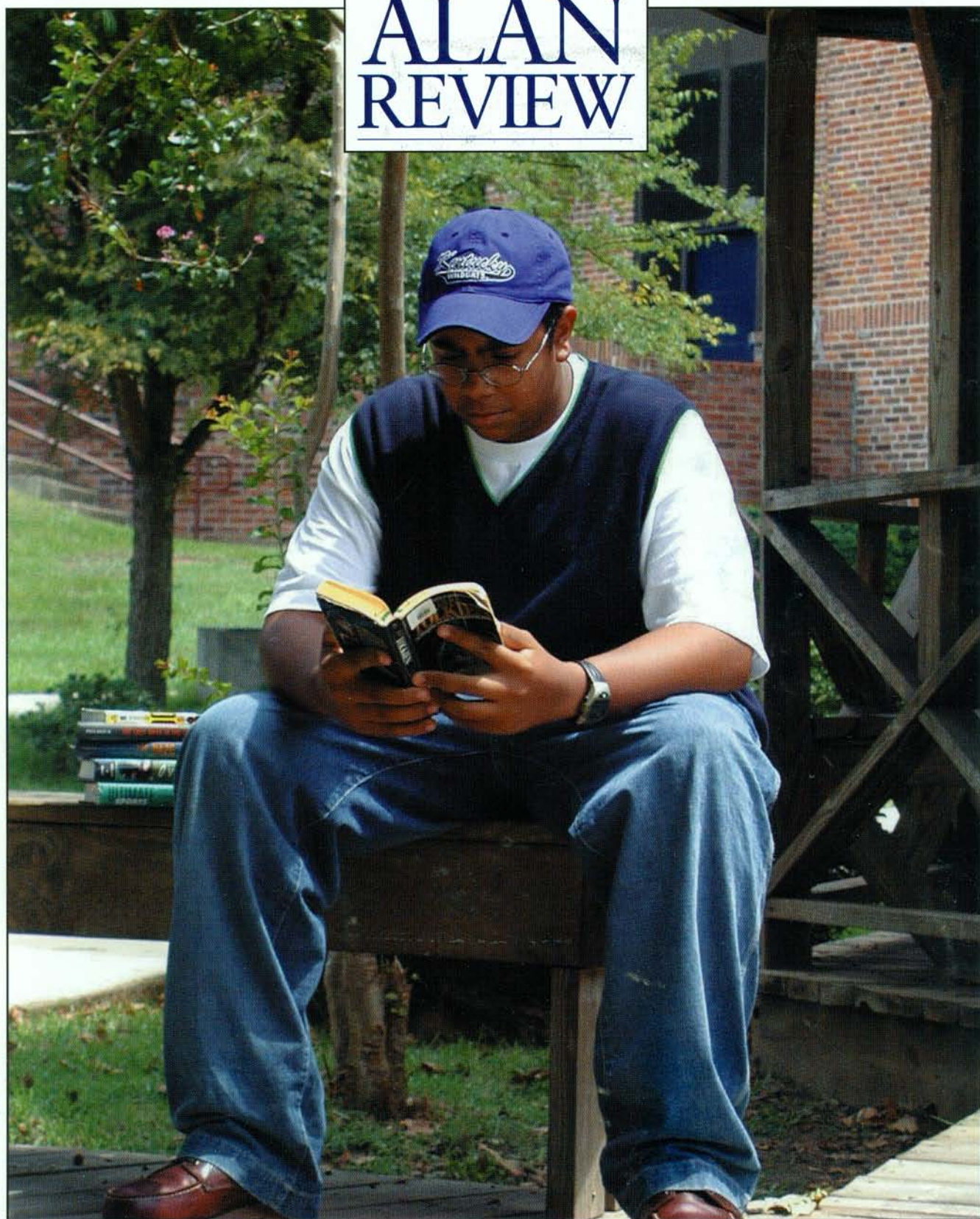


Volume 30

• Winter 2003 •

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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."

MANUSCRIPT FORMAT. Manuscripts should be **double spaced** throughout, including quotations and bibliographies. A **title page** with author's name, affiliation, address, and a short professional biographical sketch should be included. The author's name should not appear on the manuscript pages; however, pages should be numbered. Short quotations, as permitted under "fair use" in the **copyright** law, must be carefully documented **within the manuscript** and in the bibliography. Longer quotations and complete poems or short stories must be accompanied by **written permission** of the author and/or publisher.

Author interviews should be accompanied by **written permission of the interviewed author** to publish the interview in *The ALAN Review*. Interviewers should indicate to authors that publication is subject to review of an editorial board. The title of *The ALAN Review* should not be used to gain an interview.

Original short **tables and figures** should be **double-spaced** and placed on a **separate sheet** at the end of the manuscript. Notations should appear in the text for proper placement of tables and figures.

The ALAN Review prefers the use of the Publications Manual of the Modern Language Association. A 3 1/2-inch MS-DOS disk in either a recent version of Word or Word Perfect format must accompany all manuscripts. Disks must be clearly labeled with author's name, manuscript title, disk format, and file title.

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Include a self-addressed stamped envelope to which return stamps are clipped. The manuscript cannot be returned if the envelope and stamps are not included. Articles submitted only by facsimile or e-mail cannot be considered, except when sent from overseas.

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Manuscripts are judged for the contribution they make to the field of adolescent literature, clarity and cohesiveness, timeliness, and freshness of approach. Selection also depends on the manuscript's contribution to the overall balance of the journal.

PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES. *The ALAN Review* assumes that accepted manuscripts have not been published previously in any other journals and/or books, nor will they be published subsequently without permission of *The ALAN Review*. Should the author submit the manuscript to more than one publication, he/she should notify *The ALAN Review*. If a submitted or accepted manuscript is accepted by another publication prior to publication in *The ALAN Review*, the author should immediately withdraw the manuscript from publication in *The ALAN Review*.

Manuscripts that are accepted may be edited for clarity, accuracy, readability, and publication style.

Upon publication, the author will receive two copies of *The ALAN Review* in which the article appears. Publication usually occurs within 18 months of acceptance.

A manuscript published in *The ALAN Review* is considered to have been copyrighted by the author of the article.

DEADLINES. Please follow these deadlines if you wish to have your article considered for a particular issue of *The ALAN Review*:

FALL ISSUE Deadline: **JULY 15**
WINTER ISSUE Deadline: **OCTOBER 15**
SPRING ISSUE Deadline: **MARCH 15**

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

The 2002 ALAN Breakfast and ALAN Workshop, held in November in conjunction with the NCTE Annual Convention, were—as always—wonderful opportunities for participants to hear and talk with authors of YA literature. Virginia Euwer Wolff gave a stirring talk at the breakfast, reminding us of the power of literature to question, challenge and heal. Paul Zindel was recognized as the recipient of the 2002 ALAN Award for his many contributions to the field of YA literature. Terry Borzumato, Director of School and Library Marketing of Random House, was recognized as the winner of ALAN's Hipple Service Award for her work on behalf of ALAN. Chris Crutcher offered his take on the importance of "connections" in the opening address for the Workshop. Here is a glimpse at what a few of the other authors had to say:

Graham Salisbury:

"Writing is a form of magic."

"I was background, like elevator music."

David Lubar: "I hope that all the hard work is invisible to the reader."

Orson Scott Card: "You must know the way the world works so you can vary from it in some way."

Ann Rinaldi: "Reading is its own reward."

Jeanette Ingold: Adolescents approach historical fiction: "...as if they are stepping into an adventure."

Kevin Crossley-Holland: J.R.R. Tolkien was "my mentor" and W.H. Auden was "my warm advisor."

Robert Jordan: Fantasy is "going beyond what can be extrapolated from reality."

During the fall convention, two terrific new co-editors were selected to take responsibility for *The ALAN Review* when my terms ends with the spring/summer issue. The newly-named pair, Jim Blasingame and Lori Goodson, bring a wonderful balance of university and secondary school perspectives to the journal.

Jim Blasingame comes to *The ALAN Review* with a healthy mix of experiences as an educator, including everything from teaching a daily summer school class on Louis L'Amour to troubled youth at Boys Town High School, in Boys Town, Nebraska, to driving a school bus on the gravel roads of rural Madison County, Iowa, to starting a middle school newspaper in Tempe, Arizona. Jim began his career in secondary English in 1976 after graduating from the University of Northern Iowa and spent eighteen years in assorted classrooms in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Utah before becoming a high school administrator. For the last seven years he has been working at the university level, first as a graduate assistant at the University of Kansas, where he earned his Ph.D. in 2000, and then at Arizona State University, in Tempe, Arizona, where he is an assistant professor.

Jim currently teaches English methods classes at Arizona State University and supervises student teachers. He also operates an experimental writing center at Sam Fees Middle School in Tempe, where he and his methods students experiment with a variety of writing activities and instructional strategies.

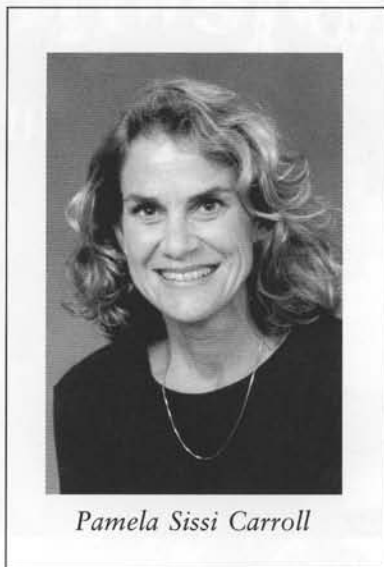
His past work with literature for adolescents includes a number of journals and books. He has managed the "Books for Adolescents" section of the International Reading Association's *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy (JAAL)*, as well as reviewing YA literature for *VOYA* and *English Journal*. He has also written YA author profiles for *Writers for Young Adults: Supplement 1*, and *The Writing Conference Presents Series*, and has published interviews with young adult authors in *JAAL* and also in *The Writer's Slate*. He has given presentations on using young adult literature for conferences in Arizona, Kansas, Texas, Montana and Iowa.

Lori Atkins Goodson is a teacher of English, reading, and technology at Wamego Middle School, Wamego, Kansas. She received a Master of Arts degree at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, and is completing her doctorate in curriculum and instruction at Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas. She is married to Todd Goodson, an associate professor at Kansas State University, and has two children, Annie, 13, and Carrie, 5. In describing her connections to YA literature, Lori told me:

I became interested in young adult literature through the graduate courses of John Bushman at the University of Kansas. Today, as a seventh-grade language arts teacher, I use young adult literature extensively. My classroom library now consists of approximately 1,700 books. I have seen firsthand what quality YA books can do for students. I've had several confess that before I handed them *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers, they'd never finished a book. Students fall in love with the works of Lois Duncan, Caroline B. Cooney, Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, Christopher Paul Curtis, Gary Paulsen, and others. I'm excited about the opportunity to share the works with my students, and as co-editor of *The ALAN Review*, I hope to share that enthusiasm with others interested in YA lit.

I heartily welcome Jim and Lori, and look forward their leadership as you, readers of and contributors to *The ALAN Review*, continue to make ours the leading journal in young adult literature.

From January 2003, please send your manuscripts to Dr. James Blasingame, Co-Editor, *The ALAN Review*, Department of English/English Education, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, P.O. Box 870302, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287-0302.




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As I Sit Here Writing

Adrian Fogelin

As I sit here in my writing room, someone is bouncing a ball in the street. A dog is barking. The sounds that come through my windows keep me in touch with the neighborhood on which I base the fictional world of my Young Adult novels. The separation my room provides gives me the necessary distance that makes writing possible. As Virginia Woolf once observed, "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." In my experience, the former can be done without; the latter is essential.

I first acquired a room of my own in the fourth grade when my family left a wooden, two-story in Pearl River, New York, where I shared a room with my sister. When we moved to a three bedroom, split-level in Princeton Junction, New Jersey, one of the three bedrooms was mine. Behind my closed door I wrote poems, drew pictures, read, and dreamed up scenarios that would lead to my marrying Beatle, George Harrison. If I had been asked what I was doing, I would probably have given the standard kid answer, "Nothing." That only meant that what I was doing was embarrassing, and too hard to explain. Alone in my room I was inventing my separate self, living a secret life that belonged only to me.

Fortunately, a closed door was respected in my family. My parents were often together, but each did things alone as well. My father went birding or worked in the vegetable garden when he wanted to think. My mother wrote fiction. The evidence of *her* secret life was scattered around the house, small piles of manuscript pages left here and there — each with a pencil nearby for spur-of-the-moment editing. My brother, sister, and I all learned the habit of going off by ourselves to work on projects of our own invention.

Because our neighborhood was safe, we had another kind of freedom in our off-school hours; the freedom (within set boundaries) to roam. One of the summer sounds I remember best is the slap of the screen door closing behind me.

I suspect that most readers of this article had that kind of time as children, and that they remember chanting that famous plaint of summer, "I am sooooo bored." More often than not, defeating boredom called forth creative solutions: start a club, draw a picture or, as my friend, Debbie and I once did, attempt to read the complete works of William Shakespeare. Lying, belly-down on my bed, we struggled with unfamiliar language. I remember being stopped by the word "solemnities," which we interpreted as solomn nighties.

The richness of off-time persists in my novels. Readers of my stories may notice that I always write about kids when

they are on vacation from school. This is because I want readers to hang out with characters who are, to a large extent, free to invent what they will do next. If the hyper-scheduled, modern version of childhood leaves adolescents short on unstructured time, then one of my goals in the stories I write is to advocate for its reintroduction.

It may take years for the value of free time to manifest itself, but "doing nothing" is essential for the messy, erratic development of creativity. Although George Harrison and I never got together, I'm sure that imagining the prospect, in all its infinite variations, made me a better storyteller.

Of course I recognize that more creative time is needed in school as well, but time that does not produce an immediate, testable result is something that seems to have been squeezed out of most school curricula. Every teacher I talk to feels the pinch. This Fall, when I taught an in-service class on creative writing for English teachers in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, one teacher told me that she had been handed a schedule that included ten minutes a day for creative writing. She looked distressed. She knew it wasn't working and asked for suggestions. I didn't have any. You can't plant a seed and expect a tree ten minutes later. Some things take time.

But I do have a suggestion that may help teachers when they are guiding readers toward their next book. Given the right book, young adults who are pressured in real life, may be able to relax — and think. There are many books that offer this, including mine.

In *Crossing Jordan*, *Anna Casey's Place in the World*, and my new title, *My Brother's Hero*, I immerse readers in a neighborhood where things move more slowly — the neighborhood just beyond my writing room walls in Tallahassee, Florida. The houses, built in the fifties, are small, dwarfed by old live oaks and longleaf pines. Lawns are an exuberant mix of grass and weeds and scattered toys. Neighbors include blue-collar workers and their families, the working poor, retirees, and university students; a racially diverse group. This is an economic demographic that doesn't often show up in fiction. It is neither middle class nor suburban; nor is it inner-city ghetto. Many of the people living here exist in the narrow zone between having just enough, and having too little. This tends to promote involvement and cooperation. I've lent a cup of sugar, shared plants, and helped the woman next door track her runaway daughter. The difficulties and pleasures of community are always present in my stories.

The voices in my novels belong to my neighbors. Charac-



Adrian Fogelin

ters are often based on kids who stop by to check out the fish in my small backyard pond; or chat with me while leaning on bicycle handlebars, bare feet on the hot tar of Marcia Avenue. The neighborhood I portray in my stories is a deliberate effort to create a place which, while not immune to bad things happening, provides characters and readers a sense of safety. In this neighborhood there are durable friendships among the kids who hang together and reliable adults for them to fall back on.

The work of the characters in my stories is twofold. First, they are becoming individuals. Second, they are becoming members of a community. The problems they face along the way are the tough, ethical questions that litter the path to adulthood for all young people.

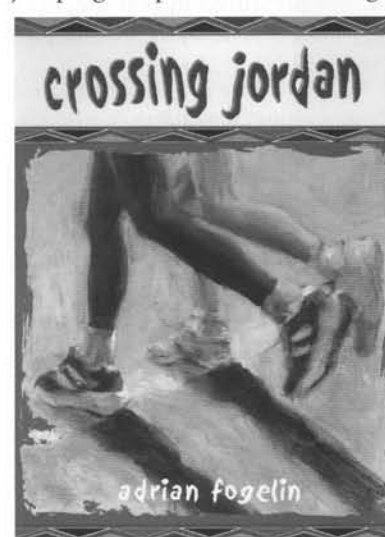
I realize that explaining what I try to do in my stories is like a magician giving away the secret of how to pull the rabbit out of the hat. But teachers — my fellow magicians — already know this trick: engage and entertain your audience and the lesson is learned painlessly. In order to raise ethical questions, the story and characters have to involve readers. The tone can't be preachy or didactic.

My first book, *Crossing Jordan*, starts on a hot summer evening. Cass Bodine, a white, twelve-year-old girl, is handing her father fence nails. The Bodines are getting ready for new neighbors, an African-American family. Cass avoids thinking about the purpose of the fence. If building the fence is the act of a bigot, her father is a bigot.

Cass doesn't know exactly how she feels about black people herself. There are some in the neighborhood, she goes to school with them; they've never been particular friends. But when the new girl, Jemmie Lewis, turns out to be a runner like herself, and perfect best-friend material, Cass discovers that she can't put on her father's beliefs like a hand-me-down sweater. She has to take a critical look. It isn't easy, but she has to strike a balance between her love of her father and a belief system that is incompatible with his. Cass must individuate.

But how about the adult character, Cass's father, Seth Bodine? In the stories I write, no one is irredeemable. Gradually, grudgingly, as circumstances force Cass's father to get to know the family next door, he begins to rethink old beliefs — and so does the family next door.

When read in schools, *Crossing Jordan* has been a good jumping-off point for discussing local race relations. One of



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the best strategies I have heard to bring this work of fiction into the real world involved inviting older members of the African-American community to tell their stories. Kids were amazed to hear that there once was a separate school for blacks — and find out where it once stood, and what it was like to go there.

Anna Casey's Place in the World explores the issue of home and belonging. Anna is an orphan who has been passed through the hands of numerous aunts, uncles, and

a grandmother before being shunted into Florida's foster care system. She has little control over her own life, but that does not mean she is passive. Anna has invented a self that helps her weather the unpredictable, sometimes chaotic life she's been dealt. She keeps what she calls her "explorer's notebook." In it she maps each of the many places she has lived. By mapping the world, she sidesteps the fact that she is unwanted. As an explorer, she identifies herself as someone who belongs everywhere.

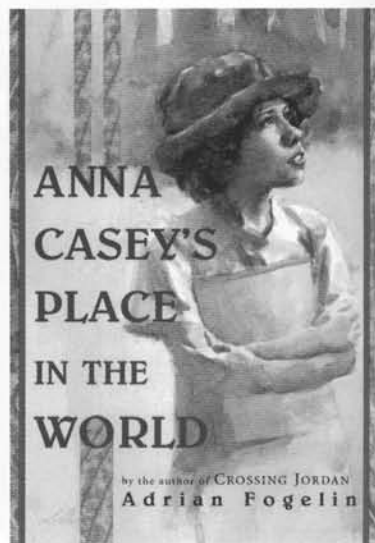
Ben Floyd, who appears in all three of my books, is the hero in *My Brother's Hero*. But the term "hero" turns out to be more ambiguous than Ben imagines. All he wants to do is answer, in the affirmative, the question that afflicts most boys: Am I brave? Spending Christmas break with his family at an uncle's marina in the Florida Keys, Ben has plenty of opportunity to show off his courage. Unfortunately, his natural caution and good sense keep getting in the way.

On the last day of the vacation, Ben, his brother, Cody, and a girl named Mica take a foolish risk. Because they ignore Ben's father's warning to keep their small boat in the sheltered creek between two islands, they find themselves blowing away from shore, night falling fast — and then they run out of gas. At last Ben has the chance to prove himself. But the reality of being brave and the bravery of his fantasies turn out to be completely different. Ben discovers that simply staying alive takes the combined resources of all three of them.

After half a night on the water, they are picked up, and Ben has to deal with the consequences of his misguided heroics. When their rescue is radioed to the Coast Guard boat his mother is aboard, he hears her crying. *The worst sound I ever heard*, he thinks. The agitation he feels is so profound it overshadows any dread he has of being grounded for life. Ben learns from his actions.

The collaborative effort that kept Ben, Mica and Cody alive on the water is not an isolated case in my stories. Success often comes through cooperation. Anna Casey may have little control over her own life, but when the nearby woods she has been visiting is scheduled to be bulldozed, she organizes the neighborhood kids to move as many saplings and small plants as they can. They may not be able to save the woods but, together, they can save something.

Sometimes the problem faced by the group is simply is how to pass the time. But even then, the solutions found by my characters often model collaborative effort. In *Anna Casey's Place in the World* the kids build the Race-A-Rama, a dirt bike track of immense hills and precipitous pits and ditches. If you were to walk back to the power line cut at the edge of my neighborhood, you would see the remains of the kid-built sand track on which the fictional Race-A-Rama is based. Largely filled in now by rains and sand slides, it is like the ruin of some ancient civilization, something of consequence, an achievement.



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In building and operating the track, the kids in *Anna Casey* divide the labor and a social order evolves. Ben Floyd is in charge. Clay, his gadfly antagonist, goads him to make the holes deeper, wider, more dangerous. Leroy, Jahmal, Justin and a kid called the Weeble fill out the cadre of racers. When the track is done, Anna, Cody, Cass and Jemmie provide the necessary audience. A race at the Race-A-Rama is markedly different from the organized sports adults orchestrate. It is freewheeling. Rules are imposed by the participants. It is an exercise in community.

But young characters in my stories don't rely solely on themselves or other kids. They have a strong web of adults who provide guidance. As society streamlines and we run more and more in age-segregated packs, I strive to portray a community in full. It is their relationships with older people that give my young characters a sense of safety in their freedom. The matriarch of the neighborhood, who first appears in *Crossing Jordan* is a small, tough African-American woman called Nana Grace, who grandmothers all the children, regardless of color. As Ben Floyd says, "We all have grandmothers we see on holidays. Nana Grace is for the rest of the time."

As I made school visits to talk about *Crossing Jordan* I was surprised when Nana Grace was frequently cited by readers as their favorite character; a bit odd for a book with two vibrant twelve-year-old girls competing for the title. But maybe Nana Grace is the grandmother kids would like to have: strict but kind, always there, never too busy to listen. When she tells Justin, an overweight boy, "You're just gettin' your weight first an' your height second," she is offering an assurance his friends — who call him lard-butt — can't give him. There are times when an adult's perspective helps.

Also in the neighborhood is Miss Johnette, a high school Biology teacher who invites kids into what she calls her "bone museum." Fossils and animal bones, bird nests and dead beetles adorn the shelves in her home. And in her closet — a human skeleton named Edgar. "This is totally creepy," says a visiting ten-year-old boy. But finding the "teachable moment," Miss Johnette gives her visitor a quick lesson in natural history — and where to get a skeleton without robbing a grave.

Mr. Barnett is the neighbor the kids know is "home on disability." A constant presence, he keeps an eye on the neighborhood. In *Anna Casey* there is even a homeless Vietnam Veteran named Sam Miller who provides an unlikely friendship for foster child, Eb Gramlich. Eb, who protects himself by being as closed as a clenched fist, receives this prickly, but useful bit of advice from Mr. Miller: "Life's rough, and it stinks ninety-nine point nine percent of the time, but once in a blue moon, something good happens. Listen, Eb, when some good thing wants to happen to you, you let it, understand?"

The community in my books includes the dogs that live behind every fence, barking with the front end, wagging with the back, as well as Fran and Blackie, dogs who roam the neighborhood, happy to walk along with any kid who is going to school or the convenience store — where Mr. G., the Indian gentleman behind the counter knows everyone by name.

For those who feel this place I write about is too rosy to be an accurate depiction of modern life, I'd say that the cold,

gritty, impersonal cities, and the slick, mall-dominated suburbs that form the settings for many YA novels are also narrowly selected; just a slice of all the possible childhoods.

There are reasons to create a nurturing setting like my neighborhood. In order to survive adolescence kids must be resilient and hopeful, attributes I believe can be encouraged and even taught. A steady diet of dark, unsettling novels may, inadvertently, feed the feelings of isolation and insecurity that often accompany adolescence. And consider for a moment the stories being told to young people by sources other than books. They are bombarded by unrealistic, fast-paced, often violent stories on TV, the movies, and video games; stories that are long on action, short on consequences.

For all their cool and sophistication, kids live parochial lives. They know their immediate circle of friends and family, a fixed constellation of teachers. Often the only other views they have of reality come to them in the form of stories. Adults are not easily led, but the blasts from the media have an effect on what young people believe to be real, and even on the stories they invent themselves.

When teaching creative writing to young adults, one of the first things I have to do is wean them away from writing stories in which things blow up. I find it telling that young writers rarely write past the "ka-boom!" As in video games, where points are awarded for "killing" the men who run across the screen, disaster has no aftermath. First stories from these new writers rarely spring from the writer's own experience, but they do mimic the stories told by non-print media. Ka-boom!

In my writing I work for a partnership between the reader and my story. I know that a reader must "buy in," and that much of the work of constructing a place and the breathing characters who inhabit it is done by the reader. Because reading is an act of collaboration, one that takes time, I hope that a book can have a more lasting impact than

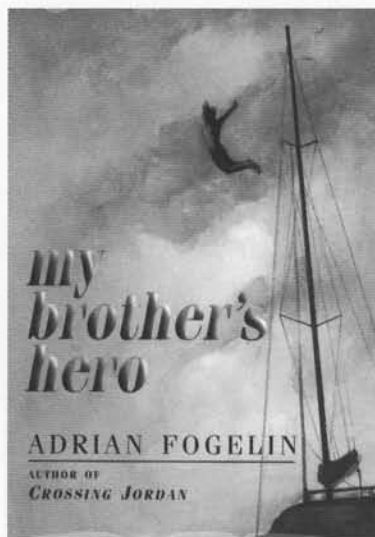
the quick assault of an action-adventure movie. To that end I try to offer characters who are as real to readers as the people they know; characters who can act as peers, even mentors.

The tone of the stories I tell comes out of my own life experience. I am the product of a happy childhood, an optimist. I was taught that the things I do can have a positive affect in the larger world. I give my readers the same message, and it's a message that needs to be heard. Although it has fallen somewhat out of favor, one of the time-honored functions of storytelling is to teach. Societies rise on a foundation of stories. Through stories a community passes on shared values, sets limits, and floats its dreams.

The relationship between society and story is dynamic. Society pushes and shapes story, certainly, but we should never underestimate the power of the story to push back. If we experience something in a book we may yearn for it. And if we yearn for it, who knows, we may roll up our sleeves and build it. I believe that a story can have that much power.

Outside my room rain is now falling. Soon the school bus will pull up next door and spill out half a dozen boys, who will play outside, despite the rain. A ball will sail into my yard. I'll go out and throw it back.

And the next story will begin.



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Brief Reviews of Adrian Fogelin's Adolescent Novels (all published by Peachtree)

Crossing Jordan

Crossing Jordan is a powerful and compelling story of friendship, bigotry and tolerance. Twelve-year-old Cassie narrates the dramatic events of the novel when Jemmie, an African-American girl, and her family move into their blue-collar neighborhood in Tallahassee, Florida. The two girls are drawn together by their competitiveness as runners as well as by their love for reading. Despite their parents' deeply held prejudices, pride, and cultural beliefs, the girls establish a close friendship in which they discover that they share more similarities than differences. They disregard the fence, a symbol of prejudice put up by Cass's father, and bond as sisters. But when their parents find out about their budding friendship, they are forbidden to see one another. Through a turn of life-threatening events, the parents learn that long-held notions of people are unimportant in a time of crisis. By their example, two adolescent girls teach adults how to overcome bigotry and racial intolerance to make "change" possible.

—Reviewed by Tammy Williams-Hinson, Shanks High School, Quincy, FL

Anna Casey's Place In The World

Orphan life has not been a joy for our 12-year old heroine, Anna. Nevertheless, she is a polite, eager to please girl who truly loves the world around her. While death and divorce have taken away all of her relatives, the collection of maps that she keeps in her faithful Explorer's notebook is a constant reminder of each place she has lived. She ends up in foster care in Tallahassee with a distant, first-time foster mother and a 10-year old boy, Eb, who comes from a neglectful home. Set during the summer in the same working-class neighborhood as *Crossing Jordan*, the plot centers on Anna's need for acceptance and permanency. Through various subplots, readers are briefly taken away from the arc of the story as the author embraces the themes of friendship and belonging. Anna and Eb meet the neighborhood kids, Cass and Jemmie—memorable friends in *Crossing Jordan*. They befriend a homeless Vietnam vet, and establish a striking friendship with a biology teacher and local conservationist. Other subplots include an adult romance, the foster brother's long-term placement, and the clearing of the woods (a place that Anna considers to be a part of her home) for a sand mine. Through this genuine and believable first-person narrative, Anna takes the reader on a journey in search of a place where she belongs.

—Reviewed by Tammy Williams-Hinson, Shanks High School, Quincy, FL

My Brother's Hero

In this third novel of Fogelin's sequence, readers get to know Ben Floyd and his younger brother Cody. We are also introduced to one of the spunkiest female characters to appear in an adolescent novel in quite a while: Mica Delano. The story centers around the Floyds' Christmas adventure: a trip to the Florida Keys, where they tend a rickety marina that Ben's aunt and uncle own. At the marina, "the brothers" meet the almost indomitable Mica, a know-it-all 11-year-old who swims and fishes better than the boys, and is never shy about displaying her talents. Mica lives on a boat with her father, a disillusioned, now-single marine biologist who, though he clearly loves his daughter, drinks too much and occasionally ignores her. It is only when Mica's feelings are hurt by her father's inattention that her longing for a mother's love becomes apparent. Mr. and Mrs. Floyd understand her needs. However, Ben, who is jealous of Cody's fondness for Mica and unhappy that a girl has taken center stage in his family's vacation, does not want her to get too close to his family.

Readers of *Crossing Jordan* will be especially eager to follow the subplot that involves Ben's and his best friend Cassie's Christmas gifts for each other. This year, the gifts are a symbol of more than friendship; a romance is about to bud. Before that subplot is resolved, though, Ben, Cody, and Mica must work together to survive a night in which they become lost on the ocean in a tiny rubber vessel. They survive the ordeal only by working together, without jealousy or showing off. This is an engaging, uplifting book that treats young adolescents with respect and offers them a sense of possibility and hope.

Teachers will find terrific potential for including this novel in an interdisciplinary unit on the ocean and shore. Mica and her father introduce readers to many Latin terms for flora and fauna; students will enjoy learning and expanding the list of terms, and diving into information about the Keys.

—Reviewed by Sissi Carroll, Florida State University

Quotes by Adrian Fogelin

From *Crossing Jordan*

It's a funny thing. If you look hard for a while at someone you know really well, it seems like you're looking at a total stranger. I looked at Daddy like I'd never seen him before and wondered, is this what a bigot looks like?
— Cass Bodine

I guess she thought she'd leave me in the dust, but I ran along with her. Our strides were identical. Our knees and elbows rose and fell together. She wasn't trying for that. I wasn't either. Each of us was trying our hardest to pull ahead. In science class last year we learned that some stars revolve around each other, caught in each other's gravity. We were like that, caught, and neither one of us could break away.
— Cass Bodine

"Doing the right thing ain't always comfortable."

— Nana Grace

"My dad used to say that being black was like carrying something heavy all the time, something you couldn't ever set down. If you're black, he said, you could work hard, but at the end of the day, all you got was tired."
— Jemmie Lewis

From *Anna Casey's Place in the World*

I've seen quite a bit for twelve, lived lots of places with aunts and uncles and cousins. But relatives aren't like parents. They don't have to keep you if they get divorced, or if they need your room for a new baby, or if their arthritis gets bad. They just pass you along until, one day, you run out of relatives. Then you have to go with someone like Mrs. Riley. Mrs. Riley is a social worker for the State of Florida. I was one of her cases. So was Eb.
— Anna Casey

Grandma died when I was eight — one of the top worst things that ever happened to me. After the funeral I ran down to the pond behind her house and grabbed a rock from the bank. It was nice and flat. My cousin Janice wanted to skip it across the pond, but I put it in my pocket. I've done the same thing in each place since — picked up a stone to help me remember.
— Anna Casey

Eb was about to wake up, but he was fighting it. Wherever he was, it was better than the place he would be when he woke up. When he woke up, he'd be back in his own life.
— about Eb

"Best I can do is stay away from people. Lucky thing there are places nobody cares about, throwaway places like this one." Mr. Miller cleared his throat and spat over the arm of the chair. "In general, people like to stay on roads, walk on sidewalks, follow signs. They're not over-curious."
— Sam Miller, homeless Vietnam vet

From *My Brother's Hero*

I wanted to *do* something. But being thirteen and a half isn't about doing. It's about waiting. Waiting to get a license. Waiting to get a car. Waiting around.
— Ben Floyd

I sat down on the curb, folded my hands behind my head, and lay back in the grass. The fronds of the palms in front of the diner clattered in the warm breeze, a sound I didn't hear at home. As I looked up into the dark, starry sky, I felt like I was expanding. The neighborhood and the kids I spent every single day with seemed as small and far away as the stars.
— Ben Floyd

"Family hug!" Cody shouted. He threw his arms around Mica from behind. "Dad? Ben?"
— Cody Floyd

"When all else fails, think."
— Mike Floyd

"You know, Ben. There's a fine line between being brave and being stupid," Dad said. "Nothing wrong with knowing the difference."
— Mike Floyd

Mica's finger traced a line across the sky."The first bright star you come to is the north star. That's the star sailors steer by. It doesn't change positions with the seasons. The captain and I use it when we're running at night."
— Mica Delano

I knew some of the things Cass wished for: a room of her own, fewer freckles, college, the Olympics. But maybe sometimes she made a wish with my name in it, maybe tonight. I hunted around for that same first star. It was still pretty light, but I found it and wished. I won't say for what, but her name was in it.
— Ben Floyd

Adrian Fogelin's Fiction in the Middle School Classroom

A University Teacher Educator's Perspective

by Cindy Bowman

and

A Middle School Teacher's Perspective

by Renn Edenfield

A University Teacher Educator's Perspective Cindy Bowman

More Than Pages in a Book

Stories are powerful tools in building relationships, understanding, and knowledge. As teachers, we should consider the narratives of all of our students and the ways that these stories intersect to create new narratives. Our narratives are where we develop a sense of ourselves; and if these selves are to grow and develop, we must seek spaces where we can make deliberate, value-based decisions. Nietzsche espouses that our narratives about ourselves only have worth if we alone have formulated that narrative; accepting anybody else's version of ourselves makes us a failure as a human being.

Meeting Adrian Fogelin and reading her novel *Crossing Jordan*, which is set in Tallahassee, Florida, took me and prospective teachers, as well as the middle schools students and teachers with whom they worked one year, beyond the pages of her books and offered us new understanding of the rich history of Tallahassee. When they first read *Crossing Jordan*, a few university students questioned the authenticity of a story of racial prejudice in their hometown. Yet within seconds, stories of misunderstanding, distrust, discrimination, and prejudice filled the classroom. A similar response occurred when we introduced *Crossing Jordan* to a class of 7th graders: disbelief melted into serious discussion of examples of discrimination that they had seen, or even in which they had been participants.

Community emphasizes mutual and interactive experiences directed toward the preservation of humanity. It affirms the subjectivity of students and leads to positive change for the welfare of others. Without community and without trust, moral and intellectual growth would not become full or rich. Our sharing of narratives—in university classes, in middle school classes, and during the times that university and middle school students met together to read and study Fogelin's *Crossing Jordan*—became a vital component in planning classroom activities to awaken middle school students across the county to personal and social issues. The pre-service teachers began planning lessons on the Civil Rights Movement, local heroes, Southern values, Confederate generals, and stereotypes. They created analogies for fences, taped Gospel spirituals, made

photo essays of the local landmarks mentioned in the novel, wrote skits depicting Cass and Jemie, and planned field trips to the cemetery where the two girls secretly met. They saw the power of Fogelin's novel when they presented some of their ideas to young adolescents in two different middle schools in Tallahassee.

Crossing Jordan in the Schools

The study of this novel demonstrated a connectedness with others, developed a community of learners, and allowed students to learn together and be responsible for one another. Through these experiences, university and middle school students created and constructed a fuller meaning of the novel together. The integration of an awareness of the social dynamics and life contexts of Tallahassee created dynamics for learning which were unparalleled. While the university students implemented pre-reading activities in two middle schools, they discovered how each individual student responded to different sections of the novel, and how vividly the middle school students could explain their favorite parts. They also noted how the connections the students made to their personal lives encouraged participation and class discussion. The pre-service teachers were unprepared for the young adolescents' commentaries on female athletes, makeup, friendship, competition, the "New York lean," "the boob factor," and relationships.

Activities

Teachers, English Education students, colleagues, and I began creating excitement for the literary event of reading and studying the novel in one Tallahassee middle school by hanging sneakers from the ceilings in classrooms, the cafeterias, media centers, and gymnasiums. A few days later, signs proclaiming, "*Crossing Jordan* is coming" decorated the schools' hallways. The chorus students began learning Gospel spirituals for a school-wide kick-off celebration that was scheduled for one of the two schools. The middle school students became as excited about the reading kick-off as they would have been about a high school football game. The university students worked with classroom teachers and school administrators to invite the Superintendent of Schools, Adrian

Fogelin, a local sports celebrity, local television news anchors, and newspaper reporters to the celebration. They created a video slide presentation of city landmarks accompanied by Bruce Springsteen's "My Hometown" and canvassed local vendors for prizes to award students participating in warm-up activities. Classroom teachers performed a skit of a scene from the novel to the cheers of all students and guests, the school chorus sang, and accompanied a popular teacher as she sang a Gospel solo. The kick-off event was a celebration of reading and a celebration of community.

Meanwhile, in the university classroom, students continued to prepare for working with classroom teachers to engage students in the reading of *Crossing Jordan*. They created interdisciplinary lesson plans including the following:

Science

- Wakulla Springs State Park
- Florida sinkholes and land formations
- Elevation studies
- Sunburn

Math

- Using the track to study distance, rate, and time
- Calculating percentages
- Geometric shapes

History

- Civil Rights and Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Rosa Parks and discrimination
- Tallahassee heroes

Art

- Building fences
- Sketching graveyard scenes
- Making dolls

Physical Education

- Track and field activities
- Famous women athletes

English

- Writing obituaries
- Reading excerpts from *Jane Eyre*
- Poetry about friendship
- Essays/research on prejudice

Journalism

- Writing articles about "Chocolate Milk"
- Covering neighborhood events
- Study of photographic techniques and copy layout
- Computer software for news articles

Music

- Gospel hymns
- Southern music themes

Examples of Novel-Related Assignments

THE CHALLENGES OF BEING DIFFERENT

- Students will create a photographic quilt that displays pictures of their lives and race-relations (chap. 6).
- Students are required to interview and photograph community members and leaders who provide an array of information about race-relations in different eras of American History
- From their interviews, students can create a poem, a brief essay, or a series of proverbs about the person they interviewed.

BIOGRAPHY

Journal: Throughout life, there is one significant event that a person will always remember. Think about an important event that occurred in your life. In your journal, discuss one event that you would want people to always remember after your demise.

- Students will be introduced to the concept of writing a biography. Students will view a videotape of interviews on the life of homeless people recorded at the Tallahassee Homeless Shelter.
- Students will create an outline for their biographies (names on tombstones).
- Groups will work on puppet shows.

TECHNOLOGY

Students will formulate into groups of four and create a PowerPoint presentation of their different neighborhoods.

Culminating Activities

At the other middle school, students celebrated their completion of the novel by displaying the novel-related projects that they had created during the study of *Crossing Jordan*. The projects included the creation of these artifacts: models of Cass's and Jemmie's homes separated by the fence, trifold boards of journal responses and illustrations of the girls' secret meetings in the cemetery, postings to Amazon.com, dolls similar to those of Nana Grace, songs written to portray different characters in the story, and dialogues they created between characters that they would have included in the novel. Invitations were sent to Adrian Fogelin to attend the wrap-up festivities. The author graciously agreed to attend, to the delight of the middle school and university students. Students brought cookies and chocolate milk (an homage to Jemmie and Cass's favorite drink) and hung banners welcoming Ms. Fogelin back to their school. The event was a lively wrap up that in which middle school students, classroom teachers, university pre-service teachers and faculty, and parents were involved; everyone was energized by the common bond: their experiences with Fogelin's novel, *Crossing Jordan*.

The pre-service teachers learned how much time and effort are necessary in planning such pre- and post-reading events, and were enlightened by the honest and forthright comments the students made to the author. They also learned that they must be willing to take risks and discuss issues that are relevant to the lives of their students. Finally, they learned that caring is a fundamental need of children who seek acceptance, and that literacy enhances our ability to care for others and mold our world and us. Adrian Fogelin, as a person and writer, reminds us to see each new day, new moment, and new experience as a story with which we can begin to build global understanding and vision.

A Middle School Classroom Teacher's Perspective Renn Edenfield

For an attorney, it must be winning the case for a trusting client. For a doctor, I guess it's seeing a sick patient recover. For an actor, maybe it's being nominated for an Oscar, but for this teacher, it's knowing that one-hundred forty middle school students look forward to my class each day that helps me feel successful. I know that if they want to be there, even though it's still 7th Grade Language Arts in Room 30, I must be doing something right.

The concept sounds simple, but making it happen for the right reason, academic achievement, is more complex than I could have imagined when I started teaching middle school

language arts in 1973. Now, twenty-nine years later, I think about how much middle school students have taught me about helping them learn to read, write, listen, speak, and view our language, literature, and life. Studying how they react to my style, respond to my lesson plans, and perform the tasks associated with learning language arts, helps me grasp the intricacies of being a good teacher. Yet, every time I think I finally know all the important "stuff," I learn some other invaluable message.

I'm fortunate to teach in a town with two universities and a community college, but I didn't take advantage of it until 1994 when I participated in the North Florida Writing Project (directed by Dr. Sissi Carroll) Florida State University. That summer institute changed by life. I learned that I was starving to be with other teachers, to interact with them, to hear new ideas, and to feel affirmed when sharing mine. When I realized that a community of educators existed, I wanted to be a viable member, which meant collaborating with teachers at my school, other local schools, and eventually presenting at state and national conferences. Every interaction with another educator complemented my classroom practice and made me yearn for more. After years of feeling isolated, I couldn't get enough of this kind of "fellowship," which led me to engage in collaboration with Dr. Cindy Bowman, also of the English Education program at Florida State University.

When Cindy supervised one of my student teachers and offered to place some pre-service educators from the English Education methods course with me, the other benefits of partnership surfaced. The FSU students brought a new energy into my classroom, and Cindy and I exchanged conversation about how to accomplish our goals for both her students and mine. Because she shared Adrian Fogelin's first YA novel, *Crossing Jordan*, with me, my students and I experienced the excitement of reading about two middle school girls, Cass and Jemmie, set in our hometown, Tallahassee, Florida. As the FSU pre-service teachers implemented the pre-reading activities, my students became emotionally engaged in the reading even before they opened the book. We soon understood, though, that more important than the novel's setting were the issues of racial prejudice surrounding the girls' friendship. Cass' father built a fence to separate his white family from their new African-American neighbors and forbade Cass to associate with these people. How would the girls manage this conflict?

Many rich classroom discussions ensued as the students shared their thoughts and attitudes and individual, and family beliefs. It was the first time I had seen such open talk on this sometimes touchy subject, and as I listened to these 7th grade students communicate with each other, I marveled at the electrifying power of literature, the conduit for the flow of thoughts and ideas and developing attitudes about real life.

Cindy's decision to become actively involved with what was going on in the middle school also allowed my students the experience of meeting an author face-to-face. Adrian Fogelin spent the day with us at Cobb. As we prepared for this celebrity visit, I saw the students internalize some appreciation for literature, too. With the expectation of meeting and talking to this writer, Mrs. Fogelin and her characters became personal to them, and they valued that connection. Their words say it best (I have touched up some of their spelling):

Dear Adrian Fogelin,

I Loved your book *Crossing Jordan*.

My favorite part is When Cass was sneaking out of the house, and she got outside. Jemmie said, "Girl, it's going to be morning before you decide whether you want to stay on or get off those stairs!" How long did it take you to write that book? How did you know about all those parts from *Jane Eyre*? Have you read the book?

Sincerely,
(Grade 7 Boy)

Dear Adrian Fogelin,

I wanted to state my opinion on your book *Crossing Jordan*. I thought that your book was flawless. I loved it. When reading each chapter it leaves you a hunger for more. One thing about this particular book is how true it is about racism. I truly enjoyed reading *Crossing Jordan* and have recommended this book to other people. This book has most definitely changes my point of view on racism. Thank you for sharing this book with us.

Sincerely,
(Grade 7 Girl)

Dear Adrian Fogelin,

Hi! I'm so looking forward to you coming to our classroom. I love your book so far. My favorite part is when Missy gets overheated and Leona saves her. Then Missy's dad tries his hardest to pay her back. I have never met an author so you'll be the first one I'll meet. That's because I have never wanted to meet any other author expect for you because your book is really good! I'm really looking forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,
(Grade 7 Girl)

Dear Adrian Fogelin

I wish you were here so we could go to the restaurant and drink chocolate until we drop. Then we would go to the track and field to see if you still got it. Then we could go to my house and talk about how you were inspired to write your book. After that we could talk about making a movie. That's what we would do if you were here know.

Sincerely,
(Grade 7 Boy)

As I evaluate my effectiveness in the language arts classroom, I think about the energy, effort, and expertise it takes to make a difference in the education of middle grades students. It is a constant challenge, and I question whether I even matter. I am not automatically revered by clients or patients because of a college degree, nor am I idolized by fans because I'm on the big screen. Admittedly, many professionals like attorneys, doctors, and actors also work hard to make a difference in our world; I appreciate their skills and talents. Sometimes I even wonder what it would be like to be valued by society the way they are. But then I think about my love for children and for learning and for educators, and I understand that not everyone can be a teacher.

Cindy Bowman is an Assistant Professor of English Education at Florida State University.

Renn Edenfield, a former teacher of middle school language arts, currently works in the Florida Department of Education.

Mentors and Monsters

Nancy Osa

I was never as brave as my characters turn out to be. In my fiction, the fearful boy can get back on his horse. The procrastinating mom can get a life. The shy girl can learn to ask questions. How on earth did I—the fearful, procrastinating, shy author—finally achieve what my characters were born to do?

How else? Through writing. And something more.

In 1994, looking for story ideas, I read a news report about the second annual “Friendshipment”—a humanitarian aid shipment to Cuba sponsored by the ecumenical group Pastors for Peace. Hurricane Andrew had recently hit, and the trade embargo largely prevented Americans from helping families in need. On the Friendshipment, volunteers physically collected medicine and other goods along a dozen caravan routes from Canada (giving the issue international significance) down to Laredo, Texas. There the cargo was escorted across the border into Mexico for shipment to Cuba, per U.S. regulation through a third country. The caravans gathered needed commodities for everyday Cubans, challenged U.S. travel and trade restrictions, and raised awareness of U.S.-Cuba relations in each of the cities and towns they passed through. (The Friendshipment has since become a semiannual event.) I wondered if any teenagers had participated, so I contacted my local Cuba group and found out that some had. This struck a chord. Here was my story.

I needed some context, so I pooled sources and began research. I knew next to nothing about the history of the Cuban nation or the relationship between our two governments. I had no idea what life was like on the island under the embargo. I was surprised, upon reading about the humanitarian effort, that people who were not of Cuban heritage were involved in a risky activity—collecting contraband with the intent to ship it to the island. In my ignorance, I was like most other Americans born after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Except that I am Cuban American.

My father, Henry, came to this country from Cuba long before the revolution, as a replacement for U.S. doctors who were overseas during the Korean War. By the time I came along in 1961, sandwiched between the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban missile crisis, Cuba had become a painful topic in our house. Growing up, I was the shy girl who learned not to ask questions. So, thirty-some years later, when I had to research Cuba for my new story, the whole reality of what had happened—what I had unwittingly lost—came crashing down around me.

19.9.94: *I thought, What if things had been different? What if our government had negotiated with Castro? I could have grown up in two countries. I'd be able to speak Spanish. I'd know Mamá [my grandmother] and my other Cuban relatives . . . things I'll never know. A life I'll never have.* [from my journal]

For me, in those early days, Cuba was a wall print of palm-framed Morro Castle that hung in our dining room . . . the clacking of dominoes late at night after I was in bed . . . the heady aroma of my tía Emma's *frijoles negros*. Cuba was *there*—with us—not distant, far from my Chicago suburb in the palm of a dictator, and it existed *then*, not sometime in a past I had never known, and certainly not in any future. Other than the Morro Castle print, the only remnants of the past were the small framed photographs of my father's father, mother, and younger brother, who unlike his siblings had remained on the island. The pictures stood like sentinels on Dad's tall dresser, a shade truer than sepia tone, portraits of three people I had never met.

I realized in the course of my research that these were the people—at least, people like them—whom the Friendshipment, and other relief efforts, benefit. Perhaps some of *my* relatives had lived through 1993's Hurricane Andrew and needed things—from construction materials to everyday items like soap. Yes, I was slow to make the connection. And it was connection I wanted. Suddenly it all became too personal for me to blanket in fiction. I had to reach in another direction.

Of the three portraits on the dresser, only Eduardo, Dad's brother, was still living. The two hadn't spoken in twenty years. But my uncle had recently made contact with his sisters, my aunts who live in Florida. I learned that Eddy was married and had a young son and daughter. I got out my high school Spanish textbook and wrote them a letter.

Septiembre 1994:

Querida Familia, Quiero que Uds. me conozcan; soy Nancy, la hija de Enrique. Que me les presente a Uds: Vivo en la costa Pacifico de los E.U., en una pequena ciudad, Portland, Oregon. Tengo 33 anos, yo soy una escritora de libros y cuentos para muchachos.

[from my September 1994 typed letter]

I began, literally, “I want that you know me; I am Nancy, daughter of Enrique.” And I told them a bit about my life. We struck up a correspondence, and I got to know my closest relatives in Cuba.



Now I had a real reason to write my story. I hitched a ride partway on the Friendship caravan the following spring and used what I learned to create my character, thirteen-year-old Cuban American Violet Paz. I felt comfortable writing from my experience and excited about the timeliness of the story. Americans had begun to “notice” Cuba again: The Soviet Union had fallen. Cigars were back in vogue. Grassroots activism was on the rise. And, in my own bit of synchronicity, wonder of wonders, my dad had picked up the telephone and called his little brother in Cuba. Inspiration? I was drowning in it. I crafted a short story for middle-grade readers that I planned to develop into a novel and began sending it out to publishers. Reviews were mixed. Most editors were put off by the political bent of the piece.

About this time, I received a letter from author Virginia Euwer Wolff, to whom I had sent fan mail. I’d heard that if you wrote to a children’s author, you’d likely get a reply, so, pure of heart, I told Virginia how much I liked her book *Make Lemonade*. She lives nearby and asked me out for pizza and to talk about the writing life. I went—no motive—a bundle of nerves and shy about presenting myself as an author. When I explained my situation—starving artist, scraping for stamps for SASEs . . . hell, I’d taken the bus to get to the restaurant—Virginia reinterpreted it for me: I had made sacrifices for my art. Instantly, I was lifted above the cramped rental house, archaic computer, and lack of wheels to a place where my work was what mattered. Virginia waved her wand again, and I had contacts:

21.9.95: *I met Virginia Euwer Wolff at the Heathman Pub on Thurs. for pizza. I had a great time. She said I should know more writers around here and gave me some names. Her editor is moving . . . but she gave me the name of the multicultural editor there, “because you didn’t ask.”* [from my journal]

Sometimes it’s good not to ask questions!

Before I could act on that good fortune, I received word from another publisher that my short story had been accepted for an anthology by Hispanic authors, to be edited by Alma Flor Ada and Isabel Campoy. Alma Flor would be in my town soon for a conference and wanted to meet me. I had read *My Name is María Isabel* and was excited to hear from her.

Again I gathered my courage, begged a ride to the suburbs, and met a famous author in a public place. We connected immediately; Alma Flor was born in Cuba and was outspoken against the embargo. We talked for a very long time over dinner about writing and living with split families and dealing with Cuban parents. All of a sudden I felt . . . normal. Crazy, but normal—I could face these problems as other people did. And doing so would enrich my work. “So get to the keyboard,” Alma Flor told me. “Maybe something about what it’s like to have green eyes and be Cuban.”

I drew from our meeting the theme that was then emerging in children’s literature: that the expression of my cultural experience, however diluted or incongruous that experience may be, is a valid representation of the truth. Of how my world, and that of others in the same boat, works. And I began to see my half-Cubanness—and my Spanglish-speaking, bad-domino-playing, can’t-dance-the-mambo self—as worthy of a story.

Over the next couple of years, I worked at drawing the short story out into a novel, but had difficulty distancing my writing self from my political self. The subject was too freshly painful to me. So I began another novel with Violet Paz as my main character. And this time, I was determined to find something to laugh about.

Knowing that my own diluted cultural experience was authentic in and of itself gave me new courage. I began to plot a story that grew from my roots and put out new shoots. The novel, which would become *Cuba 15* (Delacorte Press 2003), focuses on Violet’s *quinceañero*, or Cuban coming-of-age ceremony. The traditional event forces Violet to reevaluate her relationship with her heritage and with her Cuban-born father, Alberto, which she does with honesty and humor. I myself had never been to a “*quince*,” and I’d never asked those pesky important questions about my father’s Cuban past when I was growing up. But I could imagine someone else doing those things. So I wrote.

When I finished revising my drafts of *Cuba 15*, I was sure this was the book I’d meant to write. Winning the 19th Delacorte Press Prize sealed the deal . . . until my Random House editor, Françoise Bui, requested revisions.

You’ve written a funny and touching story that offers a delicious slice of Cuban culture. And that’s precisely what I’d like you to expand on. Your own synopsis . . . states that . . . “the rift between the United States and Cuba has caused a culture gap in the Chicago-based Paz family, as well as ‘gaps’ in how the Pazes relate to one another and to their family on the island.”

Yet this collision and gap seem largely glossed over. They are the missing layers of the story—ones that are crucial to incorporate if you want your novel to resonate with depth and texture. [from F. Bui’s February 15, 2002, letter]

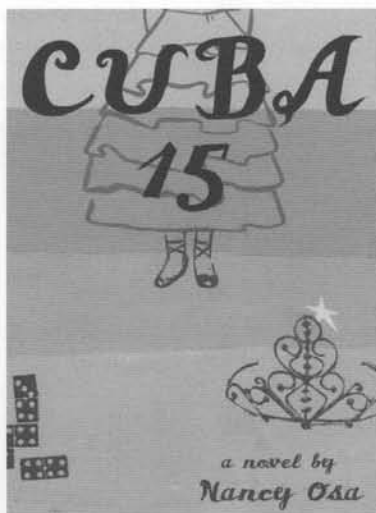
Why some people don’t enjoy criticism is beyond me—I was touched by these insights gained from such a thoughtful read, and fired with pride. I could go deeper.

But deeper is difficult, even painful. I worked hard on the manuscript . . . but again I glossed over the crux of Violet’s dilemma, her parents’ lack of trust that prevents Violet from coming to grips with her Cuban roots. Françoise was not fooled.

You’ve done a great deal to embellish the rift between the Paz family vis-à-vis their views on Cuba. But, as I said in my first letter, I feel that a big emotional pull—an incident that jolts Alberto into a fury over Violet’s growing interest in Cuba—is missing. You need a climax. [from F. Bui’s July 2, 2002, letter]

The gentle suggestions in her revision letter tugged at the corners of my mind until it opened a bit. Then a bit more. Françoise was telling me that “deeper” was not enough—*wider* was more like it. Still I mentally argued with her: *But that confrontation would never have happened in my family!* And the question hit me: *But what if it did?* Imagining my way into someone else’s life wasn’t real enough. I needed to see through their eyes.

So I finished the book. Writing from beyond my experience allowed me to fully incorporate that climactic bit of fiction as a truth in my life. Through Violet’s humor and bravery, I find that I am somehow enhanced. We help each other, as Violet jokingly puts it in reference to her friend Leda, “like those relationships where one fish scrapes dead barnacles off the other.” (*Cuba 15*)



It's hard to write alone. Scary, even. And deciding to confront a difficult subject is often not enough. In my case, mentors helped me complete the equation. Perhaps all authors need "personal trainers" to beckon us through the dark undergrowth of our psyches, to let us come out the other side braver for having examined our fears. What a gift when one happens along! I've discovered that mentors are where you find them; sometimes neither you nor they know that they are mentors until much later, if ever. They are like good sorcerers casting generous spells. They help us spin our fears and demons into gold. My gratitude knows no bounds.

The 1994 anthology project was eventually discontinued by

the publisher. But, often, that rainy night in October when I first met Alma Flor floats back to me in all its promise, reminding me of the many wonderful, selfless people who have helped show me the way so that I may do the same for my readers and other writers. It's a rare occupation that pays off for everyone, and I know how lucky I am. In my journal the following day, I wrote, "Alma Flor hugged me before she said good night. Is this a great job or what?"

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Cuba 15, by Nancy Osa

Delacorte Press Publication date: June, 2003 (ISBN: 0-385-90086-4)

Brava, Nancy Osa, author of *Cuba 15*, and recipient of 19th Annual Delacorte Pres Prize for first novels. I can hardly wait to get this positive, artistic book into the hands of every teacher and middle and high school student that I know. It is a true treat to introduce you to this novel and its author Nancy Osa, a wonderful new voice in YA literature.

In *Cuba 15*, we get to know the multi-dimensional Violet (Violeta) Paz, exactly at the time in her life when her grandmother (Abuela) is insisting that she have a "quinceanero" — a party to celebrate her fifteenth birthday that. In Abuela's Cuban tradition, the quinceanero marks the time that females step into womanhood — a Cuban debutante, if you will. Violet, whose energy and wacky sense of humor are suspiciously similar to Osa's herself, wants nothing to do with what she fears will be a disaster — after all, she hasn't worn a dress since the 4th grade, she doesn't have enough friends to fill the auditorium where the event is to be held, and she worries that the cost is too much for her family. Eventually, though, as Violet learns more about the tradition of the "quince," she begins to understand, and respect, why it means so much to her Cuban grandmother that she participate in it. As the story's main plot unfolds, several entertaining side shows also occur: we see Violet's "loco family" set aside an entire weekend for a dominos fest, and giving the game the kind of passion that many of us attach only to cheering for college football

games or spotting Hollywood celebrities. We are charmed by the Spanglish speaking-Abuelo and Abuela, as well as by the eccentric Tia Luci, a cigar-smoking cousin, and the wise and wily Senora Flora, "party planner for the stars". We are pleased to see that Violet becomes a successful member of the school's speech team, and delighted that, unlike many of the adolescents we meet in YA books, she enjoys her family, and is eager to spend time even with her younger brother. We laugh with Violet when her mother suggests new names for her latest scheme: a drive-through bakery called Catch 'Er in the Rye. We applaud Violet for creating, from the traditional quinceanero, a celebration that makes her proud of herself and her family. And we are also reminded of serious political and cultural connections and disconnections between the US and Cuba — at a time when changes in those relationships are imminent.

Nancy Osa offers readers engaging dialogue among endearing characters within the context of an aspect of our American culture with which many of us are unfamiliar. This book will be an extraordinary collection to classroom libraries, and one that English/language arts teachers will want to share with their friends across the curriculum.

Now — anyone have a pocketful of dimes? I am ready for a long game of dominos!

Reviewed by Sissi Carroll, Tallahassee, FL

A handful of quotes from Cuba 15:

"The *quinceanero*, *m'ijo*, this is the time when the girl becomes the woman." (Abuela).

"I'd never even heard about this quince thing before Abuela brought it up. I don't know any more than you do, other than what I've read in this book." I patted the copy of *Quinceanero* for the Gringo Dummy on my desk."
(Violet)

"In between siestas that afternoon, I lost my shirt to my grandmother...*Lo siento*, Violeta, *pero* I win again!" she

sang cheerfully from pimiento-colored lips, reaching for the pot as the other players commiserated with me, one game after another. Still, I kept coming back for more."
(Violet)

"Dad's face scares me when he talks about Cuba." (Violet)

"My job, Violet, is to take what is true about Violet Paz and put it into the fiesta. The quinceanero is a statement about who you are and where you are going."
(Senora Flora, the Party Planner)

Critically Thinking about Harry Potter: A Framework for Discussing Controversial Works in the English Classroom

Joanne M. Marshall

Harry Potter as Test Case

Since J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series was first published in 1997, parents, teachers, and readers of all ages have been fans of the boy wizard, enthusiastically standing in bookstore lines at midnight to purchase the next installment, or flocking to the movies, or rushing to buy the DVD. Previously reluctant readers, including young adult readers (MacRae), are suddenly enthralled with a book, and the adults who care for those readers are equally enthralled with its results. Magic, indeed.

However, not everyone has been under Harry's spell. The American Library Association reported in January that the Harry Potter books are the most-challenged books for the third year in a row, and there have even been reports of its public burning (Goldberg, "Harry") and, when burning wasn't possible because of fire codes, cutting (Goldberg, "Pastor"). These rejections of Harry have been largely from a few conservative Christian groups who feel that the Bible's many admonitions against the practice of witchcraft and sorcery (see Deuteronomy 18:9-14, for example) are to be taken seriously (Abanes). Other critics feel that the books are sometimes violent and scary, and note that sometimes its characters disobey or disregard authority. These parents, therefore, both religious and non-religious, are concerned about the negative influence such a story, especially such an extremely popular story, could have on their children. It is important to note, therefore, both that Harry Potter's critics are not limited to conservative Christians and that not all conservative Christians condemn the books. Some authors in Christian publications view the books as morally positive and uplifting (see, for example, Jacobs; Maudlin), while others have written thoughtful, if not completely accepting, analyses (see, for example, Faries; Neal).

Regardless of the source of people's discontent with Harry and his friends, the popularity of the books, when combined with the vociferous objections to their use in English classrooms, serves to make Harry Potter an ideal test case for how teachers and media specialists can handle controversial works.

A Framework for Discussing Controversial Works

The most important step in bridging ideological gaps is to open discussion. As Alex Molnar wrote in 1994 about public

school conflict with conservative Christians, "Educators too often do a poor job of reaching out to diverse groups of parents and community members and drawing them into the life of their schools" (p.5). At the school level and in the classroom, English educators can lead the way in open discussion, particularly discussion about books such as the Harry Potter series. I offer the following seven-step framework as a way to begin that discussion, having tested it in three young adult literature college classrooms and one adult education church classroom. While my experience has been with college-age or older adults, I am confident that young adults would also

benefit from this exercise, which is at its heart an exercise in critical thinking. Although the Harry Potter books are of immediate interest because of their current

buzz, the framework could be adapted to any other work of media.

First, I ask people (a) if they have read any of the Harry Potter books, or (b) if they have seen the movie. Count the people so you get an idea of your audience. Ask people to keep their hands up for a moment so that those who haven't read the books or seen the movie can find the Harry Potter readers and/or movie-watchers later when answering group questions that require some in-depth knowledge of the stories.

Second, I summarize the story very briefly. My summary, which I put on a slide, is this:

Harry, an orphan living with his mean aunt and uncle, discovers at age 11, when summoned to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, that he has magical powers and is famous in the magical world—a sort of parallel England—for surviving evil Lord Voldemort's attack on his parents. Adventures at school ensue as Harry learns more.

I ask the group if there are any questions or if anyone would like to add any other key details.

Third, I draw "for Harry" and "against Harry" columns on a chalkboard and ask the class to quickly fill in the arguments for reading the Harry Potter books and against reading them. As a group, people have been quite good at filling in both sides, even when it is obvious that they wholeheartedly agree with only one side.

Fourth, I introduce the concept of finding common ground by thinking critically about the book, calling the group to a

The most important step in bridging ideological gaps is to open discussion.

democratic ideal of open discussion and asking them to try to see the other side's point of view, complimenting them on a good beginning by their success in fulfilling step three. I also introduce the concepts of ascertainment and discernment, modified from Ted Baehr's work. Ascertainment is simply the idea of figuring out what happens, as in ascertaining the facts about something, in this case, what happens in the Harry Potter story. Discernment is the personal application of that ascertainment, or how what happens affects you as a reader, if at all. For most readers, the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of discernment as "the act of discerning or perceiving by the intellect; intellectual perception or apprehension" suffices. In other words, discernment is about thinking critically. In conservative Christian theology, discernment is also a spiritual gift, the ability to tell good from evil, or to "discern between the spirits" (I Corinthians 12:10; Thomson and Elwell). So in Christian theology, discernment is also about thinking, or perhaps feeling, critically. There is therefore some common ground available around these ideas of ascertainment and discernment.

While everyone might agree on what happens in the book, there is room to disagree about how what happens might affect the reader. Regardless of the opinions, however, the application of ascertainment and discernment require readers to discuss the book critically. I emphasize that the point of this exercise is not to tell people *what* to think about reading the Harry Potter series, but to provide an opportunity for people – whether adults, young adults, or younger students – to practice *how* to think about books or other media.

Fifth, I provide a handout (see Table 1) based on the work of Baehr and media professor William Romanowski. There are three columns. The first column provides two sets of questions in eight categories for readers to answer about the Harry Potter series, providing evidence for their responses in the second column. One set of questions is intended to help the reader ascertain the facts of what's going on in the Harry Potter books; the other set is intended to help the reader discern the impact of those facts. Readers use the third column to indicate whether they think, given their answers to the questions and evidence from the books or movie, Harry Potter is a positive, negative, or neutral influence. I break the audience into small groups, asking them to make sure they have at least one Harry Potter reader or viewer in the group, and then I assign each group one of the eight categories to discuss. Categories include questions about how the hero, the villain, violence, sex, Christianity/religion, worldview/culture, moral lessons, and authority are addressed in the book. Category number four, sex, is not really relevant to the Harry Potter series – yet – but it is included here so that the framework might be applied to other media.

Sixth, I compile column three responses from each group, writing each positive, negative, or neutral evaluation on the board. When finished, I ask the group if they are surprised by any of the ratings, if they have questions for any group, and if there are any group's ratings they would like to discuss. These questions lead to some lively discussion, as groups ask questions of others, defend their answers, and provide textual evidence for their responses.

Finally, I ask the audience to make an overall statement

First, I ask people (a) if they have read any of the Harry Potter books, or (b) if they have seen the movie.

about whether they think these particular books are worth reading, and if there are any limits that they would place on their being read. These questions provoke interesting discussion about the value of the books as well as about age-appropriateness. If I were using this framework in a high school or middle school classroom, I would ask students to write a short persuasive essay outlining their position about the appropriateness of Harry Potter, in keeping with research on the positive effects that inquiry-based activities such as this one have on student writing (Hillocks; Johannessen). Or I might ask them to apply the framework to another work of literature. The framework is intentionally broad enough to be used for any work of literature or movie and with any group of people, from young adults to concerned parents.

Working with Controversy

As readers and educators, we tacitly acknowledge the power that books have on us. We fall in love with stories, can't stop talking about books, and hope that we share some of that

love with younger readers as we teach and model reading. We teach books by diverse authors so that our students can learn about others' experiences and points of view, perhaps even feeling something in response, and

our literary theory acknowledges the power of experience and reader response (Rosenblatt, Probst, Scholes). So it should not be completely surprising to us that conservative Christians and other parents are concerned about their own children's affective response to a particular set of stories. Rather than dismissing those concerns as ridiculous or crying "censorship!" we should work instead to try to understand those concerns. The advantage of the framework provided here is that it acknowledges those concerns and provides a voice for them while also demanding that readers think critically about what they are reading. In that sense, then, we can use controversy to make our classrooms places devoted to diverse and well-reasoned voices.

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Table 1: Questioning Framework: Ascertainment and Discernment*

Ascertaining/ Discerning Questions	Answers/ Evidence from <i>Harry Potter</i>	<i>How does Harry rate? (positive, negative, or neutral)</i>
<p>1. The Hero Ascertain: Who is the hero? Why does he or she succeed? Discern: Who is the hero? Heroes fight Man, Nature, Self, Supernatural What kind of role model is that hero?</p> <p>2. The Villain Ascertain: Who is the villain? Villains fight Man, Nature, Self, Supernatural Discern: What is the message behind the villain's role? Is the villain sympathetic? What's the source of evil?</p> <p>3. Violence Ascertain: How much violence is there? Discern: How is the violence portrayed? Necessary? Fun? Normal? Shock factor?</p> <p>4. Sex Ascertain: How much sex is there? Discern: How is the sex portrayed? Loving and glorious in marriage or a committed relationship? Fun and frequent goal outside marriage or a committed relationship?</p> <p>5. Christianity / Religion Ascertain: What's the role of religion, the church, God, Christians, or other religions in this story? Discern: How is religion, etc. portrayed? Foolish, weak? Admirable?</p> <p>6. The Worldview / Culture Ascertain: What is the worldview or the culture like in the book/movie? Discern: How is the worldview or culture portrayed? Gloomy, hopeless, violent, exotic, everyday? What's the value of life? Worth living?</p> <p>7. Moral Lessons Ascertain: What are the moral lessons of the piece? Discern: How do those lessons compare with typical moral or religious lessons?</p> <p>8. Authority Ascertain: Who or what are authorities? (adults, government, tradition, God, etc.) Discern: Are the authorities worth respect? Do they make good decisions? How do they compare with real-life authorities?</p>		

*Adapted from: Baehr, Ted. *The Media-Wise Family*. Colorado Springs: ChariotVictor/Cook, 1998 and Romanowski, William D. *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos/Baker, 2001.

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Resources

For more resources on the Harry Potter debate, see <<http://www.luc.edu/faculty/jmarsh8/harry.html>>.

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ALAN Announcements

A Change in Rates

Beginning with the new year, the ALAN Membership rates will increase slightly. Student memberships will be \$10, regular memberships will be \$20, and institutional memberships will be \$30. Those who join ALAN using the current membership form (see the back cover of this issue of *The ALAN Review*) can still take advantage of the former rates.

ALAN Speakers Bureau

In our continuing quest to serve schools, libraries, and other groups interested in young adult literature, ALAN is initiating a speakers bureau, which can be visited at the ALAN Web site, www.alan-ya.org. This speakers bureau will contain the names and contact information for speakers who are available for school, in-service, library, and other programs involving young adult literature.

If you are interested in including your name in the ALAN Speakers Bureau, please contact Bill Mollineaux, 2003 ALAN President, at Bnose3@aol.com for further information.

Congratulations to the Newly Elected ALAN Officers for 2003:

Michael Cart, President-Elect

These three will be joining the Board of Directors:

Carolyn Lott

Jean E. Brown

James Cook

New ALAN Review Co-Editors Have Been Selected!

From January 2003, please send your manuscripts to Dr. James Blasingame, Co-Editor, *The ALAN Review*, Department of English/English Education, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, P.O. Box 870302, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287-0302. Jim and Co-Editor Lori A. Goodson will be assuming responsibility for the journal editorship in the summer, 2003; they will share responsibility with current editor Sissi Carroll during a spring transition period.

Spiritual Quest in the Realm of Harry Potter

Gail Radley

First, the disclaimer: although I read voraciously as a child and write for children as an adult, I have never been particularly drawn to fantasy, to science fiction, fairy tales, or anything along those lines. I sampled the genres and have nothing against such alternate realities, but am simply drawn more toward what we call realistic fiction.

On the other hand, every work of fiction, whether fantastic or realistic, offers an alternate reality, a way of stepping into someone else's circumstances and psyche and shedding our own momentarily. That fact is intrinsic to why we read fiction—when we return to our own realities (providing the alternates had substance) we are changed, expanded by experiencing the feelings of another, and better-fitted to meet our own challenges.

That said, I want to look at the alternate and fantastic world of Harry Potter because it has so captured the imaginations of children and adults alike, garnering unprecedented weeks on the New York Times bestseller list. The *Journal of Marketing* reported that in 2002, the first four Potter books have sold some 70 million copies and been translated into 30 languages ("There's Something..." 126). Because it has been such a phenomenal success, it behooves us to consider the world and characters J.K. Rowling offers children.

Hers is a world that has attracted not just a little protest. Some conservative Christian groups balk at what they feel is the glorification of witchcraft and wizardry. Some went so far as to identify the lightning scar on Harry's forehead as either a swastika or "the mark of the beast" and his broomstick as a phallic symbol ("Some Church..." 1). Others worry about the violence and disturbing imagery in the stories. The Potter books have been challenged in schools and have been burned in at least one public rally ("Harry Potter might" ...2A).

But as more circumspect adults dig into the works, they are finding much of worth. The first volume, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, is a moral tale in which good (personified by witches and wizards) overcomes evil (also personified by witches and wizards). Thus, the parallelism demonstrates that this society is quite like our own in that it contains both negative and positive elements. The positive must struggle to prevail.

Joseph Campbell, in his work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, examines the mythological hero's journey and its attending archetypes. He points out that heroic myths deal with humanity's deepest issues, their plot lines representing psychological, rather than purely physical, triumphs, a hero

who dies to the material world and conquers death of one sort or another through rebirth (Campbell 16-7, 35). Hollywood story analyst Christopher Vogler extended Campbell's observations to modern films, demonstrating that these archetypes and plotlines continue to appear, from *American Graffiti* to *Wizard of Oz*. Their persistence testifies to their psychological and spiritual importance. Harry Potter exemplifies Campbell's hero archetype and, in *Sorcerer's Stone* at least, follows the typical hero's journey described by Campbell:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (30)

Along the way, Harry encounters many of the archetypes that Campbell and Vogler note are intrinsic to such a journey, among them the Herald, Mentor, Threshold Guardian, and Shapeshifter.

The first stage in the hero's journey is the "Call to Adventure." The opening of the story finds the hero placed in the Ordinary World—in the language of the Potter books, the Muggle world, the world of non-wizards. The kindly, fatherly wizard, Professor Dumbledore leaves orphaned Harry with Muggle relatives, the Dursleys, believing he will be cared for there until he comes of age. Harry's Ordinary World is set apart from what most readers will find familiar by the cruelty of

his caregivers, his aunt and uncle Dursley and his cousin. Unlike Harry, the aunt and uncle are aware of Harry's real identity as a wizard and are determined to drive any such tendencies from him, in the process, depriving him of every comfort and sign of affection. Just before Harry's eleventh birthday, Mr. Dursley observes a series of unusual events that signal Harry's approaching Call to Adventure: a cat reading a map, strangers in cloaks whispering about Harry, owls swooping about, shooting stars. Finally, Harry receives his first letter—and Dursley grabs it from him before Harry can read it. Letters continue to come—eventually by the dozens—no matter where Dursley hides Harry.

Finally, on Harry's eleventh birthday, Dursley hides his family in a tumbledown shack on a small rock island. A violent storm ensues, bringing with it Hagrid, in the archetypal role of Herald. The Herald, Campbell notes, summons the Hero toward the Special World where dangers as well as bounties await. "The herald or announcer of the adventure," Campbell tells us, "is often dark, loathly, or ter-

While such a shifting, unreliable physical world seems fantastic, it is not hard to find parallels with the psychological realms we inhabit; how much more true this is for children for whom the world is mysterious, new, and filled with incomprehensible rules and ways of handling different personalities.

rifying, judged evil by the world" (53). Hagrid fits the bill well:

A giant of a man was standing in the doorway. His face was almost completely hidden by the long, shaggy mane of hair and a wild tangled beard, but you could make out his eyes, glinting like black beetles under all the hair. (Rowling 46)

But just as highly spiritual people are not *of* the material world, Harry is not *of* the world—he is not a Muggle, and Hagrid does not stand in the way of Harry's claiming his destiny, and so Harry readily sees the man as the gentle giant he truly is. Hagrid reveals to Harry his true identity as a wizard and delivers Harry's letter of acceptance to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry (51). The Call to Adventure has been sounded.

A Hero needn't readily accept or believe the call, and while Harry is properly intrigued, he greets the news that he is a wizard with an exclamation of disbelief (51). But his disbelief is momentary, and, considering the Dursleys' cruelty, he is quite ready to leave the Ordinary World behind in favor of the intriguing world of witches and wizards. Hagrid goes on to tell Harry his true story—that his wizard parents were killed by the evil wizard Voldemort, who also attempted to kill Harry as a baby—that, in addition, Harry somehow had seemed to have caused Voldemort to disappear. Among the wizards, young Harry is already a well-known hero. Harry's flickerings of memory support Hagrid's version of events, proving this Herald trustworthy.

In informing Harry about himself, Hagrid is also acting as Harry's first Mentor. A failed wizard himself with only a small store of magic at his disposal, Hagrid overrules Dursley's objections and prepares Harry for entry into the Special World. Such preparation, Campbell points out, involves giving the hero "amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass" (69). For Harry, these are the first tools necessary to his new world—his list of school supplies, among them course books, robe, wand, and owl.

Such items cannot be gotten anywhere in the Ordinary World:

"Can we buy all this in London?" Harry wondered aloud.

"If yeh know where to go," said Hagrid. (Rowling 67)

Hagrid, of course, knows where to go—through the Leaky Cauldron, a "tiny, grubby-looking pub" that none of the Muggles seem to see, into the courtyard and, with three taps of Hagrid's pink umbrella, right into Diagon Alley, the marketplace of wizards. While shopping, Harry meets two of his future opponents, Malfoy and turbaned, stuttering Professor Quirrell; they might be seen as Threshold Guardians, beings who attempt to prevent the hero's entry into the Special World. But Harry does not perceive them as obstacles; for readers, they simply foreshadow trouble. Thus, with Hagrid's knowledge and reassuring guidance, Harry has crossed the First Threshold into the Special World, a "zone" Campbell explains, "of magnified power" (77).

Harry makes a number of Threshold crossings in *Sorcerer's Stone*. Diagon Alley is a simple appetite-whetter and another opportunity for Harry to doubt himself, to possibly refuse the call.

"Everyone thinks I'm special," [Harry] said at last. "...but I don't know anything about magic at all."

"Don't worry, Harry. You'll learn fast enough," [Mentor Hagrid reassures him.] (86).

But Harry shows no hesitation about crossing the next Threshold—catching the train at Platform nine and three-quar-

ters. There, the Threshold Guardian he must overcome is the difficulty of finding an apparently non-existent platform to board his train to Hogwarts. He is assisted by a temporary Mentor—a wizard mother seeing her children off to school. "All you have to do is walk straight at the barrier between platforms nine and ten," she tells Harry (93).

Vogler notes that at the Threshold, the Hero "must be able to take a leap of faith into the unknown or else the adventure will never really begin" (152). He goes on the state that "Heroes don't always land gently. They may crash into the other world, literally or figuratively" (153). The wizard mum, seeing Harry's confusion, advises, "Don't stop and don't be scared or you'll crash into it; that's very important. Best do it at a bit of a run if you're nervous" (Rowling 93). Thus, Harry takes a leap of faith, landing himself right in front of the Hogwarts Express. This train ride with his new classmates marks Harry's passage into the Special World.

Campbell refers to the next stage as entering the "Belly of the Whale" (90); the Hero seems to have died to one world and to be reborn an innocent in the next. One of the first faces Harry sees when the train comes to a stop is his Mentor, Hagrid, there to guide the "first years" to the school. The students walk a "steep, narrow path" through what seems to be a thick forest, catching a glimpse of a magnificent castle just as they board their boats (111). Harry is moving into the "dream landscape of continuously fluid, ambiguous forms," that Campbell describes (97). Rowling writes

Harry had never imagined such a strange and splendid place. It was lit by thousands of candles that were floating in midair...dotted here and there among the students, the ghosts shone misty silver. (116)

Later, when Harry makes his way through the castle, he discovers that

[t]here were a hundred and forty-two staircases at Hogwarts: wide, sweeping ones; narrow, rickety ones; some that led somewhere different on a Friday; some with a vanishing step half-way up that you had to remember to jump. Then there were doors that wouldn't open unless you asked politely, or tickled them in exactly the right place, and doors that weren't really doors at all, but solid walls just pretending. It was also very hard to remember where anything was, because it all seemed to move around a lot. The people in the portraits kept going to visit each other... (131-2)

While such a shifting, unreliable physical world seems fantastic, it is not hard to find parallels with the psychological realms we inhabit; how much more true this is for children for whom the world is mysterious, new, and filled with incomprehensible rules and ways of handling different personalities.

The Belly of the Whale is a place where the hero "must survive a succession of trials" (Campbell 97). Harry's first Hogwarts test is an initiation rite intended to reveal Harry's primary characteristics and place him with others of his ilk. Each student takes a turn wearing the "Sorting Hat" to determine to which of Hogwarts' four houses he or she will be assigned. Harry is assigned to "Gryffindor where dwell the brave at heart" and whose "daring, nerve, and chivalry/Set Gryffindors apart" (Rowling 118). Rowling gives a clear indication of the enemy status of Malfoy (the student Harry encountered in Diagon Alley and again on the train) when he is assigned to Slytherin, whose "cunning" residents "use any means to achieve their ends" (118).

Harry shows his chivalry—and his worthiness to walk the Hero's path—when he engages in a high-speed broomstick chase after Malfoy, trying to retrieve a friend's possession.

Both boys are breaking the rules; it is the day of their first flying lesson and their teacher has forbidden them to fly in her absence, so Harry risks expulsion to help his friend. But Harry's remarkable, natural broomstick skills identify him as a potential star player in the school sport, Quidditch, and punishment is quickly forgotten.

Harry is chosen to play the difficult position of "seeker." The seeker's job is to catch the Golden Snitch, a small, winged ball, thereby ending the game. A seeker is more likely than other players to be seriously injured. This critical and dangerous role certainly befits a hero. In Harry's first game, his house, Gryffindor, is pitted against the wily Slytherins. Gryffindor seems headed for victory until Harry's broomstick turns into a bucking bronco. It has been bewitched—apparently by Professor Snape, the Potions professor, who has made no secret of his dislike of Harry. One of Harry's classmates manages to break the spell and Harry wins the game to become a beloved school hero.

"The original departure into the land of trials," Campbell tells us, "represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination" (109). For Harry, the temptation might be to rest in the glory of this worldly (or "other-worldly"), victory. A second distraction from his quest come in the form of the Mirror of Erised (or Desire), a mirror that presents the viewer's greatest desire—in Harry's case, union with his parents. The benevolent, wise Professor Dumbledore cautions Harry away from this appealing entrapment. "[T]his mirror will give us neither knowledge or truth. Men have wasted away before it," Dumbledore tells Harry (Rowling 213). "It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live" (214).

True to the Hero that he is, Harry turns away from the dream-state offered by the mirror and prepares to, as Vogler terms it, "Approach the Inmost Cave" (167). Vogler goes on to explain,

Heroes, having made the adjustment to the Special World, now go on to seek its heart . . . the very center of the Hero's Journey. On the way, they may find another mysterious zone with its own Threshold Guardians. (167)

On a midnight excursion with two friends, Harry had discovered a fierce, three-headed dog guarding a trapdoor in an off-limits area of the castle. This monstrous Threshold Guardian is a clear reference to Cerberus, the three-headed dog of Greek mythology which blocks the path to the underworld. The "underworld" beneath the trapdoor is Harry's Inmost Cave. There, the friends realize, must be hid the Sorcerer's Stone, a substance that "will transform any metal into pure gold. It also produces the Elixir of Life, which will make the drinker immortal" (220)—wealth and immortality await in the underworld! Word comes to Harry that his archenemy Voldemort is still alive, though weakened, and Harry realizes that Voldemort is after the Stone. When his friends point out the danger of trying to thwart Voldemort, Harry sees the central issue: Voldemort's plan is to take over the world. Though it might mean his death, Harry is determined that he will never go over to the "Dark Side"—nor will he stand by and allow it to take over (270).

While Cerberus was tamed with a penny, Fluffy, the three-headed dog of Hogwarts is soothed by music. So flute-playing Harry and his allies slip past the Threshold Guardian. The underworld presents a series of high-stakes tests and trials: strangling vines; a violent, human chess game; puzzles to solve. Finally, Harry must literally walk through fire to face Professor Quirrell. Quirrell turns out to be the ultimate shapeshifter. It was Quirrell, not Snape, who had bewitched

Harry's broomstick in the Quidditch game. Further, Quirrell, it turns out, is literally two-faced, for on the back of his head, beneath his turban, he carries the nearly destroyed Voldemort: Quirrell has been trying to help Voldemort regain his strength. Now Harry must face his greatest fear, his Supreme Ordeal. Here, Campbell says, the hero must face the central question, "Can the ego put itself to death?" (109). Quirrell unwraps his turban and brings Harry face-to-face with the evil wizard who attempted to kill him and succeeded in killing his parents. Harry gains a clearer understanding of the nature of evil when Voldemort says, "I have form only when I can share another's body...but there have always been those willing to let me into their hearts and minds..." (293). Evil is a moral and spiritual choice, a willingness to allow oneself to be used, rather than a will to conquer self.

Harry is now in possession of the Sorcerer's Stone (his Reward), gained by looking into the Mirror of Desire, now housed in this underworld beneath the trapdoor. It is significant that while Harry's greatest desire earlier had been reunion with his parents, his ultimate desire now has become to benefit the world by keeping the Stone from Voldemort. When Harry refuses to hand it over, he finds himself in a fight with the two-faced man. Harry feels the fire in his scar again, but it subsides when Quirrell's own skin blisters at the touch of Harry's skin. Then, amid "Quirrell's terrible shrieks and Voldemort's yells of 'KILL HIM! KILL HIM!'" everything goes black for Harry (295).

Harry has engaged in the Supreme Ordeal, forgoing concerns for himself to align himself unwaveringly on the side of good. As Vogler states,

The Supreme Ordeal . . . signifies the death of the ego. The hero is now fully part of the cosmos, dead to the old, limited vision of things and reborn into a new consciousness . . . In some sense the hero has become a god with the divine ability to soar above the normal limits of death and see the broader view of the connectedness of all things. (199)

Now we learn whether or not Harry will "take The Road Back, returning to the starting point or continuing on the journey to a totally new locale or ultimate destination" (217). In *Sorcerer's Stone*, the decision point of The Road Back Phase occurs with the Resurrection phase, the main purpose of which "is to give an outward sign that the hero has really changed" (241).

After his ultimate struggle with death, Harry awakens in the Hogwarts hospital wing. This brief recovery phase places Harry "quarantined safely away" from others, as Vogler points out is typical of this stage (228). "One function of Resurrection," Vogler explains, "is to cleanse heroes of the smell of death, yet help them retain the lessons of the ordeal" (228). The first face Harry sees is "the smiling face of Albus Dumbledore" (Rowling 295). Harry shows that he has truly changed (placed his own interests after the well-being of others) by showing alarm that Quirrell/Voldemort possesses the Stone. Dumbledore assures Harry that this did not happen, that Dumbledore had arrived in time to rescue Harry (though he points out that Harry "was doing very well"[296]) on his own and that the Stone will be destroyed. Dumbledore also explains that while Voldemort lost that battle, he is not destroyed forever. "He is still out there somewhere, perhaps looking for another body to share," Dumbledore tells him. "[N]ot being truly alive, he cannot be killed." Harry "has delayed his return to power" and, if others take up the battle, he may be delayed forever (298). Thus, we see that Harry, too, may be called upon to battle evil again. Dumbledore's explanations of events help Harry—and readers—to clarify

and solidify what they have learned through the Ordeal.

Self-realization is another frequent hero's reward. Dumbledore explains to Harry that when his mother died protecting him from Voldemort, her love left an indelible mark on her son that neither a world full of Dursleys nor of evil wizards could erase. Love protects—conquers all; for this reason, Quirrell and Voldemort were literally unable to touch Harry (299). Love is the ultimate amulet of protection.

To cast the story for a moment in Christian terms, Dumbledore might be seen as the Divine Father of the universe. He looks to Harry's well-being, even as he sends the beloved boy into the world. Dumbledore is also the only one Voldemort truly fears, who has powers equal to Voldemort, though Dumbledore refrains from exercising all of them (11). Voldemort is the personification of evil, the devil, while Harry plays the role of the savior who is returned to his Divine Father when his work is done. It is a pattern that has been repeated in religious histories and mythological heroes' journeys throughout time.

A return to the Ordinary World is also a part of the Hero's Journey, and it involves bringing something of value back to that world, a boon to be shared. The delaying of Voldemort's evil designs and the understanding of the need for a continual struggle against evil are the Ultimate Boons of Harry's Ordeal. When the school term ends, Harry boards the train to a London full of Muggles. But he returns with knowledge of his true worth and with the realization that he has, for a time, benefited all by staving off evil. In a promise of justice that every tormented child will appreciate, Harry notes that some of his new magical abilities will allow him to "have a lot of fun with" his bullying cousin (Rowling 309). Harry is, as Campbell phrases it, the "Master of the Two Worlds" (229).

Almost thirty years after Campbell's study was published in 1949, child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim presented his book, *The Uses of Enchantment: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. Bettelheim's work came in response to concerns in the '60s and '70s that fairy tales (which need not involve fairies) presented violence and other negative imagery damaging to young readers and listeners. (This is not unlike the criticism Harry receives, although religiously-motivated concerns seem to predominate.) Many parents either steered their children away from such reading material or presented sanitized, Disney makeovers. Bettelheim points out that

... a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable, is an intrinsic part of human existence—but that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious.

Modern stories written for young children mainly avoid these existential problems . . . The child needs to be given suggestions in symbolic form about how he may deal with these issues and grow safely into maturity. (8)

Both myths and fairy tales have their roots in the lore and religious traditions of more basic times in humanity's development. The Harry Potter stories, by contrast, are neither myth nor fairy tale, but modern tales recently conceived of by Scottish writer J.K. Rowling. Fairy tales and myth are usually short while the Potter stories are famed for their length (the last volume being 734 pages). Fairy tales generally have simply-drawn characters and plots, while characterization and plot in Potter is more complex. But Harry, like the heroes of myth and fairy tale, faces no shortage of evil.

Bettelheim points out that the power of the fairy tale to

teach is most of all in the child's identification with the hero, rather than the defeat of the villains (9). Harry is a particularly appealing character to children. Good-hearted but not perfect, picked upon, an average student with childlike concerns and ordinary looks, Harry stands as a sort of Everyboy. He is, proclaims one reviewer, "the epitome of the downtrodden orphan who conquers all adversity" ("Sheer..." 2).

Of course, ordinary children do not have the powers of wizards to assist them, any more than they encounter fairy godmothers, magic amulets, or wish-granting genies. How, then, can such stories assist children in navigating a world fraught with real danger and difficulty? Bettelheim explains,

The unrealistic nature of these tales...is an important device, because it makes obvious the fairy tale's concern is not useful information about the external world, but the inner processes taking place in an individual. (25)

Though the Potter stories present a fantastic world, children nonetheless gain from them psychological and spiritual understandings that will serve them better than amulet or genie.

Like Bettelheim, Campbell laments the loss of such guidance:

...the psychological dangers through which earlier generations were guided by the symbols and spiritual exercises of their mythological and religious inheritance, we...must face alone, or, at best, with only tentative, impromptu, and not often very effective guidance. This is our problem as modern, "enlightened" individuals, for whom all gods and devils have been rationalized out of existence. (104)

Apparently, though, children have been quicker than many adults to recognize what speaks to their inner needs, for *Harry Potter* seems to be a new story that, in calling on the imperishable hero's journey, offers much of substance to nourish a child's soul.

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Robin Hood Comes of Age

Rebecca Barnhouse

The Robin Hood story has long been a most pliable frame. From its roots in the medieval ballad to its present incarnations as coming-of-age narrative, it has taken a multitude of forms when it has been presented to young readers: adventure-romance, political manifesto, psychological drama, fantasy story. In doing so, it sometimes challenges received notions of children's and young adult literature. While some Robin Hood books are clearly intended for young readers, others blur the boundaries, sometimes in ways we can applaud, since they help break down artificial boundaries dividing fiction for children from that for adults. A look at the legend's long history helps us understand why the story lends itself to such a wide variety of retellings.

The Legend in English Literature

As R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor have detailed in their study of the legend, Robin Hood has a long history in English literature. Beginning as medieval ballads, Robin Hood stories have also appeared in plays, chronicles, poems, operas, songs, and novels by writers as prolific as Anonymous, and as illustrious as Ben Jonson, John Keats, and Thomas Love Peacock. The tales were known long before the extant ballad versions began to be copied or printed in the mid-fifteenth century. Interestingly, the first two references to them in English literature are negative: in William Langland's poem *Piers Plowman*, composed around 1375, the character Sloth, who doesn't remember his Paternoster very well, knows the "rymes of Robyn hood" (*Piers Plowman* B.5.402). And *Dives and Pauper*, a homily written about 1405, admonishes those who would rather hear a song of Robin Hood than mass or matins (Dobson and Taylor 1). Who were these people shirking church services to listen to outlaw tales? According to historian Barbara Hanawalt, "It is safe to assume that the ballads were recited frequently in villages, towns, and castles of late medieval England," and they were enjoyed across the social spectrum by nobility, gentry, and villagers alike (154).

The medieval ballads contain many of the elements familiar to modern audiences: Robin is an outlawed archer who lives in the forest with his companions Little John, Will Scarlett (or Scathelock), and Much the Miller's son. Maid Marian and Friar Tuck are late arrivals, not joining the band until the sixteenth century. What is most surprising about the medieval ballads is the portrayal of Robin Hood himself: he is no socially conscious outlaw who steals from the rich to give to the poor. Only twice is the medieval Robin shown helping people, and town dwellers fear him. Hanawalt reminds us that "Medieval people did not have a romantic expectation about

the liberality of bandits," (167) and this is reflected in Little John and Much the Miller's rescue of Robin in one ballad. Not only do they kill servants during the rescue, they also "beheaded a monk and killed a little page accompanying him for fear the child would tell who murdered his master" (165). In another ballad, Robin himself slays fifteen foresters and countless villagers. A long way from the ballads are the romantic views of Robin Hood in 19th and 20th century literature. As Stephen Morillo says, "It is doubtful whether the original outlaw would recognize his socially progressive descendant" (571).

While some Robin Hood books are clearly intended for young readers, others blur the boundaries, sometimes in ways we can applaud, since they help break down artificial boundaries dividing fiction for children from that for adults.

By the sixteenth century, however, Robin has begun to look more familiar to us. John Major's 1521 *History of Great Britain*, a Latin chronicle, reports that Robin Hood would not "spoil the poor, but rather enriched them from the plunder taken from abbots. The robberies of this man I condemn," says Major, "but of all robbers he was the most human and chief" (qtd. in Dobson and Taylor 5). But

not until the publication of *Ivanhoe* in 1819 does Robin Hood become a defender of Saxons against cruel, usurping Normans. Throughout a long history, the legend has gradually gained the characters and characteristics that modern readers (and filmgoers) associate with him, a palette ready for modern writers to choose their colors from.

Early Children's Versions of Robin Hood

We can assume that the audience for the medieval ballads—the nobility, gentry and villagers—included both children and adults, so in one sense, Robin Hood has always belonged to the young. (In fact Bennet Brockman has argued that children's literature got a bad reputation with academics because of its association with medieval romances, including Robin Hood stories.) Versions of the Robin Hood ballads produced specifically for children appear in the early 1800's, and in 1840 children's novels about the outlaw are first published in England: Joseph Cundall's *Robin Hood and his Merry Foresters* and Pierce Egan's *Robin Hood and Little John*, on which Alexander Dumas based his novels *Le Prince des Voleurs* and *Robin Hood Le Proscrit* (Dobson and Taylor 59-60; 317).

Then, in 1883, Scribner's published Howard Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood of Great Renown in Nottinghamshire*. For many twentieth-century writers of Robin Hood novels, it has been a source and inspiration. Especially for Americans, it has arguably been the most influential version of the legend (with the more recent exception of film versions), and it remains in print today. Basing his tales and

illustrations on the ballads as they were collected by Joseph Ritson, Pyle wrote a collection of adventure stories connected by characters, and only loosely by a central narrative. As Lucien Agosta has shown, Pyle shapes the ballad material into his own narrative, providing "causal connections and character motivations," and downplaying the sometimes considerable violence found in the ballads (28).

Pyle sets his stories in "the land of Fancy," a "No-man's-land," as he calls it in his Preface (viii). Although historical figures like Queen Eleanor and King Henry II appear in his pages, Pyle in no way tries to recreate medieval England. In Robin's world, each of his merry men is promised three suits of Lincoln green each year, along with a salary, venison, "sweet oaten cakes, and curds and honey" (22). There is no suggestion of where the green suits are manufactured, and the same holds true for the varieties of costume Robin and his men use when they play tricks on the Sheriff of Nottingham and other not-so-worthies—they seem to grow on convenient trees in the greenwood. Like the ballads, most of the stories are set in spring or summer. Although winter does come to Pyle's Sherwood, it's a comfortable kind of winter spent around a roaring fire at the Blue Boar Inn, and no one ever suffers from the cold.

Robin is a young man, eighteen when he first flees to the forest, having killed a king's forester in self-defense. A band of oppressed men gathers around him during the next year. No children or women mar the easy camaraderie of the band, although Robin has loved Maid Marian since we first met him, Alan-a-Dale marries his fair Ellen, and Little John admires various village maidens.

Dobson and Taylor congratulate the "historians and literary critics [who] . . . rescue[d] the greenwood hero from the unreliable clutches of the local enthusiast, the film scriptwriter, and the author of children's stories" (ix). Try as they might, however, neither the historians nor the literary critics have been able to keep Robin Hood safe from "the author of children's stories," often to our considerable advantage. After Pyle, Robin Hood books for young readers proliferated, and even Enid Blyton and Antonia Frasier contributed retellings of the stories. E. C. Vivian's 1927 version was still in print in 1965, while Roger Lancelyn Green's 1956 *The Adventures of Robin Hood* has been even more durable. It has been reprinted thirty four times (Kevin Carpenter 226) and remains in print today. Green returned to the ballads in his careful reworking of the tales, and he includes epigrammatic quotations from them at the beginnings of stories. The ballads themselves, sans stories, were the focus of Anne Malcolmson's *The Song of Robin Hood*, which sets fifteen ballads to music. With Virginia Lee Burton's illustrations, it was a Caldecott Honor Book in 1948. In his *Robin Hood: The Many Faces of that Celebrated English Outlaw* Kevin Carpenter gives an annotated list—with fascinating illustrations—of English Robin Hood books for children from the 19th and 20th centuries (218-229).

The Robin Hood Novel for Young Readers

Bows Against the Barons

Retellings of the familiar elements of the story continue to be published year after year in both England and the U.S.

However, in the twentieth century, a new kind of book for young readers begins to appear: instead of telling the story of Robin Hood, these novels use the outlaw tale as a vehicle to tell another character's story. The first of these is Geoffrey Trease's 1934 *Bows Against the Barons*. Well-known as for its political leanings (Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard say that Trease's "Robin speaks like a member of the British Communist Party during the 1930s" [541]), *Bows* is a Robin Hood story with a child protagonist. Robin Hood novels themselves were hardly new: Thomas Love Peacock's *Maid Marian* had been published in 1822 and G.P.R. James' *Forest Days: A Romance of Old Times* appeared in 1843. But the story for young readers told from the point of view of a child? That had not been done before.

Borrowing the ready-made setting and familiar characters, but jettisoning the standard episodic structure of Robin Hood tales, Trease tells the story of the peasant boy Dickon, who, forced into the forest after shooting a deer, quickly finds himself a full participant in the outlaw band, valued for his skill with the bow and entrusted with weighty errands. In Dickon's eyes, the outlaw is hardly the laughing, jesting merry man found in Pyle's version. Instead, Robin Hood "was quite old. He did not look like the wonderful hero of whom the songs and stories told." But his "steel-blue eyes" and his "hands, friendly but strong," tell Dickon that "This was a man among men" (23). This Robin Hood is a real outlaw whose actions have consequences, not an imposter lounging lazily on the greensward and plucking venison, oat-cakes, and suits of Lincoln green off convenient trees. Instead of locating Sherwood in Pyle's "land of Fancy," Trease attempts to create a realistic setting. In the end, however, Trease's medieval England is "as unrealistic in its total negativity as the

We can assume that the audience for the medieval ballads—the nobility, gentry and villagers—included both children and adults, so in one sense, Robin Hood has always belonged to the young.

sentimental image he was hoping to destroy," as Suzanne Rahn has argued (27). Because Trease was so intent on writing political propaganda, his portrayal of the rich as bad, the poor as good, and the cry for a classless society ringing loudly through Sherwood and medieval Nottingham is as unhistorical as is Pyle's comfortable Sherwood.

In her study of real medieval outlaws, Barbara Hanawalt finds that not only did outlaws steal from the poor, but their social hierarchy reflected actual social class instead of being the classless society often portrayed in retellings such as Trease's (161, 164).

Yet what Trease created has become a genre unto itself: the Robin Hood novel with a young protagonist. Trease's novel and those that follow its format shed the episodic structure and the shifting focus, and employ instead a single protagonist whose point of view guides readers through the narrative. Unlike Pyle's version and its many followers, these novels conform to current notions of middle grade and young adult literature: they are coming-of-age stories in which protagonists overcome some difficulty or begin to understand their places in the world.

Robin's Country

Consider, for example, Monica Furlong's 1995 novel for younger readers, *Robin's Country*. Her protagonist has been (like a variety of characters in recent literature for young people) traumatized into muteness. Unable to remember who he is, and known only as Dummy, the boy escapes his evil

master, Farmer Jordan, by running to Sherwood Forest and to Robin Hood. Dummy quickly becomes the favorite of all the greenwood heroes, especially Robin, who is portrayed as kind and responsible, a "handsome" man with "the most brilliant blue eyes Dummy had ever seen" (24). Only Marian distrusts Dummy, fearing he is a spy. But after he becomes an excellent archer and saves Robin's life not once, but twice, Marian warms to him. Slowly, Dummy regains both his voice and his confidence, and finally, in a fairy-tale ending, even his identity when King Richard recognizes him as his long-lost godson. The tale is saccharine, but it accords more closely with the coming-of-age model so prevalent in today's novels for young readers than does Pyle's collection of stories where nobody ever grows up.

Girls in the Greenwood: *The Forestwife*, *Child of the May*, and *Rowan Hood*

Girls have also begun to grow up in the greenwood.

Female protagonists have appeared in three recent novels, and in each, the idea of the female as a nurturer and healer is set against male as fighter. Theresa Tomlinson's 1993 *The Forestwife* gives us a fifteen-year old female protagonist who, like so many girls in novels with romantic-medieval settings, is to be married off to an odious old man. Like Dummy, she escapes to the forest. However, Tomlinson's Sherwood is far more dangerous than either Pyle's or Furlong's, and her Robin is far less heroic. A brash, thoughtless young man called Robert, he has little understanding of the sufferings of the common folk and the hard work of women until Marian teaches him by example. The novel focuses on Marian's growth to adulthood and her reluctant acceptance of her fate: she is to be the new Forestwife, the healer who lives alone in the greenwood and tends to those who need bodily and spiritual renewal. As Marian comes of age, readers also witness Robert's maturation and his transformation into a hooded character dedicated to helping the poor who have fled to the woods to seek out the Forestwife. Far more like Furlong's book than Pyle's, Tomlinson's novel tells of a young person's struggles against an oppressive society and of her search for her own identity, a description that could be applied to many of the young adult novels published each year.

Tomlinson continues her story in her 1998 *Child of the May*, set fifteen years after *The Forestwife*. Here we see the coming-of-age of Magda, the teenaged daughter of Little John, who has been raised in the forest by Marian. She, too, fits the template of the young adult novel's protagonist; she longs for something different and rankles at her role as Marian's helper, but by novel's end she has matured enough to understand her place in the forest: she, too, is a healer who must sacrifice her own desires to the needs of the people who seek her aid. Along the way, however, Magda gets to have the adventures denied Marian, by chopping off her hair, dressing as a boy, and accompanying other outlaws on rescues and raids. Tomlinson's Robin Hood figure, Robert, has fully matured by this time. He has become almost legendary, and he still serves the troubled people who flock to Marian for help. Known as The Hooded One, Robert is the most wanted man "in the north" (16).

Although both Tomlinson's books and Furlong's strive for psychological realism, their presentation of the Middle Ages is as unrealistic as Pyle's and Trease's. Mary H. McNulty places them, along with Robin McKinley's *The Outlaws of Sherwood* amongst her "Adolescent Novels Set in the Middle Ages" (20). Although she briefly notes that *The Forestwife* is "not strictly historical fiction," she also tells readers that the novel takes place "in the last decade of the twelfth century" and that it "depicts the lifestyle and roles of nobility and peasants at the end of the 12th century" (23), thereby undermining her earlier statement. To my mind, however, Tomlinson's novels, like Furlong's, are more adventure-romance than historical fiction because they use settings with some medieval characteristics to evoke a romantic milieu in which someone like Robin Hood just might have shot his bow. Inconvenient facts about medieval life are erased or glossed over, just as winter is in Pyle's *Merry Adventures*.

The books are not *about* the Middle Ages, they are about characters from medieval legends. As Thomas J. Garbáty reminds us, the Robin Hood ballads borrowed from medieval romance, which frequently included fantasy elements such as stories of "outlaws, fairies, [and] revenants (the dead returning to life)" (98). Thus, it seems appropriate for a novelist retelling a Robin Hood tale to use a fantasy setting that draws on the Middle Ages rather than a strictly historical setting.

In *Rowan Hood: Outlaw Girl of Sherwood Forest* (2001), Nancy Springer does just that. Her fantasy adventure novel is about a thirteen-year-old girl whose mother was an "aelfin" healer, a woodwife. After her mother is murdered, Rowan cuts her hair, dresses as a boy, and seeks out her father, Robin Hood. When she finds him, however, she realizes she's uncomfortable in the rough, masculine band of outlaws. It takes the help of her mother's kin, the aelfe, who are spirits of the woods, for Rowan to understand her fear of her own identity: "I am afraid of being a woodwife like my mother," she admits (153). Like Tomlinson's Marian and Magda, Rowan comes of age when she accepts the healing, nurturing side of her that she has long denied and becomes a woodwife. And like Magda, she also gets to have boy's adventures, saving a princess who is escaping a forced marriage, and rescuing Robin Hood, as well. Springer's decision to include fantasy elements such as the aelfe allows her to alternate freely between medieval history and medieval legend, while in Tomlinson's books, the tension between the two can be uncomfortable: it's not historical fiction, but sometimes it's presented as if it were.

Springer's Robin Hood is a thoroughly romantic hero, an understanding friend and father who happens to be remarkably handsome—but in the spirit of contemporary heroes, vulnerable as well. Like most modern Robin Hoods, his eyes are blue and merry, and he carries himself proudly. "He was so handsome, manly, strong, brave . . . His smile was so droll and sweet," Rowan thinks about him (61). As part of her maturation, she must find a way to reveal her identity to him and to be his daughter without being part of his band. The answer to both comes when she first rescues and then heals him. At the same time, of course, she accepts her elvish powers and her role as healer.

In each of these books, the romance of forest life as Pyle

Girls have also begun to grow up in the greenwood. Female protagonists have appeared in three recent novels, and in each, the idea of the female as a nurturer and healer is set against male as fighter.

presented it is undercut by a feminine perspective. The female protagonists are just as brave (and often braver) than the male outlaws, but they are much faster to recognize and respond to suffering. In their eyes, forests are places of hardship where hunger is never far away, not sunny glades with venison picnics awaiting all comers. Springer and Tomlinson both paint the male outlaws as gangs of thoughtless roughhousers whose antics the women watch with wary eyes, anticipating the resulting bruises and broken limbs they, the healers, will have to mend. Nevertheless, Robin Hood himself is still heroic in each of these works (although he must mature into heroism in *The Forestwife*).

The feminine power of healing shared by Marian, Magda, and Rowan comes with a price. Each protagonist recognizes that the role of healer means a life outside of marriage. The novels imply that marriage—but not sex—diminishes the female healer's power. Although Marian's predecessor as Forestwife and Rowan's mother, the woodwife, lived lives of solitude, Marian, Magda after her, and Rowan all surround themselves with friends, and Marian takes Robin to her bed when he returns from long trips. Here and in the use of cross-dressing, the novels posit girls' lack of freedom: when they are disguised as boys, girls gain freedom, but when they accept their roles as healers, they are constricted in many ways.

These three novels, along with Furlong's, fit easily into recent ideas about fiction for young readers. In each, a motherless—and sometimes fatherless—child is alone in the world, facing danger, and searching for an identity. In each, the protagonist is confronted by both physical and psychological difficulties, passes some kind of test, and emerges having—sometimes reluctantly—accepted a particular role in the world. In each, a young person comes of age. Ironically, however, although death is present in each of these novels, only in Pyle's never-never land and in Trease's early novel, where we never see him as a youth, does Robin Hood himself die.

The Outlaws of Sherwood, In a Dark Wood, and Forbidden Forest

While Furlong, Tomlinson, and Springer use the Robin Hood milieu as the background for the story of a child character who doesn't appear in the traditional stories, Robin McKinley and Michael Cadnum choose characters from the ballads for their protagonists. Their novels call into question some conventions generally associated with young adult literature.

McKinley places Robin himself at the forefront of the *The Outlaws of Sherwood*. Writing about Robin Hood novels in general, Stephen Knight notes that Robin Hood "lacks the inner tension and the personal trajectory which the novel constructs as central" (172). McKinley gives Robin both inner tension and a personal trajectory: he is eighteen when he kills a man in self-defense. Howard Pyle's Robin Hood also flees to the forest after an accidental killing, but he suffers no angst, unlike McKinley's hero, who must come to terms with his action. Like a character in a Chris Crutcher sports novel, McKinley's Robin is supported by his close friends, and his girlfriend stands by him, too. These qualities seem to place *The Outlaws of Sherwood* squarely within the young adult genre and indeed, the novel was first published by children's book publisher Greenwillow at a time when McKinley was already known for her award-winning books for young readers. The subject matter, too, seems appropriate for young readers, even if her characters and story are equally, or perhaps

more attractive to adults. The subsequent publication of the paperback edition as an Ace fantasy title for adults (although McKinley keeps fantastic elements out of her Sherwood) and the shelving of the title in the science fiction/fantasy sections of bookstores demonstrates this dual audience.

Whereas McKinley's novel enjoys a wide readership because of its marketing, Michael Cadnum's Robin Hood books are marketed strictly for a young adult audience. Although he has also written for adults, Cadnum, like McKinley, is well-known for his prize-winning books for teenagers, and therefore, his recent novels have been packaged for teens, whether or not they would appeal to adults. Further, the traditional association of Robin Hood stories with children makes his books seem appropriate for young readers.

However, Cadnum's first Robin Hood novel, *In a Dark Wood*, features adult characters. In a turn on traditional expectations, Cadnum makes the Sheriff of Nottingham his protagonist. The sheriff is a solitary, introspective adult when we meet him, and he suffers few of the traditional woes that afflict teens in modern young adult novels. No adolescent angst plagues him; his inner turmoil looks more like a midlife crisis. And Robin Hood himself is a forest philosopher in Cadnum's version, a clever man who enjoys pondering a story's meaning. Cadnum's spare, allusive style also seems aimed at an adult audience; it shares more characteristics with Barry Unsworth's *Morality Play* than it does with the style of many of today's young adult novels. It's a shame that because of its marketing, Cadnum's novel will not be widely read by adults. Yet, at the same time, the presence of the novel in the young adult section of libraries and bookstores helps to broaden conceptions of what young adult novels can be, perhaps breaking down some of the confining formulas that have recently held sway in children's book publishing that insist that young adult novels must be about teenagers who have problems with which readers can easily identify.

In *Forbidden Forest: The Story of Little John and Robin Hood*, Cadnum returns to a more traditional young adult format. Despite the book's title, Robin Hood remains a secondary character. The focus on Little John has a familiar trajectory: like Robin in McKinley's novel, Little John is eighteen when he flees to the forest after accidentally killing a man. The second protagonist, Margaret, a sixteen-year-old merchant's daughter, also escapes to the forest when she is accused of murder. The book is part adventure story, part romance. Sherwood is almost as comfortable a shelter as Howard Pyle made it, not a harsh landscape where people struggle to survive. Little John and Margaret are drawn to each other despite the chasm between their social classes—he is a tanner's son of no means at all while she is accustomed to life with servants and social amenities.

What makes *Forbidden Forest* a young adult novel, besides the characters' ages, is their coming of age. John is an orphan who must decide who to trust and how to live in this world; he rejects a cruel outlaw leader before joining the benevolent, fun-loving Robin Hood, whose philosophical bent isn't as apparent as it was in *In a Dark Wood*. Margaret, who is motherless but protected by a loyal servant, faces marriage to a man she doesn't respect, but she plans to go through with the wedding in order to save her beloved father from financial ruin. Like so many young adult protagonists, both Margaret and John struggle against the confines of an oppressive society, maturing as they make difficult decisions. In the end, however, they seem to sacrifice little to achieve freedom; were this a realistic historical novel, the life of hard-

ship they choose would be far more apparent.

Robin Hood and Young Readers

In some ways, the presence of all these books, from Trease's to Springer's to McKinley's to Cadnum's, side-by-side in the children's and young adult shelves of libraries causes us to question definitions of literature for young people. Are young readers more likely to be drawn to books with characters their age? Does the presence of a single protagonist allow these readers a stronger sense of identification? Or does this focus on the viewpoint of a single child character, so prevalent in recent fiction, rob readers of some of the richness and complexity that a novel with a more expanded viewpoint could offer them? One wonders whether Pyle's version, with its complicated language, third-person omniscient viewpoint, and adult characters, would be published for children were the manuscript submitted for consideration today.

Just why is Robin Hood considered children's literature? Bennett Brockman has shown how, by their association with medieval romance, Robin Hood ballads became the property of servants, children, and old women. Dobson and Taylor have said that the Robin Hood story, the one with adult characters, appeals to children because of "the ability of children throughout the world to identify with the forest outlaw hero-figure" and because of the story's "loose and episodic structure, its lack of pronounced characterization, [and] the absence of any strong sexual connotations" (58). Few readers would consider a "lack of pronounced characterization" a mark of good children's literature. However, other writers have sidestepped the question of why the outlaw tales are appropriate for children by simply assuming that Robin Hood does belong to children. Taimi Ranta calls Pyle's version the "quintessential children's story" without ever really telling why it is so; she sees it as good storytelling "regardless of a reader's age" (213), yet her primary concern is with the book's didactic qualities and its efficacy in the classroom. Jill May laments the absence of girls in Pyle's version, but nevertheless recognizes the story as one written for children—because, after all, Pyle wrote and illustrated it with children in mind. She notes that there is no "fear of growing up and facing adult responsibility" in "Pyle's elusive romantic woods [that are] full of adventure" (200). But like connotations of the word *lusty*, a favorite of Pyle's, conceptions of children's literature have changed, and growing up and facing responsibility are now a distinct part of modern novels for young readers.

Reflecting the kinds of changes in fiction for children, Robin Hood books have moved from Pyle's episodic version featuring the adventures of many adult characters, to narratives focused on the psychological development of a young protagonist. Although episodic versions continue to be published, they share shelf-space with quasi-historical coming-of-age novels often featuring female characters. The legend lends itself to so many genres that it moves back and forth easily among them, allowing writers to add political, feminist, psychological, fantastic, or other elements. For over six hundred years the legend has captivated both adults and children, and its allure has not dimmed in the 21st century.

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Consider the Source: Feminism and Point of View in Karen Hesse's *Stowaway* and *Witness*

Wendy J. Glenn

The source through which we receive information can influence significantly the message ultimately acquired. In a trial setting, for example, attorneys for the prosecution and defense tweak details surrounding an event to shape jury members' perceptions of truth. The same holds true in the world of fiction; the teller shapes the tale. In several of her novels for young adults, Karen Hesse, through the varied voices of her female characters, suggests a condemnation of patriarchal values. Maggie (*Wish on a Unicorn*), Rifka (*Letters from Rifka*), Nyle (*Phoenix Rising*), Hannah (*A Time of Angels*), Mila (*Music of Dolphins*), and Billie Jo (*Out of the Dust*) each struggle to survive in a male-dominated world; each character's account of life within patriarchy expresses contempt for a system that denies individual freedom and victimizes those who refuse to comply to established standards.

Although two of Hesse's newest titles, *Stowaway* (2000) and *Witness* (2001), continue to question patriarchy, they distinguish themselves from other works in her body of fiction in the use of a point of view other than that of the first-person, female protagonist. In *Stowaway*, our narrator is instead eleven-year-old Nicholas, who flees England by boarding a ship set to sail for the South Pacific. *Witness* takes its form from the *Spoon River Anthology* of Edgar Lee Masters; eleven characters of varying ages and genders share their version of events in poetic form. In her decision to stray from her typical pattern, Hesse continues to explore gender issues but provides a look at patriarchal culture from within, in one case, and from multiple points of view in the other, ultimately strengthening the feminist pulse that beats within her earlier works.

Stowaway

Through the Eyes of a Boy

In *Stowaway*, we learn about the world as experienced and recorded by young Nicholas in the journal he maintains during the voyage. This world is a man's world, one in which women play a negligible role. Nick's mother has died, and

his sisters, who remain nameless, are mentioned only once. We see only passing glimpses of the wives, mothers, and daughters of the natives that the crew encounters during the course of the voyage. Men rule both on land and at sea. Especially noteworthy are Nick's observations of men who hold positions of power, both on the homeland from which he fled and on the deck of the ship he hopes will carry him to safety. That which Nick chooses to reveal tells us something about his perceptions of these leaders, in particular, and patriarchy, in general.

Hesse's decision to select these details simply reinforces her positive portrayal of the atypical male and further challenges an Imperialist patriarchy under which explorers dominated and destroyed native cultures.

The Abusers

Nick has fled his English soil as a result of the abuse he suffers at the hands of the men in his life. His mother has died, and he thus is raised by his father, a scholar who wants Nick to "overcome his soft-heartedness" and become a man (22). Because Nick is not interested in learning his Latin and becoming a scholar like his brothers, he is "a disappointment" to his father (3). One Christmas, Nick desires to leave his boarding school and spend the holiday in the comfort of his family. He runs away, and, after arriving home "tired, hungry, cold," his father says nothing, "not a single word," places him in his carriage, and drives him back to school (44-45). The father lacks compassion, embodying instead an emphasis on stoicism and "indifference," traits exemplified by the stereotypical male within the patriarchy (68). Nick's teacher, Reverend Smythe, is another powerful man; he takes "pleasure in beating others" (13). Realizing the punishment he might face should he beat one of his students, he instead, as patriarch and leader of his family, "beat[s] his own children, staring at [his boarders] all the while," forcing them to witness his cruelty (13). When Nick's father returns him to school after his attempt to run away for the day, the Reverend strikes "his youngest daughter, Josephine, eight years old, [Nick's] age, with a particular ferocity" (45). Nick is the only witness to the event.

When Nick's father completely gives up on his son's potential to enter the realm of the intellectual, he apprentices him to the local butcher, telling the boy, "The Butcher'll make a man out of you" (22). Once the Butcher brings forth the

whip, forever scarring Nick's tender skin, Nick does not wait to learn what else the butcher might teach him. In his few years, Nick interacts with men whose power gives them the self-perceived right to abuse that power, to manipulate those beneath them in the patriarchal hierarchy.

The Distanced Intellectual

While aboard *Endeavor*, Nick encounters Mr. Banks, another man who wields power. A botanist and gentleman assigned to gathering and cataloging new plant and animal life discovered on the journey, Mr. Banks represents the culture of dominance in its civilized form. Mr. Banks is well-educated and has risen to the top of his field by virtue of his accumulated knowledge and subsequent expertise (5). He is used to getting his way and demonstrates little patience when the weather refuses to cooperate or the captain refuses to allow him and his fellow scientists and artists to go ashore. He is not cruel but shows the marked self-centeredness of a man in control. Although his "dark eyes are lit with an eager curiosity," he admires nature not for what it is but for what it can offer him as a man of science (5). When, for example, the ship comes upon a waterspout the "width of a tree trunk," Mr. Banks is unimpressed. Nick notes, "I suppose he could not shoot it, nor bag it, nor stick it in a glass bottle, and felt it not much to consider" (108). Nick, in contrast, views it as "a thing of wonder" (108). In another instance, Mr. Banks is asked to part with one of the dogs that has been traveling with him; the natives consider dog a delicacy. Mr. Banks parts readily with the beast, even though Nick claims it to have been loyal to and valued by the crew. He reveals, "Mr. Banks says nothing about Lord Grey's absence. Only a Gentleman could have given something so dear with such ease" (245). Mr. Banks is not unkind like the men Nick has known in his past, but he lacks the ability to empathize and consider the needs of those below him.

The Gentle Leader

Nick finds a model of masculinity that he can admire in the form of Captain Cook, a "clean-shaven man, strict and stern, with cold eyes," but "a good man" who repeatedly demonstrates his concern for others (2, 44). Although a respected leader among his men, Cook does not take advantage of his position of power. He, for example, "eats no more, no less, than any man on the ship" (222). In addition, he is "determined to keep his men healthy and well fed," even to the extent that he administers "twelve lashes a piece" for turning away one's portion of beef (13). Further, after the captain is insulted by the Portuguese sailors who control the port at Rio de Janeiro, he refuses to give in to his anger, realizing his men's lives depend upon the provisions that will be stocked on this stop (36). Finally, when the vast majority of his crew members die as a result of bad water collected at Batavia, the captain is obviously overcome with sadness and loss. Although he continues to perform his duties, "his heart seems broken" (259). Nick reveals, "He kept us safe and healthy for so long, and now he watches the men slipping away" (259).

In addition to caring for his men, Cook is respectful in his dealings with the natives; he teaches Nick the value inherent in every man. When landing on King George's Land, he cautions his men to respect the natives by taking "nothing from the island without making payment, not even wood"

and to behave as guests in the home of a foreigner (73). Before landing on Otaohiti, he requires the ship's surgeon to "check all the men for infectious disease" so they "might not bring European illness among the natives" (87). Finally, when King Raja of the West Indies excuses himself from a feast, thinking he is not invited due to his black skin, the captain "soon made it clear that he was welcome" (243).

Critic Elizabeth Bush claims this portrayal of Cook reflects Hesse's attempt to be politically correct; the description of his treatment of the natives is "inserted to soothe twenty-first century sensibilities rather than reflect contemporary mores" (65). However, while Hesse depended on historical documents in the creation of her text, she is creating fiction and is thus allowed to select details that best fit her perception of the character, even if an historically accurate portrayal does not result. Even contemporary men sometimes clash with "contemporary mores." Hesse's decision to select these details simply reinforces her positive portrayal of the atypical male and further challenges an Imperialist patriarchy under which explorers dominated and destroyed native cultures.

After observing Cook in the duration of the voyage, Nick deeply admires him. He writes, "Captain is a wondrous man, I think. I did not have a very high opinion of certain men when I came aboard. Captain has taught me that a man might be stern, even harsh, and still be fair" (222). He respects the captain for his compassion and convictions, seeing in his leader the kind of man he, himself, might become. As a male, Nick is granted access into the realm of social power; that he chooses to emulate a man who behaves outside the realm of stereotypical masculinity says much about the novel's representation of what a praiseworthy man should be.

Nicholas is both outsider and insider, providing a unique view of life within patriarchal culture. He is, at first, an outsider due to his age. He must learn the ways of men in order to be admitted into their ranks. Unlike the female protagonists we have seen in Hesse's fiction, Nick has the opportunity to enter the world of the insider by virtue of his gender. Indeed, over time and with hard work, he demonstrates his ability and dedication and is thus rewarded with approval on the part of his crewmates. More importantly, however, Nick chooses to forgo the invitation into the traditional patriarchal world; he knows that he is giving up power (a choice not granted to his female peers) but does so anyway. In novels told by a single, female protagonist, we witness the primary character passing judgment on a system in which she does not have and will never have significant power. As a male, Nick's rejection of patriarchal values is all the more telling of Hesse's stance.

Witness

Truth in Many Voices

Witness is composed of poems narrated by eleven characters who tell us the story through several first-person perspectives. In addition to conversations and sermons in which an audience is present, Hesse provides the unspoken thoughts of each character. We are offered a look into a hidden self that is often not revealed in the use of a single narrator. We have access to the inner reaches of the mind and thus know the thoughts and beliefs of each speaker without having to interpret them through the descriptions provided by a first-person narrator. Through "the kind of silence" she maintains, by

the manner in which she leaves her characters "to work out their own destinies or tell their own stories, the author can achieve effects which would be difficult or impossible" to achieve" if she allowed a spokesperson to "speak directly and authoritatively to us" (Booth, 273). Hesse's emphasis on the depiction of truth is evident when she writes that:

My gut knotted as I wrote from the point of view of characters whose lives were rooted in bigotry and intolerance. But there were also narrators who made my heart soar. Disabling my censor, allowing each character to speak his or her mind, I have, in *Witness*, attempted to piece together a mosaic of a community giving birth to its conscience.

("Statement accompanying Advance Reader Edition")

Although it is difficult to give voice to characters whose mouths shape words of prejudice and hatred, readers are able to witness characters in the vulnerable state of self-expression and thus make judgments on their own.

Every character in *Witness* faces the same experience, the arrival and increasing influence of the Ku Klux Klan, the embodiment of patriarchy at its worst. Its members are armed with cultural power and the belief that God has granted them the authority to exercise that power. The characters have choices to make in response to the Klan's attempts to strengthen its dominion, choices determined largely by how the characters perceive the Klan. Some see it as a vehicle for power, others as a source of misplaced masculinity, and still others as a dangerous deception.

The Power-Hungry

Three men fall prey to the Klan's rhetoric, believing involvement will help them to garner or maintain power. Reverend Johnny Reeves first embraces the Klan due to the attitude toward Blacks that its members share. He claims to be a man of the Lord but regularly denounces Blacks as henchmen of the devil. During one sermon, he damns a Black minister whose congregation consists of both blacks and whites, claiming, "it's a sorry state, neighbor, / it's a pitiful state of affairs when a colored preacher / can lure good white folk from their hearths" (14). In another, he argues that Harlem is "the den of the devil," the "center of sin"; he claims that "if we are patient, my good neighbor, / we can stay here at home, / we can take care of our problems at home / and down there in harlem, the / negro problem will / settle / itself" (16). When the Klan gains a hold in town, Reeves carries the message of its members to the pulpit, using his position as minister to spread the word, the word of men who follow a creed of hatred and destruction. He tells his flock how he and his fellow Klansmen took a pine, forty-feet in height, constructed a cross, wrapped it in kerosene-soaked burlap bags, and set it afire on the hill above town; the "flames leaping, / seeking heaven, / neighbor, the white / crucifix scoring / the night / blazed perfect. / perfect" (52). He is overwhelmed with pride when, due to his pontificating at the pulpit and involvement in Klan affairs, he is asked to lead the group in the morning prayers. He shares the event with those to whom he ministers, telling them, "the gathering prayed with me, / neighbor, in the summer morning / with the bees humming in the clover. / they prayed with me as I declared the klan a / movement of god" (70). As a member of the "ruling" body, this man has the power to manipulate the doctrine of the church to which he claims to belong.

Mr. Harvey Pettibone, a local shopkeeper, also falls prey to the Klan's ability to bestow power on its members. At first, he views his involvement with the Klan as a potential money-making endeavor. In trying to convince his wife that they should join, he tells her, "if we join the klan, / we can wipe out bronson's grocery by next year, vi. / all the klan members will shop here, / even if they live closer to bronson. / bronson's made his feelings against the klan clear. / if we join up with them, how long could bronson last six months, nine?" (29). Although he is unable to convince Vi to join, he becomes a member and relishes his newfound sense of power. When the Klan learns that a hotel is serving liquor to its patrons, members step in to see their kind of justice enacted. After the event, Vi asks Harvey, "so you go in, dressed in those ku klux nightclothes of yours and you / think / you'll save the world from the evils of drink / by raiding the place and smashing a few bottles." Harvey replies, "it felt so good breaking that glass, vi" (102). Once he becomes a member of the dominant group, Harvey allows his passion to overcome his principles; he is swept away.

Perelle Johnson, town constable, commits his crime not through his actions but through his lack of them, resulting from his fear that the Klan will strip him of his existing power. Johnson is intimidated by and fearful of the Klan and thus remains a bystander, guilty of refusing to act when he possesses knowledge of that which is occurring in his town. He first allows the Klan to rent the town hall for its meetings, even though he has some reservations (18). Later, when faced with the arrival of two hundred Blacks hired to work on the nearby dam, he is concerned only with himself and the fact that his "job sure doesn't pay / enough" (101). He is frustrated by his obligation to "protect them / from the ku klux" and exposes his own prejudice in his claim that he will have to also protect the Blacks "from themselves" (101). When the Klan situation in town becomes too severe for him to handle after the shooting of Ira Hirsh, an innocent Jewish man, he hesitates to contact authorities who possess greater resources. He claims, "I hate calling for help" (127). When the detective from Boston arrives, Johnson is not at all surprised how quickly he uncovers "all the dirty little / things" that have taken place, including "the letters sent to mr. hirsh / threatening to tar and feather him / if he didn't move out" (127). Johnson shirks his duty as a man of the law out of fear of retribution on the part of the Klan, as well as out of his own concern for his reputation. His pride causes innocents to suffer needlessly.

The Worthy Men

In stark contrast, two of Hesse's adult males question and even impugn the ideology of the Klan, recognizing that its members hide behind masks rather than face the world as individual men. Newspaper editor Reynard Alexander vows to remain impartial and neutral when dealing with the issue of the Klan (26). It does not take him long, however, to realize the truth about the Klan and begin writing articles that eventually result in threats against his life. He writes without fear, seeking to present only the truth as he sees it: "from state to state, / from town to town, / men join who can not be trusted. / unscrupulous men / who work in the dark / behind hoods and masks. / it takes but ten dollars. / and when that sort of scoundrel / starts hiding under hood and robes, / no good can come of it" (69). Despite the threat that he should be careful about what he says and prints or there may come a

day when he is unable to write or print again (108), Alexander continues to rail against the Klan (79, 103, 125, 137, 149). He refuses to cater to the demands of those seemingly in control, speaking his mind and undermining their power.

Dr. Flitt is progressive in his thinking and quick to defend those who are criticized by the Klan. While Reverend Reeves bemoans the changing role of women in his society, Dr. Flitt celebrates their newfound freedom. Reeves argues, "have you seen the way the girls dance? / sinful, neighbor, sinful. / these girls / doing the unspeakable gyrations of satan. / with each step they unravel the / moral fiber of our country" (21). The Doctor responds, "the flapper / is not the least bit alarming, / nor a sign of the declining social standard. / I doctor these women / and I have seen over the last years a transformation in them. / and what I see, / the opening of roses kept bud-tight so many years, / it warms this aging soul" (22).

The Wise Women

Although women are not granted the rights and privileges of full membership in the organization, they are given the opportunity to serve in a secondary role. If involved, their task is to attend to the domestic chores associated with helping the needy community members (at least those who are white and Protestant). The Klan espouses the idea that "the average woman / is happiest when she prepares food in her own kitchen / and sits down with her family to enjoy it. . . . / the average woman, / she loves her home and family first. / she might have got distracted / when she was earning wages / while her man fought in the great war. / but the trend is the other way now" (44).

The novel's women, however, see through this rhetoric and stand against the values of the Klan. Not a single female character in *Witness* chooses to associate with the Klan; each seems to discern and reject the deceptive tactics used by the group to recruit members. Ms. Sara Chickering, a local farmer, realizes the potential power of the Klan, claiming the "klan can seem mighty right-minded, with their talk of family virtue, / mighty decent, if you don't scratch the surface. / there's a kind of power they wield, / a deceptive authority" (59). Even after a threatening letter wrapped around a stone comes crashing through her window warning her to evict the Jewish man and his daughter who are living with her, she maintains her stance against the Klan. Ms. Iris Weaver, restaurant owner and rum runner, has chosen a non-conventional life that doesn't include marriage or family (19). The Klan disapproves of her way of life, but she perseveres, stating, "I was born protestant, / but i'd join the catholic church / before / i'd throw my lot in with the klan" (58). Mrs. Viola Pettibone, shopkeeper, ignores her husband's attempts to convince her to join the Klan. He promises her "parades," "picnics," and "speakers from all over" and assures her that "they take care of their women." In response, she "shakes her head slowly back and forth" and tells him outright that they should not join (25).

Those who refuse Klan membership and remain outside its realm of influence emerge from the events unscathed. Reynard Alexander, Dr. Flitt, and each of the females suffer out-

rage but, because they have not sacrificed their principles, feel no guilt. Those who sympathize with the Klan and enter its ranks, however, are destroyed. Reverend Reeves sleeps with a young girl (9) and ignores her resulting pregnancy; the child is found "stuffed in a shoebox, / wrapped in newspaper, / tied with a heavy cord, / and left behind a tree to die" (136). Once the Klan learns of Reeves' immoral behavior, his membership is revoked and the letters, "k.k.k.," are branded on his back. He attempts suicide by jumping off of the steel bridge that rests across the Connecticut River (140). The fitting irony is that he is condemned by the Klan, the very organization whose principles he advocates. He is a hypocrite whose very heroes become his persecutors. Even within the Klan, no one is safe. Harvey Pettibone also suffers as a result of his involvement with the Klan, both socially and emotionally. After participating in several Klan events, his reputation among the townspeople diminishes, and his wife is forced to try to "buy back [his] good name" (128). His conscience also begins to peck at him and he subsequently "cannot get in bed with viola," a woman who, unlike himself, has remained true to her values (120). Percelle Johnson loses all credibility as constable.

In *Witness*, the use of multiple perspectives of the same events allows each character to tell his or her version. In doing so, personal biases are revealed, and judgments about the nature of the character can be made. Without the author-imposed limit of a single nar-

rator, we know what each character is thinking. In Hesse's other novels wherein she gives voice to the primary female character, we hear the protagonist describe the actions and presumed thoughts of hurtful men, for example. To hear the words come from the men, themselves, is all the more disturbing.

Concluding Thoughts

In both *Stowaway* and *Witness*, Karen Hesse takes a risk in choosing to stray from her typical employment of the first-person female protagonist. The result, however, yields two works of fiction that allow Hesse's questioning of patriarchy to emerge not only unscathed but become unabashedly more convincing. In *Stowaway*, the eyes of young Nicholas show us the various men who inhabit his world. Hesse chooses a gentle leader, one who does not fit the mold of what a patriarchal male should be, to inspire the young boy. Although Nicholas, unlike his mother or sisters or female peers, is guaranteed a place within patriarchy, he opts for a gender identity beyond that which is expected of him. In *Witness*, we hear the voices of many characters, bigots and kind souls alike. Hesse chooses here to celebrate those whose voices ring with words of goodness and equality rather than those who spout the rhetoric of power or patriarchy. In the end, those who accept the dogma of the Klan are destroyed. Although Karen Hesse is the ultimate teller of her tales, her characters serve as her voicebox, conveying her views of the world through their words. In *Stowaway* and *Witness*, the voice of a boy and the voices of many unite to perpetuate Hesse's message of hope, that we may be free to be who we choose, regardless of whether we are born boys or girls.

Every character in Witness faces the same experience, the arrival and increasing influence of the Ku Klux Klan, the embodiment of patriarchy at its worst.

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Wendy Glenn worked with "amazing students" as a public junior high and high school teacher in Mesa, Arizona, before teaching future English teachers at Northern Arizona University. Currently she teaches at the Neag School of Education at the University of Connecticut. A passionate reader of young adult literature, she "believes in the power of words to change perspectives and, ultimately, lives".

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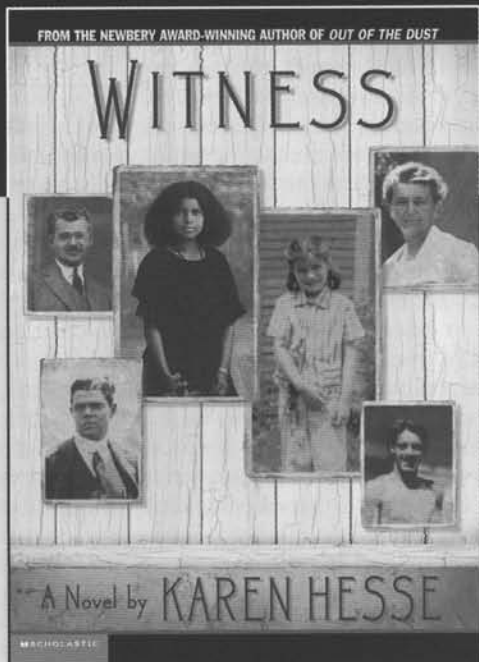
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Rat by Jan Cheripko
Boyd's Mill Press, 2002, 205 pp., \$15.95

Sexual Abuse/Basketball/Friendship
ISBN:1-9078-034-5

When he catches the popular basketball coach molesting a cheerleader, 15-year-old Jeremy, "Rat," testifies in court against him, angering the boys on the team. Since Jeremy is the team's manager, this is an extremely uncomfortable situation.

Along with trying to get into the team's good graces, Jeremy has to come to terms with the fact that he was born with a birth defect, a withered arm, which hinders his ability to play the sport he loves. At this point in his life, Jeremy is feeling very alone. With the help of the new coach and his wife, young Jeremy understands that he made the right decision in testifying. The question is whether the coach can get Jeremy's teammates to believe this also.

This well-crafted book is intriguing. The reader will be able to relate to Jeremy and feel eager to see what happens next—a definite page-turner. With its vocabulary and plot detail, it is probably best suited for kids in middle school, or the reluctant reader.

Jennifer York
Knoxville, TN

True Confessions, by Martha Brooks
Groundwood Books, 2003, 181 pp., \$16.00

Relationships/Teen Pregnancy
ISBN:0-374-37806-1

17-year old Noreen is driving around lost on a rainy night and ends up at a small town café. Her arrival stirs up the lives of the café owner and friends. The grandmother figure, Delores, learns from Noreen that she has run away from her boyfriend and family because she doesn't know how to handle life's unexpected turns. Noreen also tells Delores that she is pregnant, and has not told the baby's father.

Noreen is allowed to stay at the café, but seems to cause trouble, no matter what she does. Readers experience a fire, fights, and a café remodeling, not to mention the emotional conversations between Noreen and Wesley, her boyfriend.

This coming of age novel is realistic and easy to read. What will Noreen do about the baby? Will she tell Wesley that she is pregnant? What will the other characters decide about their own lives? This is a well-written novel for the more mature teen reader.

Jennifer York
Knoxville, TN

Dating Hamlet by Lisa Fiedler
Henry Holt and Company, 2002, 192 pp., \$16.95

Romance/Adventure
ISBN: 0-8050-7054-0

Lisa Fiedler writes Hamlet's story from Ophelia's point of view. His plan to feign madness and to avenge his father's murder includes Ophelia and her brother, Laertes. Ophelia and Hamlet are madly in love and effectively trick Claudius and Gertrude into believing that he is deranged.

The plot is serious, romantic, and intriguing. Most teenagers would enjoy reading this novel before analyzing Shakespeare's play. The author's writing style has the flavor of Elizabethan language, and Ophelia and Hamlet's character traits fit Shakespeare's portrayal. The ending is not tragic — Ophelia and Hamlet survive and leave; Fortinbras will rule at Elsinore.

Fiedler manages to include many plot details from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: the play within a play, Ophelia's drowning, the sword duel between Hamlet and Laertes, even the gravedigger. This novel is a strong bridge to the tragedy of *Hamlet*.

Sarah K. Herz
Westport, Connecticut

Young Adult Books In Review Recently Published Titles

Jeff Kaplan, Editor

3x5 inches to "Clip & File"

<p><i>Heir Apparent</i>, by Vivan Vande Velde Harcourt, 2002, 315 pp., \$17.00</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Fantasy ISBN 0-15-204560-0</p> <p>A plucky fourteen-year-old protagonist from sometime in the future, Giannine Bellisario, receives a birthday gift certificate from her absentee dad. Redeeming it at a local Rasmussen Gaming Center Virtual Reality Arcade, she enters a Total Immersion Game Room and elects to play a dangerous new virtual reality game: <i>Heir Apparent</i>.</p> <p>Suddenly, Giannine becomes Janine de St. Jehan, shepherder in a fantasyland version of Medieval England, and heir to deceased King Cynric. In this computer-generated reality, Janine must play to survive, a task complicated by morality protestors in the real world who create a glitch in Rasmussen's ability to return her. Thus, she must win the game by defeating dragons, completing a quest or two, answering riddles, subduing the villains—all the requisite cast members of a fantasy written with humor, realism, and historical accuracy.</p> <p>The only problem is that every time Giannine makes a mistake that kills her character, she must begin at the start of the game. As she plays, the activist group, People from the Society to Prevent Cruelty to Children, takes over the arcade and damages the equipment that controls <i>Heir Apparent</i>. Now in order to escape, Giannine must win the game or literally die.</p> <p><i>Heir Apparent</i> is a rollicking, suspenseful adventure with a female dragon slayer who can become king and just possibly save her own life.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Judith Hayn Wilmette, Illinois</p>	<p><i>Sonny's War</i> by Valerie Hobbs Female Coming of Age/Historical - Vietnam Frances Foster Books/Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2002, ISBN: 0-337371136-9 224 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Cory is fourteen years old and living in Ojala, California. It's a sleepy town where all there is to do is "cruise" Main Street, and watch her brother drag race. She is growing into young womanhood during the exciting, idealistic, confusing, tumultuous 60's. In one year her father dies, her brother is drafted and sent to Vietnam, her favorite history teacher (on whom she has a crush) is a conscientious objector, and she and her mother are forced to become independent.</p> <p>Valerie Hobbs eloquently depicts the turmoil and bittersweet humor of a young girl who deals simultaneously with loss, betrayal, and love within her own life and the lives of people she holds most dear. The story is gripping, memorable, and readable. It is historically accurate and significant.</p> <p>Set during the Vietnam Conflict, the reader "experiences" living the effects of the war on those persons left home.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Linda Broughton Mobile, Alabama</p>
<p><i>The Secrets of the Twisted Cross, Case No. 6, The Belltown Mystery Series</i> by T. M. Murphy J. N. Townsend Publishing, 2002, 164 pp, \$9.95</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Mystery/Holocaust ISBN: 1-880158-43-4</p> <p>When a series of anti-Semitic hate crimes plagues his Cape Cod town, 16-year-old sleuth Orville Jacques is hired by a rabbi to investigate the situation. Believing that the offenders are teenagers, the rabbi feels that Orville, being a high school student, is in the best position to discover the miscreants.</p> <p>Unfortunately for Orville, his attempt to infiltrate the hate group backfires, resulting in his being labeled prejudiced and shunned by his classmates. Furthermore, his life is endangered when he learns that these actions are not committed by mischievous teens, but by a sinister group of neo-Nazis. However, Orville's perseverance pays off as he helps bring to justice members of the local chapter of the Sons of Hitler, uncovers the identity of its evil leader, and solves a murder as well as a series of robberies.</p> <p>Middle school boys—especially reluctant readers—will enjoy this fast-paced, action-packed mystery filled with numerous twists, identify with Orville's romantic and peer problems, and discover a great deal about the Holocaust . . . without realizing it.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Bill Mollineaux Granby, CT</p>	<p><i>Water: Tales of Elemental Spirits</i> by Robin McKinley and Peter Dickinson G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2002, 266 pp., \$18.99</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Fantasy: Short Story ISBN: 0-399-23796-8</p> <p>Robin McKinley and Peter Dickinson weave fanciful tales in their short story anthology <i>Water: Tales of Elemental Spirits</i>. This is a collection of six enchanting tales – three by each author - linked by an aquatic theme.</p> <p>The stories are filled with Greek and Roman underworld myths, and possess a near reverent tone, as the opening story, "Mermaid Song" sets the tone between those who dwell land and those who dwell on sea – only the landsman who has listened to stories passed down through generations can accord the sea its proper respect. The authors alternate stories in the text, but each brings his and her own seamless quality to the telling. In Dickinson's stories, characters are easy for readers to relate to, as in "Mermaid Song." Dickinson also makes the sea monster, Kraken, a creature to be pitied. Similarly, McKinley's stories make the reader wish to be in them. Her "The Sea-King's Son" will undoubtedly become a new fairy tale.</p> <p>The writing duo have created a book that challenges ideas about other worlds as well as about our own world. The stories explore the spirits of water, and those who live with it. McKinley and Dickinson push the reader's imagination to its limits while delighting it as well.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">JoAnna M. Ball Lawrence, Kansas</p>

<p><i>The Boy Who Could Fly Without a Motor</i> by Theodore Taylor Harcourt Children's Books Division: 2002, 138 pp., \$15.00</p> <p>Nine-year-old Jon Jeffers lives nineteen miles off the coast of San Francisco with his mother, father, and dog, Smacks. Jon thinks he is the loneliest boy in the world, with nothing to do but watch the lighthouse beacon.</p> <p>The nation fears the coming war and President Franklin D. Roosevelt wants to know about every advancement that might help the fight. Jon would like to be involved in some of the adventures he can only imagine. He thinks to himself, "If only I could fly." Soon, Jon begins wishing so hard for his dreams to come true that he is visited by mysterious man who teaches him the secrets of levitation. Jon fails to keep his promise of secrecy, and soon things go awry.</p> <p>Taylor has given us a story of pure fantasy, set in a real time. The story reads almost like a parable and might be studied for its unique genre and deeper message more rather than content. The short text makes for a perfect read aloud, especially to younger children. Suggested target audience: Upper elementary to middle grades.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lu Ann Brobst Staheli Spanish Fork, Utah</p>	<p><i>The Secret Within</i>, by Theresa Martin Golding Boyd's Mills Press, 2002, 240 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Thirteen-year-old Carly Chambers keeps secrets. Her peers can't breach her armor of silence. No one in the resort community of Oceanside knows that her father causes the bruises she wears.</p> <p>And her parents have no idea that she sneaks out of her window each night to lead a second life on the balmy summer boardwalk. Carly also uncovers other people's secrets. Eddie the newsstand man has a son who doesn't know he exists. Aileen, the strange girl in the long flowing skirts, could really be a special friend. And, Nick, the popular athlete, honestly likes her.</p> <p>When a tall stranger follows her, and she discovers that the "candy" deliveries her father forces her to make aren't candy, and the house of cards crumbles.</p> <p>Carly finally musters enough strength to admit the truth, stand up to her father, and accept help from others. Recommended for ages 12 and up, <i>The Secret Within</i> sensitively depicts internal conflict that silences abuse victims, and shows readers the situation is escapable once the truth is revealed.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Michele Winship Columbus, Ohio</p>
<p><i>Kotuku</i>, by Deborah Savage Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002, 291 pp., \$16.00</p> <p><i>Kotuku</i> tells the compelling story of Charlotte Williamson (Wim) Thorpe's road to self-re-discovery while reconnecting with her family and reconciling the past. Savage writes a tightly connected story of loss, love, and longing. Wim's family relationship exhibits an honest approach to how adolescents and adults often mis-communicate with one another, causing tension and misunderstanding.</p> <p>A major twist in the story is the unexpected arrivals of an elderly relative and a stranger from New Zealand. These two opposites of past and future remind Wim that life is meant to be embraced and celebrated. The visitors help Wim let go of her hurt and anger to realize how important it is to accept her family, live her life, and learn to love again.</p> <p>As Savage brings together the pieces of Wim's family and friends, she weaves in an historical tale of New Zealand that lends an informative segment to the story.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Melinda Byrd Murphy Monroeville, Alabama</p>	<p><i>Once Upon a Marigold</i>, by Jean Ferris Harcourt, Inc. 2002, 266 pp., \$17.00</p> <p>This is a funny fairy tale about a little prince who runs away to the forest and finds a friendly troll to live with.</p> <p>Edric, the troll, really doesn't want to take the prince home with him, but is too kindhearted to leave him. Years pass and Prince Christian, who has forgotten about his royal lineage, falls in love with the princess who lives across the river. Through a series of misfortunes and adventures he wins the princess Marigold, and defeats the evil stepmother just as expected in fairy tales.</p> <p>The most non-traditional part of this story is Edric the Troll, who spices his speech with mangled proverbs as he advises his foster child/prince through his teenage growing pains. Young readers from middle to secondary levels will enjoy this tongue-in-cheek tale about a troll, a prince, and the search for eternal love.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Freya Zipperer Savannah, Georgia</p>

<p><i>Coraline</i>, by Neil Gaiman HarperCollinsPublishers, 2002, 176pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Adventure/Horror ISBN: 0-3809-7778-8</p> <p>Educators and parents: Here is a book you will actually want to read alongside your charge! Almost like a Buddhist sutra with its complex themes veiled by more simplistic ones, <i>Coraline</i> does not disappoint.</p> <p>If you are looking for a twist on an old standard—a black cat instead of a rabbit, a couple of washed-up actresses in place of Tweedledee and Tweedledum, and a parade of mice replacing a retinue of other worldly creatures—it is all in this phantasmagoric fantastical horror novel. <i>Coraline</i> is <i>Alice in Wonderland</i> set in the 21st Century.</p> <p>Themes in the book include the power of imagination, the relationship of parents to their children, and a child's emerging sense of self, and how this growing individuality leads to the development of courage and fortitude to face life's difficulties. Because of graphic depictions and startlingly vivid imagery, I would be likely to suggest a middle school and older readership.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Laura Bullock Petal, Mississippi</p>	<p><i>Thorn Ogres of Hagwood</i> by Robin Jarvis Harcourt, 2002, 244 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Fantasy/Animal/Shape-Shifting/Evil ISBN: 0-15-216752-8</p> <p>In this <i>Book One</i> of the <i>Hagwood Trilogy</i>, werlings, diminutive human-like creatures who can change shape and live in a forgotten forest, are drawn into a war with their evil neighbors, blood-thirsty thorn ogres led by the evil, (literally) heartless High Lady Rhiannon.</p> <p>Young Gamaliel Tumpin, insecure and unable to change into a mouse in his early days of werling school, finds that he is more courageous than he might have thought. In concert with his fellow students, and led by an older, talented student, Finnan Luffkin, Gamaliel meets danger he never imagined. Finnan has his own weakness, which complicates the plot and will ultimately give meaning to the trilogy.</p> <p>An assortment of odd and humorous characters quickens the pace of this plot-driven tale. Highly imaginative, ornately descriptive, and vividly gory, <i>Thorn Ogres</i> will appeal to lovers of fantasy, and the ending will make readers want to find the next volume.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Cyrene Wells Machias, Maine</p>
<p><i>Black-Eyed Susie</i>, by Susan Shaw Boyd's Mill Press, 2002, 167 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Mental Illness, Abuse ISBN: 1-56397-729-X</p> <p><i>Black-Eyed Susie</i> features a twelve-year old girl, Susie, who no longer eats, sleeps, or speaks. Her father is rarely home, and her mother insists that Susie is only "going through a stage."</p> <p>While visiting, Susie's Uncle Elliot realizes something is drastically wrong. He insists that she be taken for care. Susie is admitted to a mental hospital where she begins a long journey toward health. During her stay, Susie meets a therapist, Stella, and two other children—one who terrorizes her, and one who offers friendship while dealing with his own struggles.</p> <p>Author Susan Shaw, at most times, handles skillfully the topic of mental illness in adolescents. The book is written in a fashion that makes it understandable to young adolescents who may recognize themselves as Susie works her way out of her psychological prison. Susie moves to a new understanding of why she has been ill, and finally does make sense of her world with the book ending realistically. "They lived happily ever after" doesn't happen in this realistic story, but a feasible solution is found. This book is a good addition to any classroom library.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Connie Russell Chippewa Falls, WI</p>	<p><i>Flight to Freedom</i> by Ana Veciana-Suarez Orchard Books, 2002, 208 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Immigrant experience ISBN: 0-439-38199-1</p> <p>As one of the two novels in of the new First Person Fiction series by Scholastic, <i>Flight to Freedom</i> is a first person fictional account, written in the form of a diary, of Yara Garcia's immigration to Miami.</p> <p>The first quarter of the novel takes place in Cuba, as Yara and her family wait for the government to process their visas to the United States. In the meantime, Yara's Papi must work out in the fields, and she and her sister Ileana spend forty-five days laboring on a tobacco farm. Finally, they arrive in the U.S. only to face a new set of challenges. Yara has left her brother and other relatives behind, and she must contend with learning a new language, and a new way of life. Her Mami (mother) learns to drive and gets a job, while Papi (father) joins an anti-Castro group which hopes to end his rule, by force if necessary.</p> <p>Readers will relate to Yara's struggles with her parents as she tries to convince them to allow her to attend parties and travel with her friend, and as she keeps her sister's secrets.</p> <p>After the end of the diary entries, Veciana-Suarez recounts her own journey from Cuba to the United States, and how she gathered information for Yara's story. The First Person Fiction series resembles the <i>Dear America</i> series, and Scholastic has future accounts planned from Chinese Americans, Haitian Americans, and Puerto Rican Americans.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Jackie Bach Claremore, OK</p>

<p><i>Paint by Magic</i> by Kathryn Reiss Harcourt Inc, 271 pp, \$17.00</p> <p>Mystery/Time Travel ISBN: 0-15-216361-1</p> <p>When Connor's mother starts acting strangely, the whole family becomes alarmed. She throws out the TV's, computers and cell phones; she insists on firing the cook, gardener and babysitter; she becomes very possessive about an art book that had been sitting on the coffee table.</p> <p>She also begins to fall into frightening periods of paralysis that become harder and harder to break. Connor solves the mystery of his mother's new behavior, and learns to understand it when he is transported back in time to 1926.</p> <p>Kathryn Reiss uses wonderful descriptions of places and atmosphere to tell this story. Dialogue, people and places jump off the page. Furthermore, as Reiss moves her story back and forth from 2002 to 1926 to 1479, she never breaks her rhythm or intensity. Though the ending is not unexpected, the journey there is fraught with challenges and surprises. This book is an excellent choice for younger teenagers or those who want a fast, exciting plot.</p> <p>Audrey Berner Montreal, Quebec, Canada</p>	<p><i>The Parallel Universe of Liars,</i> by Kathleen Jeffrie Johnson Roaring Brook Press, 2002, 192 pgs., \$15.95</p> <p>Sexual abuse/Family/Self-esteem ISBN:0-7613-1746-5</p> <p>Fifteen year-old Robin Davis, overweight and insecure, feels like she lives in a "parallel universe" where lies and secrets are commonplace.</p> <p>First is the affair she discovers between Frankie, the handsome model next door who abuses drugs and alcohol, and her silicone-enhanced stepmother, Janice. Second, is her secret voyeurism through which she learns about sex. Then, there is her own illegal sexual relationship with Frankie, which both excites and scares her. Finally, surrounding these secrets are the relatively normal teenage problems: first dates, dysfunctional families, and self-esteem issues.</p> <p>In her debut novel, Jeffries tells a compelling story whose multiple issues and problems would relate to a number of adolescent readers, especially females. However, because Robin's "abusive" association with Frankie is never brought to the attention of adults, and is not ended cleanly nor clearly enough, I would hesitate to recommend this novel for students below high school age.</p> <p>Lisa Scherff Knoxville, TN</p>
<p><i>The Bagpiper's Ghost</i> by Jane Yolen Harcourt, 2002, 125 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Magic/Ghost Story ISBN: 0-15-202310-0</p> <p>In this third installment in Yolen's <i>Tartan Magic</i> series, thirteen-year-old twins Jennifer and Peter are lured by a magical dog to a cemetery to see the Lady in White.</p> <p>The dog speaks in a Scottish brogue and provides much of the comic relief in the novel. When the ghost of Mary McFadden appears, she points a long, white finger at the twins, screaming with "anger, fear, loathing, horror...and longing." Jennifer decides to help Mary fulfill her purpose here on earth, which soon appears in the ghost of bagpiper Iain McGregor. Mary thinks that now they can finally be together, but the cold iron fence that separates them is harmful to magical creatures.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the spirit of Mary's twin brother possesses Peter's body. Peter-as-Andrew admits lying to Mary about Iain's death to prevent the marriage of his sister to a man of lower standing. Before there can be any resolution, the sun rises, and the ghosts disappear, but Andrew is still trapped inside Peter. If Jennifer can't rid Peter of Andrew's spirit soon, Peter will be lost forever.</p> <p>While the story will appeal to reluctant readers, the Scottish dialect is complex enough to warrant a glossary at the end of the book. Students who read the other books in the series will better understand the allusions to events and characters from <i>The Wizard's Map</i> and <i>The Pictish Child</i>.</p> <p>Cindi Carey Lacey, Washington</p>	<p><i>Doomed Queen Anne</i> by Carolyn Meyer Gulliver Books/Harcourt, 2002, 240pp., \$17.00</p> <p>History/Young Royals ISBN 0-15-216523-1</p> <p>Promising Henry VIII a male heir to his throne, Anne Boleyn manipulates him to her will by refusing to submit to his conjugal wishes. She convinces him to have his first marriage annulled to make their union legal and to maintain her integrity. When the Pope does not support this action, Henry splits the Church of England from the Catholic Church, an act that enrages many of his subjects.</p> <p>Anne does become Queen, but when she does not produce a male child, she falls from favor. Though innocent of adulterous treason, she is convicted and beheaded. However, Elizabeth, the daughter whom she and Henry VIII conceive, does eventually become Queen. Given her options at the time, Anne Boleyn behaves in an understandable, if not exemplary, way.</p> <p>Readers age 12 and up will gain a more profound understanding of the intrigue and the behind-the-scenes treachery of life in the British Royal Court in the 1500s.</p> <p>Edgar H. Thompson Emory, Virginia</p>

<p><i>Kicked Out</i> by Beth Goobie Orca Book Publishers, 2002, 92 pp., \$7.95</p> <p><i>Kicked Out</i> is the story of fifteen-year-old Dime's struggles to discover her own self-worth. Still reeling from her guilt over her complete recovery from a car accident that left her beloved older brother a quadriplegic, Dime feels that she does not deserve the life she has. This attitude manifests itself in many ways. She has conflicts with her parents, is failing at school, and has a relationship with a boyfriend who treats her like she feels: terrible. Finally, her parents kick her out of their house to live with her older brother.</p> <p>With this fresh start, Dime faces new challenges, learns to appreciate herself, and begins to make better choices in her life.</p> <p><i>Kicked Out</i> is a good choice for older students who tend to lose interest in longer books. The story involves situations common to teens (arguments about curfews, dating, demands for more respect/responsibility) that will provide good grounds for discussion. The storyline, dialogue, and vocabulary are written at a reading level that would provide a successful experience for struggling readers, but would likely prove too simplistic for students reading at or above grade level.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Maryanne Obersinner Eugene, Oregon</p>	<p><i>King of the Mild Frontier: An Ill-Advised Autobiography</i> by Chris Crutcher Greenwillow Books, 2003, 208 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Chris Crutcher, the renowned author of <i>Chinese Handcuffs</i> and <i>Staying Fat for Sarah Burns</i> (among other award winners), has strung together a set of Christmas lights in his "Ill-Advised Autobiography." In this book, fresh incidents are mingled with favorites that he has included in many of his talks before audiences of young adult literature fans.</p> <p>Crutcher offers a composite of the characters who appear in his fiction. Though he occasionally jumps back and forth chronologically, the style, the sarcasm, the pity, the heart—indeed all the issues that pack his novels—are in this non-fiction book about his very own life. The events he chooses to write about allow the reader to speculate on those he didn't share, though he names name, even unflatteringly, in an effort to explore truth.</p> <p>The book reads fast; it is engaging, and satisfying. The qualities that permeates the book and endears Chris to his fans, is the element that he applies to his hero Michael Jordan, and one he shares with him: humor and humility.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Len DeAngelis Newport, RI</p>
<p><i>Heading Out</i> edited by Gloria Kamen Careers Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2003, 200 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Editor Kamen aims to answer how career decisions are made via twenty-four individuals categorized as writers in the arts, science, medicine and invention, business and politics, and sports. She selects people who exemplify persistence, self-confidence, and talent, and explains the path they took that led them to success, hoping that readers learn "how others coped and succeeded should send its own message to readers."</p> <p>Ken Burns, Pauline Fisk, Dean Kamen (whose name and selection stirs questions), and Katherine Paterson, write pieces for the book. Others have excerpts from their writings chosen by the editor. Short introductions preceded the words of each person. Why the editor made the choices she did among the many available is not explained, and hence, tends to limit the book's usefulness. Reading to a class, though, and discussing each person on the basis of the book's purpose serves a readership. Some pieces (Sydney Poitier, Nelson Mandela, Vernon E. Jordan, Boris Yelsin, Dan Rather, Lance Armstrong) excel, and will tease the reader/listener to explore more.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Len DeAngelis Newport, RI</p>	<p><i>A Circle Of Time</i>, by Marisa Montes Harcourt, 2002, 261 pp., \$17.00</p> <p><i>A Circle of Time</i> opens with a dramatic accident that simultaneously thrusts fourteen-year-old Alison Blair into a coma, and into the body of Becky Lee Thompson, a teenager living in California at the beginning of the twentieth century. Alison's mission—which she has no choice but to accept—is to save Becky from the disastrous fate that awaits her.</p> <p>Initially, Alison has little understanding of the source of Becky's danger. However, when Teresa Cardona Pomales, a daughter of a wealthy Spanish landowner, takes Alison under her wing, she begins to unravel the mystery, which lies within the complex history and relationships of the Pomales family. Joshua Winthrop, Becky's attractive and sensitive boyfriend, also helps Alison, and in so doing develops a bond that extends through time.</p> <p>Middle school readers who enjoy fantasy, mystery, and romance will especially appreciate this ambitious second novel. Although the plot is somewhat repetitive and predictable, the writing is strong and the ending creative. The exploration of issues such as life after death, and cultural change and diversity, makes this novel not only entertaining, but educational, with potential for readership across many different ages and grade levels.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tom Phillon Oak Park, Illinois</p>

The 1980's: Earthsong (The Century Kids),
by Dorothy and Tom Hoobler
The Millbrook Press, 2002 158 pp., \$22.90

The 80's and Popular Culture;
Environmental Issues
ISBN 0-7613-1608-6

The *Century Kids* Series, of which *Earthsong* is a later installment, follows several families through the decades with a focus on the history, culture and issues of that decade.

This particular volume features cousins Suzanne, Eric and Jason as they battle the owners of an unscrupulous leather tanning company which is dumping toxic chemicals into Lake Chohobee.

The text is liberally sprinkled with references to the icons and inventions of the decade – personal computers, Rubik's Cube, point and shoot cameras, *Rolling Stone*. In addition, photographs of these icons accompany snapshots of the characters sporting the hairstyles and dress of the decade.

The text of this book and others in the series would be great for a study of the decades and a cross-curricular language arts/social studies link. Unfortunately, the characters are not very engaging. The stereotypical, undeveloped characters move through a flat, predictable plot linked to the signature topic of the 80's – environmental concerns.

Marge Ford
Campbell, Ohio

Women In Politics by Karen Zeinert
Twenty-First Century Books, 2002, 112 pp., \$29.90

Women/Politics/Leadership
ISBN: 0-7613-2253-1

In the latter portion of the twentieth century, no single movement has had a greater impact on social change in political life than the introduction of women into higher office. Now, it is commonplace to see women, of all races and status, occupy prominent national positions, and even, allude to running for the presidency itself.

In an easy to read, smartly designed nonfiction work, Twenty-First Century books presents another in its series of books that tell interesting stories about the lives of significant individuals. This time, the story is the useful history about women in American political life, not just those who ran for office, but also famous advisers and appointees (e.g., Eleanor Roosevelt and Sandra Day O'Connor). The book begins in 1774 when 51 North Carolina women agreed to become actively involved in the conflict between England and the colonies, and then moves on to the antislavery movement and to suffrage. The black-and-white photos and reproductions that appear throughout are good touchstones for discussion, and a time line runs from 1774 through 2000 compliments the text.

Zeinert's book gives a sharp, historical and highly informative approach to the presence of women in American political life, and serves as a valuable primer for anyone who is even remotely interested in learning about both the sacrifices and glory of being in public office. This is a good resource for both middle and high school social studies classes.

Jeffrey S. Kaplan
Orlando, Florida

Body Marks: Tattooing, Piercing, and Scarification
By Kathleen Gay and Christine Whittington
Twenty-First Century Books, 2002, 112 pp., \$14.95

Tattoos/Body Piercing
ISBN: 0-7613-2352-X

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to get a tattoo? Or, maybe, you already have one. Did it hurt? Is it hidden? Revealed? Do you like it? Or are you filled with regrets?

Everything you would want to know about the art of tattooing and body piercing can be found in this complete guide to the latest in the art of decorating one's skin. This book, sure to be of interest to adolescents, discusses the history of various forms of body marking, the current popularity of body piercing and tattoos, the how and why this 'art' is done, and some things to think about before choosing to be pierced or tattooed.

Authors Gay and Christine Whittington trace the roots of body decorations and modifications from ancient cultures where tattoos were marks of ownership for slaves or punishment for criminals, to today's trends where celebrities and teens often sport both tattoos and piercings. The authors include good sections about safety precautions, as well as warnings about the social implications of body modification.

The tone throughout remains neutral, and the text is well researched and well organized. Good-quality, full-color and archival photos appear throughout.

David Quill
Setauket, New York

The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler by James Cross Giblin
Clarion Books, 2002, 246 pp., \$ 21.00

Biography/Dictator/Nazis
ISBN: 0-395-90371-8

A book about Adolf Hitler is never an easy read. One wonders: How can someone grow up to be such an evil human being—as if "human being" is a fit description for such a demented soul.

Yet fascination, curiosity, and a basic need to know compels the most reluctant reader to learn about this most heinous of all people. Complete with photographs and timelines, this good read (if you can call a book about Hitler, a good read) is bound to interest high school students who want to learn more about the individual who singlehandedly mesmerized the masses and changed the world.

A brilliant politician, Hitler swayed the entire German nation with promises of renewal and prosperity, even as he managed a strategy to dominate most of Europe. As he systematically carried out his plan, he set World War II in motion. Meanwhile, he managed to convince many rational German citizens that Jews were the cause of all evil, devising and ordering the deaths of more than six million men, women, and children.

In a straightforward and matter of fact manner, James Cross Giblin explores the forces that shaped the man as well as the social conditions that furthered his rapid rise to power. Beginning with his childhood in Austria to his final days in a Berlin bunker, we learn of why this enigmatic, deranged despot was able to destroy the civilized world.

Jeffrey S. Kaplan
Orlando, Florida

<p>The Way Science Works by Robin Kerrod and Sharon Ann Holgate Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc., 2002, 160 pp., \$24.95</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Science/Physical World ISBN: 0-7894-8562-1</p> <p>This wonderful book is complete with exquisite full-color illustrations and photographs of the fascinating world of scientific exploration. Young and old readers alike will delight in the jam-packed and detailed information about the history, principles, and procedures behind scientific experiments, and discoveries. The experiments within the book will particularly intrigue science teachers, as they provide the step-by-step directions needed to experience science in action. The book primarily discusses the processes that occur in the real world: experiments involving such physical properties as matter, atoms, elements, forces, energy, heat, sound, light, color, electricity, and magnetism.</p> <p>This terrific resource explains key theories in clear and accessible language, and highlights even the smallest of detail with clear and vivid images. From creating your own polymer slime to investigating rocket power, budding and accomplished scientists will relish the chance to experience vicariously how science really works. This is a perfect complement to a science curriculum at school, or making science fair projects at home.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Judith Johnson Oviedo, Florida</p>	<p><i>The Cannibals: Starring Tiffany Spratt</i> by Cynthia D. Grant Roaring Brook Press, 2002, 148 pp., \$</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Teen Problems/Humor ISBN: 0-7613-2759-2</p> <p>Tiffany Spratt, head of the cheerleading group called the Cannibals, is into celebrities, glamour, and little else. In her journal, Tiffany recounts the events of her senior year at Hiram Johnson High. Readers are privy to Tiffany's triumphs and tragedies, not to mention her beauty tips. She tries to pursue a relationship with the new guy in school, Campbell MacLaine, but Campbell seems to want a girl with less style, and more substance.</p> <p>It seems as if all Tiffany's dreams will come true when she successfully lobbies to have <i>Scream Bloody Murder</i> filmed at her school. But, when the movie people back out unexpectedly, Tiffany is blamed for the ensuing chaos: the swimming pool is filled with fake blood; two major soft drink companies sue the school; and all her friends desert her. Will Tiffany be ever able to show her face again?</p> <p>This novel will primarily appeal to high school girls who revel in its confessional format. The novel's greatest strength is its humor. Author Cynthia Grant pokes fun at everything—from teen slasher flicks to 1-800 numbers—but she is never preachy or heavy-handed. Instead, the author gently reminds her readers what really matters in life. Hint – it is the cake, and not the frosting.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Eileen Callery Shrub Oak, New York</p>
<p><i>The Doomspell: A Battle Between God and Evil</i> by Cliff McNish Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2002, 214 pp., \$17.99</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Witches/Magic/Good and Evil ISBN: 0-8037-2710-0</p> <p><i>Doomspell</i> is the captivating story of Rachel and her younger brother Eric, two adventurous young children who discover that they have magical powers. Written in a style reminiscent of Harry Potter, this novel is a superb first effort by McNish.</p> <p>This novel begins as Rachel and Eric are suddenly snatched from their home on earth, and taken to the land of Ithrea by Dragwena, an evil witch with blood red skin, four sets of teeth, and a snake-like mouth. Dragwena, who has controlled the gray, sunless, snowy Ithrea for hundreds of years, has captured and killed thousands of children, and now she has her eyes set on Rachel.</p> <p>Dragwena believes Rachel is the one and only 'child-hope,' the child whose magical powers will one day rule Ithrea, but others have different ideas; specifically, they want Rachel to lead a rebellion against the evil Dragwena.</p> <p>When Dragwena, though, tries to use her most powerful spell, the Doomspell, this nasty witch finds that her evil is no match for Rachel, Eric, and the good wizard Larpskenya. A fun read for youngsters who enjoy fantasy adventures.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Deena Williams Newman Rockledge, Florida</p>	<p><i>The Hero's Trail: A Guide for a Heroic Life</i> by T.A. Barron Philomel, 2002, 131 pp. \$14.99</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Inspiration; Setting high goals ISBN: 0-399-23860-3</p> <p>T. A. Barron, author of the popular <i>Lost Years of Merlin</i> series and <i>Kate in the Heartland</i> trilogy, is an active advocate for the many adolescents who can—and do—have a positive impact on the world. In this moving collection, Barron weaves together stories of young heroes. Some, like Anne Frank, are names with whom young readers are familiar. Others, like Keema McAdoo, a young teen who set up an after school program in her Massachusetts town as a way to provide kids in her neighborhood with an option to gangs and street violence, are new to readers. All of the book's heroes inspire readers to take action in our own neighborhoods and situations. Barron's gentle strength and optimism are evident in the narrative portions that he composes as he connects the threads of this wonderful book.</p> <p>Barron is also the creator of the Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes, a competition named for his mother, in which young people are honored for their truly fine and selfless works. For more information, see barronprize.org, and his Website, www.tabarron.com.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sissi Carroll Tallahassee, FL</p>

★“Convincing, affecting.”*

SONNY'S WAR

VALERIE HOBBS

★“The times, they were a-changin’; and Hobbs chronicles the pivotal years of the late sixties in a convincing, affecting novel. In 1967 fourteen-year-old Corin is a kid, cruising the sleepy streets of her California desert town with her beloved older brother, Sonny; by the time she turns fifteen, in 1968, she is grappling with the moral complexities of the Vietnam war and suffering her first hopeless crush . . . Hobbs writes like a dream, but the Cory she conjures up for us is as real as real, completely believable in all her teenage vulnerability and sharp-eyed observation.” —*Starred, *The Horn Book*

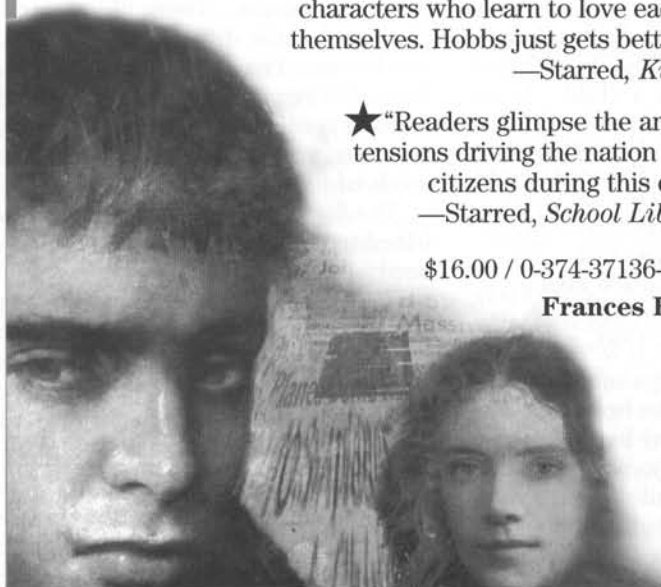
★“The author shows what she does best, crafting a believable, multifaceted plot with vivid, well-rounded characters who learn to love each other—and themselves. Hobbs just gets better and better.”
—Starred, *Kirkus Reviews*

★“Readers glimpse the ambiguities and tensions driving the nation and individual citizens during this difficult time.”
—Starred, *School Library Journal*

\$16.00 / 0-374-37136-9 / Ages 12 up

Frances Foster Books

FARRAR
STRAUS
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“And I wrote my happy songs, Every child may joy to hear”: The Poetry of William Blake in the Middle School Classroom

Francis E. Kazemek

Miss Stretchberry wanted her students to love poetry (Creech 2001). She read to them daily both from the works of acknowledged masters and contemporary poets and encouraged them to write. Jack, an initially skeptical and reluctant writer (boys don't write poetry; girls do), was intrigued by William Blake's "The Tyger." (I have retained all of Blake's spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.) He responded to Miss Stretchberry's oral reading of the poem by writing that he really didn't understand it. However, he admitted, "at least it sounded good/in my ears" (Creech, 2001, p. 8). Not only did it sound good in his ears, but it continued to do so, especially after he composed his own poem based on "The Tyger's" rhyme scheme. He wrote Miss Stretchberry that the sounds of the poem were in him "like drums/beat-beat-beating" (Creech, 2001, p. 9).

The impact of Blake's poem upon Creech's fictional character was strikingly similar to the effect "The Tyger" had upon one of our major American poets as a child. In an interview Bill Moyers asked Adrienne Rich about the first poem that she remembered touching her deeply and awakening her somehow. She answered:

I think it was Blake's "The Tyger." I was given poems to copy, that was how my father taught me to do handwriting. "The Tyger" was one of them and it was so musical and mysterious. The wonderful image sank very deep very early.

(Moyers, 1995, p. 347)

Whether fictional or actual, Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1967 [1789, 1794]), have been captivating readers and awakening them to the many joys of poetry for more than two hundred years. Recently, Blake's poetry has appeared in a number of children's and adolescent works of literature as a dominant theme or a symbolic touchstone. For example, in addition to Sharon Creech's *Love that Dog* (2001), we find Nancy Willard's Newbery Award winning *A Visit to William Blake's Inn: Poems for Innocent and Experienced Travelers* (1981); this older picture book captured the imaginative vision and spirit that we find in all of Blake's work.

The purpose of this article is to explore some of Blake's poetry that I find suitable for middle school readers and its

relationships to a number of current works for young adults. I highlight the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and suggest how Blake might be connected to other literary and musical works. My hope is that this exploration will encourage teachers to reread or read some of Blake's poetry with their students as a means of helping them enter into his particular visionary world and the universe of poetry in general.

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

Most present readers probably know Blake's poetry through his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, which show the "Two Contrary States of the Human Soul." From my long experience reading Blake I have found that a relatively small number of readers and teachers are familiar with his great prophetic poems. These illuminated works are long, complex, and made difficult by Blake's seemingly idiosyncratic symbolism. For example, *The Book of Urizen*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem* require, for me at least, a great deal of effort, numerous readings and the use of critical studies. The *Songs*, however, are accessible to all readers of all ages and at all levels of literary sophistication.

The *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (originally published separately as two books) is one of Blake's "illuminated books." The individual poems were skillfully and imaginatively integrated into copperplate engravings which he then colored by hand with pen or paint brush. Thus, each poem is, to use Blake's own terminology, a "Particular." These poem-engravings, even in the poorest quality facsimiles, shine and sing with a vitality that delights both eye and ear:

The verse is part of the design, the design part of the verse, in an extraordinary condensed and almost ritualistic way; the visual completeness, the insistent metres, the impersonal skill of the calligraphy, turn these poems into achieved works of art that seem to resist conventional interpretation.

(Ackroyd, 1996, p. 122)

Although these works of art have multiple layers of possible meaning, several general themes arise when we read the *Songs* repeatedly. Some celebrate the spontaneity, naïve vision, joy, and exuberance of childhood. Others are darker, ominous and explore the special concerns and fears of child-

hood. Perhaps they more adequately capture the zeitgeist of our present time in which "hurried," latch-key, and abused children seem not to be uncommon. Lastly, several of the poems deal with questions of morality and provide readers with models of how to live in the world.

"The Tyger"

"The Tyger" certainly is the most well-known of the *Songs*. Even folks who don't read poetry recognize the opening lines: "Tyger Tyger, burning bright,/In the forests of the night. . ." (Blake, 1967, unpaginated; all references to Blake's poems are from this illustrated and unpaginated collection). Over the last decade while teaching at universities and secondary schools in Ghana, Ukraine, and Norway, I found that if students knew any English poetry, they knew Blake's "The Tyger."

"The Tyger" has been discussed by all notable Blake scholars (for example, Bloom, 1965, and Frye, 1947), and it offers readers a lifetime of reading pleasure. Its possible meanings are many, complex, and like all great poetry, irreducible to simple generalizations. The poem doesn't state facts; it raises ultimate questions: "What immortal hand or eye,/Dare frame they fearful symmetry?" and "Did he smile his work to see?/Did he who made the Lamb make thee?"

Like Jack to whom the poem "sounded good/in my ears" and Adrienne Rich for whom it was "so musical and mysterious," the preeminent Blake authority Sir Geoffrey Keynes observes: "It seems better, therefore, to let the poem speak for itself, the hammer strokes of the craftsman conveying to each mind some part of his meaning" (Blake, 1967, p. 148). Keynes continues with advice that should be etched on every teacher's desk: "Careful dissection will only spoil its impact as poetry" (Blake, 1967, p. 149).

"The Tyger" plays a central role in two recent novels for young adults. Kate DiCamillo's *The Tiger Rising* (2001) deals with a troubled sixth grade boy and his father trying to come to terms with the death of their mother/wife. A caged tiger owned by a local businessman is a symbolic touchstone throughout the novel. When the boy, Rob, shows the caged animal to an equally-troubled and alienated girl, Sistine, she immediately begins to recite "The Tyger." Rob exclaims, "Oh," and nods. "He liked the fierce and beautiful way the words sounded" (DiCamillo, 2001, p. 50).

"The Tyger" and several other poems from the *Songs* are integral to the characters, themes, and mood of David Almond's truly Blakean and luminous novel *Skellig* (1998). Ten-year-old Michael's family is in turmoil because of the serious illness of his baby sister. He discovers a strange creature (part man? part owl? part angel?) living in a crumbling garage and at the same time meets the fiercely independent girl, Mina, who lives next door. Together they befriend Skellig, and Mina opens a world of poetry and vision for Michael.

Mina reads part of "The School-Boy" from the *Songs* to Michael and says, "William Blake again. You've heard of William Blake?" He tells her that he hasn't. She then says, "He painted pictures and wrote poems. Much of the time he wore no clothes. He saw angels in his garden" (Almond, 1998, p. 59). Later when she observes him reading a book

with a red sticker on it and asks what it means, Michael comments that it's for "confident readers." Mina scoffs and asks what would happen if other readers wanted to read it:

"And where would William Blake fit in?" said Mina. "Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright/In the forests of the night.' Is that for the best readers or the worst readers? Does that need a good reading age?" (Almond, 1998, p. 90)

Her question is a resonant one for all teachers, K-12 through the university level.

Neil Waldman's picture book version of *The Tyger* (Blake, 1993) is an interesting presentation of the poem. The illustrations are in acrylic, and each page contains a two line couplet. The gray rendition of the forest is punctuated with the orange and black stripes of the tiger, and the various pictures depict parts of the poem, for example, a white lamb standing peacefully and stars throwing down their spears. The individual illustrations are captured together in a four page mural at the end of the book. I like this version because it makes Blake's poem visually accessible to all readers, even to those, as Mina might say, who are not "confident."

Lastly, in Alice and Martin Provensen's illustrations the Tiger lounges, sleeps, and prowls across the pages of *A Visit to William Blake's Inn: Poems for Innocent and Experienced Travelers* (Willard, 1981). This is a glowing-eyed Tiger that Blake would have approved. In the poem "The Tiger Asks Blake for a Bedtime Story," he recounts how he greedily stole Blake's food and consequently became ill. What can make a "tiger roar again"? Only an "immortal story": "Only William Blake can tell/tales to make a tiger well." The poem concludes with these lovely lines:

If I should dream before I wake,
may I dream of William Blake. (Willard, 1981, p. 40)

Willard's collection is a perfect complement to Blake. The poems and illustrations capture the imaginative vision and fancy that we find in the *Songs*. We encounter Blake and his wife in their bed and breakfast. Guests are picked up in "Blake's Celestial Limousine"; "Two patient angels" are the housemaids; "Two mighty dragons" serve as cooks and bakers; a rabbit shows guests to their rooms; a "shaggy old bear" offers his head as a pillow; and Blake himself leads walks on the Milky Way.

This wonderful picture book for all ages is especially appropriate for middle school readers because of its playfulness, wit, and humor. For example, a tailor builds a house out of the "wool of bat and fur of mouse," "moleskin suede," and "robins' wings" because "It's best/ to work with what I know." When the house proves to be unlivable, he and his wife take "rooms at the inn of William Blake" (Willard, 1981, pp. 42-43). Like all of the poems in the collection, this one is a joy to read aloud.

"On a Cloud I Saw a Child"

While sitting at her kitchen table, Mina's mother tells Michael that they must look at the world with new eyes: "The kind of thing William Blake saw. He said we were

surrounded by angels and spirits. We must just open our eyes a little wider, look a little harder” (Almond, 1998, p. 131). And that’s what the poems and illustrations of the *Songs* help us do: see imaginatively. Perhaps, as in “Introduction,” we see a piper (not so strangely resembling Blake himself) walking down a country road while looking up and listening to a child-cherub floating just above him: “Piping down the valleys wild,/Piping songs of pleasant glee,/On a cloud I saw a child,/And he laughing said to me. . . .” Or perhaps as we read such poems as “Spring,” “The Blossom,” “Laughing Song,” “The Ecchoing Green,” and “Infant Joy” we simply share in the spontaneous joy of being alive and seeing the world anew:

I have no name
I am but two days old.—
What shall I call thee?
I happy am
Joy is my name,—
Sweet joy befall thee!

The *Songs* are especially appropriate for demonstrating to students that poetry is an *oral* art and meant to be heard, sung, and celebrated. As the recent past Poet Laureates of the United States, Robert Pinsky and Stanley Kunitz, have stressed, poetry must reconnect with its origins in song and dance. The current Laureate Billy Collins tells students to take a poem and “press an ear against its hive” (Collins, 2001, p. 16). Through such oral performances students and teachers affirm poetry’s power to nourish the heart, mind, and soul.

We know from various biographical accounts that Blake would often sing the *Songs*. Fortunately, there are various recordings available today. R. Vaughan Williams set them to music, and different classical singers have performed them. Perhaps if one looks long and hard enough one might be able to find an old recording of some of the *Songs* by the poet Allen Ginsberg. However, the CD that *must* be a part of any middle school classroom that celebrates Blake is folk singer Greg Brown’s arrangements of sixteen of the poems in his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (Brown, 1986). Brown’s music and renditions are a joy to listen to, sing with, and dance to (“The Ecchoing Green” as a hoe-down!). I can’t think of a better way to introduce and celebrate Blake than to play the CD. I’m certain he is smiling somewhere whenever he hears it.

Marks of Weakness, Marks of Woe

The *Songs* not only celebrate innocence. They also acknowledge experience, and that experience is often bleak, cruel, and even horrible. References to Blake’s mythological universe abound in Philip Pullman’s astounding “His Dark Materials” trilogy that I have found to be favorites with young adults who have expanded their fantasy reading beyond the Harry Potter books: *The Golden Compass* (1995); *The Subtle Knife* (1997); and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). Pullman says that “there are three debts that need acknowledgement above all the rest. . . . The third is to the works of William Blake” (Pullman, 2000, unpaginated). He incorporates the dark, “Specter” side of experience into his trilogy.

The two “Chimney Sweeper” poems raise starkly (though beautifully) images of how children have been, and are, often misused by adults. The little sweeper in the “Innocence” poem begins: “When my mother died I was very young,/And

my father sold me while yet my tongue,/Could scarcely cry weep weep weep weep./So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.” The sweeper in the “Experience” poem highlights the hypocrisy of his parents who have “gone to praise God & his Priest & King/Who make a heaven of our misery.”

I often have found the sweeper poems to be most resonant with adolescents, both here and abroad. Their sense of common decency and justice is aroused when they read and then discuss them and several others, for example, “Holy Thursday”: “Is this a holy thing to see,/In a rich and fruitful land,/Babes reduced to misery,/Fed with cold and usurous hand?”

Similarly, the poems that deal with friendship and love call into question our understanding of those concepts. These are complicated and difficult issues for early adolescence, and Blake’s *Songs* offer a way to “step back” as it were and explore them. In “A Poison Tree” we see the difference between forthright anger and simmering resentment: “I was angry with my friend:/I told my wrath, my wrath did end./I was angry with my foe:/I told it not, my wrath did grow.” And to the speaker’s joy, the wrath eventually kills the foe.

In the epigraph to “A Little Girl Lost,” Blake writes: “Children of the future Age,/Reading this indignant page;/Know that in a former time,/Love! sweet Love! was thought a crime.” And in the apocalyptic “London” we encounter the results of a society that represses honest discussion of sexuality on the one hand and commercializes it on the other: “But most thro’ midnight streets I hear/How the youthful Harlots curse/Blasts the new-born Infants tear/And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.” Certainly this is truer today than even Blake could have imagined.

“For Mercy Has a Human Heart”

Poetry, like most good literature, has the power not only to delight but also has the potential to instruct. This is true of the *Songs*. By exploring the “Two Contrary States of the Human Soul,” the poems embody what the imaginative psychologist James Hillman (1989) calls poetry’s soul-making power. Let’s look at a few of the *Songs* that raise questions of how we might be and act in the world.

Blake begins “On Another’s Sorrow” with a series of rhetorical questions:

Can I see another’s woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another’s grief
And not seek for kind relief?

He then answers categorically: “No, no! never can it be!/ Never, never can it be!” Similarly, in “The Human Abstract” he argues:

Pity would be no more,
If we did not make somebody Poor:
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we. . . .

These poems address directly the moral ties that bind all of humanity together, regardless of religion or ethnicity, Christian or Muslim, Israeli or Palestinian. They are a yea-saying to the fact that we all are not only brothers and sisters under the heavens, but that as such we have responsibilities for the welfare of one another. In today’s world, this is a message that needs to be artistically, compellingly, and non-didactically affirmed in our classrooms.

Blake further develops the nature and responsibilities of humanity in "The Divine Image." The third stanza reads:

For Mercy has a human heart
Pity, a human face:
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress. . . .

By sharing these poems with students and by helping them relate the poems to their own lives and experiences (for example, by asking them how *they* feel when they see someone sad or crying and what they might do in such situations, or by having them make a collage of the "human dress" — Peace), we not only are exploring great poetry with them but also are engaging in the best kind of non-didactic moral education.

"He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star"
(Blake, 1988, p. 35).

In "The Marmalade Man Makes a Dance to Mend Us" (Willard, 1981, p. 36) Willard addresses the same concerns as Blake. She says, "Lamb and tiger, walk together./Dancing starts where fighting ends." Dancing is poetry's metaphoric partner, and Blake's work and those of the others I have presented in this essay celebrate innocence and experience, joy and sorrow, and the beauty of language imaginatively used. But more, for middle school students in today's difficult time, they affirm the necessity of envisioning, of believing in, of dancing and celebrating the possibility of a more universally peaceful world and more loving and visionary people. "Maybe we could all see such beings, if only we knew how to," Mina's mother tells Michael, tells us (Almond, 1998, p. 132). Blake can teach us how.

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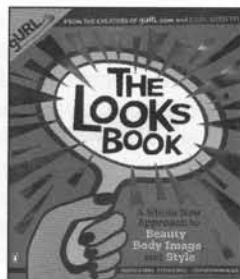
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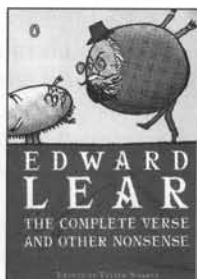


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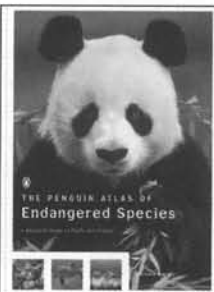
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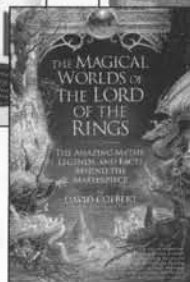
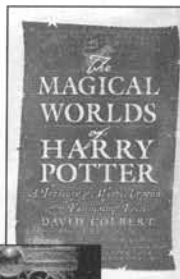
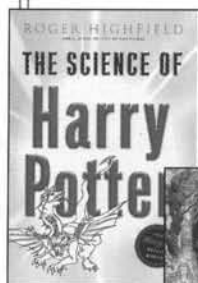
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Dreams of Possibilities: Linking Poetry to Our Lives

Ruth McKoy Lowery

Dreams

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

—Langston Hughes*

As an interim middle school teacher in a large urban school district, I was assigned to teach a dropout prevention language arts sixth grade class. The students were predominantly minority immigrants performing below grade level. Many were not excited at the prospect of doing “too much reading” and wanted to bargain about the types of books they could read, the main concern being the thickness of the books chosen. In an effort to engage them in the beauty of language, I integrated poetry in the language arts lessons. At first reluctant; their interests piqued when I emphasized the concise nature of poetic forms. Wow! They would not have to read long pages, they could read “poetry” and that was reading. They were exultant.

I began with a demonstration of how meaningful poems could be in our lives. First, I introduced them to Langston Hughes’ poem, “Dreams.” Before reading the poem, I asked the students about their dreams for life after middle and high school. We talked about what they hoped to do after graduation. What careers would they like to have? I then asked them to think about their dreams as I recited the poem. After reciting the poem, I asked them to respond to their feelings about the poem. We then shared in a classroom discussion. The students’ responses focused mainly on the jobs they would like to have after graduation. Most of the jobs were those that would make them rich so they could buy and do anything they wanted for the rest of their lives.

Using their personal connections to the poem, we created a “dream wall”. We placed Hughes’ poem in the middle of a bulletin board and then using 3x5 index cards and yarn, we created individual links to the poem. The students wrote their dreams for the future on the 3x5 cards. They were free to revisit the wall and update their dreams. For many, this was a meaningful exercise. They frequently referred to the “dream wall” as a memorable experience. I dared them to dream and to think beyond those dreams to making them possibilities for the future.

More recently, as a teacher educator, in my children’s and adolescent literature classes I continue to incorporate the poems of Langston Hughes in hopes of preparing pre-service teachers to teach diverse students. My dream is that they will go out and create effective educational environments that foster dreams of possibilities for all students they will teach, including those students considered at risk of school failure. In the remainder of this article I share pre-service teachers’ reflections to “Dreams” in one literature class. First, I begin with an overview of poetry in children’s lives. I then describe the setting and present how the pre-service teachers reflected on their dreams after listening to the poem.

Poetry in Children’s Lives

Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown define poetry as “the expression of ideas and feelings through a rhythmical composition of imaginative and beautiful words selected for their sonorous effects” (38). Poetry has the power to illuminate ordinary experiences in extraordinary ways (Hade and Murphy, 346). Readers of poetry quickly come to realize the picturesque ways in which they can express themselves while using a scarcity of words. They learn to recognize and value the beauty in words. Perfect (728) determines that poetry validates the human experience thus it helps us to understand ourselves.

Poetry is all around us and inside us. Teachers can orient their students to the beauty that lies within by providing them with a wide variety of poetic forms. Tompkins posits, “As students experiment with poetry, they learn that poetic language is vivid and powerful but concise, and they learn that poems can be arranged in different ways on a page” (50). Teachers can use the poetry to help their students create new experiences. They can empower their students to move beyond simply liking poetry to thinking more deeply about the poem’s meaning. As students read or hear poetry recited, they learn to reflect on poetry. This reflective process creates more meaningful personal experiences for them.

Although poetry has the power to generate wonderful experiences in its readers, historically it has been the most neglected genre utilized in schools’ curricula. Some teachers do not share poetry in their classrooms because they too had negative experiences in their early exposure to the genre. When I ask preservice teachers to reflect on poetry from their elementary to high school experiences, their responses are often prefaced by groans. Many vividly describe how they had

* From *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* by Langston Hughes, copyright © 1994 by The Estate of Langston Hughes. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.

to dissect or memorize different poems. Often, they remember the poems but not the poets' names. They have no positive connection with the beautiful words.

Strickland and Strickland (205) found that teachers today are increasingly more knowledgeable about literature and are willing to expose students to a plethora of literary experiences. These teachers are more willing to engage their students in poetry. Teachers are finding that students tend to develop a love for poetry when they are immersed in reading and listening to poems as pleasurable engagements. Sloan (53) admonishes that in order to create poetry lovers, teachers need to give students what they want. Consistently exposing students to an array of good poetry helps them to develop a sense for poetic forms and soon they are able to identify different types of poems on their own. They are able to create lasting connections with poetry.

Pre-service Teachers' Reflections on "Dreams"

The children's literature course focuses heavily on the different literary genres. The pre-service teachers are encouraged to read widely in all genres throughout the semester. My goal is to help them learn to read critically, analyze, and interpret literature from a wide variety of genres, topics, and themes. When we study poetry, I often encourage them to create poems from their own experiences using some of the forms we discuss in class. Often, to begin the poetic experience, I share with them from the Langston Hughes' collection of poems (4). Recreating the experience with my middle school students, I share the "Dreams" poem with the pre-service teachers.

I begin by placing a copy of the poem on an overhead. I ask the pre-service teachers to listen as I recite the poem. I recite the poem once as they follow along with the copy on the overhead. Then, I ask them to close their eyes and think about anything that came to their minds while I again recited the poem. After the second recital, the pre-service teachers write their responses in their class journals. We then discuss their individual responses as a whole group and I share my experience of reading the same poem to middle school at-risk students.

The pre-service teachers' responses to the poem were diverse. Seventeen focused on their dreams for the future, eight focused on the children they hoped to teach, one reflected on her parents' admonition to her as a child, and one focused on her young son's future. I did not ask them to respond in a particular way to the poem before I told them about the middle school students because I wanted them to think freely about their responses. However, from their responses, it was evident that most of the class focused on their personal dreams and hopes for the future.

Personal Reflections. The 17 pre-service teachers shared a common bond in describing their personal dreams in that they looked at their own experiences. However, their reflections were closely related to the poem as they shared their hopes for the future. One pre-service teacher shared, "Dreams are the substance of who we are. They give us purpose and direction and without them we would have nothing to look forward to." Another wrote, "This poem just strikes me as true. Without something to live for, we die; if only inside." Still another shared, "[This is] a beautiful poem that is full of hope for the future. Without dreams what is life worth. Dreams are our hope for a better future."

Several pre-service teachers focused on the sadness they would feel if they did not have dreams. One wrote, "I have more dreams in my head & in my heart than I can count. I think I would be sad if I didn't have my dreams. Whenever things aren't working out, or I feel frustrated where I am, I can always escape to the thoughts of my dreams." Another shared, "I feel sad, for life without dreams seems pointless, dreams are the only hope we have for happiness." Finally, one pre-service teacher wrote, "It is incredibly sad to forget your true, pure ambitions—your dreams. Life tries to take them from you—reality gets in the way. Somehow, the truly heroic people hold fast to their dreams."

Reflections as Future Teachers. The eight pre-service teachers who focused on their future as teachers, wanted to help their students realize the importance of their dreams. One pre-service teacher shared, "I think this is a great poem to show children how plain life would be without them having dreams. Having dreams add variety and excitement to people's lives." Another wrote, "Many times younger children only think of dreams as being what they have at night while sleeping. This poem would give another, important perspective. And it would also get them thinking of their own dreams."

The pre-service teachers felt that sharing the poem with their students could help them to see that dreams are good. They wanted to empower them to think beyond their present situations to claiming a future of possibilities. One pre-service teacher shared her hope for her future students, "The picture that [Hughes] paints for the reader (to describe the absence of dreams) is very vivid. I think that this poem is very motivational. Those students who seem not to have ambition or visions for themselves could be influenced by this poem." Another wrote, "Dreams are the core of life. They permeate through every soul...Don't ever let your dreams melt into tiny snowflakes. Keep your dreams alive."

Creating a Classroom of Dreamers

After the pre-service teachers wrote their responses to the poem in their journals and I shared my experience of reading the same poem to at-risk middle school students, we began to envision their future classrooms. I communicated the importance of being prepared to teach all students. I placed strong emphasis on the at-risk students they may ultimately meet, interjecting some of the stark research findings on the at-risk and diverse student body they will encounter in their teaching careers.

Slavin (5) determines that at-risk children are students who are at risk, on the basis of several risk factors and are unlikely to graduate from high school. The risk factors include low achievement, retention in grade, behavior problems, poor attendance, low socioeconomic status, and attendance at schools with large numbers of poor students. The changing demographics in immigrant populations across the United States indicate that by the year 2020 the student population will comprise over 45% minority students (Banks, 5).

It is important, then, to prepare pre-service teachers to meet the needs of this rapidly changing student body. Teachers who are not prepared for cultural diversity may experience difficulty as they try to administer the needs of these children. Teacher educators are being asked to prepare teachers who are more culturally aware and perceptive of the children they will teach.

For many students, school is the main social space where they will come in contact with others, often others who are different from them. Their teachers are important factors in their lives, frequently being the only person to offer them a glimmer of hope for the future. It is important that teachers acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for understanding how to effectively reach these children.

Moving Beyond Dreams to Possibilities

In order to move the pre-service teachers to the level where they are prepared to meet the needs of their students, I encourage them to first look at their personal experiences. Using Langston Hughes' poem provides a non-threatening exercise where they can tap into their personal dreams and hopes for the future. They begin to see that they are now in college because of their dreams as young children. Along the way, their parents, teachers, and others interested in their lives encouraged them to make realities of their dreams. The experience is meaningful because they are looking at themselves.

As the pre-service teachers make these self-discoveries, they then move to another level where they can then look critically at the lives of children they will teach. Some of their students will have the same opportunities they had but others will not. Some students do not have parents who dream a future of possibilities for them. They simply live through the kindergarten to twelfth grade experience. Many do not even make it to the twelfth grade, often dropping out of school before the tenth grade. The pre-service teachers then begin to picture the influence they will undoubtedly have on these children. What if they dared them to dream? What if they showed them that there was a larger world beyond their lived realities? How can they make a difference in their students' lives? These are some of the issues they begin to ponder. They grapple with these questions from the simple incorporation of an eight-line poem, "Dreams." Pre-service teachers come to realize that their children also have dreams and that these dreams can become possibilities if someone takes the time to foster hope in their lives. They learn that by reflecting on their personal lives they can encourage their students to "Hold fast to dreams."

Conclusion

Using poetry to help students think about their future can have powerful effects on their thinking processes. As students "take the poems to heart" and try to link them to their lived experiences they come to understand that they can create meaningful expressions without long texts. For many students, their dreams are simply dreams until teachers or other well-meaning adults challenge them to move beyond dreams to reality.

Many pre-service teachers will have their first true experience with cultural diversity when they step into their own classrooms. It is important, then, that teacher educators help them to prepare for this experience. Using poetry can indeed be a useful experience in helping pre-service teachers reflect on themselves and then move beyond those self-reflections to understanding the greater worldview they can provide their students. For many students considered at risk of school failure, a teacher's assurance that their dreams can become possibilities can make a difference. One pre-service teacher, Caitie Porteus Galligane, summed it up beautifully in her reflection on Hughes' poem, "Dreams":

"Dreams"

My dream is my guide,
My determination, my pathway,
Without my dream, I have no point,
Nothing to do, no where to go,
My dream is my life, my goal.

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The Voices of Cultural Assimilation in Current Young Adult Novels

Ann Angel

Immigrant stories bear witness to hope but also to a history of impoverishment, persecution and misunderstanding. Memoirs and novels of those who made the journey to these shores in search of wealth, material comfort, ready acculturation and assimilation often relate the realities of personal struggles that prove stark contrast to the promise. New immigrants often found themselves laboring at menial jobs for long hours at low wages, conquering overwhelming language barriers, and beleaguered with religious and cultural disparity. The bitter truth proves that a dream of wealth and acceptance turns out, for some, to be just an illusion. For all, the journey proves to be one of self-discovery and awakening understanding of the soul of humanity.

In recent years, a few contemporary writers have focused on the struggle. In doing so, they have captured their own and imagined adolescent voices that tell of being trapped between two cultures. Over the last few years, three renowned writers have chosen from diverse genres to tell immigrant tales through memoir, contemporary vignettes, and historical fiction. Each author captures very real adolescent voices and their stories.

While Frank McCourt recaptures his own youth in *Angela's Ashes*, two other writers rely less upon personal experience and more on history and imagination. Most recently, An Na, who won the Printz Award and a National Book Honor with her first novel, *A Step from Heaven*, brought a mix of personal story and research to readers through the contemporary voice of Young Ju, a Korean pre-schooler who immigrates to the United States and grows up squarely facing immigrant challenges, into the lives and hearts of readers. Norma Fox Mazer, combining research and an imaginative interpretation of real events, weaves the story of one adolescent's extraordinary cultural and family losses in her World War II novel, *Goodnight Maman*.

With each of these narratives, the main character's individual voice personalizes the experience of loss, of crossing oceans and continents, leaving behind the familiar, losing a cultural history, and then blending into new cultures. Each narrative uses different techniques with language and time in order to capture the unique voices and experiences of its characters.

Although *Goodnight Maman* is written in past tense, Mazer rejects the notion that past tense creates distance. She says she never wants distance between the characters and the reader. "Although the story is based on distant events," she says, "I hoped that the first person voice would render it immediate,

and that the letters Karen writes to her mother would allow her to speak more emotionally and intimately" (interview). Karen is very young when the book begins, but gradually, with the accumulation of experience in wartime and as a refugee, she becomes a more reflective person. Mazer explains that telling Karen's story in past tense to establish distanced time helped to create this reflective quality by using cultural references from the past as an integral part of the story:

One day someone called me a frog.

"That's what we call the Frenchies," Zooey said at lunch.

"It's a dumb insult," Peggy said. "Don't feel bad, Karen."

A few days later, two girls came up to me in the hall and said, "Dirty Jew."

I kept a blank face and kept going down the hall. I was surprised — shocked, really. I didn't think Americans were like that. I didn't tell anyone. (*Goodnight Maman* 124)

Mazer adds that, although the historical events on which her novel is based took place almost sixty years ago, scenes like this achieve their effect through many revisions. She says she writes the story over and over, until she enters "a place where I stop feeling I'm *writing*. I'm inhabiting the character, and I know everything she knows, everything she thinks and feels. That is a magic time for me, and it also tells me that I'm very nearly finished with this story" (interview).

Alternatively, Na and McCourt create immediacy and intimacy in their works with present tense narratives. Na's character, Young Ju, remains in present tense voice throughout the narrative. And, although McCourt opens chapters with telling paragraphs written in the past tense to create a sense of the author's voice as the memoir began, he leads into present tense scenes that become immediate and compelling stories.

For example, McCourt describes his mother in an adult narrative tone: "She never saw her father, who had run off to Australia weeks before her birth." At this point, McCourt shifts into the scene as though it was the here and now: "After a night of drinking porter in the pubs of Limerick he staggers down the lane singing his favorite song..." (*Angela's Ashes* 13).

Unlike McCourt, who passes from past tense memory into a present tense scene, from the very first page, Na captures her main character Young Ju in the moment of learning to trust a parent. The novel opens with a scene in which the reader hears a parent speaking: "Just to the edge, Young Ju.

Only your feet. Stay there" (*A Step from Heaven* 9). The scene sets the novel's pattern of vignettes shown as though they are snapshots.

Despite an interesting and initial tense shift in McCourt's work, creating a sense of moving from McCourt's adult sensibilities back to a four-year-old's voice, readers of both McCourt and Na's works will find themselves sharing captured moments with the main characters when they were very young. Those shared moments change along with understanding and language as the characters age. Both works rely upon present tense scenes that show ever more complex understanding to accomplish this.

McCourt's use of an adult voice that falls into the child-voice of Frank, indicates his work is clearly memoir, while Na's consistent use of present tense indicates her work is clearly fictitious.

McCourt said it took years to find the voice. "I kept fiddling with it," he told Jim Saah, of *Uno Mas Magazine*. "I was being literally imitative and derivative" (Saah 10). It may be that *Angela's Ashes* was a vehicle for McCourt's own voice at various ages, perhaps McCourt's return to places where he grew up jarred his memory, whatever the cause of discovering the voice McCourt says that once the voice of young Frankie came to him, the writing moved easily. "It was miraculous," he told Saah in an interview, "I just knew that I had to write that part about the playground and being on the seesaw with my brother. And I just stayed with that" (Saah 10).

Na has said the literature of personal immigration experiences such as *Angela's Ashes* is the literature that gave her own character, Young Ju, her voice. In fact, she still credits McCourt for making her connect to the voice and tone for *A Step from Heaven*. McCourt's novel helped her realize the depth of innocence of children's voices: "I had been struggling with how to create a child-like protagonist's voice without making it sound as though I was 'dumbing down' to the character. They are able to see events, people and places with an intensity and open mindedness that adults lack. Also, children have this wonderful ability to make up or imagine their own stories when there is no given explanation. Or sometimes, even when there is one, they might choose to create an alternative interpretation of what they see and hear" (Na interview).

Na chooses concrete language, the language of metaphor and simile, to mirror Young Ju's childlike sensibilities. For instance, she allows Young Ju to experience her personal heaven as something tangible by mixing up the meaning of flying to the U.S. with going to heaven. Discovering that heaven was not the suburban home Young Ju searched upon her arrival to the U.S., comes through Young Ju's experience of a large white carpeted living room where she searches the closets and corners for her dead, and presumably heaven-sent grandfather. As Na said, "It was hard to choose what Young Ju might know and might not know. For instance, I wondered about the concept of moving. Would Young Ju know what that meant? I tried to imagine her village and what words and ideas she might have been exposed to and it seemed that moving would be a whole new experience. People in her village would not be moving. Her family never moved or talked about moving so I had to treat this concept and word as completely new. As Young Ju grew up I tried to imagine the mo-

ments and ideas that might stand out in her memory. At this point, I also drew upon my own experiences and memories of learning new concepts. I distinctly remember my first taste of Coke and going to school" (Na interview).

McCourt's narrative, peppered with metaphoric connections, tends to demonstrate a four-year-old child's concrete understandings of religious experience so that when new babies arrived sometime at night in his mother's bed, it is little Frankie who explained, "We have two new babies who were brought by an angel in the middle of the night" (*Angela's Ashes* 21).

While both Na and McCourt use simile and metaphor to create textural reality, Na's use of simile and metaphor creates a textural reality that proves to be more visual and universal than McCourt's, which relies upon that Catholic understanding. For example, Young Ju describes people with "round money eyes"; her curled hair is "toy-man hair."

Unlike McCourt, whose memoir exposes the difference in cultures where multiple dialects of the same English language are spoken, Na creates a world of language and cultural differences as Young Ju learns the meaning of English words to replace her Korean language.

Na admits her own grasp of Korean is pretty limited. "I can speak it pretty well with my parents but it's at an elementary level. If I had to speak in front of a Korean audience, I would be hard pressed to sound other than a little girl." Yet Na captures much of her visual imagery through concrete metaphor and visual references she believes come from the language of children. "I think," she explains, "the language of children lends itself readily to visual and metaphoric referencing" (Na interview).

The use of Korean words in Na's novel stems from a desire to subject the reader to another language. "Just as immigrants struggle to make sense of English, I wanted English readers to struggle with the Korean," she says. "It was also a way to demonstrate Young Ju's transition from thinking predominantly in her native tongue to adopting English" (Na interview).

Mazer also crosses language barriers in her novel. In a scene where Karen, newly arrived in the US, is anxious, confused and tired, she hears a soldier demand of her brother, 'Lasname first, buddy.' Karen can't tease out the two separate words—"last name"—from 'lasname,' but she recognizes the word 'buddy,' with relief. She learned it on board the ship Europe and knows it's "a friendly American word." "This scene," Mazer said, "was doing double duty."

She continues:

I was addressing the language problem and also the whole tension of being in a situation where you barely understand what's going on. Karen and her brother had some foundation in English, since their mother was a language teacher, but they were far from fluent, pretty much at sea, really, when they first came to this country. As the story progressed, I needed to show Karen's growing vocabulary and understanding, but I also wanted to have a little fun in the book, a little lightness. It's a somber story basically, some horrific things happen, and dealing with the language gave me a chance for a lighter touch. In the scene where Karen and Peggy talk over the fence, Peggy is very frank, open, confident. She's a quintessential American girl. She's got a handle on things, and as a gesture of friendship, she wants to teach Karen American

teen slang, like, "You got it!" while Karen, who is coming along in the language, shows off a little for Peggy with very specific, concrete words like sneakers and sky and feet" (Mazer interview).

While these novelists use past or present tense in determining the immediacy of scenes, they each develop narrative voice and the characters' voices in ways to demonstrate growth and development through each character's literal and figurative understanding. Mazer, whose readers only glimpse the narrator in this past tense account through brief summary scenes, says, whether past or present tense, "when things begin to happen so that character is propelled forward, the effects have to change the person" (Mazer interview).

McCourt, as the earlier discussion of tense shifts demonstrates, is not a self-effaced narrator in the way he periodically inserts adult telling or authorial narrative into his writing to summarize adult understanding of experiences.

In McCourt's work, this voice creates irony, in that the reader catches on to the consequences of actions before the character Frank knows. Na also demonstrates an ironic tone, despite choosing to remain completely self-effaced as a narrator. The reader never sees the writer on the page, only the child in the moment. Yet the irony exists in the way readers are able to figure out Young Ju's world a moment before Young Ju. Even the novel's title reflects this irony through its double-meanings. Young Ju believes she is going to heaven, but ends up in the United States, a step away from heaven in that her grandfather hasn't returned, but the US offers almost heavenly promise to her parents. In the first US scene where the reader finds Young Ju looking for her deceased grandfather in her uncle's large house, the reader senses Young Ju's lack of experience in her descriptions: "There are so many rooms. All of the floors are covered with a warm white blanket that is soft on my feet" (*A Step From Heaven* 26).

In another early scene, the reader understood immediately that Young Ju's teacher was trying to communicate that it was lunch time. But Young Ju thought she was playing a game with tiny fish made of yellow crumbs.

I make the little fish swim in the air. The teacher nods. "Yehs!" she says.

"Yehs," I say and make the fish swim more. "Yehs."

"Noo," the teacher says, shaking her head. She points to the fish. "Go-de-fish." (*A Step from Heaven* 34)

According to Na, it was challenging to try to let Young Ju write her own thoughts and words. In the process, Na would ask herself what Young Ju might have said and thought. "The reader, since they are older," says Na, "will understand the teacher or adult more readily, but Young Ju does not have access to that information so she has to make due with her own incorrect assumptions. I think this happens a lot not only with children but also with adults who might not know English or the customs of Americans very well. For example, Young Ju's aunt assumes that the card with the flowers that reads, 'We are sorry for your loss,' means what Young Ju wants her to think. She does not immediately know that those words are often used for someone who has passed away. Young Ju's aunt does not have access to a common phrase that would be readily understood by most Anglo-Americans."

Mazer wants to show some of these same immediate needs when she uses similar techniques to show Karen's developing understanding of her new language while in an Oswego, New York refugee camp:

The soldier sitting behind the table said, "Whazymame?"

"Pardon?" Marc said.

"Wazyname, buddy?" Name. Name," he said loudly.

Marc started speaking in French. "*Je m'appelle* Marc Levi—" I poked him, and he began again. "I am Marc Levi and this is my—"

"Lasname first, buddy." (*Goodnight Maman* 82)

Neither Mazer nor Na worry about their main characters appearing foolish. Rather they allow irony to play into the text. Mazer makes sure to shed light on Karen's understanding so that readers see the character react with enlightenment. Na makes sure to allow Young Ju to sometimes believe her own interpretations of the world are much smarter than the ones adults and readers might have. "Of course, she is naive, but with each new experience she learns to adapt and adjust. Hopefully, readers sympathize with her because they themselves remember what it is like to be in a new situation, learn a new language, navigate a new culture" (Na interview).

All three novelists deal honestly with losses that precipitated immigration. While Mazer deals with an adolescent who had experienced the loss by death of a loved parent, Na and McCourt deal with alcoholic and dysfunctional parents.

As writers, McCourt and Na appear to share cultural parental respect in such a way that portrays alcoholic fathers sympathetically. Nevertheless, their main characters clearly deal with a parent who can't control his disease or behavior. For Na, this comes early in the novel when the little girl Young Ju watched her grandmother's reaction to her father:

"Now, Halmoni [grandmother] can only shake her head when Apa [father] comes home late stinking like the insides of the bottles that get left on the street. Her lips pinch tight, then she hides with Umma [mother] and me. Because when Apa is too quiet with the squinty eye, it is better to hide until he falls asleep or else there will be breaking everywhere. Halmoni always says, That Apa of yours needs a good spanking.

(*A Step from Heaven* 10)

McCourt's character Frankie sees the effects of alcoholism through his mother's response on payday:

"Mam says there's no use waiting up any longer. If Dad stays at the pub till closing time there will be nothing left from his wages so we might as well go to bed. It's quiet in the lane and I can hear her crying even though she pulls an old coat over her face . . .

(*Angela's Ashes* 110)

By creating a distance through childlike understanding of a parent's alcoholism, a distance created by filtering the view through other adult characters, both writers avoid judgment and blame of alcoholic parents in their narratives. McCourt says that although he doesn't absolve his father completely for walking away from his children, his father was a good father when he was sober. "He had the disease. The alcoholism," McCourt said. "Apart from the drink, he was the al-

most perfect father. That he was kind and good humored and so on. So he had every promise of being the perfect father . . ." (Saah 7).

Na's concerns about portraying the father's problems in her novel are that she wants the reader to empathize with the father's dual problems of cultural misunderstanding and the disease of alcoholism. "In many ways, he was a tragic figure, unable to cope with the complexities of adjusting to a new world. By no means are his actions excusable, but they can be understood. You see the ways in which he struggles to maintain his idea of strength and masculinity while everyday he toils in a job that demeans him. But ultimately, when a disease like alcoholism or battering takes over, one must fight back, must fight to create a life that is free from this terror" (Na interview).

Just as McCourt's memoir traces all the pain but also the joy of these cultural experiences, Na's novel, although fiction, mirrors her own birth in Korea. Na, who reads other novels to learn about her own writing, and reads many women writers and writers of color, says the novel is autobiographical in the sense that:

I remember learning new words, trying to figure out what common things like cider, finding myself upset that my parents couldn't help me understand this new culture, that it was up to me to interpret for them as well as myself. I drew upon that feeling to help me think about what Young Ju and her family faced as they tried to adjust to their new surroundings. But Young Ju's family was not my family. She faced far more difficult trials than I ever faced. My parents like her parents both worked extremely hard and they had very traditional ideas about the role of women in the family and in society, but I was much more rebellious than Young Ju. And my parents learned to adapt much more readily than her family. (Na interview)

For each of these writers, the story seed may have come from a personal experience, but the immigration experience develops from the way individual characters evolve and grow. The ability to grow comes from each personal struggle to make a journey and then to assimilate in a foreign culture.

While Mazer admits to writing about Oswego because she was stunned to learn that such a camp had existed so close to her childhood home, she says that the journey is what she hoped to capture in *Goodnight Maman*. She wrote until she found the voice and inhabited the character, but she says,

"The difficulty I had with this story were all the transitions from journey to journey, but the whole novel was a journey that required unity of story and place" (Mazer interview).

McCourt admits to making pilgrimages back to old neighborhoods, something that appears to be reflected in the way his past to present narrative feels like a pilgrimage to haunting memories.

And although Na makes honest connections to her own family's immigrant experience, she wants readers to know her work is a fiction where she strives to capture literary richness through a character's personal voice. She says this is a richness of style she's still learning from other writers: "I read when I get stuck in my writing. I don't read specifically for technique but if I've finished the novel and I find myself drawn to it again and again, then I know that there is something there that I want to learn" (Na interview).

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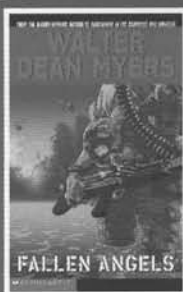
Additional Reading:

- Guterson, David. *Snow Falling on Cedars*.
Nye, Naomi Shihab. *Habibi*.
Ryan, Pam Munoz. *Esperanza Rising*.
Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*.

Ann Angel is a teacher and writer of young adult literature who lives in Brookfield, Wisconsin. She is currently editing a collection of short stories by new and known writers, called Defining Beauty. Profits will go to the Vermont College Writing for Children and Young Adults program for a YA scholarship.

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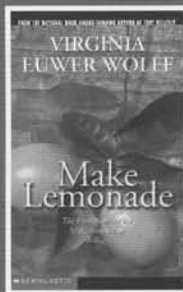
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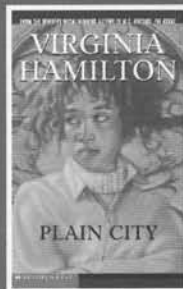


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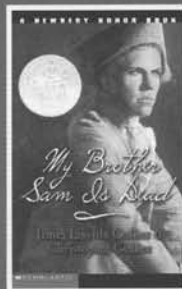


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Are These Parents for Real? Students' Views of Parents in Realistic and Historical Fiction

Janis M. Harmon and Monica C. Gonzalez

What do you think of a father who banishes his small son to his room for months for slamming a door? How endearing is a father who shows overt favoritism to his older son while neglecting the younger one? Can we possibly fathom what it is like for a young child to witness his father murdering his mother? What would you have to say to a gun-toting, free-spirited grandmother who follows her own rules, or to a young lady trying to deal with a new stepfather and a helpless mother as the Civil War changes everyone's lives? What words of consolation can you offer to a young girl whose tyrannical father literally abandons her in his quest for a male heir to the throne? When viewed collectively, these brief descriptions capture the wide range of parent characters we find in many young adult books. While these portrayals are only a small sampling of parental figures in several young adult novels, they lead us to ask the questions, "Are these parents for real?" and "Do young adult readers think so?"

Parents come in a variety of shapes and sizes in young adult literature and lead to interesting, if not unusual, relationships with the protagonists. In Vardell's perusal of parent characters of the Newbery winners in the nineties, she found an array of parental figures, while not always perfect role models, but who represented diversity in terms of gender, cultural, and language expectations as well as contexts (p. 163). As educators interested in adolescents and their literacy development, we value healthy parent-teen relationships and are encouraged when young adult authors include supportive parents or parental figures in their books. Nonetheless, the portrayal of parents in many young adult books does not necessarily reflect the positive and supportive characteristics we believe are important. Some authors of young adult books capture the attention of young adult readers by depicting parents in a less than positive fashion to create more interesting, rather than realistic, portrayals. Similar to the exaggerated and oftentimes offbeat situations presented in the media, adolescents want to read about parents whose behavior may be possible but not necessarily probable, especially in relation to their own lives. Some familiar yet rather negative portrayals of parents across different genres include such themes as domestic violence, abusive relationships, surrogate parents, abandonment, role reversals, present but negligent parents, no parents, and parental discord. On the other hand, there are young adult books that also present parents in more favorable roles, such as the caring and supportive parents in *Shabanu*, *Achingly Alice*, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* and *The Road to Memphis*.

Given the variety of parental roles in young adult books, we were interested in finding out how adolescent readers per-

ceived these roles themselves across different genres. We decided that an interesting comparison would be with realistic fiction novels and historical fiction novels, since both genres deal with human relationships. We posed several questions to guide our efforts. How do young adult readers view the role of parents in realistic fiction? How do they view the role of parents in historical fiction? Are there any differences across these genres? To find answers to these questions, we asked for volunteers in Monica's ninth and tenth grade English classes to participate in our project. The fourteen students who stepped forward to work with us ranged in age from 14 to 16 and had varied reading interests and abilities.

We then developed a teaching framework that enabled students to read, talk, and write about parental characters in three realistic fiction novels and three historical fiction novels, each containing a parent role mentioned in our introduction. Figure 1 contains a description of the parental involvement in each novel. Our selections represent differing themes of parental relationships, both male and female protagonists, and different configurations of parent roles (i.e., real parents, grandparents, divorced parents, step-parents).

In this article, we describe what students had to say about parental roles and also provide guidelines for implementing the instructional framework. Our description includes students' views about parental roles in real life, their expectations of parental roles in realistic and historical novels, their impressions of the parents they encountered in our selected books, and a comparison across genres about these parental characters. In addition, the guidelines for implementing the instructional framework include both discussion and writing suggestions.

Students' Expectations of Parental Roles in Real Life and in Literature

Parental Roles in Real Life

Most students had similar ideas about parenthood and expressed high expectations of parents, especially as role models for their children. They mentioned the need for supportive, caring parents who know how to create a balance between helping their son or daughter and allowing them independence to make their own decisions. Some comments were the following:

- Once they have taught me most of the basics, [they need] to let me go on to make decisions for myself and learn from my own choices.
- . . . to give me money, support, and keep me within the realms of sanity.

- To be there for me when I need them, to forgive me when I mess up, and take care of me when I'm sick.
- I expect my parents to care for me, and listen to what I have to say and respect me in no matter what I do.

From a realistic perspective, these students also noted that not all parents live up to these high expectations. Some comments were:

- Parents have a huge effect on their children; sometimes they leave mental scars that last for a lifetime. Others turn into best friends.
- Most parents these days are not good role models. They drink, smoke, shout, argue, and do other bad things in front of their children. They do not care about where their children are, or what they are doing and with whom they are doing it with. [Some] parents give their children money to keep them out of the way.
- Most parents are generally good parents. Other parents can be too strict or too nice. I think parents need to realize that kids are kids.

Parental Roles in Realistic and Historical Fiction

Overall, the students felt that societal changes would have an impact upon parental expectations and therefore expected authors to treat parental roles in realistic and historical fictions differently. Students noted differences in terms of relationships, values, discipline, family structure, and even amount of time spent together.

- In realistic fiction, I expect them to be more combative with their children, and in historical fiction, to be more supportive, maybe because in historical fiction, they may have gone through many trials together (like through wars).

- Definitely, as society changes, so do our roles as people, as does the role of parents. Parents had more time to be with their children in the past. In today's society they have jobs and many other things to do.
- In historical fiction I would expect authors to make parents high and mighty prevalent characters who do no wrong and hold absolute power. In realistic fiction, the parents are less than perfect and are not in total control of their children.
- Historically, parents had a very different role in the family. They had to teach their children a trade and were responsible for their children's limited education.

Students' Impressions of Parental Roles in Literature Parents in the Realistic Fiction Books

The students acknowledged that the authors depicted the parental relationships in a realistic manner. They viewed the mental and emotional abuse suffered by Bo in *Ironman* as more common and realistic than actual physical abuse, just as the psychological impact of Max's family history in *Freak the Mighty* would likely create a person like Max. Some, however, felt that Max might have had more psychological abnormalities as a result of his experiences. The students also felt that it is not uncommon to find fathers who find one of their children more interesting than another and play favorites, as in *Tangerine*. The students also voiced their impressions about expectations tied to living in today's society, the use of other characters as more positive parental role models, changes in parental relationships, and parental impact on children's behavior.

Expectations tied to living in today's society. As the students read the realistic fiction books, they maintained a refer-

Figure 1: Realistic Fiction and Historical Fiction Books

Realistic Fiction

Ironman by Chris Crutcher

Stemming from a strained relationship with his father, 17 year-old Beau Brewster constantly finds himself in power struggles with male authority figures in his life. An aspiring athlete who thrives on pushing himself beyond limits, Beau learns more about himself through discoveries he makes about his dad's adolescence and the similar rocky relationship he had with his own father.

Freak the Mighty by Rodman Philbrick

Maxwell Kane, son of Killer Kane, is an oversized eighth-grader who lives in the basement of his grandparents' home. With the help of his good friend, "Freak," Max comes to terms with the truth about his father's past and his mother's death. In the process he builds a better relationship with his grandparents, and a stronger sense of self.

Tangerine by Richard Bloor

Living his life as the quirky little brother of the town's football superstar, thirteen-year old Paul Fisher is used to the lack of attention he receives from his parents. After moving to the very strange town of Tangerine, Florida, Paul confronts his parents about his brother's cruelty and their willingness to excuse his abusive behavior. Although he is legally blind, Paul is the only one who can see the truth.

Historical Fiction

In My Father's House by Ann Rinaldi

Oscie and her stepfather, Will Mc Lean, have an uneasy relationship, as they are both strong minded, and often find themselves on opposing sides of issues. However, as they endure the turmoil brought on by the Civil War that quite literally commences and concludes on their homestead, they strengthen their relationship and form a strong bond of familial love and mutual respect.

A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck

In 1937, 15-year old Mary Alice from the big city of Chicago has to spend a year living with her "trigger-happy" Grandma in a rural community. When Mary Alice arrives, she is apprehensive about her new life at Grandma Dowdel's and is counting the days until she can return to her "normal" life in Chicago. But when the year is up, Mary Alice is reluctant to leave this woman who has opened her mind and taught her so much.

Mary, Bloody Mary by Carolyn Meyer

Historically accurate, this book reveals the unusual relationship between Mary Tudor and her father, King Henry VIII. After Mary's mother, Catherine of Aragon did not produce a male heir, the king begins a new life with a new family and banishes Mary from her home, forbidding her to see her own mother.

ence to the here and now in order to understand the motives behind character actions. By focusing on behaviors that are acceptable in today's society, they were able to construct realistic impressions about story events and character actions. For example, in *Tangerine*, one student felt that the father's poor treatment of Paul was unacceptable, because "a child in today's society needs more than just one parent. Paul needs his father." Another student, in writing about her impressions of *Ironman*, pointed out that at the end, Bo's father was willing to work at improving their relationship and commented that "this makes the book more realistic, because today people have these options of going to have someone monitor their conversations and help the two people work on their relationship." The use of outside counseling as a way to solve family problems is an acceptable action by today's standards and therefore such actions heighten the verisimilitude of *Ironman*.

Other characters as more positive parental role models. While the students accepted the parents, especially the father figures in *Tangerine*, *Ironman*, and *Freak the Mighty* as less than admirable characters, several envisioned other characters in the novels as representative of more positive parental figures. The adolescent protagonists, who were embroiled in unhealthy relationships, confused about themselves and their identity, and faced with weighty decisions, find the support and direction they need from other characters. For example, some students commented about the role of Mr. Nak in *Ironman* as a supportive, caring adult model and both the grandparents and Gwen in *Freak the Mighty* serving as the mentors for Max. Even *Freak* encourages Max and also fills in as a parent figure at times as he looks out for Max. Paul in *Tangerine* had a somewhat sympathetic mother who did pay attention to him but in a rather negligent way. Nevertheless, she still represented, to some extent, a stable adult figure in Paul's life. Student responses about these peripheral characters, who actually play decisive roles in the novels, may be indicative of their stated beliefs that adolescents need understanding and caring parents. If these parents are less than desirable, then the protagonist must have another adult figure to provide support and guidance.

Changes in parental relationships. While most readers have an innate desire for happy endings, several students in this group maintained a realistic stance as they discussed the endings to the books in light of parental relationships. For example, Bo in *Ironman* changes his idea about his father once he learns that other people have poor relationships with their parents. Then "[he] comes to understand that he will be fine, even if his father never cares for him, but in order for him to do that, he will need the true love of others." This comment also reflects how the students view the adolescent need for others. Other students grappled with the complexity of relationships as they tried to rationalize outcomes that were not straightforward and simple. For instance, in his written response about the ending of *Tangerine*, one student commented, "Paul will [now] be closer to his father but [also] farther from his father [too]. I say this because Paul got his father's love by default." With the changes in relationships, the protagonists gain newer understandings about their parents even though the relationships may not be totally satisfying to the reader. While happy endings with these relationships do not occur, the authors do provide more realistic, hopeful endings for the protagonists. Bo learns to see his father through different lenses just as Max gains more insight into his grand-

parents. Paul, on the other hand, has to deal with accepting the "defaulted" place he has in his father's life.

Parental impact on children's behavior. Another thread running through student responses was the notion that the protagonists behaved the way they did because of the parents. Bo's anger at events and people at school stem from his father's need for power and control. Max has deep-seated problems interacting with others due to his father's bad deeds, and Paul must take care of himself because his father's attention is focused solely on his older brother. One student aptly described Paul's parents in the following manner:

No amount of parent counseling will help Paul's parents achieve an IQ level of over 80. Although they might learn how to be sensitive, they will not be the ones to account for Paul's character and moral development as well as responsibility. He will have to develop apart from his parents for they do not provide the strong foundation of discipline and guidance that he needs. He will enter into the world with self-taught morals and self-control since he was the one who ended up monitoring his character and ethical development. However, I'm sure he'll do fine.

While adolescents want to read books where parents are shadowy background figures or nonexistent, it seems apparent that readers cannot ignore parental figures. They are quick to analyze how parents impact the actions of the protagonist—especially when the impact is not positive.

Parents in Historical Fiction Books

The students also found much realism in the historical fiction books, even though several students felt that some character actions were somewhat "over exaggerated," especially Oscie's responsibilities in *In My Father's House*. They felt that the protagonist was too young to take on responsibilities of such magnitude, as in overseeing the plantation work. However, other students pointed out that the narrative was told from Oscie's point of view and therefore represents how she saw herself, not necessarily to the extent that she claimed to have such responsibilities. Some students also felt that Richard Peck exaggerated the audacious, plucky behavior of Grandma Dowdel in *A Year Down Yonder* because women during the Depression years would not have had that much independence. Other aspects of realism in student responses include their expectations about the historical period, the parental impact on their children's behavior, and changes in the parental relationships.

Expectations about the historical period. Students with a good grasp of history were able to formulate realistic opinions about the nature of the parental relationships in the selected books. These books spanned different time periods that would perhaps give rise to different relationships with parents—*Mary*, *Bloody Mary* in the 1500s, *In My Father's House* in the 1800s, and *A Year Down Yonder* in the 1900s. Nevertheless, the students focused mainly on justifying many actions and events as a result of the lowly status of females (all protagonists were females) during these times. Students also made references to other behaviors influenced by history, such as the social actions of royal families as depicted in *Mary*, *Bloody Mary*. The following is an example:

Her father is not really [a] father since affection is not shown between them and he never sees her. This, of course, [was] typical in the royal families of the earlier centuries. A daughter's

only useful purpose [was] to be used as a contract between two countries in order to increase wealth and chances of peace . . . I think for this time period of the royal family, [and] that this relationship [was] completely normal and acceptable.

Changes in parental relationships. Some students noted that the changes in parental relationships occurred because of the changing perspectives of the protagonists. In *Mary, Bloody Mary* students readily agreed that while King Henry began with love and ended with total indifference toward his daughter, it is really Mary's increasing awareness of her father's zeal for a son and his uncaring feelings for her and her mother that creates the change in their relationship. In addition, Oscie's relationship with her step-father and even her mother in *In My Father's House* also undergoes a change as Oscie matures. She begins to respect and admire Will and becomes her mother's caregiver, as evident in the following excerpt:

Oscie's relationship with her mother has shifted from idolizing her to taking care of her. Oscie learns to step down from the power when Will returns from his journeys, and [she] becomes more of a helper for Will than a hindrance.

In reference to *A Year Down Yonder*, one student noticed that the relationship changed between Mary Alice and Grandma Dowdel when "Mary Alice learns what a wonderful woman her grandma is. [Their] relationship is the perfect example of how people are affected by the people they are around while they are growing up."

Parental impact on children's behavior. Students particularly noticed how parents influenced characters in *Mary, Bloody Mary* and *In My Father's House*. These books illustrate parental impact in totally different ways and offer students an opportunity to examine the extremes of parental influence. In the case of *Mary, Bloody Mary*, many students commented on the detrimental effect of King Henry's actions on Mary's life and ultimate reign of England:

Although Mary tries to hide it, I think she is extremely sad about the way her father treats her (as a servant). She has been completely neglected and now she wants revenge. It is terrible to neglect a child, and the effects are clearly seen on Mary. Although Mary hated her father's ways, his acts were imposed upon her, and she ruled exactly like him, and was given the title of "Bloody Mary." This is an example of why some people think that a child will act just as they parents when they are older.

On the other hand, students were enamored with Grandma Dowdel's character in *A Year Down Yonder* and valued the positive influence she had on Mary Alice's life:

I love this relationship. I believe that is one of the healthiest relationships I have ever read about. Although Grandma never expresses her fondness for Mary Alice in words, her actions speak much more strongly. This is unbelievably effective. Each character is able to relate to the other much better because there isn't all this "static," verbal conversation between them. By learning to relate to her Grandma Dowdel through analyzing her actions, Mary Alice has learned to read other people's thoughts by looking at their faces or their body language. . . Mary Alice seems to have gotten wiser from her Grandma Dowdel's non-verbal teachings.

It may be that Grandma Dowdel embodies all the high expectations these readers have about the role of parents. She goes beyond these high expectations and is more endearing to

the readers because of her unique, eccentric mannerisms that lead to adventurous and amusing incidents.

Comparison Across Genres about Parental Characters

In general, the students found realism in the parental relationships in both the realistic and historical fiction books as they noted similarities and differences in the relationships across selected books as well as genres. They clearly emphasized the need for a reader to have background knowledge of historical events in order to analyze the realism of the historical fiction novels. Without this knowledge, a student would be unable to make a reasonable assertion about the realistic nature of parental relationships.

When juxtaposed against their stated beliefs about parental roles, some relationships fell far short whereas others exceeded their expectations. Regardless of how the parent characters compared to their expectations, the students still felt that many actions were realistic, although somewhat exaggerated at times. Students also weighed the relationships in the historical novels against accepted behaviors of today, as illustrated in the following journal entry about *Mary, Bloody Mary*:

I think, for this time period of the royal family, that this relationship is completely normal and acceptable. Family was not necessarily one you trust. Family was purely gene-related and nothing else. Of course, this is the reason why probably there were so many problems in the royal family and of course the lack of relationship is bad but that is the way it worked. I believe that is the reason why this day and age is much more successful than that time period is because of close family ties.

For *In My Father's House*, some students felt that Oscie's actions were perhaps more realistic for her time period, not the present day. They grappled with the amount of responsibility she had at such a young age. Some also felt that Grandma Dowdel in *A Year Down Yonder* was larger than life although her relationship with Mary Alice was still within the realms of believability.

In regard to the realistic fiction books, we noted some inconsistencies, especially with *Freak the Mighty*. Once again the students questioned the verisimilitude of the character, Max, more than that of his relationship with his grandparents. Several students wrestled with the idea that Max would have had more psychological problems and abnormalities as a result of his earlier experiences. Regardless, they still saw much realism in his relationship with Gram and Grim, who love him and take care of him. The power struggle between Bo and his father in *Ironman* also represents realistic behaviors to the students just as the favoritism of Eric's father in *Tangerine* lends believability to the novel.

In a discussion about which genre seemed to be more realistic in terms of parental relationships, the students felt that the historical fiction books were slightly more realistic. Given the selection of historical fiction books they read, this response appears to be in line with their initial comments concerning their expectations of parents in historical fiction. They expected stricter discipline, more rigid family life, and parents with absolute power.

Instructional Framework

This project not only yielded important insight into students' views about parent roles in realistic and historical fiction, but also provided students with an opportunity to actively

engage in non-threatening discussions that evoked both aesthetic and critical responses. The discussions enabled students to present their own opinions in a risk-free environment and allowed them freedom to choose their own topics, which, in turn, validated their ideas and served as a gateway to foster confidence in their writing. Drawing from their own experiences, background knowledge, and information gathered from the peer group discussions, the students were then prepared to write about their impressions and expectations of parental roles in realistic and historical fiction. We next present an outline of the procedures we followed in this project over the course of approximately four weeks. We describe initial tasks, the configuration of discussion groups, and the writing tasks, and provide ideas to help teachers replicate our project.

Getting Started

To begin the project, formulate questions that you believe will stimulate interest and discussion while providing opportunities for students to think critically and deeply about the characters in the books. Our questions included the following: (a) How do young adult readers view the role of parents? (b) How do young adult readers view the role of parents in realistic fiction? and (c) How do young adult readers view the role of parents in historical fiction?

The next step is to find appropriate books that will provide both interest and variety in both genres. As stated previously, the books we selected represented different themes of parental relationships, both male and female protagonists, and different configurations of parent roles. (Please refer to Figure 1 for a brief description of the six books we used in our project.) Prior to group discussions, pair up each historical fiction book with a realistic book. Students will discuss one pair of books each discussion day and take notes during the discussion to use later for the writing assignment.

Configuring Discussion Groups

The students will engage in several discussion groups, including an initial discussion about parent roles, a discussion of paired books from each genre, a discussion across each genre, and a discussion comparing genres based on the selected books.

Initial discussion. Before students read any of the books, conduct an initial discussion on the role of parents. Give each student a questionnaire to complete individually about their perceptions of parents (may be a homework assignment). After responding individually, have students use their responses as a springboard for group discussions about their expectations of parents. The group discussion can be done as a whole class or in smaller jigsaw groups. The following are examples of items to include on the questionnaire:

- Describe the role of parents.
- What is your view of parents?
- What expectations do you have of parents?
- Would you expect authors to describe parents differently in realistic fiction compared to historical fiction? Explain your response.

After this discussion, ask students to select at least one book to read from each of the two genres (realistic fiction and historical fiction). Students must keep a reflective journal in which to respond to the following prompts at each of the four designated stopping points for each book read:

- What do you know about the relationship between the protagonist and his/her parents?
- What are your impressions about this relationship so far?
- Make a prediction. (Include the parent relationship and how it affects the story.)

Discussion of paired books from each genre. Allow at least one class period to conduct each paired book discussion. Use the following prompts to guide the discussion:

- What kind of relationship does the protagonist have with his/her parents?
- Has this relationship changed? Explain how or why.
- Is this relationship realistic? Elaborate.
- What do we understand or discover about the protagonist through his/her relationship with the parents?

After facilitating a discussion for one genre, repeat this procedure for the other genre.

Discussion of books across each genre. Allow at least one class period each to conduct discussions of realistic fiction and historical fiction. Students will look for trends in parent relationships across each genre. Use the following prompts to guide the discussion:

- Compare and contrast the relationships the protagonists have with their parents.
- Discuss general and specific examples of how they are the same/different across the books.
- What conclusions can you draw about parent relationships in these books?

After facilitating a discussion for one genre, repeat this procedure for the other genre.

Discussion comparing genres based on the selected books. Allow at least one class period to conduct this discussion to compare the parents in realistic fiction and historical fiction. Students will look for trends in similarities and differences in parent relationships across both genres. Use the following prompts to guide the discussion:

- What conclusions can we draw about parent relationships in these two genres?
- How are they the same? How are they different?
- Are these parents realistic?
- Are these protagonists realistic?

Writing Tasks

The information gathered from these discussions lends itself to many possibilities for writing assignments. Students now have a wealth of ideas to use for initiating the writing process. A few sample topics to which students can respond with the information they collect from the book discussions are listed below. These writing responses can range from traditional essays to creative writing formats, depending on the objective the teacher wishes to achieve with the students.

• Description

Select two or more characteristics of the parent relationships in the books you read. Describe these characteristics in detail citing several specific examples from the texts. Make a statement about the characteristics you described.

Develop a readers' theater script of one episode in a selected book to illustrate a characteristic of the parental relationship.

- **Compare/Contrast**

Discuss your view of parents today as opposed to those discussed in the historical fiction book. Describe the similarities and differences in these relationships.

Write a poem in cinquain or diamante format to depict similarities or differences of parent characters in realistic and historical fiction books.

- **Argument**

Choose one of the genres (or one book) and discuss why you find the parents or parent relationships to be either realistic or unrealistic. Be sure to cite examples to support your point of view.

Write a letter to the author explaining your views about the parent characters in his/her book.

- **Analysis**

Analyze the parent relationships across one genre (or across both genres for a longer assignment). Select specific aspects of these relationships for a more focused analysis.

Write new lyrics to a familiar song that reveal important issues the protagonist might address to his/her parents.

Conclusion

This project proved to be very rewarding and motivating to the 9th and 10th grade students. They grappled with important issues about parent relationships in terms of their own preconceived ideas as well as those of their peers. They, in turn, used this information as a basis to critically analyze the ways in which authors of realistic and historical fiction for young adults depict parental roles in their books. By engaging in class discussions about these books, students gained a richer understanding and deeper awareness of the complexity of parent characters and how these relationships influence the

thoughts and actions of the young protagonists. Perhaps as the students read subsequent books, they will be mindful of how authors depict parent figures and will continue to ask themselves "Are these parents for real?"

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THE LIBRARY CONNECTION

John Noell Moore, Editor

Diane Tuccillo is no stranger to the world of young adult literature. She has been Senior Librarian/YA Coordinator at the City of Mesa Library in Arizona since 1980, and she has recently completed a three-year term on the ALAN Executive Board. A frequent presenter at ALAN Workshops and at other professional conferences, she has written articles for ALAN Review, VOYA, Kliatt and other publications; she serves as a book reviewer for School Library Journal and VOYA.

In our conversations over the years I have been intrigued by the services her library offers to its patrons who are interested in young adult literature. Recently I asked her if she'd share with the ALAN audience the kinds of opportunities that her public library creates as well as her ideas about the ways in which public librarians and secondary school teachers can collaborate. In this column she presents a tremendous amount of information that both librarians and public school teachers can use in getting their students hooked on young adult literature. —jnm

Getting Teens Hooked on Reading: What Public Librarians Can Do for Teachers Today

Diane P. Tuccillo

Fifteen years ago, I wrote an article for *The ALAN Review* about the same topic I am addressing and updating today. Although the basic philosophical principles discussed in that article are still effective, the processes we use to help teachers promote lifelong reading among students have changed as a result of advances in media formats and other technologies. For instance, in 1987, a number of libraries still had card catalogs, while today it would be difficult to find a library without an online catalog and patron Internet service. Audiovisuals have greatly improved in variety of subjects, availability and formats. These elements have greatly influenced how we serve our public.

Even we librarians have changed our higher educational requirements to reflect these and other technological conditions. For example, taking computer research courses is now as important to a library degree as learning collection development or reader advisory, and even those classes incorporate computer instruction.

Despite the increased focus on technology, those of us who work with children and teenagers in libraries still study their literature, promote it, and look forward to cooperating with teachers and school librarians to help students learn about and benefit from it. The essence of the matter is that teachers and youth librarians serve the same clientele and both understand the importance of books and reading. During the times when school is not in session—weekdays after hours, weekends, evenings, school vacations, and in some cases on certain holidays, students have the option of accessing the public library for educational, informational, recreational and research purposes. Providing avenues for them to learn about the library, what books and other materials they can find there, and encouraging them to participate in library programs and activi-

ties can mesh with classroom objectives, extend their use of and exposure to the written word, and lead them on a path of lifelong reading and library usage beyond their secondary school years.

Programs/Services Public Librarians Can Provide Booktalking

A booktalking program is one of the most effective ways for public librarians to reach teenagers. When a public librarian comes to a classroom or school library to visit with students, it provides an opportunity for the librarian to give a brief orientation to the library in general, to share information about library programs and activities specifically for teens, and to introduce sample titles from the young adult collection through booktalks.

Teachers and school librarians can likewise incorporate booktalking techniques to promote reading to students. Booktalking is attractive because it can be done for a large group, a small group or even one-on-one. It is an effective means for connecting teens and books.

According to Jennifer Bromann in *Booktalking That Works*, some purposes for booktalking include building public library and school relationships and cooperation, and strengthening ties with schools, school librarians and teachers. However, the most important goal is to get teens who do not read to do so. Bromann observes: "The goal of booktalking is not necessarily to sell particular books as much as it is to sell the idea of reading. The point is to leave every listener with a good impression of books and the library, even if they never pick up a book you tell them about. Booktalking is not about *making* them read. When book report time comes around, however, students may be looking for that book they vaguely remember hearing about" (11).

If you are not familiar with the art of booktalking, perhaps you are wondering what a booktalk *is*. Think of it simply as a commercial for a book, told in storytelling form but leaving the listener hanging. You might also compare it to the trailers shown in movie theaters for forthcoming films. The point is to entice students to check out the books and find out what happens for themselves, simply because their curiosity has been sparked.

There have been few changes in how school booktalking programs have been done in the last fifteen years. Still, there are many more and a wider variety of YA books from which librarians can choose for presentations. The presentations allow librarians to inform students about the latest library holdings, such as audiobooks, other kinds of audiovisuals, popular teen magazines, and special formats like graphic novels, in addition to mainstream fiction and non-fiction.

Librarians can model booktalks for students, and some teachers give students the option to present booktalks en lieu of book reports. A few students have taken this one step farther, like the Coalition of Teen Advisors (<http://www.teenmatrix.org/>) at the Chandler Public Library in Arizona, who taped themselves performing booktalks which are shown on the local cable television station as well as on the in-school channel.

Since the Accelerated Reader Program has become a trend in many schools, librarians can use booktalking to help promote the book choices. A number of schools in Mesa provide us at the public library with binders of their AR lists so that students can find the books in our library as well as in their school libraries. Some teachers request booktalks based on the AR books and I then tailor my presentations to those titles. You can ask your librarian if this might be an option if you are doing AR.

Arranging school visits for booktalks has become a much more widespread practice. Check with your local public librarian to see if this service is available in your community.

Teen Library Web Pages

School visits also give librarians a chance to explain about the resources available on library web pages, especially services directed toward teens. Often these teen library web pages include reading lists teens may access to find good books, opportunities to submit book reviews, and to find out what other teens are recommending. Our Teen web page for the City of Mesa Library has a section called *What Do I Read Next?* (<http://www.mesalibrary.org/teens/readnext.htm>), and many libraries have similar sections, often including input from teen library advisors. Most libraries also link outstanding reading web sites from other libraries and organizations on their web pages.

As a matter of fact, YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) and VOYA (*Voice of Youth Advocates*) magazine have developed a new national reading program called Teen Top Ten/YA Galley, which will be promoted on the web. Through the program, teens can vote online for their top ten favorite YA books published each year. Voting takes place during Teen Read Week in mid-October via the *Teen Hoopla: An Internet Guide for Teens* web site (<http://www.ala.org/teenhoopla/>). Find out program details in the December 2002 issue of VOYA and learn how your teen readers can get involved.

Teen Advisory Boards

Teen library advisory groups have become a mainstay of many libraries in the last fifteen years. These groups encourage teens to participate actively in their libraries, promote positive youth development, which can foster the Search Institute's 40 Assets (<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>), and provide an opportunity for teens to contribute to their communities through the Service Learning Program at their schools.

At the City of Mesa Library, we have a teen advisory group called the Young Adult Advisory Council, or YAAC for short. This group of about thirty teens, representing most of the junior and senior high schools in Mesa, meets twice a month to review books and plan activities. They serve as official library volunteers and help out as needed. Their monthly newsletter, *Open Shelf*, is distributed in all three City of Mesa Library branches and at each junior and senior high school. Delivering copies is a cooperative effort with Mesa Public Schools Media Services, which sends them along with their audiovisual bags. In addition, current and archival issues of *Open Shelf* are available online (<http://www.mesalibrary.org/teens/readinglists/openshelf.htm>). Several teachers in Mesa use the printed version of *Open Shelf* in their classrooms to encourage independent reading or for assignments, and copies are on display as handouts in the media centers.

Other school and public libraries have similar groups, providing opportunities for members to offer peer reader advisory and promote library programs and services to teens. If this kind of group does not exist in your community or school library, you may want to suggest that one be started. If there already is such a group, you may want to encourage qualified teens to participate.

Library-Published Teen Literary Magazines

At the City of Mesa Library, we publish an annual teen literary magazine called *FRANK*. *FRANK* consists of original poetry, short stories, essays, artwork and black/white photography by and for teens. Teens also volunteer on the *FRANK* editorial staff. Although many schools have their own literary magazines, magazines such as *FRANK* give students additional avenues to see their work in print and to work with other students from throughout the community. We encourage teachers to tell their students about *FRANK* and persuade them to contribute their work. Find out more about *FRANK* at <http://www.mesalibrary.org/teens/frank.htm>.

Teen literary magazines are becoming more common in other libraries as well. Some are online, some in print, and some are in both formats. The Phoenix Public Library publishes a 'zine called *Create!*, which also appears on their web page at <http://www.phoenixtecentral.org/twebapp/teenzine.jsp>. *The Seven Hills Review* is a teen ezine published through the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. It can be found at <http://teenspace.cincinnati.library.org/sevenhillsreview/>. Both are excellent examples of publications by teens for teens. Students can submit their creative work to a variety of forums like these having Internet connections.

Tours

The public library makes a perfect setting for an inexpensive field trip that can greatly benefit students. At the City of Mesa Library, we give groups of students tours of our Young

Adult section and the rest of the library, explain programs and services, and teach them how to use the computer effectively for personal information as well as for research. Most teachers arrange a tour with computer lessons, allowing additional time for the students to explore the library on their own or to work on a specified project. We often see students who are brought to the library for a tour returning later on their own time.

Again, check with your local library to see what kinds of tours are provided. You will also want to ask if computer and research instruction are also offered.

Reading/Research/Professional Materials

Public librarians can give recommendations on the latest books for teens and can provide bibliographies. Bibliographies are frequently found online on a library's web page in addition to being available in print. The City of Mesa Library publishes seventh, eighth, and ninth grade selected reading lists that teachers and school librarians are welcome to use with their students. Some libraries offer Literature Study collections, which consist of multiple copies of popular titles for classroom study and which teachers can check out for an extended period of time.

We can also recommend useful professional resources for working with teens, books and reading. Many journal subscriptions and expensive reference books are beyond most school budgets, but the public library is more likely to be able to afford at least the best and most useful, and can share those resources with teachers. Find out what your library has to offer.

Internet Access

Besides having teen-oriented web pages, many public libraries have web pages for educators. Check out the Educators web page for the City of Mesa Library: <http://www.mesalibrary.org/kids/teachers.htm>. You will find an impressive array of links for professional resources, reading information, educational materials, statistics and more. Your local library may have a similar page.

Even the American Library Association has gotten involved in developing an outstanding web page for educators, called *Sites for Parents, Caregivers, Teachers and Others Who Care about Kids* <http://www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/parent.html#c>. Another resource is The Internet Public Library, which has resources on their *Teachers & Administrators* page, located at <http://www.ipl.org/div/subject/browse/edu70.00.00/>.

Meetings

Public librarians are usually willing to attend school faculty meetings to explain what the library has to offer and find out what the school needs from them. Think about inviting your public librarian to your school's staff meetings once or twice a year. Some librarians are also willing to host meetings at the library itself for Reading and English teachers and/or Media Specialists. Find out if connecting in this manner will work for your school and public library. You may be pleasantly surprised at what develops from the interactions at these meetings in sharing information and planning new ways to reach and teach teens.

Final Thoughts

Youth services librarians are eager to serve our young people and to help them develop a lifelong love of reading and appreciation for literature, goals to which teachers also aspire. We also want to encourage them to become lifelong library users and supporters, complete with knowledge and skills to navigate the spectrum of computer applications. Computers and other technologies have inundated our world, and they have helped to foster widespread communication and reading/writing opportunities. In most cases, libraries and schools have adapted well to this new environment and are successfully utilizing it to benefit students. However, an even better way to succeed is for schools and libraries to work together. Find out what public librarians can do for you—we are here to help!

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Diane P. Tuccillo's book VOYA Guide to Teen Library Advisory Groups is forthcoming from Scarecrow Press.

Familiar Fairy Tale Picture Books Transformed into Teen Novels

Rosemary Chance

Once upon a time in faraway places, stories were told around campfires and hearths among family and friends. Eventually these oral stories were written down and some were illustrated. Two of the best-known names in written folk literature are the Frenchman Charles Perrault and the Grimm Brothers of Germany. In 1697 Perrault published a collection entitled *Tales of Mother Goose*, and from 1812 to 1815 Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm published a collection of tales they had recorded from many storytellers (Darton 1999).

Folk literature from the oral tradition to the printed word encompasses four major types: legends, myths, fables, and fairy tales (Norton 1999). The most popular type of folk literature published today for children is the fairy tale, sometimes referred to as "magic" or "wonder tales" because of the presence of magic in the stories. Fairy godmothers and evil witches abound in fairy tales. Library shelves are full of illustrated versions of fairy tales, and in the last few years, familiar fairy tales have been expanded by skillful authors into novels for teens.

Characteristics of Fairy Tales

Fairy tales from the oral tradition share certain literary characteristics. The plot is simple and to the point. Within this direct plot are special features. Repetition was used to give the storyteller a break, such as this question from the Snow White story: "Mirror, mirror on the wall, / Who is fairest of us all?" In fairy tales, time passes quickly. In Paul Zelinsky's retelling of the story of Rapunzel, for example, twelve years pass in one paragraph: Rapunzel is a baby, then one sentence later she is twelve years old. Action happens quickly as well. There are no long, detailed descriptions of scenes to slow the plot. For instance, in the story of Rumpelstiltskin, we know only that the miller's daughter is locked in a room filled with straw. In Paul Zelinsky's retelling of the tale, elegant illustrations present visual knowledge of the room in the absence of descriptive text.

Sparsely described settings are also common in fairy tales. A nonspecific, open setting makes the tale every person's story. "Once upon a time," and "Once in a land faraway" create an open setting accessible and inviting to everyone. However, clues in the text and illustrations let the reader speculate about the setting. In *Little Red Riding Hood*, retold and illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman, the story clearly takes place in a forest.

Characters in folk tales are also flatter, less well-developed than they are in well-written modern stories and novels. Fairy tale characters are either "good" and have no flaws, or they are "evil" with no redeeming features. Good characters,

like Snow White and Cinderella, are models of how to behave. Bruno Bettelheim in his book, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, maintains that black and white morality shown by fairy tale characters is clear to children. For instance, children understand that murder is wrong. The stepmother in the Snow White tale was evil, and she was wrong to try to deceive and kill Snow White.

Fairy tales not only have certain literary elements in common; they also contain a basic pattern that is repeated over and over. Kernels of the Cinderella story are found in *Tattercoats*, *The Brocade Slipper*, *The Talking Eggs*, and in modern movies such as *Pretty Woman*. Recently, several authors have turned familiar fairy tales into complex stories suitable for teens, such as *Cinderella 2000*, by Mavis Jukes, and *Ella Enchanted*, by Gail Carson Levine. Each of these original novels has at its core the kernel of a single fairy tale. In these novels, the kernel is there, but details and literary elements have changed and expanded.

Fairy Tales and Novels for Teens and for the Classroom

Once a familiar fairy tale is changed into a novel for teenagers, it becomes a more complex story. Characters become more fully realized in these retellings. Readers learn the weaknesses and strengths of main characters, such as Orasmyn and Belle in Donna Jo Napoli's *Beast*. The author adds subplots and complications to the stories that were not present in the fairy tales. Rather than a simple fairy tale, some young adult novels are transformed into realistic fiction; others retain their fantasy elements. Gillian Cross's *Wolf* is a marvel of pieces from "Little Red Riding Hood" but is devoid of talking wolves or other happenings typical of fantasy. On the other hand, Gail Carson Levine's *Ella Enchanted* maintains the cruel magic of a curse on a young maiden.

Consider the possibilities for pairing stories for middle school and high school students. Challenge students to compare an illustrated fairy tale with a novel clearly based on a familiar tale.

For example, read Lisbeth Zwerger's *Hansel and Gretel* to a class and discuss the kernel of the story: The mother dies, the father remarries, and the stepmother wants to get rid of her two stepchildren. Hansel and Gretel become hopelessly lost in the woods, but they find a candy house. The witch who lives there captures them, intending to eat them. The children manage to push the witch into the oven, and they are saved. Then have students read *The Magic Circle* by Donna Jo Napoli and search for the kernel of the Hansel and Gretel story, looking for similarities and differences. Several features of the novel will intrigue readers. For instance, the narrator is the

witch, who was a healer until she was tricked by demons. She isolates herself so that she will not be tempted to eat children. By the time Hansel and Gretel appear at her house, she has carefully arranged her life to avoid evil. But the children tempt her, and she knows that she will not be able to resist eating them. She sacrifices herself in her own oven rather than live with the knowledge that she has eaten children.

Offering students the opportunity to compare a picture book with a teen novel allows us to review familiar tales with students. Some teens may not know traditional fairy tales. Here is a chance to acquaint them with an aspect of cultural literacy they may have missed in their childhood. For teens who loved fairy tales when they were younger, reading and discussing familiar tales will feel comfortable or even nostalgic. This feeling may entice reluctant readers to explore novels with the kernel elements of a fairy tale.

The titles of picture books and teen novels that follow are grouped by nine popular tales, for easy comparison. The picture books are traditional versions, beautifully illustrated. No parodies or other cultural variations are included. This is a selected list of titles based upon my fondness and admiration for particular illustrators. Certainly there are still more titles available. The teen novels recommended are suitable for middle school and high school students with some variation in age levels, as noted in the commentary. Through comparing picture books and teen novels, we have one last chance to introduce fairy tales to older readers, to introduce readers to the beauty of book illustration, to encourage critical thinking, and to expand cultural literacy. Beauty, Beast, Cinderella, Hansel, Gretel, Jack, Little Red Riding Hood, Rapunzel, Rumpelstiltskin, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White can make all of that possible.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

• Picture Books

Mayer, Marianne. *Beauty and the Beast*. Illus. by Mercer Mayer. New York: Sea Star Books, 2000.

Gr. K-3. Mercer Mayer's dramatic and richly painted illustrations enhance the familiar romantic story of the love between an enchanted prince and a beautiful young woman.

McCaughrean, Geraldine. *Beauty and the Beast*. Illustrated by Gary Blythe. New York: Carol Rhoda Books, 2000.

Gr. K-3. This spare retelling combined with almost surreal illustrations creates a mysterious feel to the classic tale.

• YA Novels

McKinley, Robin. *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty & the Beast*. New York: HarperCollins, 1985.

Gr. 5-10. This novel has mesmerized readers for years with its beautiful language, believable characters, and magically satisfying story.

McKinley, Robin. *Rose Daughter*. New York: Greenwillow, 1997.

Gr. 6-12. Robin McKinley revisits and expands the Beauty and the Beast story as she explores the transforming power of love.

Napoli, Donna Jo. *Beast*. New York: Atheneum, 2000.

Gr. 7-12. Orasmyn, a Persian Prince, cursed by a fairy, becomes the Beast and tells an absorbing story from his viewpoint as a lion. Belle, a French beauty, plays a traditional role and redeems him.

CINDERELLA

• Picture Books

Brown, Marcia. *Cinderella*. New York: Atheneum, 1971.

Gr. K-4. Winner of a Caldecott Medal, this French fairy tale follows a familiar story line enhanced by pastel illustrations that shimmer with delicate beauty, humor, and timelessness.

Craft, K. Y. *Cinderella*. New York: Seastar Books, 2000.

Gr. K-3. Adapted primarily from The Arthur Rackham Fairy Book and Andrew Tang's *The Blue Fairy Book*, Craft's lavish illustrations reflect an imaginary setting of seventeenth and eighteenth century France. The text is embellished elaborately with borders and illumination of the first letter on each page. Full-page illustrations rendered in oil over watercolor add romance and mystery to a familiar story.

• YA Novels

Jukes, Mavis. *Cinderella 2000*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2000.

Gr. 6-10. Ashley Ella Toral is plagued with an embarrassing stepmother and twin stepsisters when all she wants is to spend New Year's Eve at the Ocean Crest Country Club with a special boyfriend. Clever and humorous trappings of the traditional Cinderella story will entertain teens who dream of romance but are hampered with everyday problems.

Levine, Gail Carson. *Ella Enchanted*. New York: HarperCollins Juvenile Books, 1997.

Gr. 4-7. Lucinda, a fool of a fairy, gives Ella the curse of unerring obedience. The result is a miserable childhood as Ella struggles against becoming a victim to whichever child discovers her curse. This novel has won important recognition as a 1998 Newbery Honor, a 1998 American Library Association's Notable Book, and a 1999 International Reading Association's Young Adults' Choices.

HANSEL AND GRETEL

• Picture Book

Lesser, Rika. *Hansel and Gretel*. Illus. by Paul O. Zelinsky. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1999.

Gr. K-3. Based on the first transcription and first printing of the Grimm tale, this winner of a 1985 Caldecott Honor, presents the tale of two children who outwit a witch to return to their grateful father. Zelinsky's beautifully shadowed illustrations complement the spare but dramatic text.

• YA Novel

Napoli, Donna Jo. *The Magic Circle*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1995.

Gr. 5-8. The Ugly One, with her twisted back and her eye for beauty, is the village midwife and healer. She learns to be a sorceress and to call demons while protected in a magic circle. One small mistake, one break in the circle, and she "is snatched by a demon and becomes the Ugly Witch. Demon voices urge her to eat a child. To escape people she isolates herself in a forest until Hansel and Gretel appear to tempt her. This is a fascinating story from the witch's viewpoint.

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

• Picture Books

Howe, John. *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1998.

Gr. K-3. John Howe's version shows a terrifying, black-ar-

mored giant from whom Jack steals the hen, a sack of gold, and the golden harp. The classic English fairy tale is embellished with elegant visual sweeps of the beanstalk and the castle in the sky.

Kellogg, Steven. *Jack and the Beanstalk.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991.

Gr. K-3. Kellogg's familiar humor marks detailed illustrations of a plucky young boy and a grotesque ogre and his wife.

- YA Novel

Napoli, Donna Jo. *Crazyjack.* New York: Delacorte Press, 1999.

Gr. 4-7. Seven years after his father's disappearance, Jack plants the beans and begins a search for his father. He finds a giant who's a wife beater and treasures that differ from those found in the traditional story. Jack wins back Flora, his true love, and comes to terms with the death of his father. This novel is a well-written adventure with a satisfying ending.

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

- Picture Books

The Brothers Grimm. *Little Red-Cap.* Illus. by Lisbeth Zwerger. New York: North-South Books, 1995.

Gr. K-3. This translation from the German presents a close retelling of the original story. In her art Zwerger brings out a surprising comic side to the tale while maintaining a somber background of muted earth tones.

Hyman, Trina Schart. *Little Red Riding Hood.* New York: Holiday House, 1983.

Gr. K-3. The detailed, charming country feel of this Grimm fairy tale is due primarily to Hyman's signature illustration style of pretty borders and expressive characters. A Caldecott Honor.

- YA Novel

Cross, Gillian. *Wolf* New York: Holiday House, 1991.

Gr.7-9. A vagabond mother, an educational program on wolves, a terrorist for a father, and a grandmother who banishes Cassy from her home combine brilliantly in this psychological thriller. Winner of the 1991 Carnegie Prize, the novel's narrative subtly dances around and through the tale of Little Red Riding Hood.

RAPUNZEL

- Picture Books

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. *Rapunzel.* Illus. by Maja Dusikova. New York: North-South Books, 1997.

Gr. 2-4. Dusikova's dreamy illustrations picture Rapunzel and the prince much younger than the characters in Hyman's retelling. Also, in this version Rapunzel does not give birth.

Rogasky, Barbara. *Rapunzel.* Illus. by Trina Schart Hyman. New York: Holiday House, 1987.

Gr. 2-4. This traditional retelling is enhanced by Hyman's beautifully detailed illustrations using full pages for important events and smaller pictures built into borders for lesser events.

Zelinsky, Paul O. *Rapunzel.* New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1997.

Gr. 2-4. Winner of the 1993 Caldecott Medal, this distinctive book reveals definite Italian and French influences in the architecture, landscape, and characters' costumes contained in Zelinsky's exquisite oil paintings.

- YA Novels

Geras, Adele. *The Tower Room.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1998.

Gr. 7-10. In the first of three books readers meet three young women: Megan, Alice, and Bella. In this book Megan is a modern-day Rapunzel. She falls in love with Simon, a young man who climbs the scaffolding into the Tower Room that Megan shares with her two best friends at an all-girls boarding school. The updated covers for paperback editions of this trilogy will appeal to teens wanting to read about romance.

Napoli, Donna Jo. *Zel.* New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1996.

Gr.7-12. Once again Napoli humanizes a witch in a fairy tale. Most of the story is told through the viewpoint of Zel's "mother," a witch who sold her soul to the devil and stole another woman's child. The setting for this Rapunzel story is fifteenth-century Switzerland.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN

- Picture Book

Zelinsky, Paul O. *Rumpelstiltskin.* New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1986.

Gr. K-3. Zelinsky expands his simple text with elegant illustrations. Winner of a 1987 Caldecott Honor, this retelling is based upon the 1819 Grimm version.

- YA Novel

Napoli, Donna Jo and Richard Tchen. *Spinners.* New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2000.

Gr. 6-10. Questions about Rumpelstiltskin's past are answered in this newly created story of two spinners. One spinner is a beautiful young woman, the other is a deformed man, scorned by the one he loved.

SLEEPING BEAUTY

- Picture Book

Hyman, Trina Schart. *The Sleeping Beauty.* Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000.

Gr. K-3. At once sinister and richly illustrated, Hyman brings this classic tale to life with fascinating artistic details of a romantic world of kings, queens, knights, ladies, and fairies.

- YA Novels

Geras, Adele. *Watching the Roses.* San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1998.

Gr. 8-12. On Alice's eighteenth birthday she is attacked and withdraws to her bedroom where she lies as if in a coma, but readers learn about her as she writes in a diary. References to roses abound, and Alice must ultimately save herself from her "sleeping death."

McKinley, Robin. *Spindle's End.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2000.

Gr.7-12. McKinley expands the story of Sleeping Beauty in this spellbinding novel of adventure, love, humor, and magic. Much more than a retelling of a familiar tale, this one will surprise with a twist at the end.

Yolen, Jane. *Briar Rose.* New York: Tor Books, 1993.

Gr. 8-12. This fascinating and unusual story blends the tale of Sleeping Beauty with the tragedy of the Holocaust. After her grandmother's death, Becca discovers a mysterious box of memorabilia and begins a search for her grandmother's origins. The novel is part of a fairy tale series created by Terri Windling.

SNOW WHITE

- **Picture Books**

Reins, Paul. *Snow White*. Illus. by Trina Schart Ryman. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000.

Gr. K-3. Cozy illustrations show Snow White looking like a young Elizabeth Taylor, and the seven dwarves looking fatherly. The Queen, Snow White's jealous stepmother, is surrounded by appropriately evil trappings in this classic, beautiful rendition of the Grimm tale.

Jarrell, Randall. *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Illus. by Nancy Ekholm Burkert. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972.

Gr. K-3. This large format book presents the familiar Grimm tale, and Burkert's illustrations emphasize a rich, majestic medieval setting. A Caldecott Honor Book.

- **YA Novel**

Geras, Adele. *Pictures of the Night*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1998.

Gr. 9-12. The third novel in the trilogy of YA fairy tales by Geras features Bella as Snow White. Eighteen-year-old Bella is a dynamic, independent character with a lovely singing voice. The summer before college she lives a carefree life touring with a band of seven musicians in London and Paris. Bella suspects her jealous stepmother of trying to kill her after encounters with two mysterious women.

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Norton, Donna E. *Through the Eyes of a Child: An Introduction to Children's Literature*, 5th edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999.

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PRACTICAL. INSPIRATIONAL. ESSENTIAL.

Kylene Beers

WHEN KIDS CAN'T READ

WHAT TEACHERS CAN DO

A Guide for Teachers 6-12

Heinemann

MIDDLE SCHOOL CONNECTION

Linda Broughton, Editor

No Quick Fixes

Two years ago I quit smoking. Had to—couldn't afford it, and goodness knows it wasn't good for my well-being. It's not an easy thing to do. There is lots of "special merchandise" to assist in this gargantuan effort. I accomplished my goal by using "special patches" and replacement of cigarettes with M&Ms. Now, it goes without saying that one person can consume significantly more M & Ms than smoke cigarettes. My method worked—I quit! I am smoke-free. I also gained mega pounds. It was okay—I knew that would happen. After my first year anniversary of non-smoking, I decided that (snap of fingers) it's time to drop the weight.

I began looking for a *super-duper-quick-as-a-flash-drop-those-pounds-scheme*. Piece of cake. I watched every infomercial. I needed something that would "erase pounds" in ten days. I tried everything on the market. Certainly those folks in TV land and all of the "certified experts" could offer me some instant gratification (even though it took over a year to slide right out of a dress size—or two). I finally faced the reality that I was going to have to do two things (actually three): eat less, exercise, give up M&Ms. I'm the expert here. I know that I can't have lasting effects with a quick fix, a *bandaid*, if you will. Nope—I have to devote time, effort, and lots of personal reflection to my goals.

As classroom teachers WE KNOW that learning and teaching takes time and gargantuan effort. Two of the most difficult language arts areas (and most frustrating) to teach and to learn are reading and writing. Actually, I prefer to call them *miracles*. No one can say absolutely how persons learn to do these. Through years of observation and theorizing it has been established that *the best way to learn to read is to be read to, be read with, and to read*. The *way to learn to write is to write*. I mean **really** write. So I would guess that the best way to teach these things is *to be* readers and writers. We also need resources that don't spout *instant remedy*. Because we are educated, "those on the outside" assume that we merely transfer our abilities to our charges. Hardly! We need pedagogy, we need resources, we need support, and we need time. Developing literate individuals while they are in the middle grades is always a work in progress. There are no quick fixes. We're in this profession for the long haul.

I have a few suggestions (resources) that might help, but be forewarned: they are going to require commitment and a great deal of effort. There are offers of programs circumnavigating our classes, hovering outside the curriculum developer's door, and lurking over the standard-test-maker's lounge. No amount of *you-too-can-do-these-activities-in-two-days* "training," worksheets, or computer programs will work. English language arts teachers bear the brunt of reading and writing instruction. What can be done?

We can read to our students – at all grade levels. Every-

one receives pleasure from being read to - warm fuzzies - *cool vibes*. Middle school students are no exception. Two names come to mind: Mem Fox (*Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*. Harcourt, Inc. 2001) and Jim Trelease (*The Read-Aloud Handbook*, Penguin Books, 2001). **READING IS THE HEART OF EDUCATION!** Reading—being read to, reading with a reader, reading for meaning, reading to learn something . . . it's a joy, it's exciting, it's engaging, it's a necessary. Reading begins with reading. Individuals need to know that those "little black squiggles" actually mean something. Readers need to know that words have meaning and sounds BEFORE any phonics make sense. Many of our children have not been blessed with being read to as infants. Many young adolescents have not been afforded the opportunities of having books and printed materials in the home. Many children come to school not reading or realizing that words build meaning. No number of bandaids will provide long-lasting effects. We must read to the children—the adolescents—the young adults—the adults. We must share with our middle grades classes the joys of reading (all levels of it). We must offer our students reading material. We must give time to the pursuit (and hard work) of becoming readers. Mem Fox and Jim Trelease offer wonderful suggestions and ideas to incorporate reading into all content areas. It can become a part of our curriculum, NOT an addition to it. Both texts are wonderfully "teacher friendly" and down right *evangelical*. Trelease confirms with statistical evidence what REAL READING can do—not chapters, not excerpts, not worksheets— but books, magazines, newspapers, real reading in context with the readers' lives. You will become believers once you've read either text. Trelease has edited two other titles overflowing with *read aloud* materials that will interest and please all ages.

Fuel real writing by having students engage in reading. The reader recognizes that writing is done for readers AND readers like to read writing that is well done. Whew! Reading and writing cannot be separated. Both are works in progress. Both are begun (legally) at age five or six. These activities are assigned and overseen by educated, literate adults. We begin to measure youngsters (as young as eight or nine) by our adult standards and we become *error-driven* toward our charges. Why not share writing that is done well and discuss those qualities that make it good? What are the qualities of writing that beg to be read? These are tough questions. Writers have a way of comparing notes about "what they do." Yes, we DO the process. The question is, though, how do we talk about what we DO and how we can do it more effectively or creatively or convincingly? I'll bet fifty cents that we've all been assigned writing but when it came time to work with it, talk about it, and maybe readdress it,

we didn't have a vocabulary to talk with writers about writing. Well, I have another suggestion. I must warn you that this is difficult, especially for those of us who have been assigning writing, expecting novellas within forty-five minutes, and seeking out every error in the paper (in other words, grading). Been there, done that (too many times to fathom):

Teach "6 +1 traits of writing". I learned about the "6 Traits of Writing" approach (see Culham, 2002; Spandel, 2001) during a presentation of a Fellow at the Mobile Bay Writing Project in 1999. I was bowled over. Why hadn't this been available to me when I had 180 students a day and tried to *squeeze* in one meaningful writing activity a week? I wore myself out by GRADING! Actually I was editing my students' work. I was pointing out errors instead of making them responsible for editing their own and their peers' work. I was expecting them to learn about revisions from my comments and suggestions—all of which came after the fact of their composing their essays. Good grief. The "Six Traits of Writing" approach offers a "working vocabulary" for writers (all levels of abilities—including the teacher/learner of writing). It's a wonderful opportunity to get our novice writers, ages seven through seventy-two, to do that which we insist upon but never know how to get them to do: REVISE. It is a wonderful tool IF (not only is there a but, there is an IF, too) they are internalized, understood, and woven within each individual teacher's philosophy and approach to teaching. There are folks running around offering two-day workshops on *everything-you-need-to-know-about 6-Traits!* Be very afraid. Too little knowledge can be dangerous to the learner and the teacher (of which you are both).

6-Traits is a model for teaching writing that's useful in middle grades classes. It is complex and complete. From this model you take what you need. The basic idea is that if something can be assessed, it can be taught. The neat thing is that you can help your writers develop the abilities to recognize good writing, evaluate their own writing, and do something about it BEFORE you have to "grade it." This takes time and a great deal of thought, preplanning, and perseverance. You need to take baby-steps first. You and your students need to try out these suggestions together. You need to begin to incorporate (one at a time) the vocabulary of writers into your classes. You need to share with students what good writing looks like and discuss - not tell - how and why it's good. You need to give your writers time to apply these qualities (little by little) to their own writing. Your environment must be turned into a readers' and writers' environment—slowly. This takes time, effort, lots of work - no *quick fixes*. Find a buddy or two, in or out of the English department (writers and readers come from everywhere). Read one of the basic texts. Discuss it, compare ideas, experiment, reflect, compare notes. Above all trust your own instincts as readers and writers. 6-Traits is "teacher grown," and like many teacher grown methods and ideas, it is a keeper. It is not a bandaid.

Logging onto www.nwrel.org will give further history and insight to *6+1 Traits of Writing*. This lab is where this model began. Vicki Spandel (although a young person) is considered the "grandmother" of these potentially "doable" ideas. She has since gone to The Great Source, Inc.

In short, I suggest that you do at least these two things with your middle school students: read to and with them, and talk the talk of writers. Both approaches will make your life as a teacher, reader, and writer so much more joyful and fulfilling (and significantly less frustrating). Remember: *there is no instant gratification* when we teach reading and writing. The wiggle of a wand or the purchase of a prepared package, even with tons of work sheets, will not promise Prince Charming or instant Eudora Welty.

One more short story. Years ago as a young adult, I learned to sail. Sailing has a lingo of its own. I took a few courses with the Coast Guard. More importantly I sailed. I learned the language of the sailor by messing around with the boat. I learned the lingo as I learned how to sail. I had to learn the language in order to communicate with others on the boat and others in boats too close to my boat. My first important word and reaction to the word was JIBE. Ask a sailor.

As you probably can tell, I am passionate about helping our young people become life-long readers, writers hence learners. You can tell that the ONLY way to cultivate these areas of longevity is going to take TIME and mountains of effort. You probably can tell how strongly I feel that teachers are *the experts*. You probably can tell that I could go one forever, but alas, I have to get to the gym. Nothing that is worthwhile is ever easy. I've become healthier, less "weighty" but (there's always a but) alas... not M&M free. May you experience joy with your students as readers and writers.

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THE PUBLISHER'S CONNECTION

M. Jerry Weiss, Editor

Focus on Portraits and Media

A Short Excursion

During the summer my wife and I had the opportunity to visit the National Portrait Gallery in London. A special exhibit, "Beatrix Potter to Harry Potter: Portraits of Children's Writers," attracted many adults and children of all ages. The exhibit, celebrating the achievements of children's authors, led to the production of a book that had all of the portraits and interesting comments about each other.

Anne Fine, of *Mrs. Doubtfire* fame, wrote the "Foreword" in which she stated:

The British have had so many fine writers for children. Explanations for this pre-eminence in the field range from the warping effects of our miserable and mercurial climate to the unenviable way in which so many of our offspring are raised. Clearly, part of the excellence in some kinds of writing for the young springs from the national quirk called the British sense of humor. But I suspect a good deal stems from the rebellion against that other characteristic for which we're supposedly noted – our hypocrisy. . . (p. 7)

In addition to Beatrix Potter, J. K. Rowling, and Anne Fine, were portraits of such literary luminaries as J. M. Barrie (*Peter Pan*), Kenneth Grahame (*The Wind in the Willows*), Frances Hodgson Burnett (*The Secret Garden*), A. A. Milne (*Winnie the Pooh*), J. R. R. Tolkien (*The Hobbit*), C. S. Lewis (*Chronicles of Narnia*), Mary Norton (*The Borrowers*), Philippa Pearce (*Tom's Midnight Garden*), Roald Dahl (*Boy*), Richard Adams (*Watership Down*), Nina Bawden (*Carrie's War*), Michael Morpurgo (*The War of Jenkins' Ear*), Philip Pullman (*The Northern Lights*, *The Subtle Knife*, *The Amber Spyglass*), Jamila Gavin (*Coram Boy*), and many, many more. By each portrait were some interesting quotes from the author's book or comments made by someone else on the author's work. A fabulous literary happening.

A schedule of author visits and readings in this gallery was also available. All of this was free of charge. In the Museum Gift Shop were lots of children's books and books for young adults. Business was booming.

Wouldn't it be great to have a traveling portrait exhibit of American Children's and Young Adult Authors? Maybe we could then have an exchange exhibit with the British exhibit.

Audio World

I'm getting hooked on books on tape and CDs. Make no mistake, I then want to read the books, if I haven't already done so.

Bruce Coville has launched a terrific audio library. Each recording is done as a dramatic reading with lots of people

playing the various characters in the book. He and a full cast are featured in *Song of the Wanderer*.

Tamora Pierce and a full cast are featured in her book, *Circle of Magic: Sandry's Book*. (The entire series of *Circle of Fire* will be available shortly).

Paula Danziger and a full cast are featured in *United Tates of America*. Paula has more to say at the end of the story that is quite compelling.

Important to note: All of these recordings are unabridged. They bring back the golden age of radio. These are perfect for developing listening skills and perhaps for extending students' powers of concentration.

These resources are available from Full Cast Audio, P. O. Box 6110, Syracuse, NY 13217, or <http://www.fullcastudio.com>. Toll free calls can be made to 800-871-6152.

New from Random House Listening Library is a full cast recording of *Seek* by Paul Fleischman. The novel, available from Cricket Books, is written in play form, and this is an exceptionally good reading.

Yes, I was hooked on mysteries as an adolescent, and I fondly remember the Hardy Boys. The Tony Award winning actor Bill Irwin does justice in reading Franklin Dixon's *Hardy Boys: The Tower of Treasure*.

One of the most favorably reviewed books in recent years was *Troy* by Adele Geras. The recording features the dramatic voice of Miriam Margolyes, who was honored with the Order of the British Empire for her extensive film, television, and theater career in Great Britain. This is the thrilling retelling of the siege of Troy as seen through the eyes of today's events in the Middle East.

Notes From *Publisher's Weekly*

In the July 22, 2002 issue of *Publisher's Weekly*, is an interesting article, "Hollywood Happenings." (pp. 79-83) Here is a feature on how fast Hollywood producers are buying children's and young adult books for screen treatment.

Stephen Moore, a literary agent who specializes in film and television rights, says there are three things that "put a project over the top."

First is a very recognizable or beloved title or author like Dr. Seuss or *Tuck Everlasting* (by Natalie Babbit). . . Second, projects that have a very strong concept, like (William Steig's) *Shrek!*, which is a simple, fable-like story. . . and finally, . . . a proposed book-to-film project that has a meaningful attachment – a big director, a big actor, or sometimes even a big screenwriter is likely to be developed and produced sooner than most.

Here are just a few titles that are listed as projects in the works or that are under option at this time:

Alex Rider series by Anthony Horowitz, optioned by Samuelson Productions.

America by E. R. Frank, film rights purchased by Rosie O'Donnell.

Aquamarine by Alice Hoffman, optioned by Fox 2000.

Artemis Fowl by Eoin Colfer, rights sold to Miramax.

A Band of Angels by Deborah Hopkinson, optioned by City Entertainment.

Because of Winn-Dixie by Kate DeCamillo, optioned by Joan Singleton.

Belle Prater's Boy by Ruth White, optioned by Angel Brown Productions.

Burger Wuss by M. T. Anderson, optioned by New Line Cinema.

Confessions of a Teen Drama Queen by Dyan Sheldon, optioned by New Line Cinema.

Everything on a Waffle by Polly Horvath, optioned by Radical Media.

The Firework-Maker's Daughter by Philip Pullman, optioned by Miramax.

The Giver by Lois Lowry, optioned by Walden Media.

The Goats by Brock Cole, optioned by Humble-Journey Films.

His Dark Materials trilogy by Philip Pullman, optioned by New Line Cinema.

Holes by Louis Sachar, currently shooting as a feature film by Walden Media.

In a Dark Wood by Michael Cadnum, sold to Beacon Films.

In the Company of Men: A Woman at the Citadel by Nancy Mace, sold to Artisan Entertainment of USA Network.

The Incredible Painting by Clousseau by Jon Agee, optioned by Cielo Cerezo.

Interstellar Pig by William Sleator, optioned by Nickelodeon Films/Paramount Pictures.

My Guy by Sarah Weeks, optioned by Disney Feature Films.

The Night Room by E. M. Golman, being developed as a feature film by Paramount Pictures/Jane Startz Productions/Icon Productions.

The Pushcart War by Jean Merrill in development by Jane Startz Productions.

Rowan Hood: Outlaw Girl of Sherwood Forest by Nancy Springer, in development for Jane Startz Productions.

The Secret of Platform 13 by Eva Ibbotson, sold to Nelvana for development as a feature film.

A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket, sold to Nickelodeon Films/Paramount Pictures, first three books adapted by author for feature film, due 2003.

The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants by Ann Brashares, sold to Warner Bros.

Someone Like You and *That Summer* by Sarah Dessen, inspired New Line Cinema film tentatively titled *How to Deal*, due out 2003.

Son of the Mob by Gordon Korman, in development for Jane Startz Productions/Miramax.

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle, filmed as television miniseries for Miramax TV, to be aired on ABC.

And this is just a partial list of all the films listed in the article. There is much to be said about how a film/tv presentation can lead to an increase in the sale of a book.

Good luck to many authors out there.

While on the subject of film, every school media center should have *Cinema Year by Year: 1894-2002*, a DK (Dorling Kindersley) book. David Thomson, noted film critic and author of several books, including *Hollywood A Celebration*, has written the "Foreword" in which he states the purpose of this book is to "open up a recent but fascinating history." There are reprints of pictures from the silent film days all the way up to the Oscars received by Denzel Washington for best actor in *Malcolm X* and Halle Berry for her role in *Monster's Ball*. Reviews are from magazines and papers throughout the entire world. Throughout there are excellent essays on topics such as "The Silent Era," "Movies Find a Voice," "The Studio System," "The New Wave," and "War and After," to name just a few. Poster Art is used throughout, as well as photos from many different films. Information about some of the world's movies stars is also included. This is an encyclopedia that can help many students appreciate how films are made and how dictate to the styles and tastes of moviegoers. And the list price is fifty dollars (\$50) for the almost 1,000 pages of most fascinating reading. For information contact <http://www.dk.com>.

I, for one, don't understand how the history and development of film (and the Broadway musical) can hardly ever be mentioned in any English or social studies course. These are major developments in modern culture and reflect achievements by individuals in unique ways, often represented by the presentation of major awards throughout the world.

Congratulations

To Karen Hesse, author of *Witness* and *Out of the Dust*, who is a recipient of a 2002 McArthur Fellowship.

To Graham Salisbury, author of *Lord of the Deep*, (Delacorte) winner of the Boston-Globe Horn Book Award for fiction.

To Elizabeth Partridge, author of *This Land was Made for You and me: The Life and Songs of Woodie Guthrie*, (Viking) winner of the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for nonfiction.

To Terry Borzamoto, recipient of the 2002 ALAN Hipple Service Award.

To Paul Zindel, recipient of the 2002 ALAN Award.

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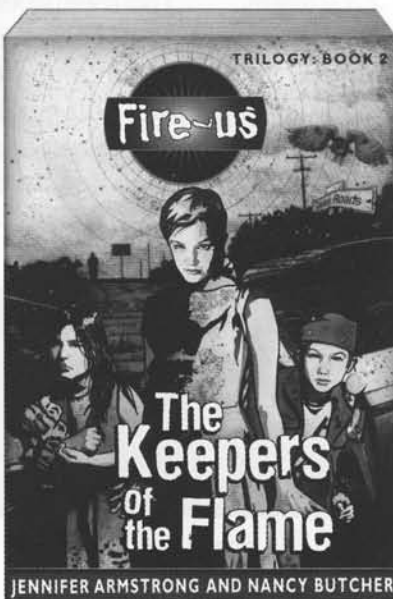
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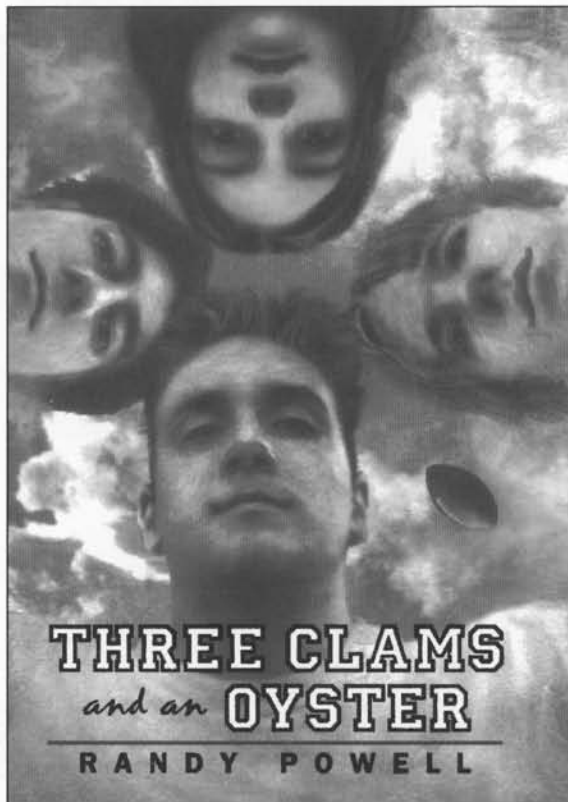
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