have choices. Many novels we teach begin or end in death. We can opt to turn away from those students who grieve and dismiss their emotion as the result of effective storytelling. Traditionally we shield children from the grim finality of death. Those who work with children confronted by death tell us that this is an error.

Girls enveloped in grief and loss feel anger, denial, and depression. Purposefully or not, we encourage denial. Societal rules regarding anger are different for young men than young women. Young women who exhibit rage are not in keeping with the traditional feminine behavior of many cultures. An adolescent who has lost the primary female role model in her life wants to conform. She wants the other females in her life to like her. The teenage girl who thinks her mother's absence will make her appear different or abnormal will often avoid talking about the loss or revealing any anger

or depression to her friends. The motherless daughter is also coping with rejection. "My mother left me." The argument is not rational, but the feeling of rejection is real.

The notion exists that grief is a finite process that can be resolved (Davidman 2000). Grief does not end. Motherless daughters revisit their loss at significant moments in their lives – graduation, awards night, first date, a break up with a serious boyfriend, birthdays, Mother's Day. The motherless daughter misses her mother at these and other significant moments.

No one story should be expected to offer a complete philosophy, to portray all the stages of grief and adherence to the "typical" set of circumstances (Radley, 1999). Literary characters can provide experiences and actions to guide readers to empathy or to model positive choices. As educators, we have the opportunity of enriching the study of adolescent literature by expanding into the realm of profound relevancy for not only those students who address grief and loss in their lives but every student by providing a greater depth of understanding of bereavement and acceptance – the reality of death, the importance of connecting with others, the power of forgiveness, the ability to feel joy without guilt, and the freedom of truth.

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# Reappearing Fathers, Reappearing Pasts: History, Gender, and Identity in Hamilton's *Plain City* and Myers' *Somewhere in the Darkness*

Laura Apol

There are many similarities between authors Virginia Hamilton and Walter Dean Myers. Pick up a text book of children's literature and you will find both of these names prominently displayed. Pick up a list of important readings in multicultural literature, a list of children's literature awards, a list of articulate discussions about the issues that surround the reading and writing of literature for children—you will likely encounter the names and voices of Virginia Hamilton and Walter Dean Myers. Each has published dozens of books—contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction and non-fiction; each has received numerous top awards for children's and adolescent literature; each is widely acknowledged for important contributions to the field of children's literature in general, and to the area of multicultural literature in particular. Each writes deliberately from her or his position as an African American author, using language (its cadences, rhythms, nuances, dialects) to convey the beauty and complexities of the lives of the characters of the stories. Both are hailed as profoundly influential authors of contemporary realistic fiction for young people. Perry Nodelman writes of Virginia Hamilton that “. . . if any still productive children's writer deserves to have her entire body of work considered as a touchstone it is Virginia Hamilton—our greatest living children's writer, our most surprising and infuriating, our most daring and perhaps our wisest” (10). Of Walter Dean Myers, Rudine Sims Bishop writes, “One of Myers's major contributions has been his authentic and generally positive portrayal of Black life in urban United States” (12).

## Similarities in the Authors and Books

There are also numerous similarities between two specific novels by these authors, *Plain City* (1993) by Hamilton and *Somewhere in the Darkness* (1992) by Myers. *Plain City* is the story of a twelve-year-old girl, Buhlaire, who searches for

and eventually finds her father—a father who was not killed in the Viet Nam war, as Buhlaire had been led to believe, but who is instead living in an underpass by the interstate outside Plain City—unemployed, homeless, and mentally unstable. The second novel, Myers' *Somewhere in the Darkness*, contains a male protagonist, Jimmy Little. Like Buhlaire, Jimmy has never had anything to do with his father, Crab, for although Crab is alive, he is serving jail time for having killed someone in an armed robbery. The story begins when Crab appears unexpectedly at the door of the apartment where Jimmy lives with Mama Jean (who is not his real mother), wanting to take Jimmy on a cross-country tour in order to prove his own innocence and “make it right” with his son before a terminal illness ends his life.

Both stories, then, revolve around young protagonists who encounter fathers who are not only marginal in the lives of their children, but who are socially marginal as well—a homeless man with significant mental instabilities, and a terminally ill convicted killer who escapes from jail and steals cars and credit cards to support a cross-

country odyssey intended to absolve his personal sense of parental guilt.

Both stories are coming-of-age stories as well—stories in which children are transformed into young adults, stories in which protagonists move into greater self-understanding and self-awareness through the course of the narrative. In each of the novels, self-identity is connected to disappearing and reappearing fathers. How, these protagonists ask, can you know yourself unless you know where you came from? Know who you might look like? Know who was there when you were a small child? Know why that person disappeared? When the fathers in these stories reappear, the simple fact of their presence is a catalyst for the protagonist's self understanding. Having a sense of past, the novels seem to say, is prerequisite to having a sense of self.

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In both books, photographs represent an important means of coming to terms with the past—photographs of protagonists in intact families: a mother, a father and a baby. Stolen photographs that Buhlaire's father returns to her when at last they meet; photographs from before Jimmy's mother died, before his father went to jail.

As fathers reappear, both books explore the notion of love—parent to child, child to parent. Buhlaire loves her father at once; she loves the thought of him, is surprised by the reality of him, but loves him anyway because he's her dad. And she's quick to say it, to herself, to him, and to others. Jimmy's love develops more slowly, resistantly. Perhaps it can never really be called love. It begins with curiosity. It includes exchanges in which Crab passionately asserts, "I am your father" (49) and Jimmy responds with equal fervor, "You ain't nothing!" (50). It has within it Jimmy's desire, and inability, to like Crab, as well as a moment where Jimmy, "look[ing] for someone he loved" sees only "the darkness of the man, the outstretched hand" (154). It evolves into a tentative liking and culminates in a final moment of reconciliation, where Crab, captured by police and in enormous physical pain—near death—says to Jimmy, "Hey man, I'm sorry" and Jimmy responds for the first and only time with a term of affection, "I know, Daddy. I know" (161).

There are numerous other similarities between the novels as well: there is the role of physical resemblance and identification—the times children looked at fathers to "see" themselves, as if in a mirror. There is the confidence that both Buhlaire and Jimmy have that their fathers will "teach" them something about themselves; there is the fact that both fathers rarely succeed at telling the truth, and that both fathers justify deception and theft as ways to facilitate relationship with their children. In both books, money (given from child to parent), becomes a symbol of the caretaking these fathers require, and both Buhlaire and Jimmy fall into caregiving roles—roles that at first they resent, but that they grow into as they accept the limitations and liabilities of their fathers. Finally, there is the shared notion of "home" in the novels—a place that includes a configuration of people who love you but are not necessarily your biological parents, a place of safety, and a place to return to when you've learned who you are.

#### Differences in the Authors and Books

There are also many points of difference between the authors and the stories. Although both Hamilton and Myers share a commitment to bringing to readers many forms of African American literature, these two authors each acknowledge or are acknowledged as writing from their unique positions as a woman or man of color. Hamilton has said of her novels, "They come out of the real in my life, I believe. . . . Most of the time I write close to my own original source—my hometown, my Perry/Hamilton family and ancestry. I draw as near as I can to that deep well of fact and memory" ("Acceptance" 438); and she explains the following about her process of discovering a distinctly female voice in the character of Buhlaire in *Plain City*: "While uncovering this remarkable, twelve-year-old Buhlaire, I realized that I see young people, particularly young females, as seeking strength. . . . Young girls, developing toward womanhood, are on a quest for self and maturity, as is my protagonist, Buhlaire" ("Everything" 376).

Myers, on the other hand, is often recognized for his portrayals of father-son experiences. In 1991, he was heralded in the following way: "Although he shares certain aspects of his world view with Black women authors, his voice has been tuned by barbershops and street corners, bongo drums and fatherhood, basketball and military service. His brand of humor, his facile rendering of the rhetoric of Black teenage boys, his strong focus on fathers and sons, are all shaded by his experiences as a Black male" (Bishop 25).

As a result, although *Plain City* and *Somewhere in the Darkness* contain numerous similarities, they also contain fundamental differences. Consider the following: both Buhlaire and Jimmy have been "father-less" for most of their lives. Both begin their stories with dreams about their absent fathers—dreams that are literal and figurative, and that reveal an underlying certainty that knowing their fathers will help them know something about themselves. Both find fathers who are flawed, troubled, troubling, and while both learn that moving into the adult world means you understand that parents let you down, disappear, make mistakes, and you come to terms with it. Still, they react to this knowledge in very different ways. For Jimmy, the flawed father who is Crab is something to resist, to condemn. Jimmy is distressed by Crab's deceptions; he is not afraid to name Crab's faults, to tell him when his reasoning or his actions are "wrong." Buhlaire, on the other hand, seems relatively untroubled by Junior's lies. While Jimmy challenges Crab's behavior, Buhlaire defends Junior, makes excuses for him, maintaining that things are not really his fault. In spite of his imperfections, she still identifies with him, loves him, cares for him.

Thus, for all their likenesses, these two novels exhibit a significant underlying difference: in *Plain City*, Buhlaire's self-understanding comes most strongly through her sense of connection and identification *with* her father, while in *Somewhere in the Darkness* Jimmy seeks his sense of self through independence, autonomy and identification *against* his father. In this way, although both stories could be considered coming-of-age stories, Jimmy's coming of age is shaped according to what has come to be known as the "ordeal motif" (Kelly 39), while Buhlaire's coming of age could be more accurately classified as a "taming of the female spirit" (Apol 68).

#### Coming of Age: Ordeals and Taming the Spirit

In the ordeal motif, a child or young person is temporarily isolated from the moral influence of adults and undergoes an experience (or series of experiences) that requires a decisive response or action. The young person "succeeds" at meeting these challenges; having proved him or herself in action, the young person returns to the safety of the family or the supervision of adult society, where he or she is rewarded. While on his cross-country odyssey, Jimmy is not technically isolated from the moral influence of adults; however, Crab (though adult in years) cannot really be considered a *moral* influence for Jimmy. (In fact, it could be argued that rather than acting as an adult who provides Jimmy with a moral compass, Crab is himself one of the challenges Jimmy faces.) Jimmy is required to take action and single-handedly meet difficulties as they arise, and, in typical "ordeal" fashion, after Jimmy has "proved" himself in his quest for self-understanding, he returns to the safety of the family—his *true* family,



that is—in the person of Mama Jean.

Unlike the “ordeal” motif, which happens most often in stories with young male protagonists, the story shape exhibited in *Plain City* is one that is frequently provided for female protagonists: the “taming of the spirit,” where a young girl moves from the relative freedom and independence of childhood into a fuller understanding of her role as a woman. In literature of the past, this female rite of passage was overt: while boys’ stories contained accounts of adventure and heroism, girls’ stories presented protagonists who “grew” into roles of selflessness, deferment, and domestic duty (Apol 61-80). The “role as a woman” that waited for adolescent girls frequently involved an other-directedness that stood at odds with female autonomy, personal freedom, or individual growth. *Plain City* exhibits such a “taming of the female spirit,” for although one could argue that Buhlaire never truly gives up her autonomy, part of the lesson she learns in the course of the novel is that the world is full of unsafe individuals (usually men) who appear in the novel in various forms—including the strange man who frightens a free-wandering Buhlaire in the woods, as well as the menacing men who move closer to Buhlaire while she’s talking to her father in the railroad underpass. (It could, in fact, be argued that the entire point of the book is that Buhlaire learns how to interact with men—how to view Uncle Sam as protector, how to see Grady as a friend, how to find a father in Junior and a surrogate father in Mister Brown, how to be wary of strange men in the woods and in the underpasses.) The coming-of-age lesson Buhlaire learns is to curb her independence, her journeying, since it may no longer be safe for her as a young woman to go out wandering alone. At the

same time, the unilateral model of comforting, nurturing, and caring that characterizes her new relationship with her father *does* put Buhlaire in the position of female selflessness and other-directedness. Although Buhlaire wants a father, she becomes in many ways Junior’s *mother*—giving him money, looking out for him, defending him to his family, providing him with unconditional love.

In this way, the two novels can be viewed as following gender-based coming-of-age story patterns—patterns that have their roots in the work on the stages of moral development articulated by Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) and later challenged on the basis of gender bias by Carol Gilligan (1982). While Kohlberg outlined a system of moral development and an ethic of justice based on individuality and separateness, Gilligan maintained that for women, the highest forms of moral development are characterized by an ethic of care and social responsibility. Kohlberg’s system validates concepts such as autonomy, detachment, justice, rights and independence; Gilligan claims that Kohlberg’s are particularly “male” understandings of moral development, and that female identity formation takes place in a context of ongoing relationship since “girls, in identifying themselves as female,

experience themselves as *like* their mothers, thus fusing the experience of attachment with the process of identity formation” (Gilligan 8). This means that “girls emerge. . . with a basis for ‘empathy’ built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not” (Chodorow 167). For this reason, Gilligan maintains that “Masculinity is defined through *separation* while femininity is defined through *attachment*” (Gilligan 8, emphasis mine).

While both Kohlberg’s and Gilligan’s views have been widely criticized for their inherent essentialism, the theories they put forward about male and female development are blueprints for the processes depicted in the lives of Myers’s and Hamilton’s protagonists. Jimmy does, indeed, operate under a system of justice, using the “wrong-ness” of Crab’s actions as a basis for judgement and even outright condemnation, opting for individuality—identification *against* rather than connection *with* his reappearing father. Late in the story, after a final effort on Crab’s part to convince Jimmy that he never did commit the murder for which he is serving time, Jimmy turns and says to his father, “It don’t make a difference if you didn’t kill anybody. . . . Not if you’re going to steal some money or credit cards or something. That’s wrong,

too. It don’t make you good just because you didn’t kill nobody!” (155). When Crab responds by taking Jimmy’s face in his hands and saying “Don’t it make a difference if it’s all I got left? What else do I have?” Jimmy responds by pushing Crab’s hands away—a physical act of separation—and saying, “Just be you and let me be me” (155). And the conclusion of the book contains a lengthy and eloquent soliloquy in which Jimmy spells out the differences between himself and Crab, imagining himself with a son he will someday have and de-

scribing his own vision of fathering, completely the opposite of Crab’s (167). A developing sense of justice, autonomy, independence—according to Kohlberg’s model, Jimmy is indeed coming of age.

Buhlaire, on the other hand, demonstrates perfectly Gilligan’s pattern of female moral development. Her sense of identity is embedded within a sense of social responsibility, connection, and care. When she meets the stranger in the woods—even after he is revealed as a dangerous stranger—she responds by imagining that her rescuer, Uncle Sam, has been too hard on the man. “Care for your fellow man. . . care for your fellow, sister, human beings” (48) she recites to her uncle. When Buhlaire at last finds her father, she discovers that he, too, is a stranger—someone she has never known, and someone who is difficult to love. He says strange things, smells bad, lives with other homeless people near the interstate. Like Jimmy’s father Crab, Buhlaire’s father Junior steals, lies, tells half truths, and represents an unlikely candidate for emulation or even affection. Yet Buhlaire responds with unconditional love and identification. In desiring to take care of a father who seems mostly unable to take care of himself, she embodies her own maxim to “Care for your fellow man.”

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And when Buhlaire says goodbye to her father at the underpass, she adds, "And when you need anything . . . well, I'll come" (177).

In the final analysis, though, although these protagonists do seem to fit gender-specific coming of age scenarios in the forms of ordeals and tamings, and while they do seem to fit gender specific models of moral development, the process of identity formation in both of the novels resists such simple and binary understandings. In *Somewhere in the Darkness*, Jimmy's autonomy is undermined by the sense of intense connectedness that he feels for Mama Jean—connectedness and a sense of community that began in the opening pages of the book and continue through to the end. Often Jimmy is portrayed as saying or thinking about how much he loves Mama Jean. His relationship with her is characterized by mutual caretaking; at one point in Jimmy's journey, Myers writes, "Jimmy thought of Mama Jean again. He wondered if the rain would bother her arthritis. If it did she'd have trouble getting up in the morning and he wouldn't be there to make tea for her. He wondered if she were thinking about him, and if she were sad. He thought a 'hello' to her, and 'I love you'" (39). At the end of the story, Mama Jean is the home Jimmy returns to, his lessons learned, his independence gained.

In a similar way, Buhlaire complicates the neatness of a binary understanding of female coming of age as well. Embedded in her ethic of care for Junior is an in-your-face defiance of her family's rules, an insistence on independence and individuality that will not allow her to conform to the communal expectations of her mother, her uncles, and her aunts. It is through exercising her caretaking that Buhlaire asserts the power of her own decision-making process and proves herself less dependent on the opinions of others, more able to think and act on her own.

Which leads, it seems, to the heart of identity formation in these two novels—that is, the intensely dialogic nature of the process itself. From the outset, both Jimmy and Buhlaire have a sense of this dialogic, discursive construction of identity. They know that one way to know who you are is to study your parents—in this case, your father—in order to see who you look like, whose face mirrors yours. You compare your hair, your eyes, the color of your skin; you see the patterns of their thinking and their lives and see how you fit, where things come together. You touch that person, physically and emotionally, leave your mark on them, discover their mark on you. You talk.

Shortly after Crab appears, Jimmy expresses this understanding of the dialogic interplay in the construction of identity when he says to himself: "He [Jimmy] would have like to stand them both [himself and Crab] up in front of a mirror and see how they looked together" (28); further, Myers writes that "He [Jimmy] wondered how he looked to Crab. Whether Crab thought they looked alike or not" (43). Later, as Jimmy sits beside Crab in the car, he imagines Crab sitting alongside his own father—a double mirroring of sorts—and speculates on the similarities and differences between his life and

Crab's; in one of the final scenes of the book, Jimmy and Crab are running from the police, and their actions are described as identical: "Jimmy found himself running, not toward Crab but in the same direction, his arms moving as Crab's were moving" (160). In the final scene between Jimmy and Crab, while his father lies dying in the hospital bed, Jimmy eats the food they bring in for Crab—physically taking his father's place by eating his father's food. As Jimmy eats, Crab breathes one last hard breath and dies, completing the dialogue between Jimmy and Crab that will help Jimmy determine his place in the world. Buhlaire, too, constructs identity dialogically. She, too, sees the similarities between herself and Junior—their rasta hair, their light skin. In fact, she goes so far as to say, "I am like my dad, can't stand the indoors for long. Have to stride the land. Just an outside child!" (169).

#### Coming of Age: Past, Present, and Future

For both Jimmy and Buhlaire, there is another sense in which identity is dialogic as well. If identity is constructed in dialogue with another individual, it is also constructed in dialogue between the present, the future, and the past. The quest for a father is, in essence, the quest for a past. The photographs, the stories, the mementoes that include fathers are representative of what Buhlaire terms "back time"—a history made explicit, even visible. After meeting her father, Buhlaire understands something about herself: "All the time, forever, she had these daydreams. . . . A ball . . . A man. I'm on the grass, I see the ball coming. A see sunlight and the man, smiling. My own show. Just always there, like a wish. Wow! It's my own back time! Me and my dad, playing" (116).

While through their absences, both Junior and Crab have stolen their children's history—their children's "back time"—Junior

has done so in a more deliberate fashion, sneaking into Buhlaire's bedroom at night and stealing her photographs, medals, treasures. When at their first meeting Junior returns to Buhlaire the packet of stolen goods, he is literally returning her back time. She thinks to herself, "Did he 'take' stuff about me? . . . My dad, a thief! . . . He took my things. He took off with my back time. He sure did. Maybe he just wanted to have me with him. That's why he took the stuff! It would be like having me pay attention to him!" (127).

For Buhlaire, making sense of the present means coming to terms with the past. "You can't change back time. Back time stays back, that's all" (170). Jimmy, too, needs to come to terms with the past, to understand Crab's history—Crab as a child and Crab's father—before he can understand Crab as the father he is, is not, and never will be. And for Jimmy the dialogue continues into the future, into the father Jimmy imagines he himself will someday become. Myers writes,

He thought about what he would do with the child if he were a boy. He wouldn't know much about getting money to buy food for him, or what things to tell him to do except to be good and not get into trouble. But he would tell him all the secrets he knew, looking right into his eyes and telling him

nothing but the truth so that every time they were together they would know things about each other. That way there would be a connection, he thought, something that would be there even when they weren't together. He would know just how he was like his son, and how they were different, and where their souls touched and where they didn't. He knew if he ever had a son he would have to do it right away, and all the time, because sooner or later there wouldn't be enough days left to fit the meaning into. (167)

### Coming of Age: Dialogue of the Self

Identity is a dialogue between people; identity is a dialogue between times; but in its deepest sense, identity is a dialogue of the self, a shifting process most visible in the discourses that construct the novels themselves. In this regard, the two books seem to move once more in different directions. Myers's telling of the story in *Somewhere in the Darkness* relies on a fairly linear discourse—a narrative structure that moves forward from the introduction of Crab as Jimmy's father, through the hall of mirrors of the father/son legacy, to the scene where Jimmy imagines himself with a son of his own. Myers' message seems to be a straightforward one; as writer Dennis Vellucci puts it,

If Jimmy is representative, the next generation of fathers will not be fated to repeat the mistakes of past generations, and the cycle of broken families, of distant or anonymous fathers, of sons left too young to their own resources might be broken. Jimmy has learned the importance of the father-son bond through its absence in his own life; his reflections at the end of the book promise that, sensitive and responsible, he will one day be for someone an exemplary guide. (212)

Jimmy's journey, his relationship with Crab, the dialogue between father and son, between past, present and future, transforms Jimmy from a boy to a man—and a responsible and honorable man at that.

The discursive mode in *Plain City*, on the other hand, adds an additional complexity to the dialogic construction of self, for the narrative structures themselves create within the protagonist a dialogue, self to self. Throughout the novel, the text resists a linear telling by being fragmented, indirect, uncertain; within Buhlaire's mind, voices meet and compete—an ongoing interior dialogue as she tries to see herself as she imagines others do, constructing a sense of identity both from the inside out and from the outside in. Periodically the text is interrupted by an italicized "snap!"—an interjection that functions much as the snap of the shutter of a camera, stopping the action at the very moment when Buhlaire is most intent on seeing herself—discussing herself with herself—not from within, but from without.

In *Plain City*, readers can recognize the constitutive power of discourse; by rejecting a limiting and unified authoritative discourse that follows prescribed conventions and fixed rules of language, Hamilton allows father and mother, self and other, past and present to blend and blur. Buhlaire's multiplicity of voice eventually becomes her strength; the discourses that meet and compete within her eventually help her form a sense of identity that is comfortable with a shifting sense of who she has been, is, and will become.

It is the dialogic nature of identity construction, then—between people, between past, present and future, and between aspects of the self—that allows the young people in these stories to actively *become*: to value their struggles, to

celebrate their strengths, to comprehend their pain, to make sense of their lives. In the process of each of these stories, the protagonists not only gain a sense of self, but they gain as well the knowledge of how that self is constructed. Both of these novels—so alike, so different—are about the stories the protagonists are told, the stories they have told themselves, and the ways those stories are revised as time goes on. As Buhlaire and Jimmy journey—physically, psychologically—the idea of a unified self becomes more and more removed. Instead, identity is recognized as a complicated interaction between people (both identification with and independence from), between times (back time, present time, future) and between voices (inner, outer, imagined, real). Through multiple ongoing dialogues, the self is revealed not as an object or thing, but as an interactive, discursive process—the process of discovering who you were, who you are now, and who it is you may one day be.

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# Francesca Lia Block's Use of Enchantment: Teenagers' Need for Magic in the Real World

Lois L. Warner

Once upon a time. What is that supposed to mean?

What time are we upon, and where do I belong?

— *Witch Baby* (2,3)

Francesca Lia Block began publishing novels for adolescents just over ten years ago, while she was in college. As consolation for being away from Los Angeles too long, she wrote a short book about a character she developed in high school, Weetzie, the "punk princess" (Campbell). While the plots of her subsequent books tackle a range of subjects often found in adolescent literature, they are consistent in that, as Rebecca Platzner writes in the winter 1998 edition of *The ALAN Review*, they blend real fairy-tale elements. It is this melding of the magic and the ordinary that makes Block's work special. Magic is what makes people dream, and what better time is there to dream than the teen years, when there is still time to make one's dreams come true?

## Magic in the Real

In *Speaking for Ourselves, Too*, Block describes her slipping of fairies, genies and witches into late twentieth-century Los Angeles as "a kind of magic realism" (17). Although it may appear that "magic realism" is a phrase she made up on the spur of the moment, magic realism is a legitimate literary phenomenon that has been around more than fifty years; a Cuban novelist named Alejo Carpentier developed the technique as a means of incorporating everyday life with the mythic qualities of Latin American geography and history. In magic realism, what is "real," even ordinary, is enriched by incorporating elements of religion, myth, and magic ("magic realism," *Benét's*). It is different from fantasy in that the fantasy novel depends on the strangeness of its characters and setting ("fantasy"). In magic realism, imaginary events are treated as if they were normal, everyday occurrences ("magic realism," *Merriam-Webster's*).

Francesca Lia Block is doubtlessly familiar with the concept of magic realism since she has a background in English literature and poetry (Campbell 59). In college she "...fell in love with ...the magic realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez" ("F.L. Block," *Authors and Artists*). Additionally, Block indicates in a 1996 interview that one of her favorite authors is

Jeanette Winterson, whose best-known book, *The Passion*, is a novel set during the Napoleonic wars with characters that walk on water and see for miles ("Cool Block"). Block's taste for magic realism is evident in her novels when her teen-aged characters carry fairies around in their pocketbooks and are granted wishes from genies. The strange lady next door, the one whom the neighborhood children call a witch, probably is a witch if she happens to live in one of Block's stories.

## A Real Need For Magic

Block's books are a pleasure to read. Typically they are short, quickly paced and filled with well-to-do teenagers living exciting lives as actors, photographers, and models in Los Angeles. Any reader expecting a typical adolescent problem novel where even the stuff of teen fantasies is given straightforward, realistic treatments will soon realize, however, that Block's fiction is not the typical teen novel: the prose is fanciful and plots often draw on fairy tales or folklore. Although Block apparently focuses on her own experiences and aesthetic sensibilities rather than a perceived sense of teenagers' needs, she has inadvertently tapped into what psychologist Bruno Bettelheim

believes is a developmental necessity. Bettelheim, author of the seminal psychological study, *The Uses of Enchantment* (1972) asserts that children, including teenagers, need to read works that incorporate magic to understand and navigate their world. A child who dislikes a new classmate because he is standoffish, for example, would not understand that the newcomer might be shy or nervous and will be friendlier later on, when he is used to his new class. But a child familiar with the fairy-tale canon would know that frightening beasts can magically turn into friendly princes, and will therefore understand that people can change (50).

While children in American society are allowed some flights of fancy, the age at which they are expected to take on adult responsibilities seems to be getting younger and younger. Even a typical teenager is increasingly bombarded with a world filled with problems, problems that were perhaps shielded from the youths of preceding generations. At school, even young teenagers are constantly warned about the dangers of drug abuse and sexually transmitted diseases, and at home, they are often alone or supervising younger siblings until six or seven o'clock each day. Additionally, teenagers face the

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*The strange lady next door, the one the neighborhood children call a witch, probably is a witch if she happens to live in one of Block's stories.*

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ordeal of separating from their parents and maturing into independent adults. The adolescent problem novel has long attempted to reflect these aspects of teens' lives through relentlessly realistic books; however, according to Bettelheim, people as old as twelve and a half think as children, not as adults (46). If Bettelheim is correct, then an almost exclusively realistic canon of adolescent literature deprives young teenagers of a literature they can truly comprehend.

Though Francesca Lia Block's interest in magic realism and her personal experiences as a teenager in Los Angeles seem to be the impetus for her books, rather than any interest in Bettelheim's theories, her books do fill the void in literature that Bettelheim believes is crucial because they reveal truth through magical means that young teenagers can understand. When adolescents read that a genie gives Weetzie Bat three wishes, they can learn to articulate and create their futures. When Cherokee Bat makes gifts for her friends that magically transform them, teenaged readers will think about what gifts they possess. When Witch Baby saves Angel Juan from the den where teenagers are turned into mannequins, young adolescent readers learn that easy answers are traps.

According to Bettelheim, those who do not get the chance to enter the world of fairy tales as children will find some way of getting magic into their lives in late adolescence, almost as if they realize that they cannot meet the expectations of adult life without the chance to see the world magically. To get access to the magic they were denied in childhood, these young adults will use any means necessary:

Many young people who today suddenly seek escape in drug-induced dreams, apprentice themselves to some guru, believe in astrology, engage in practicing "black magic," or who in some other fashion escape from reality into daydreams about magic experiences which are to change their life for the better, were prematurely pressed to view reality in an adult way (51).

While the reading of a book is not a substitute for actual experience, Francesca Lia Block's later books offer a far less destructive avenue through which older teens can seek the magic Bettelheim believes they so desperately crave.

Unlike Block's earlier novels, which heavily draw on Block's upper-middle-class childhood experiences in and around Los Angeles, Block's more recent books appeal to older adolescents because they feature teens who are thrust into adult circumstances where they confront serious problems, circumstances high-school students are either facing prematurely as adolescents or contemplating encountering in the future (Campbell). While adolescent novels frequently examine similar themes, the teens in Block's novels learn to handle their problems through some sort of magical intervention, the "enchantment" Bettelheim hypothesizes they need. In *Baby Be-Bop*, for example, Weetzie Bat's best friend Dirk struggles with his sexuality, and by extension, his identity. When a band of skin-heads attack him because he is gay, a magic lamp connects Dirk with his past and identity by giving him the chance to meet the great-grandmother, grandfather, mother, and father he has never known. Barbie Marks, the protagonist of *I Was a Teenage Fairy*, takes Mab, her tough-talking fairy friend, almost everywhere she goes. The two remain inseparable until Barbie is able to confront the fact that her mother allowed her to be sexually abused. In *The Hanged Man*, Laurel uses the Tarot to tell a story that seems

to be about her slipping into a spiral of anorexia, sexual promiscuity, and drug abuse because she is grieving her late father, but is actually about how she is trying to forget that she was his mistress.

### The Real in the Magic

Block's most recent book, *The Rose and the Beast: Fairy Tales Retold* takes the magically realistic fiction she has been producing the last ten years to a new level. Reading these tales is like taking a walk in a fairy-tale forest: there are surprises hidden everywhere. Even the cover of the collection is designed to astonish and stun the most casual browser. A beautiful young girl with flowing long hair, wearing a filmy dress and a crown of flowers, waits patiently for her prince to save her. The bottom half of the girl's figure wraps around to the back of the book, however, where a different story is told. The maiden's fingernails, incongruously long and claw-like, are painted an eerie silvery-green color. They are the hands of an old woman, with wrinkles and age spots, jarringly out of place on this beautiful teen's body. The cover of the book is designed so the girl appears to be lying down, but the back of the book, with its placement of bushes and trees, shows clearly that the figure is standing. With the truths of the back cover revealed, the face of the girl on the front cover that, just a minute ago, looked peaceful and submissive now seems hard and angry. She who looked beautiful is now frightening.

The figure on the front of this book foreshadows the kaleidoscopic instability that is found within. In sharp contrast to the highly specified setting of Block's earlier books, the settings of the tales in this book jolt from the "once upon a time" in "Rose," a retelling of "Snow White and Rose Red" set in a fairy-tale forest to the back of a city bus in twentieth-century Los Angeles with a girl heading to her grandmother's house in the desert to avoid her father, the wolf. Additionally, the reader is bumped in and out of the stories with self-referential remarks. The unnamed protagonist of "Bones," for example, says, "I dreamed of being a part of the stories—even terrifying ones, even horror stories—because at least the girls in stories were alive before they died" (153). She is, of course, making these remarks as a part of a story, a retelling of "Bluebeard." These violent shifts from the past to the present and in and out, instead of confusing the reader, combine with Block's usual magic realism to underscore the universal nature of the tales.

Bettelheim writes that "...more can be learned from [fairy tales] about the inner problems of human beings, and of the right solutions to their predicaments in any society, than from any other type of story within a child's comprehension" (5). The tales Block chooses to "retell" particularly focus on the trauma that young adults face as they make the transition from childhood to full adult members of society. The pain and uncertainty of this transition, hypothesizes Bettelheim, may seem so great that the adolescent might be tempted to cling to childhood. Block seems instinctively to realize that those on the verge of adulthood need one final connection with the world of fairy tales to make that most traumatic transition. Fairy tales about growing up might serve as both a chance for the young adult to "practice" his experience in fantasy before he must in reality and as a warning to those who attempt to remain behind:

These stories also convince the hearer that he need not be afraid of relinquishing his childish position of depending on others, since after the dangerous hardships of the transitional period, he will emerge on a higher and better plane, to enter upon a richer and happier existence. Those who are reluctant to risk such a transformation, such as the two older brothers in "The Three Feathers," never gain the kingdom. Those who got stuck in the pre-oedipal stage of development, such as the dwarfs, will never know the happiness of love and marriage (215).

The stories Block chooses to revisit in *The Rose and the Beast* seem relevant to the bittersweet rites of passage involved in growing up even if the particular circumstances, like the circumstances of the original Snow Whites, Cinderellas, and Rapunzels, are extreme. While there is no evidence that Block draws directly on Bettelheim's theories, they are clearly echoed in her focus on teenagers' struggles to separate from their families and live effectively as adults.

In "Snow," Block's version of "Snow White," a story of "a mother's jealousy of her daughter's budding sexuality," Snow's mother, not her stepmother, is cast as the witch, and the hunter, recast as a gardener, is her mother's lover (Bettelheim 207). In "Snow" there is no prince; Snow and her mother battle for the love of the gardener. Instead of overcoming "the dangerous hardships of the transitional period" to "emerge on a higher plane," as happens in "Snow White," however, Snow tries to stall herself in Bettelheim's "pre-oedipal stage" by staying with the dwarfs, bringing devastating results. When Snow returns to the cottage and happily declares, "I am a freak," she ominously hears "seven pairs of boots climbing up the stairs to find her" (30-31). Snow has sentenced herself to a life as cramped as her dwarfed guardians simply to avoid the trauma of the transitional stage.

In "Charm," Block's version of "Sleeping Beauty," the needle is a syringe filled with heroin, and the sleep is a drug induced haze designed to shield Rev, the sleeping beauty, from horrifying life her parents give her. A childhood friend named Charm who is the long-lost love of her life saves her from her self-destructive spiral. Rev, like Snow, has neither separated from her parents emotionally nor accepted responsibility for her own life:

And then, finally, when her chance had come to ornament her beauty the way she wished, for the imagined forbidden lover with the small high breasts and sweet, wet hair and gentle eyes, she had pricked herself and fallen into the death sleep.

Perhaps it was what she deserved for wanting to make herself more beautiful. And for wanting what she could not have (92).

Unlike Snow, however, Rev eventually wakes up, makes the break, and finds happiness with Charm.

"Love is a dangerous angel," writes Francesca Lia Block at the end of her first book, *Weetzie Bat* (78). Block's subsequent work shows that life, for some teens, is also a dangerous angel: discrimination, drug abuse, sexual abuse, AIDS, and neglect are all parts their lives. Like the fairy tale charac-

ters whose stories precede them, the teenagers in Block's book experience far more trauma than does the average teen; however, their stories, also like those of the fairy tales, resonate with young adults because they all must go through a period of intense upheaval in order to enter the adult world. Francesca Lia Block's "fairy tales with an edge" offer these teens a last chance at the enchantment they need to help them make the leap to the next exciting stage of their lives (Block, *Authors and Artists*).

#### Annotated Bibliography of Block's Books for Adolescents (In order of publication; all published by HarperCollins)

*Weetzie Bat* (1989)

Weetzie's story is the first in the series, now collected as *Dangerous Angels* (1998), about herself and her family. Weetzie, the "punk princess," lives in Los Angeles and goes to a school "where no one understands her" (3). Her life is transformed when her best friend's grandmother gives her a lamp with a genie, and she makes and receives three wishes. Although these wishes all come true, the "happily ever after" implied in this almost-fairy tale is questionable as she and her friends face betrayal and disease.

*Witch Baby* (1991)

Witch Baby is the dark child of a union between "Secret Agent Lover Man," Weetzie's long time lover who functions as her husband, and Vixanne, a witch-like woman with whom Secret has an affair. Because

Witch Baby doesn't know that Secret is her biological father, she doesn't feel she belongs in a family that consists of Weetzie, Secret, Dirk, Dirk's lover Duck, and Cherokee Bat, her "almost sister" who is the biological daughter of Weetzie and any one of the three men in the family. With wild, dark curling hair and cowboy boot roller skates, Witch Baby embarks on a search for self-identity.

*Cherokee Bat and the Goat Guys* (1992)

Cherokee Bat's story is about the lure of power. When Cherokee, Witch Baby, and their boyfriends, Raphael and Angel Juan start a band called The Goat Guys, they have immediate success because of special gifts Cherokee makes each band member, gifts that enhance their performances on stage. Their success begins to turn sour, however, when Witch resorts to stealing horns for Angel, and Cherokee attempts to gather all of the power for herself by wearing everyone's gift at once. Unlike Block's other books, which draw on elements of European fairy tales, *Cherokee Bat* draws on Native American folklore.

*Missing Angel Juan* (1993)

This novel is Witch Baby's second story. In this book, Witch Baby continues her search for identity when she follows the love of her life, Angel Juan, to New York City. In a plot twist that borrows from the story of Bluebeard, and with the help of a fairy godmother-like figure in the person of Charlie Bat, Weetzie's deceased father, Witch finds Angel in a chamber of mannequinized teenagers. If *Witch Baby* is about finding one's identity in the family, *Missing Angel Juan* is about finding one's identity in the world.

### *The Hanged Man* (1994)

In her first departure from the Weetzie Bat books, this book is the story of a girl who attempts to deal with the death of her father by living a wild and self-destructive life in Los Angeles. In this book, Block draws on the folklore of the Tarot. Each chapter begins with a drawing of a card, a description of its meaning, and its place in the pattern of the fortune telling. At first, the stories that accompany each card seem tenuously connected, but, as in a Tarot reading, the pattern, or the story, is revealed when all the cards are in place. Eventually, the reader learns that Laurel is not acting in response to the pain of the loss of her loving father, but to the pain of his incestuous relationship with her.

### *Baby Be-Bop* (1995)

With *Baby Be-Bop* Block returns to the characters from the *Dangerous Angel* books to tell the back-story of Dirk, Weetzie's best friend. In her first and thus far only book with a male protagonist, Block takes the reader back to Dirk's early life and his struggle with his sexuality. When Fifi, his grandmother, gives Dirk a golden lamp, he gets a chance to meet some of the many deceased members of his family, including his parents, who help him forge his identity.

### *Girl Goddess #9* (1996)

A collection of mostly previously-published short stories, this book is interesting because Block has developed, in her novels, many of the themes that she introduced first in these stories. Some of the stories, such as "Tweetie Sweet Pea," which draws on Kurt Cobain's suicide (although he isn't mentioned by name), take their themes from popular culture, and others, such as "Blue," the story of a fairy, draw on the magical realism that are found in most of Block's longer works. Notable stories in this collection are "Dragons in Manhattan," a story drawing on *The Wizard of Oz* that shows Tuck finding her long-lost father in the form of one of her lesbian mothers, a transsexual, and the title story, "Girl Goddess #9," told in the form of a 'Zine about two girls realizing that their rock-god fantasy is another form of fairy tale.

### *I Was a Teenage Fairy* (1998)

Barbie Marks is a teenage model under the thumb of her mother. Her best friend is Mab, a fairy who lives in a birdcage in her room. Mab helps Barbie hold onto herself in the turmoil around her, and eventually Barbie faces up to truth that she and other models have been sexually abused by a photographer with their parents' full knowledge. Barbie achieves self-actualization when she saves a new child model from the photographer's abuse and becomes a photographer herself.

### *Violet and Claire* (1999)

*Violet and Claire* has fewer allusions to magic and fairy tales than do any other of Block's books. Dark Violet is obsessed with films, and she makes friends with light, fairy-like Claire because she sees Claire as a potential subject and star for the film she is making. Violet sells her script and becomes caught up in the glamorous and frightening Hollywood lifestyle, while Claire becomes involved with her poetry teacher. The novel concludes with the two coming together in the desert with the realization that they need each other to make it in the adult world.

### *The Rose and the Beast: Fairy Tales Retold* (2000)

Block deftly connects the realities of teenagers' lives with traditional fairy tales showing the tales' continued relevance (see text).

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## May I Recommend Three Brand New, Stunning YA Books for Your Summer Reading List

Sissi Carroll

*Big Mouth and Ugly Girl*, by Joyce Carol Oates (HarperCollins, to be released May, 2002)

This is the first young adult novel that prolific novelist and Princeton professor of creative writing Joyce Carol Oates has written. While the genre is new to Oates, the issues she addresses in *Big Mouth and Ugly Girl*, including teens' struggle to balance self-loathing with self-acceptance, the imperative of peer relationships, and the reality of the threat of violence in today's high schools, are familiar to readers of contemporary adolescent/young adult fiction. Matt Donaghy is a well-liked class clown whose reputation and links to friends are ruined when he is accused of threatening to blow up his high school. Although he has been kidding when he made the threat, two sisters—the daughters of a local fundamentalist preacher—overhear him and report him to school administrators. Matt is suspended pending investigation, and his parents are incensed; they decide to sue the school for injury to Matt's reputation. It is the tall, socially-awkward, and powerfully athletic Ursula Riggs who, without promoting, steps in to speak on Matt's behalf. Although he is allowed to return to school, he is ostracized and becomes so despondent that he contemplates suicide. Again, fortuitously, Ursula shows up and, noticing that he is teetering on the ledge of a cliff, coaxes him toward safety.

Matt refers to himself as "Big Mouth," for obvious reasons. Ursula takes pride in her private sobriquet, "Ugly Girl." The use of these believable self-imposed labels by the two protagonists is one of the most interesting features of the story. Adolescent girls will understand that Ugly Girl's aggressive and abrupt manner is a shield behind which she hides the fact that she is not the traditional kind of young lady whom her mother and sister expect her to be. Big Mouth kicks himself with his moniker, reminding himself that he tends to carry jokes too far, and that he inadvertently causes miscommunication. Through a series of emails and telephone calls, the two misfits become comrades in the fight against their classmates' rejection and hypocrisy, then they become real friends. The positive, affirming ending of this story may disappoint readers who see themselves as Ugly Girl or Big Mouth, since their own conflicts are not so easily resolved. Some might even read Oates' ending as indicative of a problem with adults: we think we can provide pat answers to teens' complicated problems. Perhaps, though, adolescent readers will also find hope in the notion that they, too, can define friendship on their own terms, and learn to accept others and themselves.

Oates, in her first novel for adolescents, writes with a style that YA advocates might recognize as a blend of Francesca Lia Block and Chris Crutcher—she creates off-center, charmingly different characters who have a host of realistic teen dilemmas.

*Breaking Point*, by Alex Flinn (HarperTempest, to be released May, 2002)

This book is terrifying in its potent portrayal of social realities in some adolescents' worlds. Paul Richmond narrates, from within the walls of a juvenile detention center, the story of his year at an exclusive private school in Miami—the year in which his life was forever changed. Paul is not rich enough to attend the school, but he is given a tuition waiver because his mother works in the main office. Home-schooled by his overly-protective mother after his father left the home, Paul is uncomfortable in every situation. His greatest wish is to be able to make a few friends.

When a school icon, Charlie Good, pays attention to him, Paul is overwhelmed with gratitude. He begins to define right and wrong in terms of what Charlie asks him to do; as an initiation into Charlie's group of friends, for example, Paul bashes mailboxes while riding in Charlie's car, swigging hard liquor with the rest of Charlie's gang. When Charlie asks him to break into the school to change a

grade that mars Charlie's otherwise perfect record, Paul reluctantly agrees. Despite serious misgivings, Paul is so caught up in the idea that he is becoming popular, that he is willing to sacrifice his own sense of right to Charlie Good.

Flinn introduces a kid named David, a strange outcast and the son of the school's groundskeeper and a cafeteria worker, as a shadowy figure who serves as a warning to Paul about what can happen when someone gets too close to Charlie Good—and when someone crosses him. David, we learn, had been accepted into Charlie's group the previous year, but this year, his life is miserable and isolated; somehow, he denied Charlie and is now suffering the consequences of continual taunting, and worse. When David's dog is killed, in revenge for its habit of using the bathroom on the school's tennis court (where Charlie reigns as king), Paul recognizes the fact that Charlie and his group are trouble. Again, though, he pushes aside his misgivings in order to revel in Charlie's attention. Even David's suicide, which Paul witnesses, is not enough to force Paul to denounce Charlie as a friend.

Finally, Charlie manipulates Paul into helping him plant a bomb in the school. He assures Paul that the bomb is designed only to scare the biology teacher; they use plans they find on the internet, using Paul's password on Charlie's computer, to build it. When the bomb is discovered, short of exploding, Paul and Charlie are questioned. Paul confesses; Charlie, wrapped in the protection of his powerful and rich father, denies any connection to the plan, and is found guiltless. Charlie, of course, rejects Paul; finally, when he is sent away to serve two years in a detention center, Paul realizes that the friendship for which he had sold his soul was a sham. Flinn paints a bleak picture of a teen who is willing to do anything to be popular and accepted. Though it may read as an extreme case, her warning to teens and those of us who work with them is right on target.

*Hole in My Life*, by Jack Gantos (Farrar Straus and Giroux, to be released April, 2002)

For those of us who know successful, popular YA novelist Jack Gantos through books like *Jack's Black Book*, *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* and *Joey Pigza Loses Control*, *Hole in My Life* will come as a shock.

This is the autobiographical account of Gantos' six years in prison, where he served a sentence for his role in sailing a ship loaded with tons of hashish from the Virgin Islands to New York City, and for selling the drug in the city. As a reader, it was difficult for me—as it will be for others who are fans of Gantos' fiction—to reconcile the image I have of funny, light-hearted Jack Gantos with the image of him in a prison uniform, enduring such a troubling situation. This is a significant book, though, and one that teenagers will read and return to for many reasons. Gantos does not sugarcoat his story; he presents himself, during his late teen years, as a prospective loser, someone who was more interested in drinking and dreaming about writing a novel than in producing any creative work, someone for whom a day job in a restaurant was sufficient. He was easily bored with his life, and dismayed when the family moved to the Virgin Islands upon the hopes of his father, who built houses, that the economy of the Virgin Islands would bring relief to the family's financial drought. At this time, Gantos acknowledges, he was easily won over into illegal dealings by a smooth-talking, educated acquaintance, one who used money as a tool to seduce Gantos into service on the drug ship. The good news of this book, and the message that Gantos must be sending, is that early mistakes, even if they mark someone for life, do not have to define him for life. It was during his time in prison, while he was working in the clinic, that he finally began to write.



*Strike Two* by Amy Goldman Koss  
Dial Books, 2001, 134 pp., \$ 16.99

Friendship/Softball  
ISBN: 0-803726074

Gwen's life during the summer revolved around playing softball, and hanging out with her cousin Jess. This summer, though, everything changed – family, friends, even herself.

Koss presents a lighthearted look at friendship and values through the eyes of a middle school aged-girl. The catalyst for our young protagonist's growth is a newspaper strike, which splits her small town in two. The town divides between management and workers, and neighbor against neighbor. Eventually, it divides Gwen's softball team, too, as her teammates begin to choose sides according to their parents' politics.

Forced to make new friends, young Gwen is surprised to learn how oblivious she has been to the lives of the many people in her town. Propelled by a sense of moral outrage and inner helplessness, Gwen organizes a secret co-ed softball game for the townspeople to enjoy. Her hope is to regain some town unity, lost in the wake of the strike.

This is an enjoyable read for young teen readers interested in the potential power sports have to bring people together.

Mariana Van Meter  
Tempe, Arizona

*Osama Bin Laden: A War Against The West* by Elaine Landau  
Twenty-first Century Books, 2002, 144 pp., \$23.90

Terrorism  
ISBN: 0-7613-1709-0

Personal glimpses into the lives of terrorists are rare. Violent and faceless attention is usually drawn to the devastation they create, rather than who they are, what they do, and why they do it.

*Osama Bin Laden: A War Against the West* offers an engaging, yet disturbing portrait of today's most noted international terrorist. Landau carefully and thoughtfully details the life of bin Laden, from wealthy, millionaire playboy to violent, Islamic terrorist, providing important background to understand the motivations and actions of this ringleader. More than an historical overview, the text provides keen insights into the personality and relationships of bin Laden through his own words, and those who know him best.

This book is carefully researched and documented, yet presented in such a way that it is stimulating and provocative. It gives depth and contour to an already intriguing and elusive character. While the bizarre cover is less than appealing, the pages of this easy to read will keep teens interested. And the experience will leave you more informed about a phenomenon that increasingly shapes our lives: terrorism.

William Gaudelli  
Orlando, Florida

*Finding H. F.* by Julia Watts  
Alyson Books, 2001, 165 pp., \$12.95

Homosexuality/Friendship  
ISBN: 31-55583-622-4

At 16, Heavenly Faith, who goes by H. F. to avoid embarrassment, lives in a small Kentucky town with her grandmother. Never having met her mother, who ran away when H. F. was a baby, H. F. is appreciative of her grandmother's generosity, but not taken in by her religious preaching. In fact, H. F. is confident that her grandmother would throw her out if she knew that H. F. is gay.

The only one that H. F. can confide in completely is her best friend Bo, who is also gay. When H. F. has her gay encounter, one that ends in humiliation, she is able to deal with it only by discussing it with Bo. After H. F. learns the whereabouts of her long-lost mother, Bo and H. F. take off for Florida on a journey that along the way connects them to gay runaways in Atlanta. On the trip, she learns more about relationships: "Girls can love girls if they want to, boys can love boys if they want to, and a girl and a boy can love each other as dear friends and nothing more or less."

This novel, laced with realistic teen voices, should fill a void for many teens who are coping with the sometimes-confusing realization of who they really are.

Kay Parks Haas  
Ottawa, Kansas

## Young Adult Books In Review Recently Published Titles

Jeff Kaplan, Editor

3x5 inches to "Clip & File"

Please contact Jeff Kaplan at [jkaplan@ucf.edu](mailto:jkaplan@ucf.edu)  
if you are interested in reviewing  
YA books for this section.

<p><i>Among the Impostors</i> by Margaret Peterson Simon &amp; Schuster, 2001, 172 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Science Fiction/Social Acceptance ISBN: 0-68-983904-9</p> <p>In this sequel to <i>Among the Hidden</i>, Luke Garner, a third child born under the a futuristic government that allows two children per family, has been placed at the Hendricks School for Boys under an assumed name. The other boys mistreat Luke, who longs to read the final message given to him by Jen's father, hoping it will provide comfort. It doesn't.</p> <p>Luke looks for another way to feel solace and discovers an open door. Once outdoors, Luke remembers his days at his parents' farm and starts a garden. When he finds it ruined, he begins to look at the other boys and discovers they are strange. Only a few of them look him in the eye.</p> <p>Determined to solve the mystery of who ruined the garden, Luke discovers a group of boys and girls meeting in the woods. They are also third children, but Luke doesn't trust them completely. Is he justified in his mistrust? Could these boys have anything to do with the Population Police?</p> <p>This novel answers some questions posed by the author's first book, but leaves many more, which logically point to a third book in this series. Young readers will enjoy the story as they ponder the implications of living in such a society.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lu Ann Staheli Parson, Utah</p>	<p><i>The Beguilers</i> by Kate Thompson Dutton Children's Books, 2001, 183 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Fantasy ISBN: 0-525-46806-4</p> <p>Rifka is different, and her community knows it. She has not made her Great Intention, despite being past the normal age of 14, and she is allergic to chuffies, the animals normal humans depend on.</p> <p>Welcome to the world created by Kate Thompson in this story of a girl who can depend on herself to discover all she can be! This futuristic tale will engage fantasy readers as they are immersed in this new world, following Rilka on her quest to capture the mysterious beguilers. Yet, for readers not already tried-and-true fantasy lovers, this book might be a bit frustrating, as its focus jumps around, leaving Rilka's quest to touch on the mystery of the beguilers, the community's past, and a new friendship. While each thread is interesting as it develops, the novel's ending does not bring closure to all of them.</p> <p>Knowing the potential frustrations in the ending, middle school and early high school students can find <i>The Beguilers</i> an engaging independent read as they learn from Rilka how to make it on one's own dedication and determination.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Susanne Nobles Fredericksburg, Virginia</p>
<p><i>A Diamond in the Rust</i> by Carla Johnson Dial Books, 2001, 197 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>History/Coming of Age ISBN 0-8037-2511-6</p> <p>The coal mines kill, and Katy's father, brother, and boyfriend are all deep in the mines every day. Yet 16-year-old Katy wants more, and her teacher, Miss Maplewhite, and her brother, Tim, see her potential to be an educated and successful woman. In early 1900s Illinois, though, women, including Katy's mother, marry young, have children, and wait in fear of the siren that cuts through the sky, shrieking the death of their coal miner husbands.</p> <p>Katy inspires readers as she struggles to break away from traditional expectations to achieve new dreams. Teenage readers especially will connect with Katy as they themselves search for ways to become who they want to be in the face of expectations from society, their family, and their friends.</p> <p>The characters in this book – from Katy's stoic mother to the coal mine's young, arrogant boss – are vivid and believable in their honest struggles with a changing world.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Susanne Nobles Fredericksburg, Virginia</p>	<p><i>The Gospel According to Larry</i> by Janet Tashjian Henry Holt &amp; Company, 2001, 227 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Humor/Teen Problems ISBN: 0-8050-6378-1</p> <p>Josh Swenson, gifted teenager, has always been a loner. Tired of complacency, he designs a Website, <i>thegospelaccordingtolarry.com</i> in which he speaks out against consumerism. Josh keeps his identity a secret – even from Beth, the girl he admires – and uses the name Larry on the Website. He's not prepared for the popularity of the Website, however.</p> <p>Josh cannot seem to tell Beth, and he worries when someone called Betagold is determined to identify Larry. Josh's mother is dead, and he cannot confide in his stepfather.</p> <p>When Betagold identifies Larry, Josh finds his world falling apart. He can only plan his own death (though he intends to stay alive), and leave the world he has known to find a new identity. The poignant conclusion of this book leaves the reader wanting a sequel. Tashjian shows us the world of the bright adolescent in the trials and triumphs of Josh.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Connie Russell Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin</p>

*The Babbs Switch Story* by Darleen Bailey Beard  
Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2002, 166 pp., \$16.00

Dealing with Loss/Historical Fiction  
ISBN: 0-374-30475-0

Twelve-year-old Ruthie finds that the simple life of 1924 Oklahoma is becoming more complicated by the minute. Although many of her experiences are typical of those who are coming of age, Ruthie's life is made more complicated by having to deal with the antics of Daphne, her sixteen-year-old sister who has the developmental level of a young child.

In this sensitively rendered text, Ruthie experiences conflicted feelings about "daffy Daphne." Alternately, she recognizes Daphne's kind spirit, and is embarrassed by her often inappropriate behaviors. When Daphne accidentally kills the pet kitten, and "attacks" a neighbor's baby, the whole family experiences a sense of ostracism. Ruthie is horrified, and no longer knows how to cope with the challenges of a sister with special needs. It is not until the town faces an imminent tragedy, and Daphne's life is in danger, that Ruthie recognizes the depth of the loving bond they share.

The gentle story is set against the historical background of the tragic Babbs Switch schoolhouse fire, in which dozens of people lost their lives. Readers will empathize with the full range of emotions expressed by Ruthie, and will be challenged to look for a sense of hope, even in the midst of difficult circumstances.

Patricia Crawford  
Orlando, Florida

*Uncle Daddy* by Ralph Fletcher  
Henry Holt & Company, 2001, 133 pp., \$15.95

Fathers and Sons/Drug Abuse  
ISBN: 0-8050-6663-2

Nine-year old Rivers was raised by his mother and his great uncle (Uncle Daddy), his father having left him when Rivers was only three. Uncle Daddy is an elementary school principal who teaches Rivers to play baseball, and lets Rivers and his friends have the run of the school to celebrate Rivers' "unbirthday."

Uncle Daddy is portrayed as the almost "perfect" father; however, life for Rivers, his mother, and Uncle Daddy changes when Rivers' biological father re-appears after a six-year absence. Rivers is unsure whether he can trust his biological father and feels torn. How can anyone trust someone who goes out for pizza one night, and doesn't come back?

Still, Rivers' father is patient, and slowly earns Rivers' trust. When Uncle Daddy experiences a near-fatal heart attack, Rivers and his mother accept the aid of Rivers' biological father in remodeling living quarters for Uncle Daddy. Though some may argue the ending is a bit too idealistic, the story moves fast, and may appeal to many slow readers.

Pam B. Cole  
Kennesaw, Georgia

*Benno's Bear* by N. F. Zucker  
Dutton, 2001, 244 pp., \$16.99

Fiction/Adventure  
ISBN: 0-525-46521-0

Benno and his father survive in their central European city by their practice of their "work." Benno is an expert pickpocket, and does his "work" while father plays the concertina and their bear dances.

When Benno and his father are caught, however, the father is sent to prison, and the bear is sent to the zoo. A kind-hearted policeman and his wife take in Young Benno. Though his life is improved by their help, Benno yearns for his bear and his father. He tries to locate the bear; when he finally finds her in the zoo, she's almost dead because without Benno to feed her, she has refused to eat. Benno's problems seem to multiply. After he is accused of theft at his school, he manages to free his bear from the zoo, and runs away with her to the forest.

*Benno's Bear* is a warm and touching book, and Benno is an affecting character.

June Harris  
Sierra Vista, Arizona

*Daniel's Walk* by Michael Spooner  
Henry Holt & Company, 2001, 214 pp., \$16.95

Adventure/Survival  
ISBN: 0-8050-6750-7

A voice calls out to Daniel in a dream that he should set out from his home in Missouri to search for his father, a trapper working along the Green River near the Rocky Mountains.

The West of 1844 was a treacherous place for a young man, but Daniel was determined to find his absent father. He joins a wagon train heading out on the Oregon Trail.

There, young Daniel makes friends with Mr. Clyman, his assistant, Johnny, and young woman named Rosalie. He also makes a formidable enemy in one Mr. Haggard.

Haggard kidnaps Daniel and Rosalie, intending to sell them as slave labor to other outlaws. How Daniel manages to escape with his life makes for a suspenseful and absorbing read.

Students who love the action adventure of authors like Will Hobbs and Gary Paulsen will enjoy *Daniel's Walk*. Because of the detailed descriptions of life on the Oregon Trail, history teachers might want to include this book in a study of westward expansion and exploration. The book produces a fast-paced story, while the underlying themes explore racism, exploitation, and prejudice.

Teri S. Lesesne  
Huntsville, Texas

<p><i>Black Mirror</i> by Nancy Werlin Dial, 2001, 249 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Acceptance of Self/Murder ISBN: 0-8037-2605-8</p> <p>Frances, a scholarship student at a prestigious prep school, is plunged into a morass of confusion and intrigue after the apparent suicide of her only brother. To be part of what was important to her brother, she decides she should join the school's charitable club that was so integral a part of her brother's school life.</p> <p>At her first meeting, she feels prickly sensations signaling something is not right about this group. A mildly retarded groundskeeper is the only one she can turn to when she discovers the true nature of the organization, and questions whether her brother's death was a suicide or not.</p> <p>In this fast-paced mystery, Nancy Werlin once again keeps readers in suspense until the end of the book, and then offers a provocative surprise. Her willingness to delve into the human psyche, and share deep insights about human loneliness, fear, and self-acceptance give readers much more than a riveting novel.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Diana Mitchell Williamston, Michigan</p>	<p><i>Anna Casey's Place in the World</i> by Adrian Fogelin Peachtree Publishers, LTD, 2001, 224 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>Growth to Awareness ISBN: 1-56145-249</p> <p>Anna Casey is a twelve-year-old girl who is trying to adjust to life with Miss Dupree, her foster parent.</p> <p>Anna has lived with her grandmother, and later with her aunt and uncle; now, she wants to have a chance to grow up and be a part of a "real" family. Adjusting to living in this new foster home—with a distant, first time foster mother and a ten-year-old boy from a neglectful home—provides Anna with more than her fair share of challenges and burdens.</p> <p>The reader will see how Anna discovers a sense of self as she succeeds in finding her place in the world. Her friend Eb, her biology teacher, her friends from the neighborhood, and a homeless Vietnam veteran help her to establish a sense of belonging and a positive outlook on life. To be sure, Anna has been through much, yet her charm and good common sense manage to win the day.</p> <p>Fogelin tells a strong believable story and draws credible characters in this sequel to <i>Crossing Jordan</i> (2000).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Jeanne M. Gerlach Arlington, Texas</p>
<p><i>The Tiger Rising</i> by Kate DiCamillo Candlewick Press, 2001, 116 pp., \$12.99</p> <p>Dealing With Loss ISBN: 0-7636-0911-0</p> <p>While not as humorous as <i>Because of Winn-Dixie</i>, Kate DiCamillo has created another multi-layered story about dealing with loss, "letting sadness rise on up," and embracing life. Rather than confronting his grief, twelve-year-old Rob Horton lets nothing get to him – neither bullies at his new school, nor his rash, nor living in the Kentucky Star hotel! After his mom's death, Rob packed away his complicated feelings in a bulging suitcase. Even his mom's name brings heartache, until he discovers a tiger in the woods. This caged, pacing tiger serves as a hauntingly fierce metaphor for his deep grief throughout the book.</p> <p>Willie May, a hotel maid, plays prophetess in offering Rob advice. The new girl Sistine teaches him to defy ridicule. Even his hollowed-out dad finally realizes Rob needs help in facing Caroline's death. In sparse, tight prose, DiCamillo quietly weaves the extraordinary alongside the universal in this symbolic and sensitive story of letting the tiger rise on up.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sherron Killingsworth Roberts Orlando, Florida</p>	<p><i>Shattering Glass</i> by Gail Giles Roaring Brook Press, 2002, 224 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Coming of Age/Manipulation ISBN: 0-7613-1581-0</p> <p>Rob, the very popular leader of the senior class, decides for his own enjoyment to transform the not so popular class nerd into Prince Charming. What follows is a series of events that manipulates Rob's friends to carry out his wishes.</p> <p>The reader will soon discover that this novel is not so different from Robert Cormier's famous coming of age book <i>The Chocolate War</i>. The pranks, the sinister accomplishments all carefully constructed by Rob, give the reader the utmost feeling of manipulation – very Archiesque. The problem for Rob, of course, is that all is not going to end as he has planned. His cruel challenges lead to violence and death.</p> <p>A compelling read – one that is somewhat slow in the middle – but one that moves to a tension-filled close.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">John Bushman Overland Park, Kansas</p>

<p><i>In the Shadow of the Alamo</i> by Sherry Garland Gulliver Books, 2001, 282 pp., \$17.00</p> <p>Alamo/Historical Fiction ISBN: 0-15-201744-5</p> <p>The captivating story of fifteen-year-old Lorenzo Beonfiacio gives American readers a new perspective of the 1836 battle at the Alamo, an old mission near San Antonio, Texas.</p> <p>Lorenzo, a poor, motherless boy from a tiny village in Mexico, is conscripted by gunpoint to join the Mexican Army, led by General Santa Anna. Garland paints superb word pictures, portraying unspeakable living conditions and horrible scenes of death and war. The best part of the book is the characterization. The reader is pulled gently into the mind and heart of Lorenzo as he reveals his hatred toward Santa Anna, his love for his friends and family, and his fears about the future.</p> <p>The author's thorough research is evident as she describes the landscape, climate, and culture and gives insights into the inner workings of the Mexican army. Designated for ages 10 and up, <i>In the Shadow of the Alamo</i> contains significant lessons about life, war and history.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Deena Williams Newman Rockledge, Florida</p>	<p><i>Groover's Heart</i> by Carole Crowe Boyd's Mills Press, 2001, 156 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Adult Alcoholism/Relationships ISBN: 1-56397-953-5</p> <p>Charlotte's parents were killed when she was an infant. Now, a precocious eleven-year-old, she lives with her mother's sister. When Charlotte accidentally discovers the existence of a black-sheep uncle, her curiosity is aroused. Taking matters into her own hands, she arrives at her uncle's door, finding him a recovering alcoholic on the verge of a relapse. She also encounters a world very different from hers, filled with down-to-earth working people rather than the affluent environment in which she has grown up.</p> <p>Charlotte draws friends and relatives into her web in an attempt to bring family members together, and pulls it off successfully. In the process, she learns about strengths and weaknesses, not only of others, but also within herself.</p> <p>The author addresses the topic of adult alcoholism matter-of-factly, and with sensitivity. She also deals adroitly with issues of guilt, responsibility, and keeping secrets. <i>Groover's Heart</i> gives the adolescent reader a sense of empowerment as Charlotte discovers how families and friends can work together to solve problems.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Kristen Sternberg DeLand, Florida</p>
<p><i>A Sea So Far</i> by Jean Thesman Viking, 2001, 195 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction ISBN: 0-670-89278-5</p> <p><i>A Sea So Far</i> opens with the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, and the introduction of two young girls whose lives are forever affected by the event. The story alternates between the orphan Kate, who longs to go to her mother's native Ireland, and wealthy Jolie, who lost her mother and her own health in the earthquake. The two girls' lives become intertwined during the years following the quake, and the setting shifts to Ireland in the story's end, as the two young women begin to take stock of their immediate futures.</p> <p>This novel will interest adolescent girls, especially in grades 6-9, because it not only touches on historical facts in both California and Ireland, but it also incorporates the themes of jealousy, friendship, and coping with death. Boys, however, may have trouble relating to the two female protagonists.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Patti Cleary Peninsula, Ohio</p>	<p><i>The Thieves of Ostia</i> by Caroline Lawrence Roaring Brook Press, 2002, 160 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Murder Mystery/Historical Fiction ISBN: 0-7613-1482-9</p> <p>It is Rome, 79 A.D., and a group of children from diverse backgrounds join forces to discover why selected dogs in their neighborhood are being, of all things, beheaded.</p> <p>Slowly, this gang of would-be detectives snoops around the city of Rome, following a host of leads. Soon, young Flavia Gemina and her band of Roman friends discover that the killer (who may also be a big time thief) might be someone closer to their lives than they had originally believed.</p> <p>With adroit and skillful writing, the author hooks the reader into this fast-paced, sharply pieced together mystery, and doesn't let up until she reaches a convincing and satisfying solution – our culprit is caught, and justice is served.</p> <p>Moreover, the book is filled with appealing and believable characters, interesting historical information, and strong narrative descriptions. A nice addition to this book is the concluding glossary of terms and place names derived from ancient Rome.</p> <p>This work is the first in a projected series, and is appropriate for discriminating male and female readers of ages 9-14.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Wendy Bell Asheville, North Carolina</p>

<p><i>Charlotte's Choice</i> by Cathleen Twomey Boyd's Mills Press, 2001, 184 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Orphan Train/Coming of Age ISBN: 1-56397-938-1</p> <p>When fourteen-year-old Jesse Irwin finds her way to Turner's Crossing, Missouri, aboard the Children's Aid Society Orphan's train, no one could have predicted she would find tragedy instead of the promised salvation. Jesse's story is told through the voice of Charlotte Ann Matthews, Jesse's only friend. Charlotte Ann must decide whether to reveal Jesse's horrible secret of sexual abuse at the hands of her adoptive father—and risk their friendship, or to keep her silence—and watch Jesse face the possibility of hanging for her father's murder.</p> <p>This novel presents a fictitious dark side to the Orphan Train experience. In addition to providing historical insights to Missouri of 1905, the characters of this good read speak through the rich textures of colloquial language. Charlotte's family interactions prove that adolescent discomfort with parental and sibling relationships transcend time. <i>Charlotte's Choice</i> would be a solid and engaging selection for middle school readers.</p> <p>Margaret J. Ford Campbell, Ohio</p>	<p><i>Hanging On To Max</i> by Margaret Bechard Roaring Brook Press, 2002, 160 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Teenage Parenting ISBN: 0-7613-1579-9</p> <p>Sam fell in love with Max at first sight. And when Brittany admits the "mother thing" is not for her, Sam becomes custodial parent. At seventeen, it means that Sam must give up all his plans for his high school senior year and beyond: football, college and becoming a computer engineer.</p> <p>At his alternative high school, Sam is the only male single parent. And so he wonders: Is he right on course?</p> <p>Sam's father, a single parent himself (Sam's mother died when he was eleven), offers to help Sam finish high school and arranges for a job in construction afterwards. College is not in Sam's plans.</p> <p>Parenting, as Sam learns, is not easy, and every day brings another challenge to keep Sam from achieving success. Slowly, Sam realizes that his own life – now with child in tow – will never be the same.</p> <p>An easy read filled with practical wisdom, this book is highly recommended as an important edition for any adolescent classroom collection.</p> <p>C. Anne Webb St. Louis, Missouri</p>
<p><i>Fair Weather</i> by Richard Peck Dial Books, 2001, 139 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Coming of Age/Relationships ISBN: 0-8037-2516-7</p> <p>The World's Columbian Exposition is in Chicago during the summer of 1893. Thirteen-year-old Rosie Beckett is far away in isolated Christian County, Illinois, with her mother, father, seventeen-year-old sister Lottie, seven-year-old brother Buster, and her gregarious, cantankerous Grandad. When they accept Aunt Euterpe's invitation to visit her in Chicago and attend the fair, their lives change forever. Acclaimed young adult novelist Richard Peck expertly weaves the fictional Beckett family into the real World's Fair of 1893, complete with historical figures Susan B. Anthony, Lillian Russell, Little Egypt, and Buffalo Bill Cody.</p> <p>Young Rosie experiences bright electric lights, displays from countries all over the world, the Transportation Building, the Fisheries Building, the Woman's Building, the first ferris wheel, and exotic foods like the newly invented hamburger during her short stay at the 1893 World's Fair. These experiences encourage young Rosie to mature from a child to a young woman. Peck's latest novel is humorous, engaging, and quite believable. I highly recommend it.</p> <p>Susanne L. Johnston Stout, Wisconsin</p>	<p><i>The Tower at the End of the World</i> by Brad Strickland Dial Books, 2001, 146 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Mystery/Fantasy ISBN: 0-8037-2620-1</p> <p>When Lewis Barnavelt and his uncle Jonathan decide to join their neighbor Mrs. Zimmerman and Lewis' friend, Rose Rita Pottinger, for a vacation on an island in Lake Superior, they have no idea they will have to again do battle with a member of the evil Izard family. Ishmael Izard has reconstructed his father's Doomsday Clock, and Lewis, with the help of Rose Rita's courage, his uncles, and Mrs. Zimmerman's good magic, will have to save the world by destroying the clock before it strikes the hour of doom.</p> <p>Brad Strickland keeps John Bellair's characters alive in this sequel to the <i>The House with the Clock in Its Walls</i>. It is a fast-paced story that combines both mystery and fantasy to keep the reader on edge until the resolution. The setting in 1950s Michigan, the likeable characters, straightforward plot, and crisp descriptions make this a fun read for younger students.</p> <p>Jim Cope Kennesaw, Georgia</p>

<p><i>Streets of Gold</i> by Marie Raphael Persea Books, 2001, 216 pp., \$9.95</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Immigrant Experience/Historical Fiction ISBN: 0-89255-256-5</p> <p><i>Streets of Gold</i> is based on actual historical events. It tells the story of the Eastern European immigrant experience in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Fourteen-year-old budding artist Marisia Bolinski and her older brother Stefan make the choice to stay in America as their parents, younger brother, and ill sister are turned away at Ellis Island.</p> <p>From Czarist-occupied Poland to the cramped tenements of New York's Lower East Side, we are treated to a richly descriptive account of Marisia's struggle as an adolescent who must make a difficult decision and face adult responsibilities.</p> <p>Marisia learns about the loyalty of friendship, the work ethic, and the value of staying true to one's own beliefs and convictions as she traverses the paths from oppression to freedom, youth to adulthood, and ultimately, dependence to independence.</p> <p>This intriguing and enriching book, illustrated with period photos, is not only a fine interdisciplinary supplement for a lesson on the immigrant experience within our nation's history, but also a tool for a comparative study alongside America's current immigrant issues.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Laura E. Bullock Petal, Mississippi</p>	<p><i>3 Days Off</i> by Susie Morgenstern Viking, 2001, 89 pp., \$14.99</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Coming of Age/Identity ISBN: 0-670-03511-4</p> <p><i>3 Days Off</i>, originally published as <i>Trois Jours Sans (Three Days Without)</i> translates well, but isn't particularly interesting. High school student William's life and surroundings are colorless; he personifies apathy to the extent of appearing robotic rather than human.</p> <p>When William tells his teacher that he'd like to rip off her skirt to see underneath, he's suspended from school for three days, during which time he is to chronicle how he uses his time. His first day is spent in town where a tourist shows him the beauty of previously unappreciated surroundings, and then he assists manual laborers and discovers hard work.</p> <p>However, this undaunted and reckless high school student next gathers his earned money to procure the services of a prostitute, only to find himself without luck until he manages to meet a university student who entertains his most clumsy advances – until her boyfriend arrives unexpectedly. These troubling experiences allow him to reevaluate his unbridled apathy and cynicism, and consider more appropriate and positive life changes.</p> <p>This slim book has a colorful cover, and appears marketed to middle level students, but its content is clearly more appropriate for high school students. And while older, disaffected students may identify with William, it must be said that he is not an especially likeable character. Moreover, the plot, though intriguing and different, is told in a low-key style that will probably attract only most contemplative and cerebral of readers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lisa A. Hazlett Vermillion, South Dakota</p>
<p><i>Whale Talk</i> by Chris Crutcher Greenwillow, 2001, 224 pp., \$15.95</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Athletic Competition/Child Abuse ISBN: 0-68818-0191</p> <p>The narrator of <i>Whale Talk</i> is a The Tao Jones (his given name and pronounced Dow Jones); he is Black, Japanese, and White. The son of a woman who abandoned him when she got heavily into crack and crank, he grew up as a child filled with rage. Now, thanks to the help of a good therapist and good, loving, ex-hippie adoptive parents, T. J. has turned out to a pretty decent and even-keeled human being. One thing he is not and will never be, though, is a conformist.</p> <p>The Tao Jones (T. J.) is particularly sensitive to injustice; when the high school bully and big deal football star taunts brain-damaged Chris Coughlin, who wears his dead brother's football letter jacket, T. J. seeks revenge. His clever weapon of choice is the creation of a high school swim (despite the fact that his school has no pool) so he can prove that a band of school misfits are capable of winning coveted letter jackets, just like the cocky football players.</p> <p>Chris Crutcher writes in a style that reminds me of Stephen King. Although the violence in the book may be unsettling to some, the work does manage to combine craziness and realism to underscore the impact of coming to terms with differences. The swim team, and the togetherness this band of unlikely characters enjoys, help school outcasts find the true acceptance and friendship they've never had before.</p> <p>Kids read Chris Crutcher (<i>Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes</i>, <i>Ironman</i>, <i>Athletic Shorts</i>) because his works speak for them; he advocates in a manner that adults should pay attention to, as well.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Len DeAngelis Newport, Rhode Isla</p>	<p><i>Clara's War</i> by Kathy Kacer Orca Book Publishers, 2001, 128 pp., \$5.95</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Holocaust/Religious Persecution ISBN: 1-896764-42-8</p> <p>A refreshingly different look at Jewish life in a concentration camp, <i>Clara's War</i> focuses on the positive attitude of people forced from their homes at the hands of Nazi Germany. The children continue to make friends, learn, and perform a children's opera. Fictional characters bring to life actual events from Terezin, one of many ghetto communities where Jews were taken prior to being shipped off to Hitler's death camps.</p> <p>Upon arrival at Terezin, Clara and her brother Peter are separated from their parents. Scared and desperate, Clara reaches out to a newfound friend, Jacob, an ambitious young man who is busy working on an escape plan. Meanwhile, young Clara attends the ghetto school, and wins the part of the lovely sparrow in the school play, "Brundibar". Jacob, anxious to conceal his escape plans, earns a role in the play, as well. Together, they enjoy each other's company, all the while planning for their escape.</p> <p><i>Clara's War</i> is a nice companion to <i>Diary of a Young Girl</i> by Anne Frank. It is another example of the sheer power of human will to overcome even the most horrible of human events.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lu Ann Brobst Staheli Parson, Utah</p>

<p><i>A Place For Joey</i> by Carol Flynn Harris Boyd's Mills Press, 2001, 90 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Culture/Immigration ISBN: 1-56397-108-9</p> <p>Boston's North End is the setting of this heartwarming coming of age story about Joey Calabro, an Italian immigrant. Conflicted by his family's plan to move to rural farmland (or "la terra"), and his own desire to remain in Boston, Joey decides to quit school, find a job, and gain economic independence. Harris aptly shows us Joey's struggle, presenting a likeable and imperfect protagonist who is frustrated with learning to speak English.</p> <p>Joey's dilemma culminates in a tragic event, when molasses tanks explode on the waterfront. Joey must decide whether he should perform a heroic act or resist fate. The resulting action allows us to see change, both in the way Joey sees himself, and in the way others see him.</p> <p>While Harris' plot is often predictable, and the resolution somewhat contrived, the spirited prose and vibrant characters bring the story alive. Well researched and historically evocative, <i>A Place For Joey</i> would have particularly strong appeal for boys and recent immigrants.</p> <p>James Joshua Keels San Francisco, California</p>	<p><i>Empress of the World</i> by Sarah Ryan Viking, 2001, 213 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Relationships/Lesbian and Gays ISBN: 0-670-89688-8</p> <p>Fifteen-year-old Nicola Lancaster attends the Siegel Summer Program for Gifted Youth to develop her intellect, but she ends up learning more about the art of living and the joy of living.</p> <p>Nicola had been pretty certain about her ability to order her life much like a scientist organizes a research project. However, when her first love is a smart, charming dancer nothing like herself, she begins to see the world through new eyes. Loving someone so different, yet of the same sex, opens Nicola's heart to new ways of being. She sees life as more unpredictable and people as less easy to categorize.</p> <p>The writer understands the flow of realistic teen dialogue, and avoids easy stereotypes. Encouragingly, she eschews the hopelessness or pathos of many past books of same-sex adolescent love stories, while still exploring the problems young lesbians and gays confront in our heterosexist culture.</p> <p>Rob Linne Garden City, New York</p>
<p><i>The Monsters of Morley Manor</i> by Bruce Coville Harcourt, 2001, 221 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Fantasy/Family Relationships ISBN: 0-15-216382-4</p> <p>Anthony and his sister Sarah lead an ordinary life in Owl's Roost, Nebraska, until they inadvertently free a family of five monsters who have been imprisoned for decades in a small chest. Demonstrating a keen sense of loyalty to their newfound friends, Anthony and Sarah assist the monsters in reclaiming their home, reconnecting their family, and eventually saving the world from a race of alien warriors.</p> <p>During the course of this fast-paced adventure, they travel through a mystical door to alien worlds, and other magical spots where they meet a cast of unique characters such as frog creatures, lost souls, and a beautiful angel. They even temporarily reunite with their recently deceased grandfather who helps them battle the problems of the universe.</p> <p>Using Anthony as the first person narrator who candidly recounts his fear, awe, and growing respect for the mysteries of the world, Coville creates a humorous and entertaining tale. Coville's descriptions of characters and settings are imaginative and engaging. Although this story is fantastic, the theme of love and support of family and friends resounds realistically throughout the entire work. The plot of this easy-read, happy-ending novel moves quickly, making it a possible favorite for young, reluctant male readers.</p> <p>Jennifer Good Auburn, Alabama</p>	<p><i>Michelle Kwan: Quest for Gold</i> by Mark Stewart &amp; Mike Kennedy The Millbrook Press, 2002, 64 pp., \$24.90</p> <p>Ice-Skating/Olympics ISBN: 0-7613-2622-7</p> <p>Michelle Kwan began ice-skating when she was six years old, and her talent was recognized early. Desiring to do tricks like the Olympics skaters she saw on TV, Michelle begged her parents to hire a coach so she too could become an Olympic contender. And indeed, before long, she did.</p> <p>This crisply written and smartly produced biography of Olympic ice-skating medallist Michelle Kwan tells the story of her young life—her struggles, sacrifices, and glorious triumphs—as she moved through a childhood, destined for Olympic success. The book is particularly good at giving readers an inside look at how ordinary people—with the help of devoted parents, teachers, and coaches—can accomplish unbelievable things.</p> <p>Winning competitions and learning to live with fatal missteps marks a young career that has only begun to blossom. Kwan is becoming a world-recognized role model for young and old alike. The author manages to capture this young talent's vivacious love for life, and her painstaking attention to detail, patience, and ultimately, victory.</p> <p>Filled with great photographs and interesting human anecdotes, this is a must read for all youngsters interested in learning what it takes to go for the gold.</p> <p>Jeffrey Kaplan Orlando, Florida</p>



# Using Fantasy Literature to Explore Gender Issues

*Marsha M. Sprague and Lori Risher*

The last decade has generated considerable interest in the issues confronting adolescent girls in American society today. Some of the earliest research which attempted to explore the issues was conducted by Carol Gilligan and her colleagues. Gilligan, Lyons, Hammer and others describe the anguish experienced by adolescent girls in *Making Connections* (1990). This and other work by Gilligan explore the loss of a sense of self and of connection to others reported by girls as they moved through the teenage years.

The urgency of the problem was catapulted to public attention with the publication of Mary Pipher's book, *Reviving Ophelia* (1994). Pipher, writing from her firsthand experience as a counselor, describes what she perceives as a pervasive malaise of today's adolescent girls. According to Pipher, girls entering adolescence experience a diminishing sense of who they are and what they can do. This is largely the result of messages that they receive from adults, from the media, and from their peers. Many girls react to this diminished sense of self by withdrawing and effacing their passions, at great expense. Others rebel by engaging in risk-taking behaviors such as drugs, alcohol, and sexual experimentation. Some, desperately seeking to conform to unrealistic expectations, become anorexic or bulimic. These findings echoed the earlier work of Gilligan.

The organization the American Association of University Women (AAUW) has been in the forefront of documenting the issues that Pipher describes, particularly as they relate to schools. In 1992 AAUW commissioned a report which synthesized research on adolescent girls in schools. The report, "How Schools Shortchange Girls," summarizes the devastating findings on the loss of self-esteem and decline of academic achievement experienced by adolescent females. This report was followed by a second, "Hostile Hallways" (1994) which detailed the sexual harassment endured by adolescent girls in schools. A third report, "Girls in the Middle: Working to Succeed in School" (Research for Action, 1996) examined the roles that middle school girls assume in order to cope with the difficult challenges adolescence, and gave specific suggestions of ways that schools could assist girls in overcoming these challenges. The list follows:

1. Expand the range of acceptable behaviors for girls, particularly behaviors such as argumentative and assertive actions.
2. Create a mentor program for girls and support the mentors.
3. Build identity development into the school curriculum. Have opportunities for girls and boys to explore and

discuss gender issues.

4. Foster opportunities for girls to assume leadership positions, within the school and the classroom setting.
5. Examine and share among schools the current practices of handling gender issues.
6. Make gender equity a school priority.
7. Create public forums to address the issue of gender equity.
8. Conduct research on gender issues.

Despite the clear call for action, the response of schools has been surprisingly slow. A review of the literature reveals that very few programs have been specifically designed to address the above recommendations. Of the programs that are reported, most are temporary research projects that lack sustainability (Sprague, 2000).

Of most interest to teachers is the recommendation to build identity development into the school curriculum, to have opportunities for girls and boys to explore and discuss gender issues.

Offering a course in gender identity was an intervention initiated by Heilman and Goodman (1995) of Indiana University. Heilman and Goodman targeted a K-12 school in a Midwestern city which had exploratory course offerings available to students on a monthly rotation. The course in gender identity (one of seven offered that month) was open to upper elementary, middle and high school students. Students enrolling in the course discussed the role of women in media and film. Based on student response, they also extended the exploration to children's literature. Finally, the students created personal narratives about their own experiences in gender identity, and these were studied. The instructors reported that the students who enrolled responded positively to the course content. However, there was definite resistance in the school, particularly on the part of male students, to having the course offered. The authors concluded that the study of gender identity was a crucial part of an effective high school curriculum.

Because elective courses such as those described above are rare, and only reach students who choose to enroll in them, another idea is to introduce the topic of gender identity within the regular curriculum. One way is through the reading of literature which introduces girls to strong female characters, ones who are able to maintain their true voices, despite challenges. These challenges include the efforts of adults, female and male peers to suppress or co-opt the voice of the young woman.

A number of books have been identified as having strong female characters. Odean's *Great Books for Girls* is an ex-

ample of a resource that is helpful in locating novels and biographies with compelling heroines. A recent article by Sprague and Keeling (2000) targets 20 young adult books which are especially effective in generating discussion of gender issues, and gives ways that they might be incorporated into the school curriculum.

Because so many early adolescents (boys and girls) are fascinated by fantasy literature, we decided to use this genre as a vehicle of generating discussion about gender issues in a seventh grade classroom. From the books recommended by Sprague and Keeling (2000), we selected four as fitting the genre of fantasy:

**McCaffre, Anne. *Dragonsong*. Bantam, 1976. 176 pp.**

Musically gifted Menolly lives in a remote fishing village on the world of Pern. Her dream is to become a musician, but only men are allowed to become "harpers." Her father beats her when she disobeys and even allows an accidental wound to heal badly so that she will no longer be able to play instruments. Lonely, frustrated, and miserable, Menolly runs away from the village to live on her own in a cave on the coast. There she finds and adopts nine "fire lizards," a semi-intelligent form of miniature dragons who enjoy her music and even accompany her. Caught outside during Threadfall (a fiery rain that plagues Pern), Menolly is rescued by a dragonrider and taken to safety. The people there appreciate her talents, including the Masterharper of Pern, who invites her to come study at Harper Hall as an apprentice Harper.

**McCaffrey, Anne. *Dragonsinger*. Bantam, 1976. 176 pp.**

In this sequel to *Dragonsong*, Menolly goes to Harper Hall to study her music. While there, she meets with antagonism on the part of teachers and other students, both male and female. She gradually learns to have confidence in her talent and to seek out friends and mentors who will support her.

**Levine, Gail Carson. *Ella Enchanted*. HarperCollins, 1997. 232 pp.**

When Ella is born, a fairy gives her a "gift" that turns out to be a curse: the gift of obedience. How can Ella ever be her true self when the "curse" compels her to do whatever anyone orders her to do, no matter how careless or unintentional the command? Rather than becoming truly obedient, she turns into a rebel, always resisting the orders she is given by finding ways around them, obeying the letter but not the spirit of the command. Feisty and intelligent, Ella finds within herself the means of solving her problem. In the end, she saves not only herself but her prince as well in this adaptation of the Cinderella story.

**Wrede, Patricia. *Dealing with Dragons*. Scholastic, 1990. 212 pp.**

In this light-hearted fantasy, the princess Cimorene rejects her expected role as wife of a prince and instead takes the job of housekeeper for a dragon. She rebuffs suitors who try and rescue her from this task, and instead uncovers a plot to undermine her dragon's authority. She becomes more and more needed by the dragon society. The plot lends itself to questions about the expected role of girls and how unconventional choices are viewed by others.

#### Teaching the Books: A Ten-Day Plan

Co-author Lori Risher is a teacher who committed to teaching these novels as part of her seventh grade language arts

curriculum teaches at Tabb Middle School, in suburban York County, Virginia.

Risher placed her students in groups of five to six. These groups were formed mainly by reading levels, since there was a range of reading difficulty within the books. Each group was tasked with reading the book over a two week period. Students developed their own time lines for reading the book. Risher arranged for small-group and whole group discussions, and led mini-lessons. She also assigned a "daily diary" assignment to guide the reading response of the students. This "diary" consisted of a journal entry at the end of each chapter. Students had to respond from a first person point of view, writing as if they were a character from the novel. They had to develop a question to share with their group, and also find one interesting vocabulary word in the chapter. This would form the basis for their small group discussion.

#### The ten class days were organized in this fashion:

**Day one:** Risher introduced the books and explained the fantasy genre. Students met in their groups, were given the books, and completed a prediction chart based on a cursory inspection of the book's title, cover, and book jacket. Students set their timeline for reading the book. She then explained the "daily diary" assignment.

**Day two:** Risher conducted a mini-lesson on setting. Particular attention was paid to the idea of non-realistic setting. Students were given a project assignment to recreate the setting in a three-dimensional mode (they had a week to do this project). Students were put in their book groups and asked to discuss the setting of their novels, as well as to share their "daily diaries."

**Day three:** Risher conducted a mini-lesson on conflict. Students were told to consider the internal conflict of the main character (which in every case is a female). They were asked to consider the conflict of who the character wanted to be versus who others expected or wanted the character to be. The terms "expression" and "suppression" of voice were introduced. Students were shown a schematic (figure 1) to guide their consideration of the conflicts experienced by the main character. Students completed a worksheet on conflict in their groups and continued to share their "daily diaries."

**Day four:** Risher reviewed plot sequence: exposition and rising action. In groups, students were asked to begin a plot diagram of their book and to continue discussion of the diaries.

**Day five:** Students met to discuss their reading to date, and to share diaries.

**Day six:** Risher reviewed plot sequence: climax, falling action, and resolution. In groups, students were asked to complete the plot diagram of their book and to continue discussion of the diaries.

**Day seven:** Small group discussion.

**Day eight:** By this time, students had mostly completed the book. Risher introduced the idea of theme as the intended message of the author, and conducted a short mini-lesson on theme. Students were told that all four books had similar themes. Students were asked to decide in groups what they thought the theme was. They were urged to consider the conflict schematic in their discussions.

**Day nine:** Risher conducted a whole-group discussion on the theme of the books, which was generally agreed upon as this: Girls can do anything, but sometimes people or things

try to stop them from doing them. Risher asked students whether they agreed with the theme of the books. Lively discussion followed. The students were given the assignment of writing a theme essay, which clearly stated the theme and gave support from the individual book they had read.

They were given five days to do this assignment.

**Day ten:** Students revisited the prediction chart they had made on day one. They compared their original predictions to their reading

### Student reaction to the books

During the first days of the unit, students read the books for plot details. They were sometimes confused with the unusual names introduced. Students who read *Dragonsinger* in particular had a difficult time following the plot since they had not read the preceding book, *Dragonsong*. When students were introduced to the conflict chart, they had some difficulty finding examples of the various factors. They appeared to be unsure as to the terms “suppression” versus “expression.” However, by the time they examined the theme, they clearly understood that the books were about the roles of women in society. Risher asked them to discuss the theme, which they agreed had to do with females fighting to take their places in a male society. In two of the classes, the conversation was quite restrained. Students politely stated their positions that girls had many opportunities now and that only in the past had there been barriers. Girls appeared reluctant to admit any current barriers. Boys appeared unaware of any barriers. Both boys and girls failed to see any relationship of the intended theme of the books to issues in their own lives. However, in the other two of the classes the conversation became very heated. Boys began teasing the girls, questioning the ability of girls to do everything that males could do. In one class, the argument ended with the girls challenging the boys to a basketball game after school at the end of the week. The teacher assisted in facilitating the game.

Co-author Sprague, who observed one of these discussions, noted that throughout the heated argument, the girls continued to raise their hands to be called upon to speak. Boys shouted out their comments without being recognized. Risher noted that in the most acrimonious class, the boys appeared to be entertained by the arguments, while the girls appeared to be truly angry.

### Assessing the impact of the unit

To assess the impact of the unit on the students’ thinking about gender issues, two different analyses were done. First, Sprague interviewed a random number of students regarding their reactions to the unit. Second, the theme papers were analyzed to determine what students finally extracted from the books regarding gender issues. Based on these two reviews, themes that reflected students’ reactions to the unit were identified:

1. There are societal expectations for women that are different (and often more restrictive) than for men. Students recognized that the girls in the stories had to try to fit into a rules-oriented society. Kody wrote, “The princess wants to be different and she is very tired of people trying to tell her that being different is bad, and that she should try to become a regular princess.” Students also recognize that today’s girls have struggles as well, although there was some reluctance to admit this. In an interview, Scott (age 12) echoed most of

the students when he said, “I would hope and believe, that girls can do what they want, but they probably wouldn’t be able to... I think that we are the same.” Emily, age 12, reflected a number of the girls, who said, “...you need to rebel, because they don’t hear you, but when you speak up, they hear you.”

2. The women in the book are strong because they are, or become, determined, and this is what allows them to survive. Tiffany wrote about *Ella Enchanted*, “Ella’s best strength was determination. Ella never gave up. She struggled daily against her curse, even though she never won.” CJ wrote of the heroine in *Dealing With Dragons*, “One of Cimorene’s strengths is that she never takes no for an answer.”

3. There is a fantasy literature schema which holds certain expectations the princess is beautiful, the prince is charming, the prince gets the princess after overcoming obstacles, they live happily ever after. The students’ schema was sometimes modified by the books but other times it persisted. One student summarized the ending of *Ella Enchanted*: “In the end the curse was broken, Ella and Prince Charmont lived happily ever after.”

4. Sometimes women are not supportive of one another, and in fact contribute to obstacles. In *Dealing with Dragons*, some of the other princesses condemn Cimorene’s choice to refuse to marry the prince. In *Dragonsinger*, as Landon realized, “The most critical of Menolly’s presence were actually the other girls in the hall. Since Menolly was receiving all the attention, the girls were jealous. The girls decided from the very start to hold grudges against Menolly and to try to make her time at Harper hall miserable.”

5. In order to conform, girls sometimes pretend to be less capable than they are. This is one way of “fitting in.” This is especially obvious in *Dragonsinger*. Lauren wrote of the main character, Menolly, “Should she play the instruments badly and make the girls happy so that they would become her friends, or should she play the instruments well and be happy with herself?”

6. Sometimes girls have to run away from the world they are in to fulfill their promise. Candi, who read *Dealing With Dragons*, wrote, “When Cimorene ran away she changed. She became more free-willed. She was able to do things her parents thought were improper. Cimorene became stronger and more jubilant than she was before.” Mike commented on the character of Menolly: “She becomes very happy when she runs away. She’s free to hum and sing, and she realizes she could never get herself to return.” This is a message that concerns us. Running away is a dangerous idea to entertain as a solution to gender discrimination. We regret not having recognized this early enough to hold discussions on the topic.

One of the most interesting set of responses was to the question, “Would you read more stories like this, or recommend them to your friends?” Some students said yes, but gave only reasons about the plot of the books being interesting. Others said, no, they really did not like to read very much. But some students clearly resonated to the purpose of the study. Here are their replies:

“Yes! It’s different from most books, like, where the leading man saves women. We should see different ways.” (Sam, age 12)

“Yes! Because I’m tired of happily ever after, especially since men end up the big heroes.” (Charell, age 11)

"Yes — I would recommend that my brother read this." (Sara, age 12)

In her theme paper, Carolyn sums up what we think is the major insight of the discussions:

This story goes to show that women have come a long way when it comes to equality. In this story Cimorene didn't need the help of princes to save her, Alianora and her (sic) did it together. She wouldn't let anyone tell her that what she was doing was just not done and with that attitude she went a long way. Although women have come a long way in equality we still have a long way to go.

Jayna summarized her thoughts in this way:

So basically who are we trying to fool? Do we always have to be saved by someone else to really be saved? Or can we do it ourselves and through many years overcome our image as a stereotype of a damsel in distress?

In this study, girls more often appreciated the role reversal of the main characters. Yet occasionally we saw wonderful insights from boys as well. This confirmed our belief that both boys and girls benefited from reading and discussing these novels.

#### Summary

There is no doubt that adolescent girls experience a sense of bewilderment as they encounter a societal agenda which often differs from their preferences. Sadly, they have no forum to discuss what the society expects and how it can be negotiated. It is clear that the school is the natural forum for these discussions. The use of literature to spark thinking about gender roles, as is demonstrated by this study, is one promising way that girls and boys can confront these issues. We are aware that just one encounter in a seventh grade classroom is not enough to impact students meaningfully, but a series of such discussions around good literature, spanning grades six through ten, could greatly help both boys and girls grapple with gender issues. Fantasy as a genre is a natural entree to these discussions, because most adolescent students respond well to it, and it frequently offers hyperspecific sexual stereotypes.

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## MIDDLE SCHOOL CONNECTION

Welcome to our new Middle School Connection editor, Linda Broughton!

### It's a Good Thing If You Get It

M. Linda Broughton

Being in the middle is no fun. I was a child in the middle. I was not cute, cunning, and cuddly. I was too tall, too lanky, too inquisitive, too nosey, too...too...too. I did not fit in with the little kids, but—more adversely—I did not fit in (or feel comfortable) with the big kids who took the high school bus. I was not a mini-high-schooler. I was too lanky, too inquisitive, too immature... What is a body (figuratively and literally) supposed to do?

Teachers who have decided to include literature that will build, rebuild, or develop lifelong readers, relevant to the age of those in (you-know-where), and who are determined to address the immediate concerns of life—from the vantage point of what it looks like to their middle school students—need some guidance and a few suggestions.

I've always been leery of classroom materials labeled 6-12. The psychological, emotional, and social abyss between seventh graders and twelfth graders is almost incomprehensible. Remember? What is good for the sixth grader is not necessarily good for the sophomore or junior and vice versa. This *one size fits all* label doesn't. A seventh grade child's needs are significantly different from that of a seventeen-year-old junior's. Just because a child can read words at the tenth grade level does not mean that same child is mature enough for a seventeen year old protagonist with seventeen year old social, emotional, and psychological interests. Children in the middle need to read texts that relate to them—speak to them. Materials that *rock their world(s)*.

As teachers, we do not have a great deal of extra time to do extensive research to discover all of the many resources that will make us more effective with middle school learners. Below are a few excellent, reader-friendly resources that offer advice, direction and guidance for the middle school teacher and learner. These resources may be read for new information by the person "assigned" to or who has elected to teach at the middle level, by the professional who needs specific suggestions and/or confirmation of pedagogical approaches. The professional who has been in-the-middle for a long time and is looking for new approaches and ideas to invigorate an already solid personal curriculum will also find useful information.

#### Resources for Hurried (and Harried!) Teachers

Remember your adolescent psychology text? It embraced the years between 12 and 20. Maybe three chapters related directly to early adolescents. We need more specific information. Rick Wormeli offers wonderful advice in his text, *Meet Me in the Middle: Becoming an Accomplished Middle-Level Teacher*. The entire text addresses the needs of the middle school child (and teacher). One particularly interesting chapter deals with the brain research applied directly to the middle school. He answered my many questions beginning with "Why do they do that?" He also addresses the possible/probable changes and extensions of our professional practices. Wormeli states that "the shifting priorities in our profession demand that we continually seek new ideas but also be savvy when practicing them. Find what makes you passionate and build on it" (XV). This text is reader friendly, teacher supportive and motivational. He offers innumerable successful strategies specifically directed toward 6-8 - not 7-12. Make sense? Ah, yes. This text answers questions not posed in the "secondary text." It offers wonderful information related specifically to the middle kid(s).

Of course, most folks reading this article are concerned with reading and literature and all of those disciplines associated with it. David Booth offers, in *Reading and Writing in the Middle Years*, strategies for connecting reading and writing by "behaving as writers ourselves and helping students to act as real writers who write because they have something they want to say" (17). He asserts that writing is not easy and not always fun. Writing can and should be satisfying and purposeful. It is an important aspect of living. Booth first addresses the processes of reading and writing and how they are interconnected. Youngsters need to recognize that we write from our reading: "we are always borrowing the bits of craft we remember from the books we have read" (91). He furthers states that it is important for "us to help young writers set up a system that enables them to experience the learning that helps acquire skills of handling information" (106). Youngsters need to see themselves as writers and readers. They need to be given the opportunity to make the choices that real readers and writers

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*Remember your adolescent psychology text? It embraced the years between 12 and 20. We need more specific information.*

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make. The premise of the text is that each child's potential must be honored and given the opportunity to developing as lifelong readers and writers. This text offers learning strategies that will can be set up in all subjects in every classroom. Further bibliographic references extend specific course-content implementation. Of particular importance are the many strategies presented to the teacher for learning how to model and demonstrate reading and writing strategies, conduct mini-lessons, and confer with students—middle school students (age and maturity specific concerns). This text supports the theory that writing can be taught and not just assigned. It's a keeper.

The Booth text provides a nice transition right into Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi's *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. This is a wonderful "how to" book. It is, as it says, a guide. The neat thing about this text is that the authors suggest and offer *baby steps*. The teacher can take chapter by chapter and get the writing workshop working with a minimum of frustration. It's user friendly and each component of the workshop is addressed separately in each chapter but always with an eye toward the *whole* of the process. The writing workshop has proven to produce strong, empowered writers. Especially important is that this text will help new teachers begin this writing workshop setup significantly earlier in their careers. It's difficult for most teachers to *let go* of control as seasoned veterans; new teachers hold on and find writing instruction (in all disciplines) frustrating. This text takes the *whole*—investigates the parts/steps—and then *puts the parts back together into the big picture*—the workshop. This text makes the writing workshop work according to each individual teacher's needs, learning community, philosophy—and, yes, teacher comfort level (zone).

We've read the research. We've listened to our colleagues. We *know* that children learn differently. We try to offer and present materials in multiple ways to motivate learning. It's difficult to teach, think, and plan beyond our own learning modalities. We've studied Gardner's Intelligences. We've passed tests and quizzes on various and sundry qualities of his ideas, but, have we actually *built* activities and offered choices that affect learning of persons who think and comprehend differently than us? Hmm... it's so much easier said. *Using Young Adult Literature: Thematic Activities Based on Gardner's Multiple Intelligences* edited by Jacqueline Glasgow and contributed to by real-live-teachers, presents wonderful ideas and suggestions applying and synthesizing Gardner's Intelligences to popular and relevant (to students) YAL texts. Glasgow offers an in-depth overview into multiple intelligences, their importance, and some insight how to approach and use literacy activities to enhance them. The text is presented in two areas of concern to the middle school person: "Growing Up and Surviving in a Chaotic World of War and Work" and "Preservation of People, Places, and Planet." Under these umbrella topics are wonderful chapters addressing the middle schooler's concerns presented in a plethora of ways certain to engage even the most "stubborn" middle

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*I remember a song sung by a famous  
frog, lamenting his state of being green  
and how it is not easy.*

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school personalities. Note: each chapter offers titles at all levels with copious annotation and thinking aloud. It comes very close to the *one-size...* label.

The text that ties all of these texts together is a resource that will help the new teacher, the seasoned veteran, or the teacher looking for new materials, and new approaches of teaching. It is Lois Stover's *Young Adult Literature: The Heart of the Middle School*. Stover's text is part of Boynton/Cook's Young Adult Literature Series. It's a thorough resource that offers specific ideas and suggestions of using texts that are totally suitable for the middle school child. The texts offered transcend disciplines. Chapter one provides ample theoretical and research-based rationale for using young adult literature as the center of middle school learning. Chapters two through four present specific examples of setting up what she calls "transdisciplinary" planning and teaching. Stover feels that *transdisciplinary* (across) "better captures the idea of transcending traditional content-area boundaries, of exploring genuine problems from multiple perspectives with concern for content-area divisions" (15). In contrast, *interdisciplinary* planning "tends to be used to describe the situation that exists when teachers of different content areas

explore how a given theme plays out within the confines of their traditional disciplines" (15). Transdisciplinary thinking introduces the idea of inquiry-based learning (students and teachers investigate questions motivated

by the reading) compared to discovery-thinking. Here the teacher leads the students toward a predisposed goal. She goes on to present ideas that are pedagogically compatible with the *whole-student, whole language learner*. It is just loaded with ideas, 30 pages of annotations (by concepts), and possibilities that unite the entire model middle school curriculum.

I remember a song sung by a famous frog, lamenting his state of being green and how it is not easy. So too is the lament of the educator-in-the-middle. It's not easy. Think about it — if it were easy, everyone would be doing it. The middle school age child has specific concerns and interests and definite ideas on how and why learning should take place. We need to address specifically those concerns and interests. Labels like *grades seven - twelve* or *one size fits all* (or, as the latest label states: *one size fits most*) do not make it. You might consider adding these titles to the professional library in your school so that in-the-middle teachers in all disciplines can read up on, reacquaint, or revitalize their ever-challenging teaching environments.

Most of us are more than willing—actually—constantly looking for information, materials, and pedagogically sound ideas to spark new, exciting ideas for our students. We do have lives beyond the classroom, however. These texts are compilations of some of the most relevant approaches to instruction for the middle level. The texts cited offer a "whole" look at the middle school student. The resources mentioned are texts that address areas directly related to the plight of the professional who deals on a daily basis with "kids in the middle."

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# *The Outsiders* is Still “In”: Why This Old Novel Is So Popular with Teens, and Some Activities Students Enjoy

Lauren Groot with Martha Story

What is it about *The Outsiders* that makes it such a ubiquitous hit? I suggested to my colleague, Martha Story, that we interview students to find out. I arrived at her eighth grade classroom at Swift Creek Middle School in Tallahassee, Florida, ready to do some activities that prompted discussion and opinion-forming. At the end of the second day, I asked THE question: “Why is *The Outsiders* so popular with teens today, even though it was written over 30 years ago?”

Good reading, realistic, current and kid-oriented are the recurrent remarks, but the eighth-graders say it much better than I can. Here are a few comments:

“I think *The Outsiders* is a story that is still alive and everyone prefers it because it goes back to how things were and you can compare how things are now. The only difference I see is people don’t call themselves Socs and Greasers anymore, but there are groups who still fight!”  
—Ramya

“It deals with kids our age. It deals with problems we face. We get to hear about how time has changed.” —Kelly

I think the reason *The Outsiders* is so popular today is because no matter how old the book is, it tells it the way it is. There’s problems everywhere, with everyone. Nobody gets all the breaks. The author tells about how life is all around.”  
—Lori

“*The Outsiders* let me escape from the real world and it informs me what life was like in the late 50’s and early 60’s.”  
—Sean

“Because the conflict between kids today is the same in many ways as it was in the past.” —Russell

“Because it still deals with situations that we deal with today. Like how Greasers and Socs have their own groups and they don’t really like each other. We still have groups like that.”  
—Tiffany

“I think that this book is still popular because it is a good story...” —Brooke

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*It seems students find this book a validation of what they see in their own lives and appreciate reading about the struggle for individual identity while still wanting to belong to a group.*

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“Why I like the book *The Outsiders* is because it is a good story about how a group of kids can survive without any grown-ups.” —Lauren

“The suspense and meaning of the book gives it its popularity.” —Justin

“I think *The Outsiders* is still popular because the book is so realistic. There are groups today who are just like that. We still have our groups and detest others. Nothing has changed, really.” —Stacey

It seems students find this book a validation of what they see in their own lives and appreciate reading about the struggle for individual identity while still wanting to belong to a group. Although Ponyboy deserts gang life after realizing the “waste of human potential resulting from delinquency and violence,” the non-didactic tone of this novel keeps the students tuned in and reading (DeMarr 153). When the students arrive to English/Language Arts

class excited about this novel, usually they simply want to READ *The Outsiders* without interruption! Nevertheless, with such student engagement, there are many opportunities for vocabulary enrichment, literary discussions, reading gains and writing improvement.

## Seeing Stars: Haves and Have-nots in Dr. Suess and *The Outsiders*

I have never had students object to being read to, so I read Martha’s class a story as an introductory activity. Due to the recent big-screen popularity of Dr. Suess’s *The Grinch That Stole Christmas*, I thought that reading a Dr. Suess story to the Swift Creek students would be fun and provide a bit of bonding. I chose *The Sneetches* because of its obvious tie-in with *The Outsiders*. I video-taped the students’ reactions while I read this story (only 3 had heard of it before) and after watching the video, I realized that every student was transfixed. After the story, I asked if the students saw any correlation between *The Sneetches* and *The Outsiders*.

Predictably, the students mentioned how Ponyboy’s gang



was like the Sneetches without stars; the Socs were like the Sneetches with stars. But the conversation took an interesting turn: discussion ensued about how some people they know, as well as celebrities, “ghetto-up,” referring to the fashion statement and attitude that copies the look and countenance of people who are from “the ghetto.” Hippies, who displayed their lack of materialism through an unmanicured appearance, were mentioned in this discussion, also. Sometimes, the students said, “It’s cool to be on the outside.” I asked the students, “What happens when everyone is trying to be cool by being on the outside?” “That is when things change,” Justin said. “Different is usually cooler. Sameness isn’t.” Nodding of eighth-grade heads confirmed this remark.

I found this a very interesting agreement since I often witness teenagers’ adherence to a “cool” code by being identical in attitude, dress and activities. During my tenure as a teacher, I have seen innumerable teens being excluded from the “in” crowd by simply dressing differently than the reigning clique. Discussions brought about by *The Sneetches* and *The Outsiders* opened a door toward a discussion of diversity being about more than race and socio-economic status.

### The Herber Exercise...Using Students’ Experiences to Enhance Reading Comprehension

Drawing from the students’ experiences in life makes for lively discussions about the vocabulary and themes in *The Outsiders*. On day two of my visit to Swift Creek, I introduced the Herber Exercise to them, and they enthusiastically participated and competed.

#### The Herber Exercise Step-By-Step (Simmons and Palmer)

1. Teacher identifies the next section of literature that the students are to read and writes on sentence that captures the main idea of this section. Teacher then chooses two words from this statement that students should learn and explore.
2. Students form groups of no more than four people. The group has one blank piece of paper, and the identified scribe/reporter draws a line down the middle. Reporters write one of the “main idea” words chosen by the teacher at the upper left hand corner of the paper.
3. For a specified number of minutes (four minutes works well), the groups tell their reporter the words that are popping into their head (no dictionary/thesaurus) in relation to the word from the main idea statement. When the designated time is over, the groups count their words and the teacher records the groups’ results on the board. The group that comes up with the most words wins for word number one.
4. For the second word from the main idea statement, do the same as in #3, above.
5. Once the number of words are recorded for word number two, the groups take turns explaining any word-relationships between the two columns.
6. Students agree or disagree with teacher-written *predictive statements*, related to the text that is to be read. The teacher may ask students to orally explain their opinion. See examples below under Step Six.
7. After the identified text is read, students discuss the words and predictive statements again to allow them to revisit their thoughts and opinions.

### The Herber Exercise Applied to *The Outsiders*

#### Step One:

The class was to begin chapter 7 of *The Outsiders* the day after my visit, so my main idea statement (step 1) was drawn from that chapter: *Ponyboy realizes the bleak future of violence between gangs, and that individuals, not gangs, are what is important in forming relationships.* “Bleak” was a words within chapter 7, and I thought “individual” warranted some discussion.

#### Step Two/Three/Four:

The groups (of four students each) came up with an average of 20 words for both “bleak” and “individual.” I would like to note that the video captured a phenomenal, atypical happening in this middle school classroom: All students were participating and engaged; everyone seemed to be having fun. The students were out of their chairs leaning around the group’s elected “reporter” as they came up with words; the video validates that all students had words to share. Here is an example from J.B., Justin, John and Casey’s group (spelling errors excluded):

Bleak	Individual
dreary	lonesome
somber	independent
gloomy	Self-confident
dark	single
lonely	strong
sad	separate
depressed	willing
weak	powerful
stress	one
helpless	indivisible
low	particular
vulnerable	smart
cold	spiritual exclusive
raw	odd
bearing	unitary
dismal	special
cheerless	expressed
dejection	difference
bare	exclusive
blank	entity
windswept	sole
	unique

#### Step Five:

Matches drawn between the words were explained by the group: “Lonely and single, because sometimes people who are single get lonely. Weak and one, because if you’re just one, you could be weak. And bare and independent, because people are left out in the open, ya know, bare, when they’re independent and don’t care what people think about them.”

#### Step Six:

As if on cue, I could tell the students appreciated shifting from “group work” to an individual, “no pressure” activity of simply applying their opinion to the predictive statements. They obviously enjoyed placing their no-penalty “A” or “D” for Agree/Disagree on their paper I handed them.

### Predictive Statements (related to Chapter 7, *The Outsiders*)

1. "Funning around" in a serious situation makes everyone feel better.
2. Chocolate cake is a nutritious breakfast.
3. Underprivileged people think that everyone else is better off than themselves.
4. If children were burning inside a house, anyone would run inside and save them.
5. Ponyboy and Sodapop should go to a foster home where grown-ups more responsible than Darry could take care of them.
6. Dallas only risked his life by going into the fire because Ponyboy and Johnny needed help.

The predictive statements I wrote created discussion that was animated, silly, as well as serious. At times, the conversation was loud, and not a one-at-a-time discussion, but I let them continue and did not "shush" them; ALL of the discussion was about the topic at hand. They eventually quieted down and took turns again. I was excited to see their enthusiasm. Sometimes you just have to say your opinion to your neighbor and not wait to be called on, especially when you are 13.

I was surprised to find that 15 of the 24 students agreed with the first statement. All but 2 disagreed with statement number 2, and statement number 3 shifted the jokes about chocolate cake to serious conversation about how people perceive themselves and others. Statement 4 was equally split, and the students who believed it amoral to not save the burning children accepted the other students' rationale that risking one's own life could ultimately be a "stupid move." All of the students believed that Darry was the right person to be raising Ponyboy and Sodapop; and all of the students thought Dallas only went into the fire to help Johnny and Ponyboy.

### Dress Up and Go to the Movies

As fashion is so important to teens, much discussion centered around what the teenagers in *The Outsiders* wore. Martha brought in a madras shirt one day; the students loved this visual, as it answered some of their questions about style in this novel.

Martha and I decided that since the students were especially interested in the fashion preferences of the Greasers,

we would have a Greaser dress-up day. We brought in pictures of Greaser-like attire and discussed that no knives, cigarettes, etc. (real or pretend) could be brought onto campus.

Most of the eighth graders in the school dressed up and completed their look with greased-back hair or pony-tails. The boys rolled up their sleeves and flexed their muscles while the girls painted on bright red lipstick. It seems they began to understand the irony of these "tuff" characters: that much of the "tuffness" was superficial; it was a shield to ward off anything that might hurt them.

The movie *The Outsiders*, from the 1980's, was a tremendous hit with these modern eighth-graders. They enjoyed knowing that S. E. Hinton was the nurse that came into Dallas's room, and they recognized some of the stars that are still popular and prevalent in today's movies. Chocolate cake and eggs, served with grape jelly were movie-time snacks

brought in by the parents, or prepared in *Teen Challenges* (Home Economics) class to further enhance students' ability to make connections with *The Outsiders*.

This high-interest novel, written near the middle of our previous century, has a hook into our teens that allows for many more teaching opportunities. In my opinion, remembering that students are not blank slates, that they are people full of opinions, experiences and knowledge is one of the first steps in helping students become readers. Responsible, critical, and

"pleasure" readers are what we hope for, and *The Outsiders* is just the novel to prompt students to join the reading "gang."

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# Backwards in Time and Forward in Spirit: Teaching *Year of Impossible Goodbyes*

Terry Martin and Tracey Brown

In *Year of Impossible Goodbyes*, Sookan, a ten-year-old girl, describes her family's experience of the horrors of World War II—first, as they battle the oppressive and tyrannical Japanese military who occupied Korea during the war, and then as they deal with the Communist takeover of North Korea after the war. This is an incredible story of a family's love, their response to adversity, and their willingness to risk everything to find freedom.

Author Sook Nyul Choi, who immigrated to the United States from Pyongyang, North Korea to pursue her university education, and then taught in the New York City Schools for twenty years, says, "Having lived through this turbulent period of Korean history, I wanted to share my experiences. So little is known about my homeland, its rich culture and its sad history. My love for my native country and for my adopted country prompted me to write this book to share some of my experiences and foster greater understanding" (1991).

And "foster understanding," it does. In addition to providing insight into World War II and Korean culture, this book addresses such themes as freedom, responsibility, growing up, and the ability of the human spirit to not only survive, but triumph in the face of real adversity.

This is a book well worth sharing with middle level students. The following are our suggestions for teaching *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* as part of a thematic unit on World War II in a middle school Language Arts/Social Studies block class, including pre-reading activities, re-

sponse journal topics, discussion and essay questions, and related teaching ideas.

## Pre-Reading Activities

In order to help students expand their knowledge of Korea, increase their understanding of Korean customs and values, and compare differences in cultures, before reading *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* consider the following pre-reading activities:

### "Getting to Know Korea" Research Activity

First, create a "grab bag" by writing interdisciplinary questions on a small slip of paper, and dropping them into a paper sack labeled "Getting to Know Korea" Research Questions. (See Box 1). Next, work with the school librarian to gather and assemble world almanacs, encyclopedias, maps, and other related resources. (Research questions may be adjusted to reflect the availability of appropriate resources). Finally, divide the class into triads. Each group will then send one person up to draw a question from the "Getting to Know Korea" grab bag. They will have the next thirty minutes to research the answers to their question, then will present their questions, their findings, and the sources they found useful to the whole class.

### "Thinking About War" Prereading Activity

*Year of Impossible Goodbyes* deals with a young person's response to war. War

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*In addition to providing insight into World War II and Korean culture, this book addresses such themes as freedom, responsibility, growing up, and the ability of the human spirit to not only survive, but triumph in the face of real adversity.*

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#### Box 1

#### "Getting to Know Korea" Research Questions:

(Questions adapted from exercise found on AskAsia Homepage  
[http://www.askasia.org/for\\_educators/fe\\_frame.htm](http://www.askasia.org/for_educators/fe_frame.htm))

Where is Korea? What countries surround it? What are its nearest bodies of water?

What time zone is Korea in? When it is noon here, what time is it there? How long would it take to fly to Korea from the airport closest to our school?

How large is the country? Describe its size in terms familiar to the rest of the class: Is it as big as the United States? Is it bigger than our state?

Describe the climate in Korea. What is the average temperature? How much rain falls there in a year?

Describe the country's chief geographic features. Are there mountains? Rivers? What places would you compare it to, geographically, and why?

What is the latitude and longitude of Korea? What is the significance of the 38th parallel?

What is the official language of Korea? What other languages are spoken there?

What religions are practiced in Korea? Is there an official Korean religion? What kinds of religious freedom exist there?

(continued on page 52)

is an issue that evokes strong emotional responses from people. Some will argue that war is never right under any circumstances, while others will charge that people who take that stance are cowardly or unpatriotic. People who believe that war is justified may point to freedom and democracy as ideals worth defending. They suggest that there are times when human rights violations are so vile and intolerable that military action becomes necessary. Others claim that war is less about ideals like freedom, humanity, liberty, than about economic and political gamesmanship. They say that violence is never an appropriate solution, and note that minorities and poor people are most often called upon to risk their lives when powerful politicians cannot resolve their conflicts through peaceful means.

People's opinions about war are influenced by many factors. Religious beliefs, family history, life experiences, political viewpoints, and personal values all play a part in determining how people feel about war. Some students know have had first-hand experience: they may have parents or other relatives who fought in a war, or have taken an active role in protesting their country's involvement in a war.

After discussing these ideas with your students, find out where they stand on the issue of war by having them respond to the questions in Box 2. Since their responses reflect their opinions about a very personal issue, there are obviously no "right" or "wrong" answers here, but remind them that their responses should demonstrate thoughtful consideration of the issues.

### During Reading Activities

#### Suggested Response Journal Topics

In *Young Adult Literature & the New Literary Theories*, Anna Soter expresses concern about how YA novels are often approached in classroom contexts:

"They are mostly taught with the same kind of focus that classical works receive (and) are often accompanied by questions that test comprehension rather than questions that encourage interpretive exploration and push stu-

### Box 2

#### Where Do YOU Stand on the Issue of War?

1. How do you think your life would change if the United States were to become involved in a war today? What things might you worry about that you don't worry about now? What things might seem less important to you?
2. What kinds of opinions do the people closest to you have about war? How do you know? How do their opinions or experiences influence you?
3. Do you think you would ever be called upon to fight in a war? How does this knowledge impact your feelings about war?
4. Imagine that the U.S.A. is engaged in a war. In front of the White House, thousands of people have gathered, carrying protest signs and chanting anti-war slogans. One man yells at the protesters, "How dare you protest while others are fighting and dying for you? You are a disgrace to this country. You are un-American. If our forefathers hadn't been willing to risk their lives fighting to establish this country in 1776, then you wouldn't have the freedom to protest." A protester responds, saying, "Protesting my country's involvement in this terrible, unjustifiable war is the most patriotic thing I can do. I love my country, and this is how I show it. If people don't protest, more people will die for no good reason." Regardless of your personal feelings about their positions, continue their dialogue by writing what you think each person might say next.
5. Are there any ideals or principles you would be willing to fight for? If so, what are they? If not, explain why you would not fight, no matter what the cause.

dents to consider the books from a perspective different from the one that influenced their first response to them" (2).

*The Year of Impossible Goodbyes* has much to offer middle level students who are in the process of becoming thoughtful readers responding to literature and developing a critical appreciation of literary works. The "starters" in Box 3 can be assigned as response journal writing and then used to spark class discussion:

### Box 3

#### Journal/Discussion Prompts

- Sookan writes, "Because I was a girl, I was supposed to stay with the women. I wasn't supposed to disturb Grandfather after my morning lesson. How I wished I could be with them" (10). Sookan and her grandfather were close, so why didn't he understand what she wanted, and invite her to join them? Why didn't Sookan just ask to be included with the boys? Do you think it is ever fair to exclude someone because of gender? Explain.
- Sookan admits, "I don't want to hear what Mother and Aunt Tiger talked about and I was sorry I had asked any questions" (10). Have you ever regretted having asked an adult a question? Describe your experience, and compare it to Sookan's.
- Sookan describes climbing on to Kisa's stand and looking at the factory from his vantage point: "Everything looked different from where he stood" (12). What do you think Sookan meant? Consider how your perception of

a situation might change if you were to see it from someone else's view. Describe a situation you would like to see from a different vantage point and discuss how that change might alter your perception.

- Sookan mentions that her mother had been "a beauty in her hometown" (13) and admits that it is difficult for her to picture her mother as having been beautiful or young. Do you have the same difficulty picturing the adults in your life as young people? Imagine that you and Sookan are talking about this. What might you say to each other?

— Sookan says: "Stroking his mustache, Captain Narita paced around the table where we remained seated. The best thing to do when he came over was to lower one's eyes and wait. I had heard that many times from the sock girls, but I had to look at him. Except for

(continued on page 52)

**Box 4****Quotations Discussion Activity**

1. "It has been 36 years since I have meditated in the warmth of a spring sun. Today, the Japanese soldiers will not keep me inside. I am too old to be afraid any more."
2. "Well, your God is silent and sleeping while the Japanese are busy killing us Koreans. We are as helpless as flies and it is getting worse as the war goes on."
3. "For over 30 years I've been working for the Japanese. Lately they don't even pay the little money they used to. For the last three weeks we have all worked without any pay. If they don't pay us soon with money or rice, we will all go hungry."
4. "Because I was a girl I was supposed to stay with the women. I wasn't supposed to disturb Grandfather after my morning lesson. How I wished I could be with them."
5. "When will you stupid Koreans understand that you are all subjects and there is nothing we, the Imperial Police of the Heavenly Race do not know about you and your activities. There is nothing we cannot do."
6. "I shall never come out again. Throw away my shoes."
7. "I'm warning you, this is the last time you'll hear me speak Korean. We'll get in trouble if Narita Sensei hears us. You never know if someone will tattle to the teacher. Anyway, you'd better move to the front of the line where all the midgets are."
8. "I thought of the chuckling Buddha that I had seen when I was at Grandfather's bedside; the little Buddha had made me feel happier when I had been so worried about Grandfather. I needed to see this happy little Buddha again, and so I closed my eyes and rubbed them hard."
9. "How good you are. Your mother taught you well. You are patient, respectful, and wise beyond your years."
10. "Let us rehearse. When the alarm rings, your teacher will tell you where to stand and then you must all grab what is in front of you and throw it over the fence."
11. "All these years you were my strength. You were the ones always helping me. I came to you as a bitter and spiteful woman whose only remaining objective was to get revenge on the Japanese for killing my parents and my babies and taking my home and my husband from me. But thanks to you, look at me. I now have many people whom I love and most of all, I am able to help many people. I've found a new purpose in life."
12. "The guards know me because I live in the neighborhood and pass through often. They know I have many children. They'll probably think you are mine."
13. "Nuna, you can't cry like this. Big sisters don't cry."
14. "He was a kind man and had put himself at great risk to help us. It was then I smelled the sweetness of the rice cakes from the package he had given me. I was ashamed I never thanked him for his kindness."
15. "I was sick of this school. I was mad that I was born Korean... I was angry at everyone."

**Quotations Discussion Activity**

Write the quotations in Box 4, from *Year of Impossible Goodbyes*, on transparencies. Distribute one quote to each

group of students. Ask them to A.) Identify the character who made each of the following statements; B.) Describe the context in which he or she made the statement, and C.) Explain what the statement tells you about the character and his or her situation.

**Box 5****Essay Topics**

1. It is often said that war makes children grow up too soon. Was this true for Sookan? Use examples from the book to support your opinion.
2. What is the significance of the tree in the first three chapters of the book? What did it symbolize to Sookan, to her family, and to her grandfather? Explain what happened to the tree at the end of the book, and what that represents.
3. Describe Haiwon's birthday party. Discuss how the party functioned as a pivotal event in the story. Use specific details from the story to support your explanation.
4. Sookan writes: "Darkness and light, peace and joy, evil and good. All these tensions and conflicts were necessary in the struggle for perfect harmony." Explain what you think she means by this statement, whether you agree or disagree with her, and why. Make sure your response demonstrates your knowledge of the characters and events in the book.
5. Despite the pain and ugliness that were depicted in the novel, there were also examples of kindness and goodness. Describe one situation in the book that illustrated this for you.

**After Reading Activities****Essay Topics**

Have students consider the five essay topics in Box 5. Remind them to be sure to cite specific examples from the book to support their statements.

**Respond Using Non-traditional Media**

—Sookan's mother presents family history through photographs. Have students create a display of their own family stories through photographs, drawings, or pictures from magazines.

—Several important symbols are presented in the book: a silver hair clip, a tree, a lunch box, traditional silk clothing. Have students gather and present their own cultural symbols and explain their significance.

—Have students create their own geographically accurate game boards and develop complete written instructions for a game involving escape from North Korea.

**Other Teaching Ideas****Use a Thematic Approach**

—Consider including *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* as part of a larger integrated thematic unit on World War II, Asia, or Communism. For further ideas on interdisciplinary thematic curriculum planning see Stover (1996), Mitchell and Young

(1997), and Tchudi and Lafer (1996).

—Offer students an opportunity to select one of several books that share an adolescent's perspective of World War II. Consider *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl* translated by B.M. Mooyart, *Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary—A Photographic Remembrance* by Ruud Van Der Rol, et al., *Nisei Daughter* by Monica Itoi Sone, *So Far from the Bamboo Grove* by Yoko Kawashima Watkins, *Under the Blood Red Sun* by Graham Salisbury, and *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry as possibilities for "pairings."

#### Study a Culture

—Invite a guest speaker in to share information about Korea. Students' understanding of the work will be enhanced if they can pronounce the names of the characters and cities, locate the geographical areas mentioned, visualize the way the Korean language is written, and understand some norms of Korean culture.

—Sookan explains the meaning of Korean names in chapter one. Create an assignment on 'naming.' Have students explore the meaning of their own names by researching their origins and asking family members about family traditions related to naming.

#### Discuss Propaganda

—Propaganda is any organized, widespread attempt to influence people's thinking or behavior. Common techniques of propaganda include: name-calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, card-stacking, bandwagon, half-truths, loaded words, picture-perfect, and self-appeal. Explore the book's presentation of various techniques intended to inspire patriotism, promote loyalty, or encourage hatred. Extend the discussion to an analysis of contemporary propaganda in advertising and in politics.

—Use the poem "Apology" by Emanuel (1991) to initiate discussion of how our perceptions about victims and enemies depend upon our perspective.

#### Conclusion

These, then, are just a few ideas for introducing *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* to middle level students. An ALA Children's Notable Book, ALA Best Book for Young Adults, *American Bookseller* Pick of the Lists, and A *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* Blue Ribbon Book, Nyul Choi's YA novel has been widely praised

#### BOX 1 (CONTINUED)

How do people greet one another in Korea? Bow? Shake hands? Embrace? How do they part?

What is the traditional and modern dress of Korean men, women, and children? Do clothes for special occasions differ? How?

What might a "typical" Korean breakfast, lunch, and dinner consist of? What utensils do Koreans use to eat their meals?

How many years do Korean students attend school? Are the schools there public or private? What subjects are studied?

What is the standard of living in Korea? Is it considered a wealthy or an impoverished country? What kinds of disparities exist between rich and poor?

What are the most common occupations in Korea? What kind of unemployment does the country have? What are the major products manufactured in Korea?

Do most Koreans live in urban or rural areas? Do they dwell in houses or apartments? How many people typically live in a Korean household? What is the size of their typical living space? Would you be likely to have your own bedroom as a Korean child?

How do people get from one place to another in Korea? How far do most Koreans travel to work? To school? Do children ride school buses? How old do you have to be to drive in Korea?

by critics as "powerful and moving," offering "a glimpse into a young girl's mind and into a nation's heart" (Shapiro, 1991, in *New York Times Book Review*). As a reviewer for *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* put it, readers of *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* "will

#### BOX 3 (CONTINUED)

#### Journal/Discussion Prompts

Grandfather's and mine, everyone's eyes were lowered in silence" (26-27). Why do you think that Sookan didn't lower her eyes? Were her reasons the same as her Grandfather's? Explain. Have you ever felt compelled to do something that you knew wasn't safe? Compare your situation to Sookan's. What motivated you? Did you consider yourself to be brave or foolish?

—Sookan says: "Grandfather looked angry and humiliated. I had never seen him look like this before. I didn't know what to do" (28). Have you ever seen someone you love and admire hurt or upset? How did it make you feel? Compare your feelings and reactions to Sookan's.

—Sookan's mother says to her: "You are a little girl, and there is nothing for you to worry about. Just do as you are told. Soon all will be well. God is watching over us" (32). Was her mother right? How do you feel, when given similar advice by adults? What do you think motivates grown ups to say things like this to children? Compare Sookan's

mother's advice to the advice given to you by an adult in your life.

—Sookan describes going to the Japanese school and reports that the role of the school was to ensure that she learned "to be a loyal and obedient subject and (worked) to bring victory to the war" (64). What do you think of Sookan's school promoting these values? In what ways does your school instill and promote values, such as citizenship and patriotism?

—Sookan admits: "I didn't know how to change these awful feelings" (81). Have you ever experienced feelings that were different than what you assumed you were "supposed" to feel? What did you do? Compare your reactions to Sookan's.

—Sookan describes fleeing her home without being able to take any of her possessions. She admits: "It was strange to leave everything I loved" (131). If you had to make a sudden escape like Sookan did, what things would you miss most, and why?

find themselves moved back in time and forward in spirit" (Kauffman, 1991). We think your students will enjoy this book, which bears witness to the plight of a people and provides an uplifting account of the triumph of the human spirit against great adversity.

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# Introducing My Students to My Friends in Young Adult Literature

*Patricia L. Daniel*

## Introduction

One strategy I use to introduce my students to books is that I talk about the characters in the books as if I know them, as if they are my friends. I explain that just like real friends, they (the students) will be intrigued by some and may choose to meet them; they will be unimpressed by some and choose not to meet them. Their choice is theirs to make; I have the privilege to describe my friends and their situations so my students can make an informed decision.

The first day in my Adolescent Literature class we invest time introducing ourselves to each other. I know we have to begin building a community of learners and provide a safe learning environment if students are going to take risks and discuss ideas and situations that are controversial. We have to have a sense of safety and community because strangers do not discuss topics that make them uncomfortable (Benton & Daniel, 1996). After students and I have introduced ourselves, I tell them about the newest friend I have made in the book I am currently reading because there is intensity in my telling as I tell about the character in the present tense.

For instance, last year I began telling them about Tish in Cynthia Voigt's *When She Hollers*. I was genuinely concerned about Tish's well being since I had to close the book and go to work; I left her at her school after the teacher was so blatantly incompetent and unfeeling. I explained to my students that Tish has been sexually abused by her stepfather and she is tired of it; she is desperate. She is carrying a knife in her boot. She told him at breakfast that she had a knife; her mother was in the kitchen but chose to ignore the conversation. Tish has not met one adult who will advocate for her. I am frustrated. I need to get back to the book to see how Tish is doing and what she's deciding to do. I so hope she doesn't hurt herself! I promise the students I will have read the book by our next class meeting, but I also promise them I won't tell them how it ends. I can see many of them care about my friend, Tish; this is the beginning of their introduction to Young Adult Literature. Several students had read the book by the next class.

This semester as students were introducing themselves to the class, I told a musician about A. C. Lemieux's *Do Angels Sing the Blues?* The main character, Boog, is devoted to his music and has the support of his parents. His best friend, Theo, is the lead singer and has the charisma for the group, but Theo's father thinks his music is a waste of time and hassles him to do something important. I confess that I am not musically inclined, but I cared about music when I read this book. I felt the cathartic release and the creative expression that Boog felt.

"Oh by the way," I add, "another great book that has a strong musical theme is Bruce Brooks' *Midnight Hour Encores*. Sib, a sixteen-year-old female, wants to see her mother. Her dad, Taxi, is agreeable and in fact, he buys a VW van to travel across the country as a way to set the stage for Sib to know her mother. During their journey Taxi talks of life 16 years ago by describing the causes, politics, and thinking of the time. While Taxi talks, Sib interprets what she is hearing on the cello. It's a fascinating journey and I don't play an instrument. People who know music, lose themselves in this book!"

## Let Me Tell You About

Throughout the years I have gradually learned to give students more choice in what they read. I provide them with a partial bibliography, seven pages long. I try to model what I hope they will do in their future classrooms: give their students choice in their reading and time to talk about the books (Atwell, 1998; Rief, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978). To let them know what some of the books are about, I tell them about what my friends are doing, how they are being challenged, and describe their situations. I talk about them in the present tense. I use strong verbs and I am emotional when I tell them about the authority-hungry adults who not only offer no help but rather purposefully put obstacles in their way.

For instance, I tell them about Chris Crutcher's *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*. Eric Calhoun and Sarah Byrnes are best friends, partly because no one else would be their friends. Eric is overweight and Sarah is disfigured by scars. That's why they became friends but that's not how they stayed friends. Eric is telling us the story. He admires Sarah's toughness. She presents a steel-hard exterior to the world. She takes a beating from Dale Thornton, local bully, rather than giving him her lunch money; and when Dale threatens Eric for his money, Sarah threatens Eric if he does give Dale his money. She wore Dale down and he targeted easier prey.

Sarah and Eric start an underground newspaper entitled, "Crispy Pork Rinds" to represent Sarah's burned face, Eric's fat, and the leftover news no one else prints. They experience the power of the pen as they anonymously attack others. When Eric goes out for the swim team, Sarah announces she knows he won't be her friend for much longer because he'll lose his excess weight and be accepted by others. Thus, the title of the book, *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*; Eric continues his swimming, but tries to eat enough to stay fat so Sarah will know how important her friendship is to him.

One day in Contemporary American Thought (CAT) class Sarah zones out; she does not get up when the bell rings; and



she is hospitalized in a mental institution. Eric is extremely worried about his tough friend. He goes to see her but it's like she's not there. He is afraid. If something can mess up Sarah Byrnes, then Eric knows he could be annihilated.

I tell students a little bit about Chris Crutcher, that he is a therapist in a mental health facility in Washington state. His books deal with hard issues that many, too many, of our students face. As in all of Chris Crutcher's books, there is a strong adult mentor. Coach Lemry is the teacher of CAT and the swim coach. She is trustworthy, thoughtful, and an advocate for students. She also knows where her expertise ends and it is refreshing to hear an adult admit that she does not know something, but it's especially difficult to hear her say that when she's talking about my friend, Sarah Byrnes. Even though I know it's true.

In *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, by Avi, Charlotte is traveling by ship from England to America in the early 1800s. She is a proper young lady, accustomed to the finer things in life, accustomed to polite society. She is the only passenger on the ship, a mistake at the outset of the books, so her only equal is Captain Jaggery. Zachariah, the old Black cook, tires to befriend Charlotte, but she is offended by his gesture. Zachariah gives her a dirk and tells her of the last voyage aboard the *Seahawk* when Capt. Jaggery had a crewmember's arm severed for not tying a knot to his expectations. Charlotte is horrified that Zachariah is telling her these lies about the Captain.

We witness Charlotte's transformation as she learns of human nature apart from titles, begins wearing sailor's clothing, and learns how to be a crew member. Charlotte's entire world is turned upside down when she considers that those in authority might be wrong and even cruel.

### Small Group Discussions

At the beginning of the semester students present their own book activities to the entire class. These activities range from readers' theater scripts, dioramas, bulletin boards, collages, structural critiques, aesthetic responses, memorabilia bags. Found poems, I AM poems, simulated journals, ABC poems, letters to and from characters, semantic differential forms, character sketches, visual representations, and more. These ideas are found in Joan Kaywell's four volume series of *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*. Even with 35-50 students in a class, the first two to three weeks every student can usually present his or her activity because they don't know each other very well, and strangers don't confide in strangers.

However, by the fourth week of class, we have to begin our small group discussion so everyone has the opportunity to share his or her activity and talk about the book in depth. Then each group decides on one activity that the whole class needs to see/hear/experience. Students choose their own groups and they may change groups from week to week, although when a student has changed to another group, he or she has always stayed with their second group choice. I provide them with a form to fill out so I know who is in which group; they write their name, book title, author, and activity.

Having the small books discussions is probably the most unselfish professional act I perform; class is not as much fun for me because I cannot be in each of the small groups, but students love their groups. They develop friendships with each other as they share their vicarious experiences with their new

book friends. They talk frankly and openly with their friends in this small and safe environment. Then when they share with the whole class, they have had their activity validated by their small group, and their confidence is evident and their presentation is rehearsed.

I am always thrilled and amazed by the rich discussion that we do engage in during the semesters. I tell students at the beginning of the semester that I hope each of us (myself included) will be uncomfortable sometime throughout the semester because we are confronted with a new idea or a new perspective than the one we have always had about something. I promise them I will make the classroom safe intellectually, physically, and emotionally, but until someone tests that safety, being safe will be taken for granted. Everyone has the opportunity to speak. I will defend your right to speak even if I do not agree with you. Hopefully we will not always agree on everything; that would be boring but safe, much like Sameness in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*. When someone makes a statement that challenges what you believe, you may question their idea but I will not allow anyone to attack someone else verbally or physically.

Students have shared with the class their own bouts with depression after reading Zibby O'Neal's *The Language of Goldfish*. After presenting an original artistic drawing representing her interpretation of O'Neal's *In Summer Light*, one student confided her attempts to commit suicide. I have found that students completely relate to O'Neal's characters and struggles of they don't get it because it doesn't speak to their experiences. During a presentation another student shared her recent decision not to take the drug ecstasy. Classmates had all kinds of questions and were amazed to learn how prevalent the drug was on their campus and in their city. Classmates also responded with encouragement for the speaker to stick with her decision to stay away from the drug. One student entrusted us with his struggle accepting the fact that his wife's brother is gay. He admitted that he liked his bother-in-law as a person, but he was shocked to learn that he was gay. He had to think through his prejudice and it was not easy.

Through my years of teaching Adolescent Literature at the university level, I am especially pleased that discussions about homosexuality have become more common and thoughtful. Ten years ago students were very reluctant to read books that depicted gays and lesbians, and discussions tended to be superficial. Students have privately confided in me that they were beginning to understand what their brothers who died of AIDS had lived through, as they determine when it is safe to share their deceased loved one with others.

Four years ago students read the books out of curiosity and snickered when they talked about the books. One student told the whole class, "I read this book [holding *Annie On My Mind*] because I had never read a lesbian book before. I read it very quickly because I was looking for the lesbian parts. [She giggled.] I read right over them. They weren't that good, really. [She giggled again.] I think I will reread it because I think it's really a love story about two people rather than just a lesbian story." Even with her giggling, I was pleased with the truth she spoke. I commented that we will have made great strides when we can truly see gays and lesbians as people dealing with the very issues and situations that straight people do.

In the past year, my students read many books that have

gay and lesbian characters and they openly discussed the conflict of the story without getting distracted by the characters' sexual orientation. I see this as a huge marker that we are making progress as a society. Our literature is reflecting our society, and our students are indicating our society is more open to diversity. I am hopeful we will get to the point where characters can be gay and that not be the issue.

### Conclusion

Throughout the semester, my students and I refer to our friends. I know it sounds hokey, but it works. I think it works because I am sincere. I really feel like I have made many friends by reading so much. When we talk about the book, we talk about the characters as if we really know them. We have invested a lot of emotional energy with some of the characters. It's like we've been through the experiences together. A student who was not majoring in education donated the books he had bought that semester with a note attached that read, "Please share these books with other students. I want to share my new friends with others."

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# Mapping A History of Adolescence and Literature for Adolescents

Greg Hamilton

When I was twelve, my parents called my brother and me into the living room, sat us between each of them on the couch, and explained that they were going to live apart from then on. I remember taking the news matter-of-factly, my stomach churning over and over, but on the surface trying to be a “grown-up,” supportive of their needs by appearing mature. My nine-year-old brother cried. And when I went back into my bedroom, closed the door, and crawled into bed, I cried, too. I cried for me and I also cried for my mother and father. I wondered how they would survive without each other. I thought about each of them living alone, separated, and rising to the challenges that being a couple seemed to protect one from.

On the playground the next day I was terrified and embarrassed that someone might find out that my parents were splitting up. It was 1973, and divorce in Oklahoma was not yet as common as it would soon be in the United States. That was when a classmate, Lisa, who had lost her older brother the summer before in a swimming accident, came over and asked me what was wrong. I told her what had happened as we walked together towards the edge of the playground. I expected her to understand because of what she had been through. She did, or seemed to at the time, and promised to keep my family secret.

Of course, two days later, several of Lisa’s friends told me they were sorry. *Sorry for what?* I asked, wishing I had never told anyone in the first place.

This story is a memory, like many of my adolescent memories, that emphasizes the way adolescents cope, survive, trust, and regret, not unlike adults, who they are in the act of becoming. The roads connecting age eleven to fourteen are long and endless when we are *in the middle*. Looking back on the pit stops, break downs, and side roads that I took during my own adolescence makes me want to forget those days, but sometimes, these memories can elicit important reminders of why I am the adult I am today. Today, as an English language arts teacher of adolescents, I’ve found it helpful to explore the historical terrains of both adolescence and the contemporary fictions adults have created for adolescents. In the following pages, I’ve provided an historical overview of these areas of study for teachers who, like myself, look to the past and the present in order to prepare and imagine possible futures.

## Guiding Principles

Nancie Atwell (1998) composes a beautiful narrative on adolescence in her widely received book, *In the Middle: New*

*Understandings about Writing, Reading, and Learning*. In her chapter “Making the Best of Adolescence,” Atwell reminds us of the nature of adolescence while encouraging teachers to recognize and act upon three principles that make up the themes of her chapter.

Atwell writes, “first, teachers have to accept the reality of middle school students . . . that adolescence is as special and important a time in a student’s intellectual development as any other phase in a child’s life . . . [and] middle school teaching should be organized so that it helps kids begin to understand and participate in adult reality” (*In the Middle* 54).

In order to develop more thoughtful and effective instructional practices, middle school language arts teachers must recognize the attributes unique to the age group they are teaching. Atwell’s first principle *regarding adolescent reality* is a reminder for teachers who work with adolescents to examine their perceptions of the nature of this age group. In order to understand the reality of middle school students, teachers can draw on their own autobiographies, remembering, like Atwell, the experiences that typified what it meant to be eleven, twelve, or fourteen. Each of the adolescent years is often marked by the sudden and obvious changes in emotional, intellectual, and physical growth.

## Historical Perspectives on Adolescence

Understanding the realities of adolescence comes also through popularized theories about adolescence, which are always relational to the philosophical world views, economics, and social conditions that define human relationships to the world at any given time in history. Marcel Danesi, in *Cool: the Signs and Meanings of Adolescence* (1994), re-tells Herodotus’s story of a Sumerian (1700 BC) father, whose description of his son’s ‘insolent’ and ‘indifferent’ behavior confirms a modern day stereotype of teenager as rebellious youth (*Cool*, x). In his comprehensive textbook *Adolescence* (1992) Eastwood Atwater traces the development of Western society’s notion of adolescence forward from early Greek society, where “the major developmental task for attaining adulthood [was] the acquisition of greater self-control and self-determination” (*Adolescence* 7). According to Atwater, Aristotle, the Greek philosopher “recognized the importance of puberty and its impact on human development . . . [when he] . . . proposed three stages of development: infancy, which includes the first seven years of life; boyhood, from about 7 years to puberty; and young manhood, from puberty to age 21” (*Adolescence* 7). During the middle ages, when “children became apprentices in the various trades and went

straight into the world of adults . . . much of the distinction between childhood/youth and adulthood was lost" (*Adolescence* 8). At that time, children were viewed as miniature adults, a perception which lasted as late as the eighteenth century, when Jean Jacques Rousseau, a French philosopher, proposed, "treating [children] like miniature adults is potentially harmful" (*Adolescence* 8). Rousseau, like Aristotle, created a developmental framework consisting of four stages with an understanding of 'adolescence' as being split between a 'savage' stage two, 5 through 12 years-of-age, and a more rational stage three, from 12 to 15. The significant difference in these two stages was Rousseau's belief that during the 'savage' stage children "lacked reasoning and should be left relatively free of restrictions to follow their innate developmental tendencies" (*Adolescence*

8) compared to the following stage three, when children were ready for more formal educational training due to the "awakening of their rational functions, including reason and self-consciousness" (*Adolescence* 8). Atwater emphasizes the influence both Aristotle and Rousseau have had on more current notions of adolescence as they relate to societal changes.

In the United States, the agrarian-based economy and social structure of the early 17th to middle 18th centuries and the rise of the industrial revolution from the late 18th century through the 19th century capitalized on American youth, making the "transition to adulthood among the working class . . . brief and harsh" (*Adolescence* 8). The adolescents of wealthier classes were rushed into adulthood as well, sent to college at 14 or 15 and entering into the professions for which they were trained as early as age 17.

By the end of the 19th century, the period of adolescence was extended, in part due to the introduction of compulsory education. "[Public education gave] young people the skills they needed for exercising the rights and privileges of democracy . . . [and] . . . extended the legal power of school authorities over students, thereby prolonging their dependence on adults" (*Adolescence* 10). Other social changes, for example, child labor laws, the concept of juvenile justice, urban growth, and the increase in human longevity helped establish the notion of adolescence as we see it today (*Adolescence* 11). By the beginning of the 20th century these social changes had contributed to the 'invention' of a period of extended development known as adolescence.

During the 20th century, new disciplines have contributed to a more scientific understanding of adolescence. Atwater addresses a variety of perspectives on adolescence (biological, psychoanalytical, social-cognitive, and cultural) that grow out of individual and cumulative studies in and across different disciplines.

Our perspectives on adolescence have certainly been more broadly defined by research stemming from various disci-

plines, however, since the publication of Stanley Hall's *Adolescence* in 1904, and the research on adolescence by Sigmund and Anna Freud (1964), Piaget (1969), Erikson (1980), Kohlberg (1969), Havighurst (1972), and Bandura (1986), each of which relied on a significantly singular group of research participants. In *Sexual Cultures and the Construction of Adolescent Identities*, Janice Irvine identifies the traditional theories of adolescent development by their tendency to divide adolescence into various stages, "with progression toward higher stages leading to a more autonomous, individuated, and independent self" (*Sexual Cultures* 30). Irvine cites Freud's theory of psychosexual development and Piaget's stages of cognitive development as establishing a norm for adolescent behavior biased by its reification of white, middle class male values. Erikson's psychosocial stages and Kohlberg's cognitive-moral developmental theory grew out of the work of Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget and are equally biased in

terms of racial and class prejudice.

In Erikson's sequencing of human development, adolescence is the 5th stage, marked by a boy's rejections of his mother. According to Erikson, once a boy has rejected his mother his sexual energies are directed towards his peer group. Psychologically, separation from the mother positions one to make decisions independently and without guidance from others. Piaget and Kohlberg continued this line of thinking. Piaget recognized the need for the individual to stand outside of something and objectify it in order to understand it, developing what he termed "cognitive detachment." Kohlberg built his cognitive moral development theory on Piaget's work and determined that decisions are made with regard to a universal justice ethic (*Sexual Cultures* 32). We now know that

Kohlberg committed suicide after his critics revealed that much of his research had been fabricated.

Traditional theories on adolescence have for the greater part of the 20th century supported expectations for how young adults should act inside

and outside our language arts classrooms. Education has been secular and knowledge objectified (Myers, *Changing Our Minds* 56). Learning has been viewed as an autonomous and individuated act where each child is a storer of knowledge, expected to *know* and *understand* through memorization, silent analysis, decoding, and objectifying texts (Myers, 1996: 56). But the latter quarter of the 20th century has seen the evolution of social changes that are challenging traditional theories on adolescence, creating broader and more complex expectations for teenagers and their language arts teachers.

Atwater outlines six areas of social change affecting adolescents in the 1990's: technological advancement, new patterns of family life, greater awareness and exercise of personal rights among youth, greater affluence in society, a greater

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*Looking back on the pit stops, break downs, and side roads that I took during my own adolescence makes me want to forget those days, but sometimes, these memories can elicit important reminders of why I am the adult I am today.*

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*Today, as an English language arts teacher of adolescents, I've found it helpful to explore the historical terrains of both adolescence and the contemporary fictions adults have created for adolescents.*

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emphasis on materialism, and the counterforces at work modifying the effects of the [other] social changes (*Adolescence* 13-15). In addition to social change, Irvine cites the impact educational research has had on our changing views about what it means to be an adolescent, with a focus on gender, race, and class. Irvine emphasizes Carol Gilligan's work with adolescent girls, Nancy Chodorow's exploration of the influence of culture on psychosocial development, and sociologist Patricia Hill Collin's call for an Afrocentric theory of development that takes into account the affects of oppression and racial prejudice (*Sexual Cultures* 32-35). It is also important to recognize, since the 1970's, the push to re-frame our notion of human development has paralleled the revisioning of schools and schooling, and more specifically, curricula and standards in the language arts classroom. Education is diverse, knowledge is interactive, and learning involves the development of multiple perspectives, the ability to translate across cultures and negotiate difference (*Changing our Minds* 56).

As shown above, current research on adolescence (Irvine (1994); Cotterell (1996); Denisai (1994); and Takanishi, 1993) has moved beyond the traditional theories of development established by Stanley Hall, Jean Piaget, Erik Erikson, and Lawrence Kohlberg to suggest multiple and competing ideological frameworks that broaden and complicate any singular perspective on the nature of adolescence. To go back to Nancie Atwell's first principle, part of understanding the *reality* of middle school students involves going beyond any one specific model of human development. *Whose* reality of middle school students do we accept? Because our society is continually changing, language arts teachers must develop practices that allow for changing definitions of the realities of our youth.

My understanding of adolescence is best confirmed by teachers like Atwell, whose stories of her own experiences surviving adolescence and attending to adolescents emphasize principles of being and learning for both child and adult. Atwell's second publication of *In the Middle* is appropriately re-titled, *In the Middle: New Understandings About Writing, Reading, and Learning*. Atwell's revisions maintain that middle school students still value most their friends, like to find out about things they didn't know before, view collaboration as cheating and learning as solitary, and like best the classes that let them talk, play, and have some say about the final product. However, her title suggests that language arts teachers must continually re-examine who and how they are teaching (*In the Middle* 68). Among those educators, writers, and classroom researchers, like Atwell, who define adolescence as a time of "widest . . . range of abilities, problems, attitudes, and levels of maturity" (*In the Middle* 27), Romano (1987), Hynds (1997), Wilhelm (1997), Bomer (1995), Delpit (1995), hooks (1994), and Gere, Fairbanks, Howes, Roop, and Schaafsma (1992) represent adolescence as a "special time" intellectually, physically, and emotionally through the examination of *who, what, why, and how* they teach. Implicit and explicit in the works

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of these teachers/researchers/writers is the valuing of the examination of definitions of adolescence as integral to the work we do with adolescents. The stories these educators tell make explicit Atwell's second and third principles, that adolescence is a significant time in a person's life, and that teachers need to organize middle school instruction in ways that will help kids begin to understand and participate in adult reality. Most language arts teachers would agree that the literary fictions we read with our students often triggers important conversations about adult realities. The changing history of the literary fictions used to educate adolescents is as interesting as the shifting historical perspectives on adolescence.

### Historical Perspectives on Literature for Adolescents

In *Adolescent Literature: Response and Analysis*, Robert Probst (1984) writes that:

The adolescent, characteristically preoccupied with self, should be an ideal reader. That is not to say that he *will* read well, or even read at all. He may despise literature, the literature classroom, and the literature teacher, and express great pride in his inability to make sense out of the written word. But unless he is very unusual, he has the one characteristic essential for a reader—an interest in himself. He is concerned about his relationships with peers and parents and his gradual assumption of responsibility for himself. He is growing more aware of the important decisions he will soon have to make. He wants to understand work, love, hate war, death, vengeance, responsibility, good, evil—in other words, he is interested in the themes of the literature that has established itself as worth reading and discussing. (*Adolescent Literature* 4)

For Probst, it is important to emphasize that adolescent literature is a collection of literary works that have been accepted into the canon and traditionally taught historically or critically (e.g., *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Macbeth*, and *Walden*) or are well-worn young adult classics typically read

by adolescents (e.g., *Animal Farm*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Summer of My German Soldier*, and *The Chosen*). Probst recognizes the interest in *self* that generally characterizes most adolescents, and suggests classroom experiences with traditional literature that encourages young readers to develop and trust their own personal responses to the texts we devoured as teens and want our students to read.

Defining and understanding the dimensions of young adult literature becomes an important act for teachers who want to deliberately and thoughtfully consider the nature of the literature they choose to use in the classroom. It is helpful to review the historical experience young readers have had with the fiction (and non-fiction) adults have laid in their paths in order to recognize some of the habits of thinking that have developed with regard to the relationship between young adults and the books they read. With an historical framework in mind, we might be in a better position to ask, where are we going? And, why?

In *Using Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom*, Bushman & Bushman (1997) begin their historical overview

by rejecting the assumption that “the beginning of literature for young people occurred in the 1950s and 1960s with the publication of Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) or Hinton’s *The Outsiders* (1967); however, the literature directed to and for young people began much earlier” (222). Bushman and Bushman create a framework for adolescent literature encompassing a roughly 400 year time period entitled “Rules to Live By,” beginning with titles like *A Book of Courtesy* (1477), *Aesop’s Fables*, and Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur* to exemplify Middle Age literature written for adults and used to socialize children into the expected adult habits and behaviors of that time. Religious and didactic literature prevailed throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, (e.g., *The King James Bible*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Pilgrim’s Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come*) during which time children were recognized as “deficient adults who needed all the help they could get” (223). The 1700s saw a slight turning point with the publication of Defoe’s *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* and Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, as well as John Newbery’s small books for children, which set the stage for the great children’s books of the 19th century (e.g., *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Black Beauty*, and *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*).

Bushman and Bushman trace the development of series books and the division of literature into boys books and girls books, competition between publishing houses, and the “shift in the treatment of characters” with the invention of the “bad boys” literature throughout the course of the mid to late 19th century. In “The Development of the Young Adult Novel,” Linda Shadiow (1992) similarly classifies 19th century young adult literature into several sub-groups, including the series books, with formulaic plots and characters shared by multiple writers, “domestic novels,” characterized by their “elevation and celebration of the power of good women to salvage humanity by conservatism and religion” (51), and “dime novels,” or adventure stories with their tales of rebellious and mischievous youth. Clearly, the mid to late 19th century marked an even greater turning point in terms of recognizing, in addition to the classics, new forms of literature that provided entertainment value. But even the “domestic,” “dime,” and “series” books developed plots intended to relate an adult view of the world to young readers, rather than trying to present their own (Monseau & Salvner 58). It wasn’t until the beginning of the twentieth century that the characters in books read by young people were depicted as having their own thoughts about the world around them. Shadiow calls this more personalized stage of adolescent literature “The Inner World” and writes, “[w]ith the appearance of a very personal me within the books, characters did start to explore the church, the home, and other worlds from an internal rather than an external perspective” (Monseau & Salvner 58). According to Bushman and Bushman, early to mid-twentieth century novels for young readers can be grouped by decade, with the Stratemeyer books taking over

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*Many of our controversial issues are controversial because we lack the strategies to become part of a community of listeners and learners who will support each other’s curiosities, dispel each other’s assumptions, and sometimes offer solutions to the problems modern society sets forth.*

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in the 1920s, the historical and “junior books” of the 1930s, and the career novels of the 1940s and 1950s. In general, “[these novels] focused on traditional social behavior: family, jobs, sports, dating, etc. The themes of these novels were moralistic and superficial. However, realism began to creep into the writing of a few young adult writers (e.g., J.D. Salinger and Henry Gregor Felsen) marking milestone in the direction of young adult literature” (*Using Young Adult Literature* 226-228).

During the 1960’s, the movement towards new realism in young adult literature gave rise to the birth of the classic, contemporary young adult novels still being used in classrooms today (e.g., *The Pigman*, *The Outsiders*, *Where the Lilies Bloom*, *Sounder*, and *The Contender*) and welcomed the addition of a plethora of young adult authors, including,

Judy Blume, Paula Danziger, Robert Cormier, and Chris Crutcher, Cynthia Voigt, Gary Paulsen, Sandy Asher, Walter Dean Meyers and M.E. Kerr (Bushman and Bushman 1997, 229-231). Many of these writers are now known for the issues and topics they cover: cultural diversity, historical fiction, child abuse, homosexuality, divorce, eating disorders, and teenage suicide, to name a few. The advent of so many young adult novels with a wide range of subject matter, many of quality and depth of literary value, has created

a fascinating controversy over the use of young adult literature in today’s English classrooms.

In his forward to Monseau’s *Responding to Young Adult Literature* (1996), Chris Crutcher, teen therapist and author of six young adult novels, writes that:

I believe the teaching of literature offers us as educators a chance to make a connection with . . . kids. By sharing our responses to stories about lives like theirs, and by relating our own lives to those stories, we can bring their education home, make it an intimate thing . . . I hope that one day kids will balk at reading—or outright refuse to read—my work because I am long dead and my stories are out of step with “kids today,” and that educators will use contemporary stories to bring my meanings home. That will mean that the world is moving along as it should. It will mean that my work is being passed over, or at least pushed aside, for the work of vibrant new authors, a few of whom might have been inspired by parents or teachers who were themselves long ago inspired by my work (*Responding* x-xi).

Over the past decade, numerous books, articles, and lectures at local and national conferences have supported the use of young adult novels in secondary classrooms (Monseau & Salvner (1992); Monseau (1996); Bushman & Bushman (1997); Small (1992); Hipple (1992); Ross (1995); Abrahamson (1986); Kaywell (1993) and yet up until eight years ago ninety percent of English classrooms used anthologies, traditional classics dominated the literature curriculum, and most English programs made no distinction between literature used for college-bound students and works used for non-academic students (from Arthur Applebee’s *A Study of*

*Book-Length Works Taught in High School English Classes*, in Gallo 18).

The critics of young adult fiction vary as do their purposes. Many believe there is simply not enough time to teach the required curriculum, let alone *entertain* books that have not proven the test of time. Others wage war with the controversial issues raised in many young adult novels, holding to the belief that the English classroom is not the appropriate environment for students to voice their opinions and concerns over personal and moral issues. There are censors, both conservative and liberal, for almost every issue. In "Censorship and the Young Adult Novel," James E. Davis (1992) outlines some of the objections,

Espousing the state religion of secular humanism, discussion of the Renaissance, discussion of Leonardo da Vinci because his paintings glorify man instead of God, telepathy, the supernatural, discussion of religions, magic, witchcraft, people's power to change themselves, stories about dinosaurs because their existence indicates that the earth is older than the Bible tells us, one world government, feminism, homosexuality, sexuality, vulgarity, violence, pacifism, objectionable language, troublesome ideas about race relations, profanity . . . boys cooking or girls playing baseball (called "improper roles") (Censorship170).

It is difficult for many of us to imagine how stories get read, discussed, analyzed, and processed without touching on the range of human conditions present in most of the novels, short stories, and poems we use in our classrooms. Alongside classics like *The Scarlet Letter* or *Animal Farm*, and certainly next to current young adult favorites such as *Shabanu* or *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*, teachers and students need to find ways to share, relate, and validate the personal in a public space. Many of our controversial issues are controversial because we lack the strategies to become part of a community of listeners and learners who will support each other's curiosities, dispel each other's assumptions, and sometimes offer solutions to the problems modern society sets forth. It is never easy, but the search for guidance only comes through a desire to move forward and into the controversial issues.

Every year, I seem to have the same conversation with the principal of the middle school where I have taught for many years. It always occurs near the end of the year when the reading scores for each school in our district are published in the city's newspaper. We bend over the article spread out across the table in the office, and gawk over the number of schools with average student reading scores in the lower quarter percentile. Elaine, the principal, will say, "They must be teaching these students *not* to read. It's next to impossible to have a room full of kids and books and not *get* kids to read."

*Getting kids to read* is a critical phrase in the conversations of language arts teachers, particularly at the middle school level, and involves questions about what it means to teach reading as well as what it means to *be* a reader. Donald Gallo reminds language arts teachers, "English teachers love literature. That's why most of us became teachers of English. During our teenage years we read voraciously . . . [and we] want students in our classes to react in the same way" (Listening to Readers 17). Gallo's statement is the beginning of an invitation, asking English language arts teachers to consider "how our experiences affect the way most of us teach

literature in classes filled with students who do not (or who *cannot*) respond to literature in a similar manner" (Listening to Readers 17).

When I interviewed for a teaching position at Elaine's middle school I had just come out of a graduate program in English Education. I was ready to be one of *the* English teachers until Elaine told me that *every* teacher in our school teaches literature. I soon discovered that she was speaking literally and not figuratively. Every teacher in Elaine's school teaches literature twice a week, for thirty-five minutes, with a general expectation that books selected by each teacher will be geared towards the kids in their literature group, every student will keep a response log or be required to do some kind of writing and responding to each reading assignment, and class time will be spent discussing the reading assignment with an emphasis on student talk and not teacher talk.

The structure of the literature program in Elaine's school encourages a kind of relationship I want middle school students to develop with the books they will read and respond to. The structure emphasizes small classes (with ten or eleven children in each literature group), a focused discussion on one book at a time, a reading/writing connection, a willingness to listen and learn from peers, and due to the make up of the student body, an appreciation of the perspectives and reading habits of mixed age, race, and gendered readers. The outcomes of this program certainly validate its purpose and its structure has given me the opportunity to reconsider my role and the role of teaching literature in general.

As I have learned to re-think my role as a teacher of literature I have begun to think more carefully about the book choices available for adolescent readers. Part of understanding middle school students is the recognition that they live in the moment and often do their best when the materials we give them are grounded in the realities of their own lives. And yet all too often, getting middle school students to read has been more about helping young readers make connections to literary texts through themes that are superficially related to the lives they live.

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## THE RESEARCH CONNECTION

Guest Columnist Ted Hipple

### Articles About Young Adult Literature: A List

Compiled by Ted Hipple

99 articles of interest to read,  
99 articles of interest.  
If one of those articles  
You happen to heed,  
98 articles of interest to read.  
98 articles of interest to read,  
98 articles of interest.  
If one...etc.

Like miles to go or bottles of beer, articles about young adult literature are everywhere around for those of us enamored of the subject. And like those miles and those bottles there may be too many of them. When 2000-2001 ALAN president Teri Lesesne asked me if I'd compile a list of good articles, I said "sure," thinking that the task would be easy, just finding a dozen or so articles and writing something about them; that would be that.

Wrong! I soon had a ton of articles I wanted to put on the list, way too many. Cuts were needed. And a finite number. 99 seemed okay, and not just for the introductory doggerel. It seemed manageable and, because I now have completed the task, I guess it was. But it was not easy setting aside some favorites, mine and my students' and my colleagues'.

Decisions had to be made early on. Though I anticipated and felt I could handle comments about my sins of commission ("How could you have included that claptrap?") and omission ("Why didn't such and such make the final group?"), I did develop a few limiting proscriptions that may need some explanation. I decided against using any of the several fine book collections of original articles, works like *Reading Their World* (edited by Monseau and Salvner), the four volumes of *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics* (Kaywell), *Rationales for Teaching Young Adult Literature* (Reid), *Into Focus: Understanding and Creating Middle School Readers* (Beers and Samuels), and *United in Diversity: Using Multicultural Young Adult Literature in the Classroom* (Brown and Stephens). I chose not to use the often excellent material in book length reference works like *Author Insights* (Gallo) or *Writers for Young Adults* (Hipple). And state journals, hard to get for some readers, had to be excluded.

The choice between a narrow or broad range of topics presented another issue. Though it would have been easy to find 99 or 199 articles on, say, censorship, I elected to be eclectic, with a large number of different topics deliberately explored. I was partial to articles that included bibliographies, sometimes extensive ones, of YA works on the subject of the article.

Another tough problem: Some folks in our trade write a lot, really a lot. Students of the field know who they are and, indeed, they are listed below-once, with the exception of a few scholars who are listed once for an article they wrote on their own and another they co-authored.

Finally came the task of grouping the articles: by topic like bibliotherapy or author studies or pedagogy? by journal? by chronology? I finally decided to list the authors of the articles alphabetically. I do hope the pages are of some value to you. Doing this assignment has certainly

been of value to me. I learned from it. And now, as King Arthur must have said at least once, "On to the list."

Abrahamsom, Richard. "Collected Wisdom: The Best Articles Ever Written on Adolescent Literature and Teen Reading." *English Journal* 86 (March, 1997). Abrahamson and his students in two graduate seminars rated and annotated what they call the best of the writing about YA literature. Their list includes 29 articles, one published in 1912, another in 1932.

Alm, Richard. "Dora Smith: Teacher, Leader, Legend." *English Journal* 73 (March, 1984). Like Dwight Burton and Robert Carlsen, Dora Smith was one of the founding parents of YA literature study. This is Alm's tribute to her work and her legacy.

Angelotti, Mike. "The Effect of Gamma Rays on the Man-and-the-Writer Zindel: The Pigman Plus Twenty Years and Counting." *The ALAN Review* 16 (Spring, 1989.) This interview with Zindel will appeal to his legions of fans and delivers considerable insight into the man and his books.

Aronson, Marc. "Teenagers and Reading: A Generational Neurosis." *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 12 (Winter, 1999). Aronson questions why book stores stock so

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*I was partial to articles that included bibliographies, sometimes extensive ones, of YA works on the subject of the article.*

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- few YA books, why English class reading lists omit such books, and why newspaper book reviews seldom review YA literature. He suggests answers and remedies.
- Barnard, Laurel, Jean Feiwel, and Marilyn Kriney. "Twenty Years of YA Books: The Publishers' Views." *The ALAN Review* 15 (Spring, 1988). Three different YA publishers present, individually, their roles in the creative and marketing dimensions of YA literature.
- Barron, Ronald. "Gary Paulsen: 'I Write Because It's All That I Can Do.'" *The ALAN Review* 20 (Spring, 1993). Barron examines Paulsen's stories and suggests why and how he achieves rapport with readers, particularly middle school students.
- Beers, Kylene. "No Time, No Interest, No Way: The Three Voices of Aliteracy." *School Library Journal* 42 (March, 1996.). Beers describes what teachers of the aliterate (who can read but will not) face daily and what they can do about it, included in which is the use of YA literature.
- Brewbaker, Jim. "I Like Happy Endings. You Don't." *English Journal* 78 (October, 1989). Using his son's opinions as well as his own, Brewbaker explores the differences between adolescent and adult responses to the same YA literature.
- Broderick, Dorothy. "Reviewing Young Adult Books: The VOYA Editor Speaks Out." *Publishing Research Quarterly* 8 (Spring, 1982). Longtime editor of VOYA, Broderick examines the complexities of book reviewing, centering her examples on YA literature.
- Brown, Margie. "Silverstein and Seuss to Shakespeare: What Is in Between?" *English Journal* 90 (May, 2001). Brown looks at poetry for adolescents, adding to her discussion a five-page bibliography.
- Burton, Dwight and Bryant Fillion. "A Literature Program for the Middle School." *Clearing House* 54 (May, 1971). In the early days of the middle school movement, Burton, one of the pioneers in schoolhouse literature instruction using books for adolescents, and Fillion discuss guided independent reading programs for students in grades 5-8.
- Bushman, John. "Young Adult Literature in the Classroom—Or Is It?" *English Journal* 86 (March, 1997). Surveying 380 students, grades 6 through 12, Bushman attempted to learn what students were assigned to read and what their favorites were. Classics predominated the former question, with some YA titles among the latter responses.
- Campbell, Patty. "A Loving Farewell to Robert Cormier." *The Horn Book Magazine* 77 (March/April 2001). Beginning with "young adult literature has lost its grand master," Campbell provides a retrospective look at Cormier, the man and the writer, and at judgments about his highly praised 15 YA novels.
- Carico, Kathleen. "Negotiating Meaning in Classroom Literature Discussions." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 44 (March, 2001.). Carico examines what makes a good literature lesson, basing much of her argument on Lyddie (Paterson) and Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (Taylor).
- Carlsen, G. Robert. "What Beginning English Teachers Need to Know about Adolescent Literature." *English Education* 10 (May, 1979). One of the major early scholars in YA literature, Carlsen here offers advice to new teachers, including a wish that they use YA literature.
- Carroll, Pamela Sissi, and L. Penny Rosenblum. "Through Their Eyes: Are Characters with Visual Impairment Portrayed Realistically in Young Adult Literature?" *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 43 (April, 2000). Carroll and Rosenblum provide a tool for judging the quality of YA literature that features characters with visual problems and include a bibliography of such works.
- Cart, Michael. "Honoring Their Stories, Too: Literature for Gay and Lesbian Teens." *The ALAN Review* 25 (Fall, 1997). Cart cites evidence suggesting that perhaps 10 percent of teens are gay or lesbian but that YA literature about homosexuality is in short supply. He adds an extensive bibliography of works featuring gay or lesbian characters.
- Carter, Betty. "Adult Books for Young Adults." *English Journal* 86 (March, 1997). Adolescents, some of them at least, read adult books. Carter provides both an argument for such books and a long list of them.
- Carter, Betty and Richard Abrahamson. "Nonfiction: The Missing Piece in the Middle." *English Journal* 80 (January, 1981). Two leading scholars in nonfiction for young adults, Carter and Abrahamson here argue for its greater inclusion in schools.
- Charles, John and Joanna Morrison. "Clueless? Adult Mysteries with Young Adult Appeal." *Voice of Youth Advocates* 23 (December, 2000). Charles and Morrison annotate recent and not-so-recent mystery novels likely to be interesting to adolescents and hook them into reading even more such works.
- Colman, Penny. "Nonfiction Is Literature, Too." *The New Advocate* 12 (Summer, 1999). Citing three reasons for negative perceptions of nonfiction for youth, Colman refutes them and then adds her own positive reasons for its use.
- Cormier, Robert. "The Pleasure and Pains of Writing a Sequel." *The ALAN Review* 12 (Winter, 1985). Though he resisted for years the many requests that he write a sequel to *The Chocolate War*, Cormier finally decided to; this is the story of that decision.
- Crowe, Chris. "Don Gallo: The Godfather of YA Short Stories." *English Journal* 86 (March, 1997). No one else has put together as many collections of original short stories by YA authors as Gallo and herein Crowe discusses these and adds an interview with Gallo.
- Curry, Ann. "Where is Judy Blume? Controversial Fiction for Older Children and Young Adults." *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 14 (Spring, 2001). Focusing on the varieties of censorship, Curry reports on her own research on why some 220 novels, which she lists, were challenged between 1984 and 1999.
- Dailey, Dan. "Culture Wars: 'It's Not About Taboos, But Whether Children Are Enobled by Violent Fiction.'" *The Five Owls* 13 (January/February, 1999). Using YA novels like *Tenderness* (Cormier), *When She Was Good* (N. F. Mazer), and *Crosses* (Stoehr), Dailey inquires into whether such books help youth.
- Dias-Mitchell, Laurie and Elizabeth Harris. "Multicultural Mosaic: A Family Book Club." *Knowledge Quest* 29 (March-April, 2001). The authors demonstrate how, using multicultural literature, they began family book discussion groups with teens and their parents.
- Donelson, Kenneth. "What to Do When the Censor Comes."

- Elementary English* 51 (March, 1974). For decades one of academe's leading writers about schoolhouse censorship, Donelson here comments on seven arguments censors make and how teachers can counter them.
- Elias, Tana. "New Short Stories for Older Readers." *Book Links* 8 (July, 1999). Describing both multi-authored thematic collections (ten titles) and collections written by single authors (15 titles), Elias makes it plain that the short story is alive and well in YA literature.
- Fine, Sara. "How the Mind of a Censor Works." *School Library Journal* 42 (January, 1996). Arguing that censorship is behavior, Fine attempts to explain the psychological underpinnings of such behavior.
- Freedman, Lauren and Holly Johnson. "Who's Protecting Whom? I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This, A Case in Point in Confronting Self-Censorship in the Choice of Young Adult Literature." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 44 (December 2000/January 2001). Freedman and Johnson examine why teachers often are their own censors, illustrating their discussion with quotes from teachers and students about the Woodson novel.
- Gale, David. "The Business of Books." *School Library Journal* 42 (July, 1996). Longtime editor Gale describes some of the ins and outs of book publishing, using YA literature for many of his examples.
- Gallo, Don. "How Classics Create an Aliterate Society." *English Journal* 90 (January, 2001). Gallo worries that a steady diet of classic literature in the schools may create students who can read-but will not. He recommends a more substantial use of YA literature if teachers want to create lifelong readers.
- George, Marshall. "What's the Big Idea? Integrating Young Adult Literature in the Middle School." *English Journal* 90 (January, 2001). Using stories from three middle school teachers, George outlines the many valuable roles YA literature can play with students in grades 6-8.
- Ghosn, Irma K. "Nurturing Emotional Intelligence Through Literature." *FORUM* 39 (January, 2001). Though many of her examples are taken from literature for younger children, it is an easy extrapolation to use YA literature to foster the greater emotional intelligence Ghosn argues students must develop.
- Gill, Sam David. "Young Adult Literature for Young Adult Males." *The ALAN Review* 26 (Fall, 1999). Gill recommends, in an annotated list, a number of YA novels boys are likely to like.
- Gregg, Gail and Pamela Sissi Carroll. "What's It Like to Be You? A Conversation with Sue Ellen Bridgers." *The ALAN Review* 27 (Spring, 1999). In an interview format Gregg and Carroll tap into the insights of one of the most popular of YA novelists.
- Hall, M. Isabelle. "Contemporary Literature from the Pupils' Point of View." *English Journal* 30 (May, 1941). Hall, an early proponent of using the YA literature of her era in English classrooms, still has much to tell today's teachers.
- Hamilton, Virginia. "Everything of Value: Moral Realism in the Literature for Children." *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 6 (Summer, 1993). A leading YA novelist discusses the relationships between realism and what she labels moralism in YA literature.
- Hannedottir, Sigrun Klara. "Ten Effective Ideas To Promote Literacy in Secondary Schools." *The School Librarian* 48 (Summer, 2000). A Finnish scholar writing for a British publication, Hannedottir has good ideas for American schools, including the use of YA literature.
- Harris, June. "How to Tell Schlock from the Good Stuff in Science Fiction." *The ALAN Review* 19 (Spring, 1992). Harris discusses science fiction written for youths and adds questions that will get them-and their teachers-to focus on its quality.
- Hauck, P. "Literature for Adolescents: Gold or Dross?" *Journal of Education Research* 18 (February, 1984). Since the days of Alcott and Alger, students of YA literature have been queried about its quality. Hauck offers some insights into the discussion.
- Hearn, Michael P. "Toto, I've a Feeling We're Not in Kansas City Anymore...or Detroit...or Washington, DC!" *The Horn Book Magazine* 77 (January-February, 2001). Hearn recounts the 100 year history of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Much of his essay deals with the censorship problems the series has faced...and continues to face.
- Hendee, Randal. "Young Adult Novels and Film." *The ALAN Review* 16 (Spring, 1989). Hendee discusses young adult novels that have been made into films, describing seven of these, and adds brief mentions of other films that feature adolescents.
- Hinton, Susan. "Teen-Agers Are for Real." *New York Times Book Review* (August 27, 1967). The grande dame of young adult literature, author of *The Outsiders*, indicates here why she respects young adult readers.
- Hipple, Ted. "It's the THAT, Teacher." *English Journal* 86 (March, 1997). Arguing that the "that" of teenage reading is vastly more important than the "what," Hipple urges greater use of YA literature in the schools. He adds the "Reader's Bill of Rights" from Daniel Pennac's *Better Than Life*.
- Hipple, Ted, Melissa Comer, and Dodie Boren. "Twenty Recent Novels (and More) About Adolescents for Bibliotherapy." *Professional School Counseling* 1 (October, 1977). The authors describe twenty novels and list many more that school counselors can use for bibliotherapeutic purposes.
- Hynds, Susan. "Bringing Life to Literature and Literature to Life: Social Constructs and Contexts of Four Adolescent Readers." *Research in the Teaching of English* 23 (January, 1995). In this research piece Hynds looks at students as they look at literature and explores the interactions.
- Janeczko, Paul. "Notes of a Poetry Junkie." *Signal* 20 (Winter, 1996). Poet Janeczko here discusses the use of poetry with adolescents in school settings.
- Jenkinson, Edward. "Protecting Holden Caulfield and His Friends from the Censors." *English Journal* 74 (January, 1985). Providing tales about actual cases of censorship, Jenkinson explores the many and continuing facets of this plague upon teachers and students.
- Jobe, Ron. "Young Adult Fiction from Canada." *Book Links* 8 (March, 1999). Jobe annotates 17 YA novels by Canadian authors, most of which are actually set in Canada and all of which are available in the United States.
- Jones, Patrick. "The Perfect Tens: The Top Forty Books Reviewed in VOYA, 1996-2000." *Voice of Youth Advocates* 24 (June, 2001). Using VOYA's Q and P evaluation sys-

- tem, 40 novels received top marks from 1996-2000. Jones discusses and annotates them.
- Kahn, Norma. "A Proposal for Motivating More Students to Lifetime Reading of Literature." *English Journal* 63 (February, 1974). Kahn's advice today remains relevant for those who, like her, want students to read all their lives.
- Kaplan, Jeffrey. "Merry Christmas Jeffrey Kaplan: A Review of Adolescent Novels about Contemporary Judaism." *The ALAN Review* 21 (Fall, 1993). Kaplan provides an extensive bibliography of YA novels with Jewish characters and themes.
- Kaywell, Joan. "If You Still Think an 'Open House' Is a PTA Meeting, Read This." *The ALAN Review* 13 (Spring, 1986). Arguing that teens' lives have changed and are changing, Kaywell discusses, with extensive lists of novels, the topics of drugs and alcohol, sex, divorce and separation, and suicide and death.
- Kelly, Pat. "Before 'Teaching' a Novel: Some Considerations." *The ALAN Review* 11 (Winter, 1984). Kelly examines a number of pedagogical issues surrounding the teaching of novels, including whole class study, boys' and girls' different reading preferences, and the objectives of both teachers and students.
- Korman, Gordon. "We Don't Get Much Respect, But We're Willing To Laugh It Off." *Signal* 20 (Fall, 1985). A novelist who has produced many humorous YA works, Korman advocates using funny literature as a way to attract young readers.
- LaBrant, Lou. "The Content of a Free Reading Program." *Educational Research Bulletin* 16 (May, 1937). An early advocate of valuing teens' choices about their own reading, LaBrant here encourages schools to use such choices in their English classes.
- Landrum, Judith E. "Adolescent Novels That Feature Characters with Disabilities." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 42 (December 1998-January, 1999). Landrum uses a rating scale on 16 YA novels that feature teens with disabilities and adds 22 criteria for judging such literature.
- Lee, Vanessa Wayne. "'Unshelter Me': The Emerging Fictional Adolescent Lesbian." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 23 (Fall, 1998). With an extensive discussion and bibliography, Lee examines the roles of lesbians in YA literature.
- Lesesne, Teri. "Developing Lifetime Readers: Suggestions from Fifty Years of Research." *English Journal* 80 (October, 1991). Lesesne summarizes the salient findings of research on schoolhouse attempts to foster habits of lifetime reading.
- Lindsay, Nina. "Foreign Perspectives in Contemporary Fiction." *Book Links* 10 (December, 2000-January, 2001). Lindsay provides an annotated list of YA fiction with foreign settings.
- Lipsett, Laura R. "No Need To 'Duck, Run, and Hide': Young Adult Poetry That Taps into You." *The ALAN Review* (Spring-Summer, 2001). Lipsett offers practical advice on using poetry with teens and includes a substantial bibliography.
- Mazer, Norma Fox. "Shhhh!" *The ALAN Review* 24 (Winter, 1997). Mazer recounts the story of her invitation to speak at an Illinois high school that was subsequently withdrawn because of censorship problems about another author's book; the school felt that Mazer's own work might add "fuel to the fire."
- Mertz, Maia Pank. "The New Realism: Traditional Cultural Values in Recent Young Adult Fiction." *Phi Delta Kappan* 59 (October, 1978). With examples from many of the 70s realistic YA novels, Mertz illustrates how much YA lit has changed from its romantic roots and credits authors like Hinton, Zindel, Cormier, Kerr, Holland, and others with being instrumental in bringing about these changes.
- Mitchell, A. H. "Black Adolescent Novels in the English Curriculum." *English Journal* 77 (May, 1988). Mitchell cites a number of novels by black authors or featuring black characters or both and argues for their place in the standard English program.
- Mitchell, Diana. "If You Can't Beat 'Em, Join 'Em: Using the Romance Series To Confront Gender Stereotypes." *The ALAN Review* 22 (Winter, 1995). Though pained when her students always wanted Sweet Valley High books, Mitchell reports that a careful study of such books by adolescents will reveal how shallow and biased the series books really are.
- Moffett, James and Betty Jane Wagner. "Student-Centered Reading Activities." *English Journal* 80 (October, 1991). Longtime advocates of student-centered teaching, Moffett and Wagner illustrate how to bring student-centered reading to the forefront; one way is with YA literature.
- Monseau, Virginia. "Studying Cormier's Protagonists: Achieving Power Through Young Adult Literature." *The ALAN Review* 22 (Fall, 1994). The novels of Robert Cormier, Monseau asserts, focus intensely on character and merit study from that perspective; such study will help adolescents better understand themselves.
- Murphy, Elaine. "In Search of Literature for the 21st Century." *English Journal* 90 (January, 2001). Murphy offers criteria for selecting novels, six useful classroom topics, and lists of novels fitting each topic, all geared to contemporary classroom use.
- Myers, Walter Dean. "Pulling No Punches." *School Library Journal* 47 (June, 2001). Two heavy hitters among the authors of YA novels-Walter Dean Myers and Robert Lipsyte-have a conversation about writing and about tough guys, sissies, and the struggles teen boys face to "become a man."
- Nadeau, Frances. "The Mother/Daughter Relationship in Young Adult Fiction." *The ALAN Review* 22 (Winter, 1955). Nadeau explores some good, some not so good relationships between daughters and their mothers, providing an annotated bibliography of YA novels to make her case.
- Nilsen, Alleen Pace. "The House That Alice Built: An Interview with the Author Who Brought You *Go Ask Alice*." *School Library Journal* 26 (October, 1979). Nilsen interviews the author of the presumably anonymously written and enormously influential *Go Ask Alice*, a story of a teenager on bad drug trips.
- Odonnell-Allen, Cindy and Bud Hunt. "Reading Adolescents: Book Clubs for Young Adult Readers." *English Journal* 90 (January, 2001). Odonnell-Allen and Hunt placed their university adolescent literature class students with high

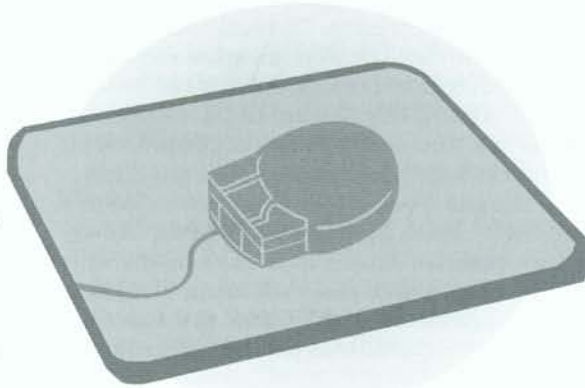
- school students in regular group discussions of YA novels.
- Poe, Elizabeth, Barbara Samuels, and Betty Carter. "Twenty-five Years of Research in Young Adult Literature: Past Perspectives and Future Directives." *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 7 (Fall, 1993). Their title explains the authors' report, an analysis of what has been studied in YA literature scholarship and of what still needs to be studied.
- Probst, Robert. "'Reader-Response Theory and the English Curriculum.'" *English Journal* 83 (March, 1994). Probst recommends that teachers use reader-response pedagogy and provides six goals and six principles which will inform such use.
- Randle, Kristen Downey. "Let It Be Hope." *English Journal* 90 (March, 2001). Randle suggests balancing the bleakness of many YA novels with some hopeful ones and provides a list of the latter.
- Reid, Louann and Ruth K. J. Cline. "Our Repressed Reading Addictions: Teachers and Young Adult Series Books." *English Journal* 86 (March, 1997). Using as exemplars R. L. Stine and the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew series, Reid and Cline offer some positive insights about such books.
- Reid, Suzanne and Sharon Stringer. "Ethical Dilemmas in Teaching Problem Novels: The Psychological Impact of Troubling Young Adult Literature on Adolescent Readers in the Classroom." *The ALAN Review* 25 (Winter, 1997). What YA novels are troubling? What happens to their readers? The authors supply answers to both questions.
- Rochman, Hazel. "Should You Teach *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*?" *Book Links* 7 (May, 1998). Worrying that the very popular *Anne Frank* may be the only book adolescents read about the Holocaust, Rochman provides a pro/con discussion of that work and annotates 12 other books useful to consider as part of a larger literature unit on the Holocaust.
- Rosenblatt, Louise. "A Performing Art." *English Journal* 55 (November, 1966). Perhaps the earliest and most revered proponent of what is now called "reader-response" pedagogy, Rosenblatt here describes the aesthetic experience of reading literature.
- Roy, Joy K. "Bibliotherapy: An Important Service to Self." *English Journal* 68 (March, 1979). "Know thyself," urged the Greek philosophers. Roy argues that the study of literature will help, that bibliotherapy is not just for the other person.
- Salvner, Gary. "A War of Words: Lessons from a Censorship Case." *The ALAN Review* 25 (Winter, 1998). At Youngstown State University an annual celebration of reading and writing YA literature attracts national attention and thousands of participants. It also once attracted an angry body of censors, concerned about the use of *Letters from the Inside* (Marsden) and Salvner, chairing the conference that year, was caught in the maelstrom. He here appends six principles those who fight censorship should heed.
- Samuels, Barbara, Rosemary Ingham, and Hollis Lowery-Moore. "Bridging the Basics: The Young Adult Novel in a Back-to-Basics Society." *The ALAN Review* 14 (Winter 1987). Citing a number of YA novels, the authors write that such novels much more likely to be read.
- Scales, Pat. "Robert Lipsyte's Summer Trilogy." *Book Links* 8 (September, 1998). Scales discusses Lipsyte's Bobby Marks books, links them to other books, and includes a Lipsyte interview with eighth graders.
- Simmons, John. "Censorship in the Schools-No End in Sight." *The ALAN Review* 18 (Spring, 1991). Simmons explores censorship and its continuing escalation in schools, particularly with YA literature, and worries that it may be a problem without a solution.
- Small, Robert. "Censorship As We Enter 2000, or the Millenium, and Just Next Year: A Personal Look at Where We Are." *Journal of Youth Services in Libraries* 13 (Winter, 2000). Small, using point-counterpoint arguments ("On the one hand...on the other hand") offers both retrospective and prospective judgments about censorship issues.
- Spencer, Patricia. "YA Novels in the AP Classroom: Crutcher Meets Camus." *English Journal* 78 (November, 1989). Spencer argues that YA novels belong in AP classes; very much among such novels are those of Chris Crutcher.
- Stover, Lois. "Adolescent Voices from Other Lands: Notes from a Reading Log." *The ALAN Review* 16 (Winter, 1989). Stover bolsters her case for using YA novels from and/or set in other countries with an annotated bibliography.
- Sullivan, Ed. "Judging Books by Their Covers," *Voice of Youth Advocates* 23 (October, 2000). Sullivan asked 24 young adults to examine both hard covers and paperback covers of the same novels and reports their responses. Covers, he learns, do make a difference.
- Taylor, Deborah. "Adult Books for Teens by and about African Americans." *Booklist* 96 (February 15, 2000). Taylor's piece, primarily an annotated bibliography, offers evidence for the inclusion of African American literature in the classroom.
- Trites, Roberta. "Queer Discourse and the Young Adult Novel: Repression and Power in Gay Males' Adolescent Literature." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 23 (Fall, 1998). Trites discusses four novels with gay protagonists: *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* (Donovan); *Trying Hard to Hear You* (Scoppettone); *Dance on My Grave* (Chambers); and *Baby Be-Bop* (Block).
- Tuccillo, Diane. "Leading Them to Books-for Life." *Publishing Research Quarterly* 8 (Spring, 1992). Tuccillo offers insights and methods about how libraries can assist in the development of lifelong readers.
- Van Allen, Lanny. "An Interview with Judy Blume." *The ALAN Review* 20 (Fall, 1992). Van Allen and Blume discuss the latter's novels, how she came to write them, how she sees them as useful for adolescents, and how she deals with the frequent censorship of them.
- Vardell, Sylvia. "YA Writers on Writing." *The ALAN Review* 14 (Fall, 1986). Using direct quotes from five novelists-M. E. Kerr, Barbara Wersba, Paul Zindel, Isabelle Holland, and Robert Cormier-Vardell examines what writers do. She includes a detailed bibliography.
- Weiss, Jerry. "Troubles in Ha-Ha Land?" *Signal* 20 (Fall, 1995). After describing the decline of teaching humorous literature, Weiss adds an extensive list of such literature.
- Williams, Robert. "Gay and Lesbian Teenagers: A Reading Ladder for Students, Media Specialists, and Parents." *The ALAN Review* 20 (Spring, 1993). Williams provides a detailed list of works, fiction and nonfiction, adolescent

and adult, that deal with gay and lesbian youth. Wood, Susan Nelson and Kim Quackenbush. "The Sorcerer's Stone: A Touchstone for Readers of All Ages." *English Journal* 90 (January, 2001). This most popular of recent books-and now a series-gets critical attention here.

Zitlow, Connie. "Sounds and Pictures in Words: Images in Literature for Young Adults." *The ALAN Review* 27 (Winter, 2000). In this report of a four year research project Zitlow expands her view of literacy to include the aesthetic dimension of reading experiences among adolescents.

Zitlow, Connie and Lois Stover. "Japanese and Japanese American Youth in Literature." *The ALAN Review* 25 (Spring, 1998). Zitlow and Stover suggest that Japanese American authors write as a means not only of informing young readers about Japanese ways but also of connecting themselves to their roots. They add a substantial list of novels with Japanese characters.

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