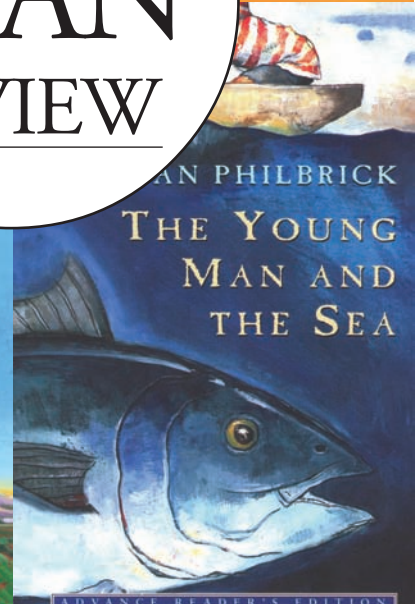
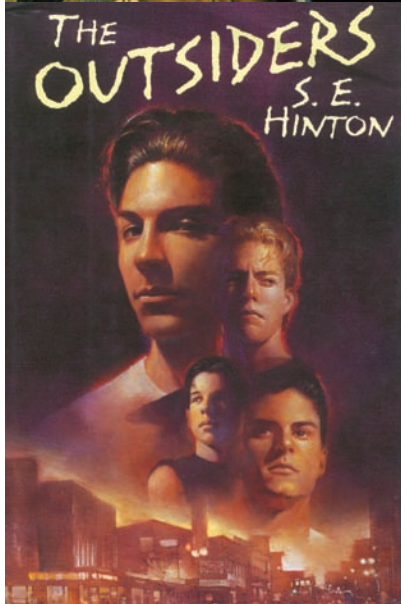
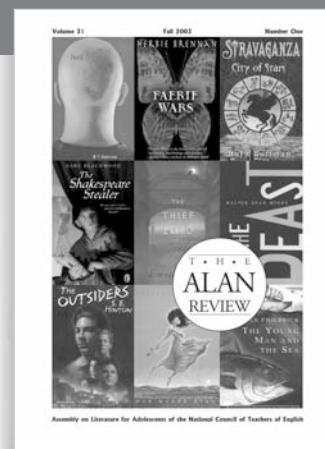


T • H • E
ALAN
REVIEW



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

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

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

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From the Editors

A year ago, after a somewhat thrilling speedway-esque drive to the Atlanta airport in which our fingernails were embedded into the car door handles, the two of us left the ALAN Conference and boarded our separate planes as the incoming co-editors of *The ALAN Review*. Our minds were spinning with ideas and goals, dreams and wishes for our tenure as co-editors, as we headed back to our respective roles as a university professor at Arizona State University and as a seventh-grade language arts teacher in Wamego, Kansas.

As time went on, our first and foremost wish was that Sissi Carroll, who has done such an outstanding job as the editor of the publication, would never step away from her telephone or computer so that she would continue to receive our calls and emails instantaneously. As it turned out, Sissi was more than gracious with her help in the editorial transition, and we sincerely thank her for it.

Our next wish was that we would be able to retain so many quality people who had helped make the journal such a quality publication. If you glance at the list of section editors and contributing writers and reviewers, we hope you recognize our attempt to merge some of ALAN's present leaders with some of ALAN's leaders of tomorrow. We wish to thank everyone who served in the past and to welcome our new column editors:

- **Claudia Katz**, Evanston, Illinois: Middle School Connection editor,
- **Kay Smith**, Highland, Utah: High School Connection editor
- **Jeffrey S. Kaplan**, Orlando, Florida: Research Connection editor
- **M. Jerry Weiss**, Montclair, New Jersey: Publishers Connection editor

- **William Broz**, Batavia, Iowa: Professional Resource Connection editor
- **Diane P. Tuccillo**, Mesa, Arizona: Library Connection editor
- **Jean Brown**: Warwick, Rhode Island: Nonprint YAL Connection editor

And, in addition to those already serving, two new editorial board members join us:

- Jean Boreen, Flagstaff, Arizona
- Wendy Glenn, Storrs, Connecticut

We're thrilled to have all these talented individuals joining with us as we begin our own journey as co-editors.

Also on our wish list has been that we continue to encourage dialogue and research and practical application involving young adult literature. Thirty-some years ago, the works of S.E. Hinton and a handful of others were slipping into the hands of teen readers, educators, and librarians. Today, in our own classrooms, students are clamoring for "more books like these"—Walter Dean Myers' *Monster*, Lois Duncan's *Locked in Time*, and Gary Paulsen's *The Rifle*, to name a few. It's because of the hard work of those before us that we're able to find such a growing list of possibilities to share with those students. And it's our responsibility to help further this path they have begun.

Yes, the taxi drive to the airport a year ago was one of our more thrilling adventures, but it pales in comparison to the excitement we're feeling as we provide you with our first co-edited issue of *The ALAN Review*. We hope you'll join us.

Jim and Lori

★ **"Insights both finely honed and enriching."***

★ **"White transports readers to 1955 in tiny Polly's Fork, Ky.,** for another memorable view of individuals who transmute their pain and suffering into compassion and even art . . . Involving as the plot is, the power of White's work derives from her seemingly easy evocation of ordinary people as they stumble into enduring truths about human strength and vulnerability."

—*Starred, *Publishers Weekly*

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"The colorful, hill-country language

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A Friendship by the Book: Joan Lowery Nixon

When I was asked to introduce Joan Lowery Nixon at a local conference, I began by noting that I had met Joan years earlier. We became fast friends immediately and spent many hours together. Joan, understandably, looked puzzled as she listened to my introduction. No surprise there: Joan was not present at our first meeting. I initially came to know Joan through her book *Whispers from the Dead*, a book required for Dick Abrahamson's class in YA literature that semester. Our friendship did begin with that first novel. It deepened as I continued to read Joan's work over the years and came to know her personally.

The Joan Lowery Nixon I came to know through books was a talented writer who knew how to keep readers engaged. Whether we were trying to figure out "whodunit" in her mystery novels or worrying about the fate of one of the Kelly children in the Orphan Train books, we read Nixon's books because they touched a responsive chord in us all. The fact that Joan was able to reach readers at such a personal level reveals quite a bit about the person behind the more than 100 books she wrote in the course of her career. Joan was a warm and welcoming individual who sought to put all she met at ease. She had a quick and lilting laugh and appreciated a good joke, even at her own expense. She was deeply touched when a reader of any age waxed enthusiastic about her writing. Joan took the time to get to know her readers. That knowledge is reflected in the fact that children, teens, and adults enjoyed her mysteries, her histories, her nonfiction, and her picture books.

A four-time winner of the Poe Award for her mysteries for adolescents, Joan not only set standards for the genre, she helped redefine it. Her careful plotting

and elaborate character development were hallmarks of her mysteries. What made her books work, though, was the fact that each of her main characters faced two problems: the mystery, certainly, was one of them; however, each character also faced a personal problem that had to be resolved. Thus, readers could connect with her characters on a very personal level.

Additionally, Joan was a champion of the writing of others in her field. She never failed to note new books and authors whose work she admired. This generosity of spirit was evident in other areas as well. In fact, my favorite memory of Joan goes back about 10 years ago. I was working with a class of at-risk readers in a local junior high school. Their librarian, Lois Buckman, and I had spent weeks talking about Joan's books and encouraging kids to select a title of hers to read independently. Their "reward" for reading would be the chance to participate in a telephone conference with Joan who had graciously donated her time to talk to the students. I wish we had thought to videotape the conference. Kids stared at the speaker-phone enraptured as Joan answered every single one of their questions (and this despite the fact that some of the questions were repeated more than once). Even a couple of maintenance people working in the library that day paused to listen to Joan as her voice echoed in the quiet room.

I miss my friend Joan. I'll miss seeing her at conferences, but I will also miss meeting her again and again in the pages of her books.

Dr. Teri Lesesne is an associate professor in the Department of Library Science at Sam Houston State University, in Houston, Texas.



New Perspectives in Young Adult Literature

All of us lead busy lives, and our ability to read everything about a subject we love—young adult literature—is impossible at best. Too often, we give a cursory glance to that we favor, hoping someday, we will have the time and the inclination to read all that we missed, and then some. The purpose of this column—*The Research Connection*—is to help alleviate this very concern. True, you want to read every young adult novel that crosses your path and every article about young adult literature that is left unread on your desk and coffee table, but time just does not permit. And, even if you did, would it not be good to have someone else digest the latest about young adult literature for your own reading pleasure?

That is the purpose of this column. *The ALAN Review Research Connection* is designed to inform readers about what is new in the study of young adult literature, and what still needs to be said. As the field of young adult literature grows, more and more teachers are beginning to incorporate young adult short stories and novels into their classroom lessons. Today, it is not as unusual to hear about a novel by

Chris Crutcher, for example, appearing along side a classic by Twain or Dickens. Indeed, my daughter read Crutcher's *Chinese Handcuffs* (Laurel Leaf, 1996) the very same year that she read *Romeo and Juliet*. I was pleased that her eleventh grade English teacher made time for both. And the fact that she did only underlines how far we have come as active leaders in the dissemination of young adult literature as a vital and engaging part of today's standard middle and high school English curriculum. It means we are doing something "right."

That said, here is a summary and review of some of the more recent and prominent articles concerning the field of young adult literature:

Female Body Image in Young Adult Literature

Researcher Beth Younger provides a comprehensive and provocative read about the role of female body image and sexuality as portrayed in young adult literature written from 1975 to 1999. In her article "Pleasure, Pain, and the Power of Being Thin: Female Sexuality in Young Adult Literature" (*National*

Women's Studies Association Journal, 2003), Younger notes in her analysis of young adult novels (1975-1999), that there is a definite embedded link between body image, weight, and sexuality: thinner young women are portrayed as powerful and in control, while larger women are depicted as sexually passive and irresponsible. Young adult literature, she writes, reflects societal stereotypes, and although literary critics often ignore this genre, it remains an important body of work that deserves our attention for not only whom it entertains, but also for what it says about the human condition.

Younger writes that young adult fiction frequently depicts female sexuality as a threatening force. For young females in a patriarchal society, sexuality—particularly, sexual desire—is often represented as a primitive force that must be regulated. In Peggy Orenstein's *Schoolgirls* (1994) and Joan Jacobs Brumberg's *The Body Project* (1997), coming to terms with sexuality in a society that treats women as sexual objects is demonstrated as a prevalent and pervasive struggle for young women everywhere. Indeed, Younger contends that girls turn to young adult

fiction because it is a genre that provides many representations of young adult girls as sexual beings.

Author Judy Blume is cited as one of the forerunners of a movement in young adult fiction in which female bodies are portrayed in a frank and open manner. Now critically acclaimed, Blume's early years—*Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret?* (Bradbury Press, 1970) and *Forever* (Simon and Schuster, 1975)—are marked by works that contain frank and graphic portrayals of sexuality, and often, Younger contends, these and other sexually explicit young adult novels are dismissed by critics as not worthy because they are so bold.

Nevertheless, as Michael Cart argues in *From Romance to Realism: Fifty Years of Growth and Change in Young Adult Literature* (HarperCollins, 1996), many young adult texts that are scorned by adult reviewers are wildly popular with young readers. The reason, as both Cart and Younger assert, is that in such young adult novels as Blume's frank *Forever*, teens find a faithful and unvarnished version of true life in all its extremes and emotions.

Younger contends that embodied in most young adult novels about sexuality is another more subtle and telling theme about the self-image of young girls—the obsession with weight and body image. True, Judy Blume's *Forever* focuses on the protagonist's loss of her virginity and her subsequent discovery of sexual prowess and pleasure, but it is her depiction of her young body that draws most of the attention of the reader.

Similarly, two texts by Norma Klein, *It's OK If You Don't Love Me* (Fawcett Crest, 1977) and *Breaking*

Up (Random House, 1980), illustrate sexually open young women who derive all their power from their looks: they are in control, powerful, responsible, and ultra-thin. In *Nell's Quilt* (Farrar, Straus, & Grioux, 1987), author Susan Terris portrays a young woman who gains control of her life only after she starves herself into near anorexia. Judith Ortiz Cofer's *An Island Like You* (Penquin, 1995) shows young girls struggling with their ethnicity as they grow into their

Young adult novels conform to the stereotype that thin is desirable, and fat is desperate and unhappy.

bodies and awareness of their sexuality. Cherie Bennett's *Life in the Fast Lane* (Random House, 1998) graphically shows one beauty queen's battle with her weight and her sense of self as a sexual being. In Connie Porter's *Imani All Mine* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), the young hero Tasha has a baby at age fifteen, combats poverty, and struggles to accept herself even though the image of thin girls she sees in *Seventeen* magazine makes her feel huge. Similarly, *Name Me Nobody* (1999), author Lois-Ann Yamanaka presents a protagonist, Emi-Lou, who diets secretly and tries to come to terms with her sexuality and body image.

What makes these depictions so powerful, researcher Younger contends, is that even though these narratives portray ethnically diverse

young girls, they also show how the contemporary hyper-thin European ideal of beauty is prevalent in much, if not all, of young adult literature. Younger demonstrates that in all instances, heavy girls are represented as sexually promiscuous, passive, and powerless, while thin characters appear responsible and powerful. These associations of weight with sexuality are subtle and suspect, but they haunt young adults novels with a fervor often unspoken, and thus reveal much about how we perceive them and their self-images.

Younger also contends that weight and race are often the unspoken notions of the novel. Thus, when the race of character is not specifically delineated, white is assumed. Similarly, when the weight of a character is not detailed, the reader is most likely to assume the character is thin. Only if the character is considered abnormal, Younger writes, is her weight mentioned at all, and more often than not, they are called fat or, at least, chubby. And this is particularly true when the depiction is of a woman.

Young adult novels conform to the stereotype that thin is desirable, and fat is desperate and unhappy. In *Forever*, the protagonist Katherine is thin, promiscuous, but in control, while her best friend, Sybil, is fat, desperate, and vulnerable. In *Breaking Up*, sixteen-year-old Alison Rose embodies the thin ideal, not even having to exercise to maintain her perfectly proportioned body. Tasha, in *Imani All Mine*, dreams of being thinner, no matter how much it might hurt, because she believes pain is less important than looking good. And in *An Island Like You*,

fourteen-year-old Sandra longs to be more than thin and flat-chested, desiring to be like her friend, Jennifer, voluptuous and big-breasted. All these examples, and more, demonstrate how powerful body image is in the narratives of young adult fiction—as elsewhere,—and how the connection between female sexuality and body image—so prevalent in our popular culture—is just as prominent in young adult literature. Moreover, Younger concludes, young adult literature should be taught in women’s studies and feminist theory courses as well as in courses that focus on adolescent and children’s literature to illustrate the participation of these texts in the construction of female sexuality and body image.

Sexual Orientation and Young Adult Literature

In her essay “Homophobia, Why Bring it Up?” African-American activist and writer Barbara Smith writes, “homophobia is usually the last oppression to be mentioned, the last to be taken seriously, the last to go. But it is extremely serious, sometimes to the point of being fatal (p. 112).” Smith continues that schools are “virtual cauldrons” of homophobic discrimination and anger from graffiti on the bathroom wall to the heterosexual bias of most textbooks. As an African-American lesbian, Smith is particularly conscious of how human beings are not stereotypes, but an amalgamation of temperaments, all layered and complex. Her argument is that discussion of attitudes toward sexuality must begin in public school classrooms, and that it should include literature about sexual orientation.

Educator Patti Capel Swartz makes this very same case in her article, “Bridging Multicultural Education: Bringing Sexual Orientation into the Children’s and Young Adult Literature Classrooms,” (*Radical Teacher*, 2003). She believes that classes in children’s and young adult literature must include works that discuss racism, classism, ableism, sexism, and homophobia; otherwise, discriminatory attitudes will not change. Swartz argues that in discussing gay issues, the focus should be about gays in regard to community and culture, and not gay sex. Discussion about sexual orientation, she insists, can be brought into the classroom in the same way as any other multicultural issue: through literature, discussion, and writing.

Swartz readily acknowledges, however, that discussion about sexual orientation might be difficult for some teachers—and for many reasons. Some might object on moral grounds, others to avoid controversy, and still others because they lack background knowledge about sexuality and gender orientation. To help, Swartz suggests two books, *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader*, edited by Peter Nardi and Ralph Bolton (Routledge, 1998) and *Curriculum, Cultures, and (Homo) Sexualities: Queering Elementary Education: Advancing the Dialogue About Sexualities and Schooling*, edited by William J. Letts and James T. Sears (Rowman and Littlefield, 1999). Both works help teachers understand how social constructions affect notions of justice and equality, and how such knowledge can shape classroom instruction. Thus, teachers can begin to make great

strides by introducing young people to literature that discusses sexual orientation.

For early elementary students, Swartz suggests Rosamund Elwin and Michelle Paulse’s *Asha’s Mums* (Women’s Press, 1990). In this picture book, Asha’s class is going on a field trip, but her teacher will not accept her permission slip because it is signed by both of her mothers. She tells Asha that she cannot have two mothers. The book concludes with a description of how hurt her fellow classmates are when they learn of their teacher’s actions, and how elated they feel when the teacher realizes her error.

Some other picture books include Tommie dePaola’s *Oliver Button Is a Sissy* (Harcourt Brace & Co., 1979), Barbara Lynn Edmonds *Mama Eat Ant, Yuck!* (Hundredth Munchy, 2000), Joseph Kennedy’s *Lucy Goes to the Country* (Alyson, 1998), Leslea Newman’s *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Alyson, 1998), Johnny Valentine’s *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads* (Alyson, 1994) and Michael Willhoite’s *Daddy’s Roommate* (Alyson, 1991). All these books, in vivid pictures and stories, depict life with parents who are of the same sex and present the lifestyle in a clear, straightforward, and non-judgmental manner.

Books suitable for older children include Marion Dane Bauer’s *Am I Blue? Coming Out of the Silence* (HarperCollins, 1994), Chris Crutcher’s *Athletic Shorts* (William Morrow, 1991), and *Ironman* (Laurel-Leaf, 1995), Gigi Kaiser’s *Love Makes a Family* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), Jacqueline Woodson’s *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun*

(Scholastic, 1995) and *The House You Pass On the Way* (Laurel-Leaf, 1999). Kevin Jennings' *Becoming Visible: A Reader in Gay and Lesbian History for High School* (Alyson, 1994) is appropriate for middle school as well as high school children. Again, these works, all subtle in tone and style, discuss the issue of homosexuality in a respectful and resonant voice, underscoring the significance of a character who is gay and non-threatening. In some of these works, the gay character is secondary to the principal story, but all are representative of what it means to be dissimilar in a world where differences are often hidden.

"As teachers," writes Swartz, "we need to deconstruct the biases of education to allow all of our students to think critically and to live full and vital lives" (p.15). Teachers need to create a safe place for difference, whether that difference is "concerned with race, gender, sexuality, class or ability" (p. 15).

Learning Disabilities in Children's and Adolescent Literature

In "Learning Disabilities in Children's and Adolescent Literature: How Are Characters Portrayed?" (*Learning Disability Quarterly*, 2003), Mary Ann Prater describes the result of research that analyzed ninety fictional books that portrayed at least one character with a learning disability to determine how learning disabilities and related topics were addressed. Prater's results indicated that most of the characters with learning disabilities were dynamic, meaning they changed or grew through the course of the story line. Also, most

of the stories, she writes, centered on a main character with a learning disability telling the story from his or her point of view, and illustrating for the reader how the character's learning disability had a major impact on the plot. In the stories analyzed, Prater concludes the predominant learning disability was in the area of reading and written language, with the characters receiving help for their disability in a school resource room. And although the diagnostic/evaluation process was often described, few details about instructional methodology for improving student-learned behavior were discussed.

In general, Prater writes that fictionalized or true-to-life characters with a known learning disability often serve as role models and/or as bibliotherapy for children with disabilities. In addition, such written and visual characterizations of children with learning problems may inspire other children without disabilities opportunities to vicariously experience and learn about disabilities, or, at the very least, inspire future characters who represent a diverse and multidimensional community of learners.

Teachers and researchers have long advocated for the use of fictional literature as a means to teach students about disabilities (Andrews, 1998b; Blaska, 1996; McCarty & Chalmers, 1997; Sridhar & Vaughn, 2000; Prater, 2000). Still, despite such optimism, few authors have systematically studied these portrayals. Instead, a comprehensive review of the literature, Prater notes, reveals only four studies in which contemporary characterizations of learning disabled fictional portrayals have been examined empirically. In these studies, researchers analyzed

characterization of (a) disabilities in general (Ayala, 1999; Harrill, Leung, McKeag & Price, 1993); (b) mental retardation (Prater, 1999); and (c) mental retardation and autism (Dyches, Prater, & Cramer, 2001).

In the first study, Ayala (1999) analyzed 59 fiction and nonfiction books for young children, published between 1974 and 1996. The number one disability was orthopedic impairments. Also, Caucasian children were portrayed more than characters of other ethnicities. Few of the books showed such individuals as victim or social outcast, and fewer than 20%, according to the researcher's criteria, were portrayed realistically; that is, the characterization of the disability was recognizable to the real concern. In contrast, Harrill et. al (1993) randomly selected children's literature published prior to and following implementation of P. L. 94-142 (1978). This law established equal educational opportunities for our nation's disabled youth in public schools. Using a pre-determined set of criteria, the authors concluded that notable improvements in the depiction of characters with known physical disabilities were seen in books published after the post-special education legislation.

Similarly, Prater refers to her own study (1999) in which she examined 68 books, published between 1965 and 1996 and written for children and young adults in which characters with mental retardation are portrayed. In general, Prater found the books generally favorable in tone and depiction, but few are written from the point of view of the character with mental retardation. And generally, the action occurs outside of a school

setting, with peers and family members as the helping agent. Teachers are rarely central to the story.

Finally, Dyches et. al. (2001) reviewed twelve children's fiction books published in 1997 and 1998 that included portrayals of characters with mental retardation or autism. The study found that, in general, characters are portrayed as having more independence, and being educated in more inclusive settings than the characters found in Prater (1999) study, although few of the books are written from the point of the view of the character with disabilities.

Building upon these studies, Prater (2003) conducted an examination of books portraying characters with learning disabilities (LD) in a fashion similar to the study of characterization of mental retardation and autism conducted by Prater (1999) and Dyches et. al. (2001). As mentioned, Prater read ninety books in which the central characters were labeled learning disabled. Results indicated that most of the characters with learning disabilities were dynamic, meaning they changed or grew during the course of the story line. Also, in most fictional books for children and young adults, the learning disabled child was the main character; the story was told from the child's point of view; and the learning disability had a main impact on the plot. More commonly, the learning disability was in the area of reading and written language, with the character receiving services in a school resource room.

In addition to children's books, Prater reviews a number of young adult novels where the central character has a reading problem. Caroline Janover's *How Many Days Until Tomorrow?* (Woodbine House,

2000) tells the story of Josh and his older brother, Simon, who spend an adventurous summer on an island off the coast of Maine with their grandparents. Josh feels that particularly his grandfather is always unfavorably comparing Josh's reading ability to Simon's. Josh wishes that Simon were the one with

Prater laments that there are not more books that include characters with learning disabilities, and not just as the singular character problem, but also as an incidental element of their character portrayal.

dyslexia. Two other books in this category are Cynthia Voigt's *Dacey's Song* (Atheneum, 1982) and the sequel *Seventeen Against the Dealer* (Atheneum, 1989). In both works, Dacey's younger sister, Maybeth, has a learning disability. In Barthe DeClements' *Sixth Grade Can Really Kill You* (Scholastic, 1985), Helen has academic difficulties and misbehaves. And C. S. Adler's *Kiss the Clown* (Clarion Books, 1986), Barbara Barrie's *Adam Zigzag* (Delacorte, 1994); Theresa Nelson's *And One for All* (Orchard, 1989); Jan Mark's *Handles* (Atheneum, 1985); Virginia Euwer Wolff's *Probably Still Nick Swanson* (Holt, 1988); Caroline Janover's *The Worst Speller in Junior High* (Free Spirit, 1995) are all books, suitable for young children and middle school

students, in which either the central character or a leading secondary character has a learning disability, and the disability plays a prominent role in the story.

Prater underscores her analysis by stating her emphatic belief that teachers can and should use books in which the characters have learning disabilities. The purposes are many, but foremost is to focus on the life of individuals with academic problems, and to portray the diversity in our society. Prater laments that there are not more books that include characters with learning disabilities, and not just as the singular character problem, but also as an incidental element of their character portrayal. Given the incidence of learning disabilities in our society, Prater concludes, one would expect more such books.

Final Note

Michael Cart, award-winning author and recognized expert in the field of young adult literature, is also founding editor of a semi-annual journal named *Rush Hour*, a journal aimed at older young adults, and including original material by young adult authors. The journal will be published semiannually, in two editions, hardcover for the institutional market, and trade paperback, for retail. (*Publishers Weekly*, July 7, 2003).

Cart and George Nicholson, his literary agent, began discussing this project nearly a decade ago. They both felt that young adult literature needed a magazine for older young adults, a market yearning for its own niche and marketing image. Both believe the young adult book industry has changed greatly through time, evolving into three distinct literary phases. First, young

adult literature began as teen novels filled with innocence, then the problem novel—those that touched kids with social issues, and then within recent years, books that are more realistic and darker in tone.

With all this in mind, Cart and Nicholson proposed a literary journal with the aim of changing how young adult literature is thought of and published. The first volume will be 224 pages and include fifteen original submissions, all from young adult authors. For this and future issues, never-before published material will include short fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, personal essays, and excerpts from forthcoming novels. Each issue of the journal will focus on a single theme. “Sin” has been chosen for the first volume, with “Bad Boys” and “Face” following in issues two and three. April, 2004, is the scheduled date of first publication, and with distribution through Random House Children’s Books.

As researchers, teachers, and just plain lovers of young adult literature, we eagerly await the publication of this exciting new journal. Sophisticated, provocative, and all-inclusive are words that hallmark its arrival, and for sure, it will provide much discussion for future young adult literature projects and research.

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Using Literature to Help Troubled Teenagers Cope with Identity Issues (Greenwood Publishing, 1999). Write or email Dr. Kaplan in the Department of Educational Studies, College of Education, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida 32816, jkaplan@mail.ucf.edu.

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Call for Manuscripts

Please consider the following themes when preparing manuscripts for submission. Themes are meant to be flexible enough to allow for many possible approaches; however, submissions need not fit one of the themes to be considered for publication in *The ALAN Review*.

2004 Spring/Summer theme: Past, Present and Future

Submissions for this issue might include articles about young adult literature dealing with historical fiction, futuristic works, trends in YA that have shown up over time, comparisons between old YA classics and new books in any number of ways, or any creative approach to the theme.

2004 Fall theme: Borders and Bridges

Submissions to this issue might include articles about young adult literature dealing with borders and bridges, both literal and/or figurative, between nations, cultures, ideologies or groups of any kind, between YA literature and canonical works, between disciplines. Border cultures could also serve as a topic or any creative approach to the theme.

2005 Winter theme: The Art of Young Adult Literature

Submissions for this issue will follow the theme of the 2004 ALAN Workshop in Indianapolis. More information on this theme will be forthcoming in the next issue of *The ALAN Review*.

The Artistic Identity:

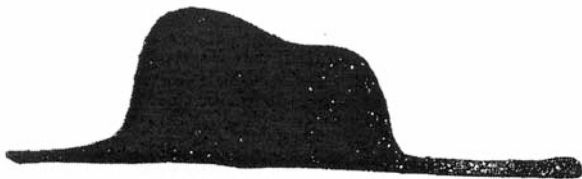
Art as a Catalyst for “Self Actualization” in Lois Lowry’s *Gathering Blue* and Linda Sue Park’s *A Single Shard*

Exupéry’s *The Little Prince* begins this way:

“Once when I was six I saw a magnificent picture in a book about the jungle, called *True Stories*. It showed a boa constrictor swallowing a wild beast. Here is a copy of the picture.

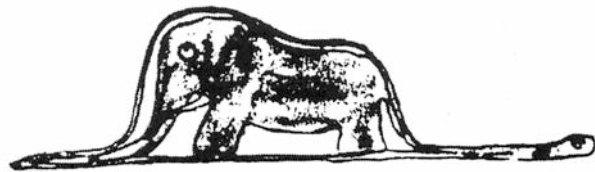


In the book it said: ‘Boa Constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing. Afterward, they are no longer able to move, and they sleep during the six months of their digestion.’ In those days I thought a lot about jungle adventures, and eventually managed to make my first drawing, using a colored pencil. My drawing Number One looked like this:



I showed the grown-ups my masterpiece, and I asked them if my drawing scared them. They answered, ‘Why be scared of a hat?’ My drawing was not a picture of a hat. It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. Then I drew the inside of the boa constrictor, so the grown-ups

could understand. They always need explanations. My drawing Number Two looked like this:



The grown-ups advised me to put away my drawings of boa constrictors, outside or inside, and apply myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic, and grammar. That is why I abandoned, at the age of six, a magnificent career as an artist [. . .].” (2)

The narrator in *The Little Prince* isn’t encouraged to explore his creativity as a child, and so, as he grows older, he accepts and participates in the comparatively boring, literal world of adults—at least until he meets that strange visitor from another world—the little prince. One message that emerges from this book, first published in 1943, is that sometimes the ideas and beliefs of children express a sort of imaginative wisdom that eludes adults. In the book, the little prince teaches the narrator to be a child again by asking him to draw things—specifically, a sheep, a muzzle, and a fence for his flower—so that he can take them into outer space and improve his very small world. When the narrator draws these things, the assumption is that they become real because they are drawn; or, in other words, drawing and reality are one and the same. Similar to the cartoon roadrunner who draws a railroad tunnel on the side of a mountain into which he escapes, the drawing becomes real—at least for those

who understand the drawing's potential. (For the coyote, of course, the drawing is always simply lines on the very hard and painful side of a mountain.)

Two young adult novels, Linda Sue Park's *A Single Shard* (2001) and Lois Lowry's *Gathering Blue* (2000), reclaim and elaborate artistic production as a metaphor for growing up or coming of age in a very difficult world. Similar to Exupéry's work, Park's and Lowry's books contain young, artistic characters who find the act of artistic creation central to their growing understanding of the worlds in which they live, as well as to their developing identities. The main character in Park's novel, Tree-ear, is yearning to be a potter in 12th century Korea despite the fact that he's an orphan, and potters are only allowed to apprentice biological children. Similarly, Kira, the teenage girl in Lowry's book, is a gifted weaver imprisoned and required to weave scenes on a sacred robe that, supposedly, accurately records the past and foretells the future. Like the narrator of *The Little Prince*, the adolescent main characters of these novels find that adults tend to discourage or place roadblocks in their artistic paths or even fail to understand art as synonymous with beauty and imagination, seeing it, instead, as a means to some materialistic end; however, despite these roadblocks, the adolescent characters pursue their aesthetic callings successfully, and, in embracing art as central to their lives, they are able to come to an enriched understanding of the complexity of their identities, or the multiple subjectivities or selves that make up these identities. The authors of *A Single Shard* and *Gathering Blue* present artistic creation as a metaphor and a catalyst for adolescent identity formation by creating rich characters whose experiences as artists pave the way for their cognitive, social, emotional, and psychological growth into well-balanced, and, one might even say, self-actualized adults.

Jean Piaget described part of this growth as the development of the ability to think more abstractly and about issues and ideas not concretely related or immediately relevant to self. Engaging in the "flow" of artistic experience might be one way of initiating such movement away from an egocentric, concrete understanding of the world and the self and toward a more abstract and de-centered view of reality that allows an adolescent to generalize, hypothesize, and empathize with others. Mihaly Csikszentmihaly defines flow as "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience

itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (4). Becoming completely immersed in the act of creation or art could help an adolescent forget, at least for a brief time, her concerns with the material realities of her life, such as her body, her peer relationships, or family problems. Such brief times of immersion in the act of creation could provide short-term practice in abstract thinking (for example, considering the aesthetic effect of a particular brushstroke on a hypothetical audience), as well as an escape from day-to-day stresses.

In *A Single Shard* Tree-ear experiences such flow early in the novel, as he begins to yearn for the potter's life. In the following passage he is described creating a small, molded clay monkey that he eventually gives to Crane-man, Tree-ear's caregiver since he was orphaned as an infant: "Tree-ear found that he had enjoyed the incision work. He had spent hours on the details of the monkey's features, inscribing them with progressively finer points. On seeing the monkey after it had been fired, Tree-ear felt a quiet thrill" (106). While making the monkey, Tree-ear is engaged in the flow of the artistic experience.

Similarly, Kira in *Gathering Blue* feels a sense of magic and lost time when she is engaged in her weaving. Lowry writes:

The threads began to sing to her. Not a song of words or tones, but a pulsing, a quivering in her hands as if they had life. For the first time, her fingers did not direct the threads, but followed where they led. She was able to close her eyes and simply feel the needle move through the fabric, pulled by the urgent, vibrating threads (45).

Kira, like Tree-ear, is lost in her work; she is in a state of flow. The process of creating art is affecting her psyche and beginning to be an important part of her identity.

Morris Rosenberg describes the process of adolescent development in a way similar, but not identical, to Piaget. According to Rosenberg, one change is in the content of the adolescent's self-conceptions over time. Rosenberg describes this transition as the shift from an emphasis on the social exterior to an emphasis on the psychological interior. In particular, the younger adolescent tends to think of the self in terms of overt, external dimensions; the older adolescent tends to emphasize more internal, covert, psychological dimensions. Additionally, he argues that the developing individual understands self in varying ways, beginning with a perception of self as a simple, global construct

and developing to one that is increasingly differentiated and multi-faceted. That is, the ways he thinks of himself begin to become more complex and multi-dimensional. His identity is understood less as singular and unitary and as a more variable, context-specific representation of self.

We see such realizations happening for Tree-ear and Kira; for example, at the end of the book, Tree-ear makes a difficult journey to deliver some of his teacher's pots to the emperor so that his teacher can get a royal commission. He does this simply because he promised he'd do so, without expecting anything for himself. This is a change from the beginning of the novel when Tree-ear only chooses to work for Min, the master potter, because he hopes it will result in pottery-making lessons. Likewise, Kira changes from being a girl who understands herself as inherently linked to her mother in the eyes of the community and therefore as someone inherently vulnerable without the assistance of others; by the end of the book, she chooses to follow her artistic gifts at great personal risk and allows them to guide her to make decisions for the future of her entire community. Both of these examples show Tree-ear and Kira moving away from a concrete, ego-centric worldview and toward an ideology that values actions with an ethical or emotional justification and sometimes nebulous or uncertain results. These are also actions they could not previously have imagined themselves engaging in, actions that are in response to unforeseen problems. In other words, specific life events precipitated the emergence of personality characteristics they didn't know they possessed.

Individuation, according to Carl Jung, is a process of developing the individual personality and establishing one's true identity. It can be seen as synonymous with self-actualization. Lisa Schade writes about Jung's theories:

According to Jung, the self is the whole of consciousness, of psyche, of an individual . . . the goal of the individual is to reach a balance or recognition of the different aspects of the self; he called the process of understanding the self-individuation or self-actualization. An individual becomes conscious of the vast reaches of the self. (12-13)

A Single Shard and *Gathering Blue* show two characters coming to a sense of identity, a sense of self that is richer, more complex, and more varied than that with which they begin. This gets them closer to self-actualization, in Jung's sense. Through identification as artists, Tree-ear and Kira begin to understand them-

selves, their place in their families and communities, and how their role as artists will become a part of their lives that may not constitute their *complete* identity, but will be one important dimension of it. In other words, they are becoming aware of Jung's "vast reaches of the self." For example, in *A Single Shard*, once Tree-ear sees himself as a potter, he begins to form a plan for what role his art might play in his life and in the life of his community: "How long would it be before he had skill enough to create a design worthy of such a vase [the thousand cranes vase]? *One hill, one valley* [. . .]. One day at a time, he would journey through the years until he came upon the perfect design" (148).

Tree-ear begins to see his life as a journey, in which art will play a role. But at the end of the novel, he has an adoptive family, and he knows that learning his craft to his satisfaction will not come quickly or easily. He has developed a much more complex and realistic view of being a potter, *and* an adult, than he had at the beginning of the book when all he wanted were lessons from Min in exchange for manual labor. Kira also takes on the artistic identity, and it also enables her to come closer to self-actualization. Lowry writes:

It was the same question that she and Thomas had discussed the day before. And the answer seemed to be the conclusion they had reached: they were artists, the three of them. Makers of song, of wood, of threaded patterns. Because they were artists, they had some value that she could not comprehend. Because of that value, the three of them were here. (153)

Once Kira makes the decision to resist the authority of the council and weave the robe with the images and designs she wants to include, she no longer feels powerless and childlike, but, instead, powerful and purposeful. She claims her creativity and decides to embrace it and act through it to improve her life and her community by weaving a future full of happiness, not fear, into the robe. Of course, she also knows this will not be easy; however, she makes the difficult choice anyway, even though it will mean temporary separation from her newly found father. Roberta Seelinger Trites writes, "Power is a force that operates within the subject and upon the subject in adolescent literature; teenagers are repressed as well as liberated by their own power and by the power of the social forces that surround them in these books" (7). In Kira's case, she first succumbs to the oppressive politi-

cal system in which she lives and consents to use her artistic gifts to assist the leaders with their policies of intimidation and intellectual control. Later, with the help of peers and family, she discovers her own power and uses her position as weaver of the sacred robe to change the society in which she lives.

Like the narrator in *The Little Prince*, Tree-ear and Kira find that by creating art and by claiming an identity as artists, they have been able to come to a more complex and satisfying understanding of their individual and cultural identities. Each chooses to use his or her art to help fellow humans or contribute to community life in their respective contexts; each also shares his or her art with others in purely generous and loving ways. Trites writes,

“The basic difference between a children’s and an adolescent novel lies not so much in how the protagonist grows . . . but with the very determined way that YA novels tend to interrogate social constructions, foregrounding the relationship between the society and the individual, rather than focusing on Self and self-discovery” (20).

Tree-ear and Kira do interrogate, and eventually come to terms with, the relationship between their artistic identities and the societies in which they live.

In *The Principles of Art* R.G. Collingwood states,

“The artist must prophesy not in the sense that he foretells things to come, but in the sense that he tells his audience, at risk of their displeasure, the secrets of their own hearts. Art is the community’s medicine for the worst disease of mind, the corruption of consciousness” (336).

The characters in both books not only change individually, they also change their communities by disrupting this “corruption of consciousness” that exists in the adult worlds in which they live. Tree-ear is able to re-introduce a sense of fairness to the evaluation of the work of Korean potters of his time, as well as help an aging master potter establish a relationship with a young apprentice, despite Korean tradition. Similarly, Kira confronts an unfair political system and, in a sense, uses her art as an antidote to its poisonous ideologies.

Park ends her book by telling the reader about “The Thousand Cranes Vase” currently on display at the Kansong Museum of Art in Seoul, Korea. Even though Tree-ear is, of course, a fictional character, the fictional merges with fact as Park suggests that perhaps such a vase, depicting the crane as a tribute to his

beloved Crane-man, might have been made by a young potter like Tree-ear. One of the points I think Park is trying to make is that Tree-ear’s art may exist over 800 years after its creation; it might be on display in a museum; it might even be the impetus for the writing of a young adult novel. His art has not only brought a sense of personal satisfaction and self-understanding to Tree-ear; it has touched generations of people who came after him.

As the narrator in *The Little Prince* will never forget what the visitor taught him about the value of the imagination, Tree-ear and Kira are forever changed by their realization that they are creative, imaginative beings—they know they are artists. In a day and age when art, along with music, is being taken out of many secondary school curricula because of lack of funding, the lessons Park and Lowry convey carry even greater significance, both for the adolescents who might read their novels and for the adults who can, if they try hard enough, see through the hat to find the boa constrictor digesting an elephant.

Janet Alsup is an Assistant Professor of English Education at Purdue University. Her scholarly interests include critical approaches to young adult literature, the professional identity development of preservice English teachers, ethical issues in qualitative research, and critical pedagogies and literacies.

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Together We're Molding Lifelong Readers, Learners and Library Users

As the new editor for the Library Connection column, I bring some unique perspectives. Since I am an English teacher turned Young Adult librarian, I understand both sides of working with teens, books and reading—in the classroom *and* in the library. I also have a philosophy that libraries are extensions of classrooms, envisioning libraries as “lifelong learning labs.” With this in mind, I believe that young people who not only make the best of their school experiences but also extend themselves through their library experiences often go on to be lifelong readers, learners and library users. I have repeatedly seen and heard the proof of this from many teens themselves, who are now adults. It is one of the big benefits of staying at the same job for so long, being able to see its long-term results!

I am hoping through this column to present inspiring and useable ideas to help teachers and school/public librarians connect to each other and the teens with whom they work. The importance of school, libraries, books, reading, writing, and teens—and how they mesh—will be the focus.

I would like to hear from teachers and school librarians about effective ways in which you have incorporated libraries into curriculum and/or have partnered with local public libraries. I would also like to hear from public librarians who would be interested in describing unique, creative success stories about connecting with schools. In addition, any other interesting perspectives that fit the focus of this column would be welcome! If you have something to share, please consider contributing an article.

Would you like an example of an exciting and unique topic? Here is a little preview of the Library Connection column for the next issue of *The ALAN Review*:

Every year, teachers, school and public librarians wait anxiously for the results of the Printz, Newbery and various other awards bestowed upon the books and authors comprising the latest and greatest of young adult literature. Although teens may be asked for some opinions and input, generally adults—teachers, school and public librarians, and others—select the winners of these awards. Even in award programs with “young reader” voting, the adults who coordinate the programs are at the root of the nomina-

tions. What if teens *nationwide* were given an opportunity to *nominate and choose* their top ten favorite books of the year? Does it sound like a dream that is way too complicated and could never be real? Well, think again, and tune in next issue, because you will find out how teens *are* meeting the challenge and really making this happen!

Get the idea? I am looking forward to hearing from you!

Diane Tuccillo has been Young Adult Coordinator at the City of Mesa Library in Arizona since 1980. Diane served on the ALAN Executive Board from 1999-2002, has presented at ALAN Workshops and other professional conferences, and is active in the Arizona Library Association and YALSA. She has written articles for The ALAN Review, VOYA, Kliatt and other publications, serves as a book reviewer for School Library Journal and VOYA, and is a member of VOYA's editorial board. Diane has been elected to the 2005 Printz Award Committee. Her forthcoming book for Scarecrow Press is Teen Library Advisory Groups: a VOYA Guide. You can contact her at City of Mesa Library, 64 East First Street, Mesa, AZ, 85201 or at diane.tuccillo@cityofmesa.org.

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Intimidation in Cormier's *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, *We All Fall Down*, and *The Chocolate War*

Adolescence is an extremely difficult period in a person's life. It is a time of establishing identity and searching for independence. Adolescents go through many changes, physically, emotionally, and socially, and as developmental psychologist Sharon Stringer suggests: "Collectively, these changes make adolescents targets for psychological intimidation" (27). Adolescents are very vulnerable to intimidation, from peers, parents and other adults. Intimidation is a prevalent issue in adolescent development and literature.

Robert Cormier, a well-known author of adolescent literature, uses the theme of intimidation in many of his books. He once said, "I am very much interested in intimidation. And the way people manipulate other people." (Sutton 28) He follows this interest in *The Chocolate War*, *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, and *We All Fall Down*, which clearly show the different types of intimidation adolescents face. Cormier does not evaluate intimidation in his books. He simply shows that it is prevalent and describes the many ways it is used. "His themes of the ordinariness of evil and what happens when good people stand by and do nothing are treated seriously, and he never provides the comfort of a happy ending" (Random House, Inc., par 17).

Cormier's *Tunes for Bears to Dance To* depicts a haunting decision the protagonist is forced to make at the hands of his boss, who uses his love for his family to intimidate him into betraying a friend. This story follows Henry Cassavant and his family as they struggle to get over his brother's death. After moving to a new town, Henry's family has almost no money so he decides to help by getting a job. When he is hired to work at a store by the manipulative and prejudiced Mr.

Hairston, it turns out to be one of the worst decisions he has ever made.

In this new town, Henry begins building a friendship with Holocaust survivor, Mr. Levine, who is carving a replica of his home city prior to its destruction by the Nazis.

Henry makes the mistake of sharing this information with Mr. Hairston. "Henry was uneasy as he resumed work, as if somehow he had betrayed the old man" (47). His uneasiness was explained when Mr. Hairston came to him with a proposition. He wanted Henry to go into the art center, "take the hammer and smash the old man's village" (70).

Henry could have turned his boss down had Mr. Hairston not threatened him: "I will have to spread the word about you to other merchants. That you are not to be trusted. No one will ever hire you again" (72). He also threatened to have Henry kicked out of school, but the worst came when Mr. Hairston threatened to get Henry's mother fired. Henry was torn between protecting his family and his friend.

In this story, Cormier shows how people can be intimidated by threats. He makes Mr. Hairston's threats very real and very hard to ignore, illustrating how such people choose the things that matter most to their victims, in this case, Henry's mother and his own education, rather than things that have no consequence. Cormier shows how powerful this form of intimidation can be, so powerful, in fact, that Henry chooses to destroy the village.

The intimidation found in *We All Fall Down* is slightly different and perhaps a little more relevant to adolescents. In this story, the protagonist, Buddy, faces

intimidation from his peers. The dark story opens with Buddy and three other boys vandalizing a home. Cormier gives a vivid description of the damage being done. They are drunk and tear the house apart. During the process, one of the girls who lives there comes home and is injured. It had seemed like a good idea when Harry, one of the three, suggested it but not after harm befell the girl. Although Buddy does not act to harm her, neither does he attempt to help her; instead, he stands idly by and watches Harry push her down the stairs with his tacit approval.

Afterward, the vandalism does not seem nearly as fun and exciting. Buddy is overcome with guilt and shame. As they are driving away from the house, Buddy becomes angry with his friends and confronts them about what they did to the girl. Harry tries to convince him that maybe he had not seen exactly what he thought he had. "Although his voice was mild, it contained an undertone Buddy could not pin down. His eyes were dark and piercing as he looked at Buddy. All of which made him shiver inside, realizing that Harry somehow was giving him a message, telling him what to believe" (16).

Harry's gang thrives on intimidating others by participating in what they call "fun time," a chance to cause mischief., as Cormier explains, "And off they'd go. To the movies...guffawing, scuffling mildly, knowing that the ushers were high school kids, most of them easily intimidated, not too eager to notify the theater manager about the noise and distractions" (51-2). Intimidation is a way of life for these bullies, and Buddy is sucked into it with them.

In this story, Cormier describes perhaps the most common type of intimidation adolescents face, peer pressure. As adolescents desperately try to find a group to belong to, they become vulnerable. Stringer further postulates: "Fear and the threat of losing peer approval motivate young adults to perform acts for the group that they would never do alone" (Stringer 2).

Intimidation can also come in the form of alcoholism and related problems. Buddy comes from a broken home, his family having fallen apart after his father's departure, and Buddy has become an alcoholic. He has discovered that alcohol carries him away from his problems. The alcohol, along with the pain he feels as a result of his home life, make him incredibly vulnerable to a group of boys like Harry and friends. Harry knows Buddy is an alcoholic and plays on his

weakness. Harry never drinks but is always quick to offer a drink to Buddy. He uses alcohol to manipulate Buddy into doing whatever he wants him to. Cormier clearly shows the level of pressure Buddy feels from Harry and the other boys, again, illustrating the intimidating power of peer pressure.

The Chocolate War is Cormier's most overt depiction of peer intimidation as he focuses on the potential consequences of standing up to the intimidators, in this case, the Vigils— a group of students who run Trinity School, and Brother Leon— a corrupt teacher. The Vigils have a way of doing things at the school with which no one interferes. They get their kicks from coming up with "assignments" for other students to do. These assignments are usually simple pranks. The Vigils choose a victim and force him to accept the assignment.

The first assignment in *The Chocolate War* goes to a boy called Goober. He is told he must go into a classroom once the school is closed for the evening and unscrew everything in the room: desks, chairs, chalkboards—anything screwed down. Cormier describes Goober as "accepting the assignment the way all the others did, knowing there was no way out, no reprieve, no appeal. The law of the Vigils was final and everyone at Trinity knew it" (36). School psychologists George Batsche and Howard Knoff generalize: "[B]ullies will intimidate those who they believe can not, or will not, retaliate or those with whom they have been successful in bullying in the past" (Batsche 2). This group of students had intimidated the entire student population so badly that no one is willing to stand up to them, that is, until Jerry Renault comes along.

Jerry is fourteen years old and recovering from the death of his mother. He comes to Trinity hoping to play football and fit in. One day he, too, is given an assignment: to refuse to sell chocolates for the school fundraiser for 10 days, at which time he is to submit to Brother Leon and sell his share of chocolates. He accepts the assignment and does as he is asked for 10 days, but on the 11th day, he still refuses to sell the chocolates, defying both the Vigils and the school authorities. Jerry decides he will not give in, a healthy act for his own self-esteem according to experts in adolescent psychology: "individuals may resist intimidation. Their defiance of authority empowers their own sense of self, preserves their integrity, and promotes

their moral commitments to fairness and justice” (Stringer 3). He is even inspired by a poster in his locker which asks, “Do I dare disturb the universe?”

While standing up to the Vigils and Brother Leon is the right thing to do, it does nothing good for Jerry at school. He is threatened, and everyone stops talking to him. He is even forced to quit the football team, but, no matter what the Vigils do to him, he refuses to sell the chocolates.

What does standing up to the intimidation get him? He is harassed by all his peers and left realizing he may have made the wrong choice. The only thing Jerry can think about is telling his friend Goober to be careful: “They tell you to do your thing but they don’t mean it. They don’t want you to do your thing, not unless it happens to be their thing too...Don’t disturb the universe Goober, no matter what the poster says” (259).

The peer intimidation in *The Chocolate War* is more sophisticated than that in *We All Fall Down*. The Vigils are a large group, and they are very powerful. They not only intimidate students, but they also have the faculty living in fear. Even Brother Leon is intimidated by the Vigils. The intimidation Cormier uses here is more powerful because it is not simply a few delinquents going against the norm. The Vigils have the capability of pulling a few strings and making Jerry’s life miserable through ingenious strategies. The Vigils’ rules have become the norm at Trinity. Group or gang intimidation is much more powerful than a single bully making threats, and Cormier uses *The Chocolate War* as evidence of this fact.

Cormier paints a graphic picture of the forms intimidation can take and what can happen when people stand up to bullies. He uses the characters of Henry, Buddy, and Jerry to show how intimidation, including threats, humiliation, and physical harm, can affect people’s lives. These effects are not a pretty picture, but Cormier stands firm according to the Random House website dedicated to his work: “Cormier’s novels have frequently come under attack by censorship groups because they are uncompromising in their depictions of problems young people face each day in a turbulent world” (Random House, Inc., par 16).

Adolescents are victims of bullying and intimidation more commonly than might be expected. In their study of bullies and victims, Batsche and Knoff found “bullying affects 15% to 20% of all students in schools

today” (165). That same study suggested the violence that accompanies bullying should “be defined more broadly to include conditions or acts that create a climate in which individual students . . . feel fear or intimidation in addition to being victims of assault, theft or vandalism” (165). Cormier appropriates these conditions and climates to create the settings for intimidation in his novels, but although he writes some stirring and disturbing novels, he does not offer suggestions for combating or overcoming bullying.

Although readers will not find remedies for intimidation in his novels, Cormier’s work provides a practical use as a springboard for important discussions with adolescents. Problem-solving discussions on issues such as bullying will evolve from reading these novels in the classroom as students discuss the books, relate the characters’ problems to issues of real life and even receive advice from adults and peers without making their personal issue(s) public. In that regard, these novels are an invaluable resource.

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Necessary Noise

stories about our families as they really are

EDITED by
Michael Cart

Joan Bauer	Lois Lowry
Michael Cart	Walter Dean Myers
Emma Donoghue	Sonya Sones
Nikki Grimes	Joyce Carol Thomas
Norma Howe	Rita Williams-Garcia

ORIGINAL STORIES by

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—Starred review / *School Library Journal*

★ "Some of YA fiction's best voices are collected in this anthology of 10 stories about . . ."

Charlotte Noruzi



Supporting and Teaching Student Choice

Offering Students Self-Selected Reading

Although I was a high school literature and writing teacher for 25 years, and began offering high school students young adult titles when *The Outsider* and *The Contender* were hot off the presses, I am now in my seventh year as a college professor of English education who also teaches such general education classes as Introduction to Literature. In that class I sponsor a reading workshop requiring response journals and student-generated items used for reading groups discussions. Because the texts I choose for the course (all novels set in Iowa) have no *CliffsNotes* or other commercial cribbing material and are not widely enough read to have their own Internet sites sporting paper ideas, students in these classes *actually read* the novels. This reading and discussion of popular rather than canonical novels (*What's Eating Gilbert Grape* and *State Fair*, for example) prompts in many students the curious reactions of confession and self-questioning. Semester after semester I read students' admissions in their response journals that go something like

this: "This is the first whole novel I have read since middle school! — I never read the books assigned in English in high school. You did not have to. Listening in class and copying someone's study guide was enough to get by." (Here I note that The University of Northern Iowa has been ranked second in Midwest top public universities by *U.S. News and World Report* for six consecutive years. Our admissions are fairly competitive.) Like it or not, many good students do not read the books we assign in high school English classes if all they are asked to do is fill out a study guide and take a test on them.

The most interesting self-questioning comes from students who insist that they used to love to read in middle school. They will ask themselves in writing, "Why did I ever stop reading? I loved it then, and after reading some novels again, I can see why." When pressed to explain why they stopped reading, students offer the expected range of responses such as, "Sports and other activities took up all of my time" and simply "I had to work when I was not in

school or studying." But a handful of introspective students have pushed a little harder on this question and made statements that I think may have broad reaching implications for this "stopped reading" phenomena. They said, "I don't know how to find books I like." By this, students do not mean they do not know the location of the nearest library or which

Like it or not, many good students do not read the books we assign in high school English classes if all they are asked to do is fill out a study guide and take a test on them.

mall has a Barnes and Noble store. Being in the library or the bookstore only heightens the problem. "There are all of these books. How do I find the ones I like?" From this picture it seems obvious to me

that students who lack strategies for finding books they like have failed to learn an important skill integral to becoming successful, mature readers—and have, in the process, failed in developing the skill to learn from and enjoy books on their own outside of school.

In one chapter of *Reading Stephen King: Issues of Censorship, Student Choice, and Popular Culture* (reviewed by Susan Dunn at the end of this column,) Jeffrey Wilhelm celebrates the value of supporting and guiding student choice of reading:

“My point is that choice is a most excellent thing because it moves our students towards independence, towards agency, towards exercising their will, finding and loving their own questions, interests, answers, and pathways [. . .]. What we need is an intelligent balance and negotiation between shared and independent reading, a constant dialectic between guidance, preparation, and opportunities to fly on one’s own” (41).

While I believe teachers of secondary literature who have contemporary practices are well-suited to foster and teach choice, I am not sure we have recognized the importance of students learning to choose as a foundational component of mature reading processes. While student choosing of titles to read is often and importantly discussed in terms of censorship and students *right* to read, I propose we talk about students’ abilities to choose books for a variety of purposes as a fundamental educational goal to be attained by every reader. We will start the process of teaching choice when our students are choosing children’s books and books for young adults. But we

must continue this support through high school and college so students are able to find adult titles as well as great young adult titles such as *Speak*, for example.

For myself, even though I, as an English education professional, am definitely a slacker in terms of the volume of my reading for pleasure (perhaps twelve books a

What I hope is that we proactively assert that helping students develop the ability to choose their own reading is every bit as important an instructional goal as compositionists have successfully asserted *topic selection* to be [. . .] .

year), I do possess useable strategies for selecting appropriate reading materials. But I have come to understand that possession of these strategies that seem integral to mature adult readers may have come my way more through luck than through any design of my formal literature experiences in school. Using the behaviors of mature adult readers as a guide, we need to tease out the experiences that helped us develop our reading tastes and motivations and name the *choosing* skills that are based on those experiences and motivations. My last book was *Holes*, before that *Harry Potter and*

the Sorcerer’s Stone on tape (17 tapes that my family and I listened to in the car all the way from Iowa City to San Francisco last summer), before that, *Speak*, and before that, *Prey* by Michael Crichton. My next book will be *SeaBiscuit* by Laura Hillenbrand. These choices were all made based on my knowledge of how to choose to satisfy my tastes and my desire for social interaction with other readers, known and unknown, who were reading those books. I know that choosing reading materials to facilitate social interaction of many diverse kinds is one of the important reading behaviors we need to teach.

Current pedagogies for teaching literature in secondary classrooms suggest that sometimes students should select titles from a long or short list, a list defined by genre or theme or by some other defining categorization. A familiar unit design might include a common reading to establish a theme or genre followed by student reading groups that meet to select and discuss common group readings, which have been selected from a collection of multiple copies of multiple titles. Typically the teacher book-talks some or all of the titles in the collection to facilitate student choice. Sometimes book groups are organized around student title selection. Typically the titles for selection are chosen for student consideration by the teacher and/or librarian because they represent a range of reading levels, reading interests and content, and reading experience and sophistication required for success. This range might include canonical texts as well as texts written specifically for young adults.

Instructional variations based on the same set of textual resources might replace reading groups with individual students selecting titles and engaging in one-to-one, peer-to-peer, and student to teacher interaction through shared journal responses or literary letters. Other units might ask students to read independently within a theme or genre, choosing books from both classroom and building libraries (or from sources outside of school).

If this is the pedagogy to which at least some of us subscribe—specifically a pedagogy that invites and supports student choice of titles—specifically a pedagogy that without hesitation includes in the list of titles available for selection, books for young adults, even for classes in the upper grades of high school, then we need to be ready to articulate what educational goals are met by this component of choice and how the exercise of choosing is important to students' academic development. We might ask such questions as how is choice of reading material related to student “ownership” of learning? How does student self-selection of reading titles play into the Vygotskian model of “zones of proximal development” and facilitate enactment of instructional scaffolding? For example, it seems to me that student self-selection of reading titles could greatly enhance the qualities of “intentionality” and “appropriateness” which are key components of the scaffolding model (Applebee and Langer, 1983).

We need to be able to answer these questions to defend our instructional practices from challenges so numerous that just the ones that come to my mind read

We might ask such questions as how is choice of reading material related to student “ownership” of learning?

like a grim litany:

- Budget constraints that look askance at the expense of maintaining classroom libraries
- Advocates of whole-class, teacher-centered instruction
- Book challenges that seek to control choice in the curriculum
- Commercial “free reading” programs that limit student selections based on reading ability.
- Political edicts that mandate a canonical Greco-Roman, Western tradition.

What I hope is that we proactively assert that helping students develop the ability to choose their own reading is every bit as important an instructional goal as compositionists have successfully asserted *topic selection* to be within the range of important components in student composing processes. No composition textbook would be without at least a perfunctory treatment of brainstorming, webbing, or other topic selection and topic development activities. But what instructional materials for teaching literature or reading identify selection of book titles as an important component of learning to literature? What I hope is that we come to think of developing students' choosing abilities as part of what it means to teach literature and reading, and we come to demand from ourselves attention to that goal.

And we have to be ready to meet external challenges to choice with clear statement of what is lost to student development as readers when students do not learn to choose.

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Professional Resources in Support of Student Choice

By Susan Dunn

High school students are difficult. As educators, we find ourselves searching through our mental archives on a daily basis trying to get our students excited about learning. I will never forget standing in front of a class of twenty-five giggling reluctant readers with my little brother's dinosaur figurines trying to act out a scene from the book *Jurassic Park*. I was constantly trying to find new and innovative ways to make my students excited about reading the way that I was in high school when I first picked up a copy of Stephen King's *The Green Mile*. I read that book cover to cover in four days. I forgot to eat, lost sleep and even convinced myself to read just one more chapter as I was driving in the car. I saw how a good book could pull you in, make you cry, and inquire about life. I also saw how reading one good book could lead me to find other good books. It is in this passion for reading that I have found my calling as teacher.

The books that I remember reading as a child and as a young adult were those that I picked myself. It is in this choice that I felt ownership of my own knowledge. This ownership is one of the traits that we all want to pass on to our students. It is through student choice that we can accomplish this goal. By implementing student choice in the literature classroom students are more likely to find motivation to read and become lovers of reading.

In our search for resources pertaining to student choice, we found a plethora of information about students' reading preferences in the liter-

ature classroom. However, few resources focus on teaching students how to choose in the literature classroom specifically. The following are reviews of two resources that could be of interest to teachers who intend to implement choice into the classroom. The first resource, authored by Alfie Kohn, focuses on the theoretical implications of choice in education. The second, a collection of proceedings from a conference held by the NCTE, focuses specifically on the practical implications of choice in the English classroom.

Kohn, Alfie. "Choices and Children: Why and How to Let Students Decide." *Phi Delta Kappan* (1993): 8-20.

In this article, Alfie Kohn illustrates the power of providing student ownership through choice in the classroom. Kohn describes how choice can have an astonishing effect on students' behavior and values as well as in academic achievement. While Kohn does not focus specifically on the literature classroom, his insight can be applied to various areas of education at all levels. Kohn describes the importance of giving students a sense of self-determination through allowing them to be in control of their learning and their lives; he argues that student choice can have lasting effects on academic achievement. Kohn states,

Every teacher who is told what material to cover, when to cover it, and how to evaluate children's performance is a teacher who knows that enthusiasm for one's work quickly evaporates in the face of being controlled. Not every

teacher, however, realizes that exactly the same thing holds true for students: deprive them of self-determination and you have likely deprived them of motivation. If learning is a "matter of following orders, students simply will not take to it in the way they would if they had some say about what they were doing. (1993)

Kohn supports his views on choice by speaking of the democratic classroom. Giving students a sense of ownership in their learning prepares them to live in society in the future. Creating a classroom that promotes choice will help to give students a sense of control over their actions and achievements. Kohn states, "Students should not only be trained to live in a democracy when they grow up; they should have a chance to live in one today" (1993).

This article also touches on structural impediments, teacher resistance, student resistance and strategies for dealing with elementary-aged students' responses to choice and change. While Kohn focuses primarily on the elementary classroom, secondary teachers can benefit from his message as a valuable teaching resource for implementing choice into the classroom.

Power, Brenda Miller, Jeffrey Wilhelm and Kelly Chandler, Ed. *Reading Stephen King: Issues of Censorship, Student Choice and Popular Literature*. Urbana: NCTE, 1997.

In the spring of 1996, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) held a conference at the University of Maine entitled

“Reading Stephen King.” The discussions that spawned this conference inspired the book *Reading Stephen King: Issues of Censorship, Student Choice and Popular Literature*. The book, edited by Brenda Miller Power, Jeffrey Wilhelm, and Kelly Chandler is a compilation of articles from conference attendees in response to the seminars, debates and commentary that fueled this two-day event. The book is broken into three main parts: Choice, Popular Literature, and Censorship. Within these three sections, one can find articles pertaining not only to a rationale for teaching King but also to how teaching non-traditional literature can lead to great things in the classroom.

Introduction

“I Want to Be Typhoid Stevie” By Stephen King

In this piece, King describes his life not only as a writer, but also as a reader. King speaks of his passion for reading, and how that love has become a desire that he wants to fulfill for his readers. King states, “What I want is to reach through the pages and grab the reader. I don’t want to just mess with your head, I want to mess with your *life*. I want you to miss appointments, burn dinner, skip your homework [. . .]” (15). King, a former high school teacher, explains the role that his books can play in the classroom. However, he is very humble about the influence that his writing can have on a reader. King states,

“I am [not] comfortable with the idea of being a poster-boy for the pleasures of reading, or the carnival barker outside, telling them to hurry-hurry-hurry: if they like what they read on the outside, they’re going to love what is on

the inside. I do what I do as well as I can, and if my work has led some readers to the work of others, or launched them on lives where the TV stays off for whole nights at a stretch, I’m very pleased.”(18)

King simply states that his books have the capability to take students to places that they have never been before and in order to let them fly, we must give them the freedom to spread their wings.

Choice

“Of Cornflakes, Hot Dogs, Cabbages, and King” by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm

In clever comparison to food, Wilhelm discusses the role of teachers in the construction of choice in the classroom. We must feed our minds in much the same way that we feed our bodies. Wilhelm argues that it is through a “constrained choice” that we will find success in our classrooms. Much as parents would teach their children to pick nutritious foods to make their bodies healthy, a teacher must guide students to selections that can be beneficial to them, even if they do not know that you are nudging them in one direction or another.

Wilhelm discusses the importance of teaching students how to make informed choices about their reading, thus resulting in “authentic” reading behaviors. Wilhelm poses the question, “So when does choice help students to read better and more enthusiastically, to stretch themselves in the context of their own purposes?”(47). To answer this question, Wilhelm looked to his students. The students had various answers, but the consensus focused on the importance of knowing the individual students and focusing on their needs

and interests. The students concluded that, “[t]he guidance of a knowledgeable adult can help match students to books that help them to become something new”(47). It is in the practice of constrained choice that students will be most successful.

Overall, Wilhelm discusses the role of the teacher in providing a positive environment that is conducive to students making their own choices in the literature classroom. Wilhelm, however, does not necessarily advocate the degree of choice that Alfie Kohn suggested in the earlier review. Wilhelm’s view of the teacher’s role in the classroom is best illustrated in an interview that he conducted with some former students at a basketball game. When Wilhelm asked his students about the role of choice in the classroom, they responded, “You made us think that we had choices, but you were always putting stuff in front of us.” Another student responded that limited choice was still choice. “Hey, when you go to a restaurant, you can choose a dessert, but only from the desserts they have.” Another student joined in with, “Yeah, if you could choose any dessert in the whole wide world you might never make up your mind...” (47).

“The Wanna Read Workshop: Reading for Love” by Kimberly Hill Campbell

In the journey to create a way to get her students excited about reading, Kimberly Hill Campbell invented the “Wanna Read Workshop.” In her search for something new and innovative, Campbell went back to her own reading history. She recalls her “Sunday afternoon experience,” where she could cherish reading. In

her desire to create this experience for her students, Campbell adopted a classroom practice where students had a choice of what to read and received in-class reading time.

Campbell completely restructured her classroom to incorporate the “Wanna Read” Workshop every Wednesday. She provided students with a list of books in her classroom library as well as delivered book talks to get her students interested in new popular titles. Campbell states, “Isn’t [a] love of reading what we want for our students? If they can discover it through King, Steel, Anne Rice, Dean Koontz or John Grisham, isn’t that a good thing?” (55).

Campbell describes the application of the “Wanna Read” Workshop and its positive effect in her classroom. She also describes the doubt and criticism that she faced from her colleagues and from parents when she first administered the workshop. She illustrates her rationale for continuing to apply the workshop into her classroom.

Popular Literature

“Canon Construction Ahead” by Kelly Chandler

The question of teaching canonical literature versus popular literature is one on which English teachers find themselves divided. Kelly Chandler discusses the role of canonical literature in the classroom and issues a call to action for teachers to discover the educational implications of popular literature. In this article, Chandler addresses the longstanding debate about what constitutes good literature and what literature should be taught in schools. Chandler states, “Contrary to conventional wisdom, the literary canon has not remained static over hundreds of years.

Instead, its revision has been a constant, recurring process, with important implications for school curricula” (107).

Chandler uses the work of Stephen King to illustrate an author of popular literature with staying power. Chandler makes a comparison between King and canonical authors such as Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, authors who were incredibly popular yet the objects of critical disapproval during the time they were publishing. Chandler suggests that popular literature has a place in the classroom much the same as canonical texts. To argue this point, Chandler states, “I think we teachers need to quit taking the literary high ground. Trying to keep out the pernicious effects of popular culture is a losing battle. This does not mean that we give up teaching the classics or that we structure our courses around what students already know and have experienced, but rather that we acknowledge that the membrane between high culture and popular culture is, in many cases, a permeable one” (113).

Chandler suggests that teachers be more thoughtful in the books that they choose to teach, looking outside the standard curriculum or the book closet. Most importantly, he wants teachers to “recognize that as teachers of literature we are not merely inheritors of our cultural tradition, but potential creators of it as well” (114).

Censorship

“One Book Can Hurt You... But a Thousand Never Will” by Janet S. Allen

Janet S. Allen focuses on the threat of censorship in America’s schools and the effect that censorship has on teachers and students’ right to

learn. Allen suggests that, “censorship, and a fear of censorship, have created classrooms of disempowered teachers and disenfranchised readers” (175). Allen describes her experience of interviewing a variety of teachers on the issues of censorship of reading materials in the classroom. Overall, Allen found that the majority of the teachers that she interviewed were either afraid or had given up hope regarding the fight for controversial literature in their classrooms.

Allen discusses a method of developing rationales teachers can use to defend their choices of materials to use in the classroom. This chapter contains examples of these rationales.

This article also suggests ways that a teacher can build a network in order to be supported by their colleagues and community in times of censorship battles. Allen lists ways to build personal and professional knowledge for defending books, ways to influence school and district-level planning, as well as ways to develop and maintain community relationships that revolve around reading.

Post Script: As Susan Dunn noted above, our search for professional literature that teachers can use to articulate and defend the importance of student choice of reading materials produced what can only be described as “slim pickin’s.” I speculate the reason for this could be, in part, because the existing rationales for choosing could be dispersed in literatures under other headings, headings such as instructional scaffolding and student ownership of learning, to name two. In an effort to further this discussion we invite readers to send us reviews of other professional texts that have relevance to the issue for supporting and teaching student choice. (BB)

<p>Act I, Act II, Act Normal, by Martha Weston Roaring Brook Press, 2003, 160 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>After much disappointment that his best friend's comic play is not selected to be the school play for this year, Christopher "Toph" Blakely ends up trying out for a part anyway, only because he promises his best friend, Kit, that he will. Unexpectedly, though, Toph lands the leading role to this year's school play, a musical adaptation of the classic fairy tale "Rumpelstiltskin." At first glance of the script and the music, Toph cannot believe he is stupid enough to participate in this childish musical, especially since everyone at school thinks plays are for geeks.</p> <p>However, being the talented actor that he is, Toph takes on the role of the mean and grumpy old Rumpelstiltskin, and grows to love his part. There are a couple of rough times during the production, yet the show goes on and turns out to be a huge success. And when it is all over, Toph looks ahead, and dreams of his future as an actor. This humor-filled story of a boy who does what he enjoys most, acting, is a book that adolescents, especially young aspiring actors, will love.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Teresa Lin North Potomac, MD</p>	<p>The Beast by Walter Dean Myers. Scholastic Press, 2003, 170 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 0-439-36841-3</p> <p>When Anthony "Spoon" Witherspoon comes home to Harlem from Wallingford Academy, he finds himself caught between two very different worlds, and he doesn't really feel like he belongs in either. Things are different for him in Harlem. People seem to have changed, and their reaction to him has changed. His best friend has dropped out of school, and a prim and proper classmate from "the Ave," Clara, is pregnant. His girlfriend, Gabi, is acting strangely. Her mother is sick, and her little brother, Rafe, is running with gang-bangers. Spoon doesn't understand why she is keeping him at a distance until he catches her in a daze with a hypodermic needle at her bedside. On the other side of his dual existence, Spoon's well-to-do friend from Wallingford Academy, Chanelle, makes it known that she wants to be more than just friends. Spoon struggles to find an identity that works in Harlem and at Wallingford.</p> <p><i>The Beast</i> is an excellent novel about difficult issues, including race, drugs, and the juxtaposition of poverty and affluence; however, Walter Dean Myers resists the temptation to preach or provide simple answers to complicated problems.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ray Castle Phoenix, AZ</p>
<p>Before the Creeks Ran Red by Carolyn Reeder HarperCollins Publishers, 2003, 370 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Author Carolyn Reeder offers three tightly-focused snapshots of teen boys trying to understand the purposes of the impending Civil War, and their own individual beliefs about the Union and the Confederacy. The first story, set at Fort Moultrie and then Sumter, S.C., features orphan Timothy Donovan, a bugler, who matures through dangerous situations and both positive and negative treatment from adult soldiers.</p> <p>The second account moves the reader to Baltimore and presents Joseph Schwartz, a poor student, on scholarship in an academy with boys from wealthy families. Joseph must come to terms with his loyalties through fights and mob scenes between the unionists and the rebels. Gregory Howard in the third story, unlike the other two previous boys, is of a privileged Virginia family. Still, he also grapples with local events and conflicts leading up to the war.</p> <p>In a style bound to be appealing to middle schoolers, Reeder creates her youthful characters in turmoil in ways that will reflect the lives of today's youth, while accurately portraying a brief historical period not often addressed in depth in Civil War literature. The author's unusual structure of this novel and her use of dialogue, interior monologue, sparse description, and authentic dialects will surely engage young readers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Marjorie M. Kaise Louisville, KY</p>	<p>Blood War by Russell Moon Harper Tempest, 2003, 140 pp., \$6.99 ISBN: 0-06-440797-07</p> <p>Marcus Aurelius, Prince of the Witches, is ready for a showdown: if only he could find his enemies. The coven members have disappeared, taking Marcus's mother with them. Confused and alone, Marcus has only one hope left; his father, the man who abandoned him years ago. Led only by his untamed power and new-found instincts, Marcus must prepare for the bloodiest battle in the history of magic.</p> <p>In his final book in the <i>Witch Boy</i> trilogy, author Russell Moon continues to flavor his story with a very dark sense of humor. Violent, mystical, and passionate, this book is definitely intended for high school boys. In a world where safety is an illusion, sex is a weapon, and only the ruthless can survive, Moon offers searing insight on such issues as loyalty, revenge, and responsibility for one's actions.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Stephen O'Rear Wheaton, IL</p>

<p>Born Blue by Han Nolan Harcourt Inc., 2003, 300 pp., \$6.99</p>	<p>Dysfunctional Family ISBN: 0152019162</p> <p>This is the story of Janie (who changes her name to Leshaya when she decides to become a blues singer), a girl with a gruesome history of abuse and survival. Born nearly dead to a heroin addict, incredibly, Janie survives the first few years of her life but not easily. Shuffled from foster home to foster home where she is witness to, as well as a victim of, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, drug addictions, and unwanted pregnancy. In the story we meet Leshaya (aka Janie) as she is leaving her childhood behind and trying to make it big by pursuing her dream as a singer. This story asks if a girl like Leshaya/Janie can leave behind the terrible past she has had and find the strength and courage to complete her dream.</p> <p>This book is definitely for older teens, as it is explicit and graphic in its description of various types of abuse.</p> <p>Samantha Woods Mesa, AZ</p>	<p>Buddha Boy by Kathie Kojia Frances Foster Books, 2003, 128 pp., \$16.00</p>	<p>Peer Pressure/Maturation ISBN: 0-374-30998-1</p> <p>Justin and his friends Jakob and Megan are not total social outcasts at Rucher High, but they're not exactly part of the in-crowd—the jocks and bullies who seem to run the school. This is why they're not too keen on making the new kid's acquaintance. They don't want to be associated with a bald-headed monk in oversized T-shirts who begs for change during lunch, lives with his elderly great-aunt, and smiles even when it's clear to others he's in pain. But on his own, Justin reaches out to the artistically talented Jinsen or Michael Martin as he was known before his own transformation and in doing so, begins to contemplate the effects his actions may have on others.</p> <p>Justin learns the fruitlessness of anger, how hurting someone now can not only make another's life miserable, but have a negative impact on one's own life in the present and future, and most importantly, how good deeds coupled with kindness toward others can reward one immeasurably.</p> <p>Laura Bullock Pearl, MS</p>
<p>Caramelo by Sandra Cisneros Knopf, 2002, 439 pp., \$24.00</p>	<p>Family/ Cultural Heritage ISBN: 0-679-43554-9</p> <p>Sandra Cisneros's protagonist, Calaya (Lala) Reyes, like Cisneros herself, experiences much of her childhood in Chicago. Lala's father is a furniture upholsterer who moves his family from Mexico City to Chicago and then to San Antonio in search of a better life. With six older brothers, Lala is her parents' youngest child and only daughter in a novel largely about family history and family stories (not necessarily the same thing) and how members of generations of a family interact. The title comes from Lala's fascination with her friend Candalaria's skin color, which is <i>caramelo</i> in Spanish, or caramel in English; Lala notices the various family branches of her relatives have various skin tones, depending on their heritage.</p> <p>Anyone who has ever gone on vacation to visit a family matriarch can relate to the Reyes family trips from Chicago to Mexico City to visit the "Awful Grandmother." And anyone who lives among multiple cultures will also relate to Lala's experience as a member of at least two very distinct cultures: Mexican and American. Due to its length and complexity, <i>Caramelo</i> may be more popular with older, more advanced high school readers.</p> <p>Melissa Noeth Phoenix, AZ</p>	<p>The Cheat by Amy Goldman Koss Dial Books, 2003, 176 pp., \$16.99</p>	<p>Teen Problems/Humor ISBN: 0-8037-2794-1</p> <p>Sarah starts it. The answers to the eighth-grade geography midterm are in her hands. Sarah decides to share her good fortune with a few classmates. Little does she know that this will turn into something far more dangerous than she could have imagined.</p> <p>A trip to the principal's office is not Rob's idea of a good day at school. Knowing he cannot go home to his father's definite fury, he leaves school in a daze heading straight out of town—on foot. Eleven hours later, Rob is curled up in a doorway on a main street far from anything familiar. Upon returning home, Rob's life is forever changed.</p> <p>Sarah and Rob are two of six characters giving readers their very own interpretive insight into the scandal. Formatted as personal entries, Koss' book allows teenage readers to unfold the story as each character reveals the progress of the situation in a different light. The issue of cheating is one of character and integrity—and one that every teenager has faced. This book is sure to resonate with today's teens.</p> <p>Elise Anderson Alexandria, MN</p>

<p><i>Crispin: The Cross of Lead</i> by Avi Hyperion, 2002, 262 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Adventure ISBN: 0-7868-0828-4</p> <p>Living in the hopelessness of servitude to a cruel feudal lord in 14th century England seems bleak enough for any teenage boy, but Crispin, the protagonist of this historical novel, has even more to bear. Not only are his parents dead, the cruel steward, John Aycliffé, falsely accuses him of two crimes — stealing money from the manor and murdering a priest. He's proclaimed a "wolf's head," a person who has committed so heinous a crime, that anyone may kill him for a reward, no trial needed. Escaping, Crispin starts a journey that eventually brings him face to face with the truth of his father's identity, and his own as well. Along the way, he discovers a new "father" in the person of a wandering minstrel named Bear. He also discovers a world he never knew existed and develops a strong sense of self and an emotional independence he could never have developed had he simply accepted the fate life seemed to have dealt him.</p> <p>Historically accurate in its references to the Peasant Revolt of 1381, <i>Crispin</i> provides an insightful look at life in medieval England for a teenage boy caught in the hopelessness of the feudal system. Students will identify with his sense of loss as he buries his mother and takes on the responsibilities of feeding and caring for himself. They'll learn to love and appreciate Crispin's surrogate father Bear's rough mannerisms as they get to know him.</p> <p>Wendy Kelleher Tempe, AZ</p>	<p><i>Faerie Wars</i> by Herbie Brennan Bloomsbury, 2003, 370 pp., \$17.95</p> <p>Fantasy/Mystery ISBN: 1-58-234-810-3</p> <p>Young Henry is experiencing major changes in his family. While doing some odd jobs for a neighbor, Mr. Fogarty, Henry meets Pyrgus who has crossed over from a parallel (fairy) world where he is prince of the Purple Kingdom. Henry first encounters Pyrgus as the prince passes through a portal into the Analog (real) world in his miniature, winged form only to be quickly nabbed by the cat. Together, Mr. Fogarty (an inventor), Henry and Pyrgus work to save the fairy realm from threats of war and return the prince safely home. Although it is a fantasy work with a note of humor, this book accomplishes more than just that as it deals with many modern issues, including divorce, homosexual parents, dysfunctional families and conspiracy theories. American readers will quickly get past the colloquial differences of an Irish writer and find the book an enthralling read.</p> <p>Vinnie Bonnit Phoenix, AZ</p>
<p><i>Flight of the Fisherbird</i> by Nora Martin Bloomsbury USA Children's Books, 2003, 150 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Interpersonal Relationships ISBN: 1-58234-814-6</p> <p>Living in the 1800's in the San Juan Islands off the coast of Washington, 13-year-old Clementine knows little of life on the mainland, but she does know her way around the islands in her dory, the Fisherbird. Soon, she is forced to make some hard decisions about loyalty to her family vs. saving Ton-Ling, an illegal Chinese immigrant tossed overboard from Clem's Uncle Doran's boat and left to drown.</p> <p>The novel touches upon the anti-Chinese feelings of the time and shows the rugged life of those who chose to live on the islands and make their living from the sea. Clem learns much about the importance of family when Sara, who is about Clem's age, is taken into Clem's home, and about friendship from Jed, a boy who lives on a neighboring island. She also learns that people are not always what they seem. Readers age 10 and above will enjoy this story of intrigue, courage, and survival.</p> <p>Charles R. Duke Boone, NC</p>	<p><i>Geography Club</i> by Brent Hartinger Harper Tempest, 2003, 226 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Sexual Orientation/High School ISBN: 0-06-001221-8</p> <p>Robert L. Goodkind High School could be any small high school in any small town in America today. Even though it is a small town, there is a diverse group of students under the conformist façade. In the lunchroom everyone sticks to their cliques, the jocks, the smart kids, the political kids, and the "losers." Russel Middlebrook is an average teen at Goodkind; he's not super popular, not a loser, just average, but he does have a secret. He is gay, and no one, not even his best friends, know. Russel often searches online for other gay teens that he can talk to until one night when, to his surprise, he connects with a classmate in a chat room and they agree to meet. Russel discovers that he's not the only gay kid at Goodkind, and things begin to happen pretty quickly. Russel and his newly discovered gay (and bisexual) friends decide to start up a club where they can meet and talk about their lives, but they don't want anyone else at school to notice them as a gay club, so they decide to call themselves the Geography Club.</p> <p>This book is an eye-opening look into the life of a gay teen, and the difficulty of figuring out teen and gay identities simultaneously. This book does a great job of pointing out that gay teenagers are just like everyone else; they are the smart kids, the jocks, and the political activists. Most importantly, they go through the same identity crisis that all teens do.</p> <p>Maria Hernandez Snohomish, WA</p>

Clip & File YA Book Reviews

<p>Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case by Chris Crowe Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2003, 128 pp., \$18.99</p> <p>History/Nonfiction ISBN: 0-8037-2804-2</p> <p>This book is a nonfiction companion to Chris Crowe's <i>Mississippi Trial: 1955</i>, the story of the murder of Emmett Till, the trial that followed, and surrounding events. Emmett was a 14-year-old African-American youngster visiting relatives in Mississippi in 1955, who was kidnapped and murdered after alleged remarks made to a white woman. Although two white men, who later admitted to the murder in a magazine interview, were put on trial for murder, they were quickly acquitted by an all-white jury. This was a landmark event that helped to jumpstart the Civil Rights movement.</p> <p>Due to the graphic nature of this story (including one photo which appeared in a Chicago newspaper), it might be disturbing to younger readers. Nonetheless, it would be a good source to use when talking about the Civil Rights movement, and a good paired read with Crowe's aforementioned fictionalized account.</p> <p>Christie Van Sande Phoenix, AZ</p>	<p>Hang On In There, Shelley by Kate Saksena Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2003, 219 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Friendship/Pop Music ISBN: 1-58234-822-7</p> <p>Fourteen-year-old Shelley lives with her mother, known as mom, and her eight-year-old brother Jake, in a flat in south London. There, she writes religiously in her diary about her life and her fascination with the hit pop group, <i>Artic 2000</i>. What she admires most about her rock group is the lead singer, Ziggy, and "the honesty that he portrays of himself" in the many fan magazines that she reads. Impressed, she decides to write him for advice, and to her amazement, she receives a postcard reply—from Italy, of all places.</p> <p>Elated, Shelley corresponds regularly, telling Ziggy about her daily trials and triumphs, and to her delight, Ziggy responds—usually with the telling phrase "Hang in there, Shelley." Gradually, Shelley's fascination with her favorite rock star turns to hesitancy and doubt, as she begins to wonder if Ziggy is really reading her letters. Soon, though, reassuring clues—the mention of her brother, her mother's troubles, and her equal frightful adventure—give her assurance that rock star Ziggy is really penning replies.</p> <p>Gradually, Shelley's mother's problems become too much to bear. She is a down on her luck alcoholic, and Shelley must cope both with her drunkenness and her brother's insolence and fear. This is a good read for young people, particularly middle school students, who long for realistic fiction with an edge and a sense of place and time.</p> <p>Jeffrey S. Kaplan Orlando, FL</p>
<p>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix by J.K. Rowling Scholastic Press, 2003, 870 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Adventure ISBN: 0-439-35806-x</p> <p>This is the fifth book of the Harry Potter series and picks up the story where the fourth left off with the return of Lord Voldemort. In this story, Harry, Dumbledore, and his group, the Order of the Phoenix are trying to warn the wizarding community of the danger. They are hampered by the fact that the Ministry of Magic refuses to believe that the dark lord has returned and tries to discredit Harry and his friends. Harry still manages to return to Hogwarts and finish his fifth year, but the Ministry's representative, Dolores Umbridge, is now closely watching the school. As the ministry tries to take control of Hogwarts, Harry, Ron, and Hermione try to find ways to learn the skills they need to survive and to uncover why Harry is having dreams of Lord Voldemort.</p> <p>Although this book is fairly long, the story is fast paced. Each of the characters is starting to develop to full potential. Motivated by the oppression of the Ministry and the threat of Voldemort, the characters face a variety of challenges and manage to prove themselves. Although adult characters receive rough treatment in this book, young adults will relate to Harry's ongoing story, especially with the ending that reveals the true relationship between Harry and Lord Voldemort.</p> <p>Sarah Dean Tempe, AZ</p>	<p>How I Fell in Love and Learned to Shoot Free Throws by Jon Ripslinger, Roaring Brook Press, 2003, 178 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Family/Identity ISBN: 0-7613-1892-5</p> <p>Angel McPherson is all-star athlete of the girls' basketball team, and Danny Henderson is determined to hook her attention—and affection. Although his free-throw skills are lacking, Danny challenges Angel to a shoot-off at the charity assembly. His loss provides the perfect excuse to request Angel's assistance...and make her fall in love.</p> <p>When Angel accepts his offer, Danny is delighted. His plan unfolds perfectly, until he realizes that Angel is guarding a family secret. But she isn't the only one with a skeleton in the closet; Danny is hiding a secret of his own.</p> <p>When rumors spread and Angel is accused of being gay, both teenagers must confess their secrets and confront the truth. They learn to accept their families and themselves, while discovering important lessons about honesty, trust, and love along the way. Whether basketball player or spectator, guy or girl, this book is sure to score!</p> <p>Jennifer Erickson Wheaton, IL</p>

<p><i>Jackie's Wild Seattle</i> by Will Hobbs Harper Collins Publishers, 2003, 197 pp., \$16.89</p> <p>Outdoor Adventure ISBN: 0-688-17474-4</p> <p>In another of Will Hobbs's engaging adventures, 14-year-old Shannon and her younger brother Cody spend summertime with their uncle Neal in Seattle while their parents travel with Doctors Without Borders. Neal drives an ambulance as a volunteer for an animal rescue center, called Jackie's Wild Seattle. When Neal gets hurt rescuing a hawk, Shannon begins to rescue animals on her own; Although rescue attempts are sometimes unsuccessful, Shannon's experiences will help readers understand life and death and the relationship between animals and human beings. Romantic interests and family relationships are also of interest in this book.</p> <p>All readers can enjoy this story, not just young outdoor fans. Readers will see, hear, taste, and even smell along with the characters. The scenes rescuing animals are exciting since these are so realistic and depicted in detail, the likely reason being that the author often writes based on real events and has a lot of experiences with wildlife.</p> <p>Naomi Yamakawa Tempe, AZ</p>	<p><i>Jennifer Government</i> by Max Barry Doubleday, 2003, 321 pp., \$19.95</p> <p>Political Satire/Futuristic ISBN: 0-385-50759-3</p> <p>In his book, Max Barry seems to be making the point that anarchy is not freedom. In a time when characters take the last name of the organization they work for and police forces contract killings, Barry creates a materialistic world where money can buy you everything, except justice. In his world, corporations rule and being unemployed is worse than murder. As corporations unite and take on the help of the police and NRA (yes, the NRA!), the government doesn't have the necessary budget to fight them. Barry begins the book with the events that set this in motion. When Jennifer Government, a government agent, is tipped off that a Nike advertising campaign will involve the murder of several people, she sets out to prevent these crimes (crime prevention is in her job description). Along the way the author caricatures the NRA, the police, giant corporations, privatized government agencies, and ineffectual protestors. The sometimes graphic nature of the material in this book and the sophisticated subject matter make it a better read for more mature young adults.</p> <p>Katrina Nelson Phoenix, AZ</p>
<p><i>Keesha's House</i> by Helen Frost Frances Foster Books, 2003, 128 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Poetry/Teen Problems ISBN: 0-374-34064-1</p> <p>Stephie is pregnant; Jason is the father and an all-star on the basketball court. Dontay's parents live in prison while he remains in foster care, and Carmen waits to be released from juvenile detention. Harris finds himself abandoned after telling his father he is gay. Katie leaves home to escape an abusive stepfather. And Keesha, after leaving her drug-abusing father in search of safety, has found a place of refuge the others turn to in times of need.</p> <p>These seven individuals take turns sharing their thoughts and the issues weighing on their hearts with every turn of the page. Frost uses the sestina and the sonnet forms of poetry to speak to readers through each characters' voice. The rhythmic quality and easy flow of the poetic forms allow the reader to feel the life in these characters in a powerful way.</p> <p>In <i>Keesha's House</i>, Frost uncovers hard, deep struggles facing teenagers today with an encouraged sense of hope and a desire for a better tomorrow.</p> <p>Kristine Johnson Cary, IL</p>	<p><i>Mates, Dates, and Inflatable Bras</i> by Kathy Hopkins Pulse, Inc., 2003, 160pp., \$4.99</p> <p>Coming of Age/Humor ISBN: 0-6898-5544-3</p> <p><i>Mates, Dates, and Inflatable Bras</i> is the first book in the series that follows the trials and tribulations of three friends: Izzie, Nesta, and Lucy. The book focuses on Lucy, a typically insecure 14-year-old. Of course, she is insecure due to normal teenage worries, such as fear of losing her best friend, wondering what to do with her future, and constant teasing about her height (she is often called a "midget"). She also develops her first crush on a "mystery boy," whose identity is kept a secret until the end of the book.</p> <p>Hopkins' book is a cute story that humorously conveys the insecurities girls face during adolescence. Hopkins does a good job of including characters who would appeal to many different girls, although some are a little stereotypical. Readers who enjoy this book but want something a little more complex should also enjoy Louise Rennison books (<i>Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging</i>).</p> <p>Janesse Perrotte Phoenix, AZ</p>

Clip & File YA Book Reviews



The Monster in Me by Mette Ivie Harrison
Holiday House, 2003, 156 pp., \$16.95

Foster Care
ISBN: 0-8234-1713-1

Natalie Willis sometimes dreams she's a monster. She can't believe she's a worthwhile person. If she were, wouldn't her mother do something more about putting her own life together so that Natalie didn't have to move into a foster home?

Natalie loves to run. Maybe, if she keeps running, all of her problems will go away. Maybe, she won't have to face the fears and the pain. Maybe, the Parker family will work out their own problems once she's no longer in the way. But foster-dad John, school-acquaintance Mary, and Coach Landers stand at her crossroads, keeping Natalie on the winning path toward the end of her run, Mom and home.

In this stunning first novel, author Mette Ivie Harrison takes the reader inside the thoughts of a young girl, forced to face a world filled with adult problems. You'll find yourself running along with her every step of the way.

Lu Ann Brobst Staheli
Spanish Fork, UT

Or Give Me Death by Ann Rinaldi
Gulliver Books, 2003, 226 pp., \$17.00

Historical Fiction
ISBN: 0-15-216687-4

Set in colonial times, this fictionalized account of American hero ("Give me liberty or give me death.") Patrick Henry and his family, suggest "what if" the family had a private life, entangled in a web of secrets and lies that never made the headlines. In Rinaldi's alternate universe, Sarah, Patrick's wife, is a "lunatic," but the family sweeps her mental illness under the rug. After she tries to drown her newborn son, however, they lock her in the family cellar for four years. Besides keeping her mother's illness a secret, Anne, the middle daughter, is burdened with another secret. During one of Mrs. Henry's ravings, she claims to know that one of the daughters will inherit her madness, the identity of whom she reveals only to Anne. The novel goes on to unravel a twisted knot of family life and to suggest an alternate origin for Mr. Henry's famous statement in defiance of the British hangman.

Young readers will be taken in by Rinaldi's strong storytelling and forget that they are reading historical fiction as they are transported to another time when the country was on the verge of war and Patrick Henry was making history, and many will identify with the heart-wrenching, confusing, and difficult decisions that the Henry family must make.

Kim Grozek
Tempe, AZ

My Mother's Daughter: Four Greek Goddesses Speak

by Doris Orgel

Greek Mythology
ISBN: 0-7613-2808-4

Roaring Brook Press, 2003, 122 pp., \$17.95

If you are a lover of Greek mythology, you know these names—Leto, Artemis, Persephone, and Demeter. They are magical, eternal beings—both Greek goddesses and real life mothers and daughters—who do everything real human beings normally do, share, argue, and come back together. Their stories are the stories of the human condition, and as told in their own voices, author Doris Orgel makes these remote Greek gods seem very much alive and real for young and old alike.

In this wonderful work, four Greek goddesses—Leto and her daughter Artemis, and Demeter and her daughter Persephone, explain in straightforward and engaging language their own personal stories about their lives, loves, and passions. Intriguing to read, and easy to follow, their stories will entice young readers to learn about Greek gods, and underscore for older readers, the significance of Greek mythology in our everyday understandings of the human condition. These larger-than-life and ancient tales are a must read for budding Greek scholars and a must have for the bookshelves of teachers who are planning a unit on ancient Greek mythology.

Anita F. Kaplan
Boynton Beach, FL

Pool Boy by Michael Simmons
Simon and Schuster, 2003, 164 pp., \$23.90

Realistic Fiction/Greed
ISBN: 0-7613-1885-2

Insider trading. Brett Gerson remembers their rip-off lawyer saying that was why his father has been dragged off to jail. Yet, what really irked him was when they lost the house....his house, the pool, the Mercedes, and his brand new \$5,000 stereo system.

Brett struggles to adjust to life across the tracks, where he now lives with his aunt. His mom makes him get a job, and Brett soon finds himself cleaning his friends' pool with Alife Moore, an eccentric 70-year old. Will his friends, and most importantly, the girl of his dreams, like him now that he is poor? Author Michael Simmons challenges the reader to decide what really matters, and raises the issue of anger, family, and forgiveness. *Pool Boy* is a fast and entertaining read that won't lose you in its depths, but to be sure, it isn't shallow water.

Dan Reinhold
Wheaton, IL

<p><i>The Second Summer of the Sisterhood</i> by Ann Brashares Friendship/Coming of Age Delacorte Press, 2003, 373 pp., \$15.95 ISBN: 0-385-72935-0</p> <p>The highest compliment one can pay an author is to eagerly await a sequel (to <i>The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants</i>) and rush out to get it as soon as it comes out. As soon as <i>The Second Summer of the Sisterhood</i> was available, I stayed up almost all night reading it; I was so excited to see what happened next to the members of the sisterhood. As with Brashares's first book, this one would be appropriate for seventh grade and up. The romance this time around is a little more racy, so there is more potentially objectionable material, but it is very tasteful and not at all gratuitous.</p> <p>As the book opens, the girls are approaching another summer, and they have all that they learned the previous summer to build on. Unfortunately, and as in real life, they continue to make the same mistakes and are in constant need of help from their friends to press on and continue to try in spite of disappointments and heartbreak for all of them. They all come to new revelations. Tibby discovers that she loves her family, Carmen learns to deal with her anger, Bridget discovers herself and is able to move beyond her mother's suicide, and Lena allows herself vulnerability.</p> <p>Rebekah Crutchfield Queen Creek, AZ</p>	<p><i>The Speed of Light</i> by Ron Carlson Sports/Coming of Age Harper Tempest, 2003, 280 pp., \$15.99 ISBN: 0-380-97837-7</p> <p>Twelve-year-old Larry can't wait for school to be over for the summer so that he can spend his days playing every possible kind of baseball with his friends Witt and Rafferty. It's the 1950s, and for this soon-to-be-teenager, nothing could be better than a summer of endless days playing and exploring. Baseball is the game he and his friends obsess about, but his best friend, scientifically minded Witt, finds the world fascinating and wants to explore it all. Under Witt's tutelage, the summer becomes just as much about trying to revive dead crocodiles, shaving cats, and trying to speed up the aging process through gravity as it is about America's pastime. It's a memorable summer of delicious days and endless nights out under the stars for Larry. All is not idyllic, however, and after this summer, nothing will ever be quite as innocent, or quite the same, again. As the three boys move out of childhood, some difficult truths come into focus, including abuse and family dysfunction.</p> <p>This novel will appeal to readers of all ages although some elements of the book will be more accessible to older readers. Young male readers, especially those in early high school or junior high, will relate to Larry as he deals with the onset of puberty, when girls, who have fallen well behind baseball on the list of interesting things, suddenly become interested. The characterizations of each of the boys is razor sharp and powerful. Witt, who sublimates his anger over abuse into scientific study, is especially well drawn.</p> <p>William Konigsberg Tempe, AZ</p>
<p><i>A Time to Love: Stories from the Old Testament</i> by Walter Dean Myers Religious/Short Story Scholastic Press, 2003, 127 pp., \$19.95</p> <p>A fictionalized retelling of six Old Testament stories focusing on love, including Sampson and Delilah, Ruben and Joseph, Ruth and Naomi, Abraham and Isaac, Zillah and Lot, Aser and Camiel. Each story is told from the perspective of a secondary character. For instance, the story of Abraham and Isaac, as it is recorded in the Bible, focuses a reader's attention on Abraham, whereas, this fictionalized account reads through the eyes and understanding of Isaac as he follows his father into the land of Moriah to make a sacrifice. He knows his father is a holy man, he is old, he loves God and seeks His will. Isaac knows they have not brought a sacrifice and begins to understand that his father intends him to be the sacrifice. Abraham takes the more difficult route only to test his old life and give Providence the chance to eliminate the command to slay his son. Isaac sees his father's incredible devotion to God and imagines his father's pain at the impending command. The other stories range from highly to barely rewritten. "Sampson and Delilah" is by Delilah. "Reuben and Joseph" is told from Reuben's point of view. "Ruth and Naomi" is about love, loyalty, and shared fate. "Zillah and Lot" is about comfort turned to fear. "Aser and Camiel," told from the point of view of two boys, one Egyptian and one Hebrew, during the Israelites' time in slavery.</p> <p>The collection of stories makes for an interesting commentary on love. Love is illustrated as a perfect emotion, employed by imperfect people.</p> <p>April Anderson Tempe, AZ</p>	<p><i>Twists and Turns</i> by Janet McDonald Friendship/Urban Life Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003, 135 pp., \$16.00 ISBN: 0-374-39955-7</p> <p>Keeba and Teesha Washington have just graduated high school and have dreams of being successful, but what can they do? They live in the "projects," and their only interests seem to be eating and partying. They do, however, have one skill they hadn't considered until their librarian friend Skye helps them realize that they can market that skill, braiding hair, hence the novel's title. Skye helps Keeba and Teesha with a business plan and supports them as they put their business into operation. They obtain funding from a friend who has made it big by doing commercials, and a friend who is getting a computer technology degree builds a website for their business. After renting a storefront, the two protagonists have a hugely successful grand opening, and settle into drumming up clientele. Of course, they also face challenges: past enemies who, out of jealousy, don't want them to succeed, and a landlord who sees their apparent wealth (They have TV stars at the opening and have a professional website, so they are bound to be rolling in the dough.) and decides to take advantage of them.</p> <p>This book is set in an inner city area where conditions are not good but are manageable. The girls learn not to give up when the going gets tough, but instead, to depend on themselves, family, and friends.</p> <p>Karen Conner Mesa, AZ</p>

<p><i>Victory or Death: Stories of the American Revolution</i> History/Diversity by Doreen Rappaport, Greg Call and Joan Verniero ISBN: 0-06-029516-3. HarperCollins, 2003, 120pp, \$16.99</p> <p>Authors Rappaport, Call and Verniero cover famous and not-so-famous people whose contributions to the American Revolution helped to ensure victory. Based in fact, each story tells how a lesser figure in American history acted to help the cause; for example, letters to his mother provide an account of how Peter Brown, a 20-year-old corporal, fought at Lexington and Concord and helped to build a fort on Breed's Hill. Francis Salvador, a Jewish nobleman with a wife, four children, a home in London, and a family plantation in South Carolina, traveled throughout the back country of the colonies, gathering signatures for the oath of loyalty in support of independence. Abigail Adams served as a "home-front reporter" when she and her four children left Boston and moved to their farm in Braintree, Massachusetts, while her husband, John, served as a delegate to the Continental Congress. Sixteen-year-old Sybil Ludington rode 40 miles to alert her father's troops that they were needed to stop the British from taking the Hudson River. Additional stories tell how others put their lives on the line as spies, soldiers, and couriers.</p> <p>Beth Bareham Tempe, AZ</p>	<p><i>Warrior Angel</i> by Robert Lipsyte Sports/Mental Health Harper Collins, 2003, 186 pp, \$15.99 ISBN: 0-06-000496-7</p> <p>Twenty-year-old Sonny Bear is now the world heavyweight champ, but he's not happy and his life is spinning out of control. As the fourth novel in Lipsyte's "The Contender" series begins, Sonny is preparing for what should be an easy fight in Las Vegas, a warm-up for what will certainly be a more difficult challenge against Floyd "The Wall" Hall, whom Sonny Bear beat to grab the heavyweight title. But the fight is anything but easy; Sonny barely wins and afterwards runs away to escape his corrupt promoter and trainers. An e-mail from someone calling himself "Warrior Angel" brings him back to life and helps him find the strength to return to his roots. He meets Warrior Angel there, who turns out to be Starkey, a teenage boy with severe mental health issues, including voices he hears in his head. Starkey and Sonny seem to be a symbiotic combination.</p> <p>Readers will not only enjoy the excitement and quick pace of the writing, especially the boxing scenes, but will also be intrigued by this new character, the danged-but-benevolent Starkey. Reading the other three novels in the series will help readers to better understand the supporting characters, many of whom have played major roles in the previous stories.</p> <p>Bill Konigsberg Tempe, AZ</p>
<p><i>The Way A Door Closes</i> by Hope Anita Smith Loss of a Parent/Poetry Henry Holt and Company, 2003, 52 pp. \$18.95 ISBN: 0-8050-6477-X</p> <p>This collection of poems all revolves around 13-year-old C.J. This collection is written in story form. Each poem represents a different family member who explains a bit of their life. Grandmomma explains how she had to sit on the back of the bus during segregation. Daddy tells C.J. he is "almost a man." Then everything changes after Daddy loses his job. He leaves the family. The family goes through a great deal of pain but learns to heal. Almost a year later Daddy returns. This time C.J. knows Daddy is going to stay. Through these poems C.J. finds a way to show his hurt, healing and the power to "open the door again."</p> <p>I would use this book when teaching about segregation and in my poetry unit. This collection is a terrific example of a different format poems can take. Students could write a different ending to this story by creating different poems. They could write about how this collection of poems affected them when they read them.</p> <p>Paula Schuster New Harbor, Maine</p>	<p><i>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review, send a copy of the book to:</i></p> <p>Lori Goodson 409 Cherry Circle Manhattan, KS 66503</p> <p><i>To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Lori Goodson at lagoodson@cox.net</i></p>

Maid Marian Made Possible:

Feminist Advances in Late Twentieth-century Retellings of the Robin Hood Legend for Young Adults

Both Robin McKinley and Esther Friesner, contemporary retellers of the Robin Hood legend, refer to Howard Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* as their first significant introduction to the legend. Pyle's text retells most, if not all, of the Robin Hood ballads (a mere glance through the table of contents reveals 20 of these ballads, from "Robin Hood and the Tinker" to "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisbourne"). However, Pyle's text does not handle the ballad of "Robin Hood and Maid Marian"—nor does it explore Maid Marian's role in the legend. As a result, the very text that feeds and informs the Robin Hood legend of the twentieth century is thorough in its treatment of literary heroism but blind to heroism as a female potential.

Considering the interest in the effects of literature on the gender and social development of the young adult reader, an interest in those writers who follow Pyle and are subsequently influenced by his work articulates just what effect his narrative has had on contemporary authors' notions of female heroism. In stark contrast to Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, in which female characters—if present at all—are peripheral and one-dimensional, his literary descendants, such as Robin McKinley's *The Outlaws of Sherwood* characterize Maid Marian and describe her not only in relationship to men, but in partnership with them, thereby describing how male quest narratives written by contemporary women writers have augmented the Robin Hood legend. Esther Friesner's *The Sherwood Game* continues this work, thereby providing a preview of the "developments in

female-centered narrative made possible for the legend by late 20th Century advances in feminist thinking" (McDonnell).

Because it is one of the first, and most popular, Robin Hood retellings authored by a woman, our hopes for *The Outlaws of Sherwood* include the integration of the female hero¹. That McKinley's Maid Marian is a significant individual is important. She is active, witty, smart, and genuine—and an old and good friend to Robin. It is this characterization that allows McKinley's Marian to pursue her heroic potential in the text and to play a role as vital and as valuable as the other legendary characters (such as Little John, Much the Miller's Son, and Will Scarlet). As Marilyn Kerrenebrock reminds us:

McKinley's females do not simmer; they do not betray their own nature to win a man's approval. But neither do they take love lightly or put their own desires before anything else. In McKinley's books, the romance, like the adventure, is based upon ideas of faithfulness, duty and honor. (52)

In view of McKinley's references and stated indebtedness to Howard Pyle, with whose Robin Hood author McKinley "grew up," this liberation of Marian's character is significant (McKinley 276). In Robin McKinley we have a woman author who has chosen to go against traditional, ideological, and gendered social training to deliver a female character with heroic potential.

The heroic potential of Robin McKinley's Maid Marian is first articulated and deployed in the introduction of her character. It is immediate. As *The*

Outlaws of Sherwood opens, Robin (a lesser forester), Marian, and Much are making their separate ways to the Nottingham Fair (McKinley 6). While traveling through Sherwood to meet his friends, Robin has time to reflect on his misfortunes: his father has recently died, and the strain on his finances is leaving him rather hungry. Interestingly, although Marian is not with him, her voice has a prominent place in the narrative from the outset. In Robin's imagination and memory, Marian is such a necessary component to his story that things she has said, as well as things she might say in response to his concerns and considerations, direct his actions—and, more significantly perhaps, our interpretation of the action:

He did consider, twice a year, as fair time approached, the noble—possibly even royal—favour he might curry by a fine tournament. But—as he told himself—royal favour was a notoriously chancy (and expensive) thing and at best a long-term one; and the Sheriff of Nottingham had a short-term mind [. . .] many times [Marian had] made Much and Robin laugh till their sides hurt with her deadly imitations of the sheriff and his society. Once Robin said to her, “But your stories are second- and third-hand. How do you *know*?” “I don't,” said Marian cheerfully. “But I am a good guesser—and a good actor, am I not?”

Robin said teasingly, “I will tell you what you already know if you promise that you will not run off with a band of wandering players.”

“I will not have to,” replied Marian, “so long as evading my father's questions when I wish to spend a day with you continues to exercise my talents so usefully [. . .] .” He did not hate the fact that he was a second-rate archer; and Much and Marian knew him and were his friends...But Much and Marian would be bringing their bows and would think it odd if he did not, for they were all to enter the contest. Privately Robin felt that Marian had a good chance of winning [. . .] . (McKinley 2-5)

What we learn of Marian's character—the generosity of her feelings for her friends and the regard she feels towards them, her gift for performing story, as well as her superior archery skills—because, rendered by Robin, allow not only for Marian to be described by Robin, but for Robin to be described. This turns out to be empowering to their characterization of each other in that neither defines or controls the other. Additionally, their mutual description serves as a good introduction to their characters in that they give the audience each other's best selves. Robin responds to Marian by responding to what he understands to be her perception of him.

This mutually defining construction of characterization continues past the introductory pages of McKinley's Robin Hood retelling and begins to gesture toward more complicated subject matter, the construction of gender. *The Outlaws of Sherwood* is told from an omniscient point of view focusing largely on Robin despite the directive powers of Marian's “voice.” Because of this, one of the most compelling acts of Marian's traditional character, disguising herself as a male to stand with Robin and his band, is necessarily foreshortened. As Robin reflects on Marian's chance of winning the Nottingham Fair's archery contest and his own indecision regarding being able to pay the entrance fee—*through allusion only*—do we learn that:

Marian had a good chance of winning; she was one of those who always allowed for the breeze that would kick up from nowhere after the arrow had left the string. They might not like it when she proved to be a girl, but no one would notice in the crowd when the three of them signed up together, for she would be wearing boy's clothes, with her hair up under a hat; and after she won, Robin didn't think they'd deny her the prize. (McKinley 6)

Marian's cross-dressing disguise, taken directly from the seventeenth century ballad “Robin Hood and Maid Marian” (Child 150), here reimagined by McKinley and presented by way of Robin's thoughts, is actually two performative acts in one; it is a performance of gender as well as of skill, conflating and poking holes through traditional social prescriptions for gendered behavior in a way quite reminiscent of a young Robin McKinley. As Amanda J. Ridder explains:

The heroines in McKinley's books reflect certain qualities that she saw in herself as a young woman: clumsiness, plainness, bookishness and disinterest in the usual social games that involve flirting and dating [. . .] . She believes that most girls go through a time growing up when they believe they must have an innate greatness and destiny beyond the apparent; that they are in fact lost princesses, switched at birth. (<http://www.cif.rochester.edu/users/harimad/McKinley.html>)

Quite literally, Marian's disguise puts her on a level playing field necessary to prove inherent skills regardless of sex and gender.

As it is, Marian never enters the contest, and we thus have no way to consider how her subversive act is received. But her intent to participate in the archery contest does allow Marian to enter Sherwood as a

male in order to find Robin, who has been accused of murder and suddenly outlawed. Marian's entrance into Sherwood also allows the novel to fulfill the expectations of the popular legend by having Marian support Much's suggestion that Robin, with the help of his two dear friends, take up the cause and leadership of the unjustly outlawed. The three friends argue at length:

Much and Marian exchanged glances. "We will not be entirely cut off from the outside world," said Marian carefully.

"You cannot be a part of this madness, Marian," said Robin sharply; "You always had less patience with Much's will-o'-the-wisps than I did."

"Nor am I an overtaxed farmer or an outlaw in hiding?" said Marian. "It is possible that it is exactly that that leaves my head clear to judge what you cannot judge—" [. . .].

There was a long pause. Robin looked at his two friends, seated now on either side of him, and it occurred to him that they were going to take him into custody as inexorably as any king's forester might: their faces told him that. "Oh, to the devil with you, and your troop of merry bandits with you," he said. "I promise." (McKinley 21)

It must be noted that neither the brevity of Marian's actual voice nor the omniscient narration of McKinley's novel detracts from its promise of female heroism. One of the charms of *The Outlaws of Sherwood* is its representation of a democracy within an unjust feudal system. As that feudal system is in transition, both the democratic and cooperative spirit of McKinley's outlaw band and Marian's offering of her own participation have a liberating effect that stands outside of singular characterization. Male disguise, here, is not purely in the service of gender subversion and social disruption envisaged by gay and lesbian studies (Butler), nor is it only in the service of female empowerment (Gilbert and Gubar). Instead, Robin McKinley's *The Outlaws of Sherwood* begins to describe theoretical and ideological "possibilities" and to offer methods by which one might transform social inequities. Traditionally, this has been a concept and application of the Robin Hood legend, since, as Clare Sponsler has noted, "the most culturally creative response [. . .] was to co-opt misrule" (46). These "possibilities" are what Robin McKinley gives to the developing young adult reader in her own "creative response" to the Robin Hood legend.

As a result of its interpretation of, and interaction with, the traditional legend, as well as with Howard Pyle's retelling of it, Robin McKinley's *The Outlaws of Sherwood* asks the reader to consider the implications of disguising one's gender, to reflect upon what opportunities doing so would make available, at the same time that it uses those considerations as an eloquent and effective stand-in for actual experience. *The Outlaws of Sherwood* encourages all readers to imagine female heroism and to integrate it as a possibility in, and for, their lives. This allows the female readers of McKinley's text to be introduced to the Robin Hood legend as a liberating and empowering experience in their own gendered, social development even as it serves to inform and expand the experience of the male reader.

McKinley shapes her narrative of gender disguise in such a way as to make the disruption of gender inequity a positive act of utmost importance. Toward the conclusion of McKinley's retelling, King Richard pardons the 12 merry "men" who organized the outlaw revolt, describing his pardon as "the King's whim;" the outlaws' number is not high enough to warrant royal pardon, but Richard has enjoyed the stories of their exploits and cannot resist participating vicariously by condoning their actions (McKinley 274). McKinley's retelling is ultimately an exploration of democracy and cooperation—a valid aspect of the multifaceted Robin Hood legend. And Richard's pardon is, in part, about supporting and stabilizing the democratic ideal, in which all persons are created equal. This is a worthy lesson, and it is fitting that McKinley's text should allow it to live on in a necessarily updated retelling of the Robin Hood legend.

Esther Friesner's *The Sherwood Game* also offers some exciting and viable alternatives. As constructed in Friesner's novel, Maid Marian is representative of "developments in female-centred narrative" (McDonnell). At times more *Frankenstein* than Robin Hood, Esther Friesner's sci-fi-informed *The Sherwood Game* moves the Robin Hood legend into virtual reality, thereby creating a bridge between fantasy and science fiction and further mediating the interactive relationship between text and reader. Friesner's novel is set in the future. This is a future that includes the creation and production of life-sized "andromechs," robots formed in the human image and used for personal pleasure (mainly sexual). Friesner's future also

allows for an examination of contemporary ideas of history and the art and influence of medievalism. Our protagonist is Carl Sherwood, a brilliant but bored and inherently fearful computer engineer moldering away at Manifest, Inc. Instead of putting his time and energy toward the Banks Project, which involves the manufacture of several andromechs for an adult “amusement” park in Japan, Carl Sherwood earns his overtime by designing a virtual reality game, strictly against company policy.

Carl’s game is a computer-enabled retelling of, and interaction with, the Robin Hood legend as the legend has been informed, most notably, by Howard

Pyle’s *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood of Great Renown in Nottinghamshire*.

Following tradition, a “visitor” to Sherwood Forest is met by the virtual Robin Hood, invited to best Robin Hood in battle, and when successful, invited to join the band and instructed in the use of longbow and broadsword. The adventures that follow include such familiar characters as Little John, Will Scarlett, Much the Miller’s Son, the Sheriff of Nottingham, and several minor “cast” players, most of whom are not programmed to the same degree of sophistication as Robin Hood and

whose friendship and aid are secondary only to those of the visitor-player—a role both selfishly and protectively guarded by Carl Sherwood. Much to Robin Hood’s dismay, Maid Marian has strictly been left out of the game. Carl’s insistence on that exclusion presumably stems from an overbearing father and little-to-no luck with women (though it should be noted how closely Carl’s characterization mirrors that of Pyle).

Trouble begins—and the novel really takes off—when Robin Hood becomes more sophisticated than even his creator could have dreamed due to a glitch in the game’s programming. As a self-aware entity with both memory and an ability to learn, the virtual Robin Hood remains true to his character profile, robbing from the rich to give to the poor, fighting authority on behalf of the voiceless and oppressed, using his clever intellect to outsmart his opponents and his charm to bend everyone else to his will. And when this combination of intellect and charm becomes self-aware—especially within the confines of a computer game—the results are provocative. It is not long before Robin discovers the means by which to manipulate Carl into giving andromech bodies to him and his co-conspiratorial Merry Men so that they may more effectively (and through their cunning knowledge of the Internet) satisfy their demands for justice. This forces Carl to seek the help of his co-worker, Laurie Pincus, and of Eddie Shepherd.

The dualism of Esther Friesner’s *The Sherwood Game*, where science fiction and fantasy, as well as development and reader, meet and are well matched, is never so instructive as when it shapes the character of Maid Marian. Because Friesner’s text involves two sets of characters, the real and the virtually real, the reader is gifted with two “Marians.” One has been with us from the outset of the novel in the form of Laurie Pincus, Carl Sherwood’s colleague and friend. The other is a traditional Maid Marian from Carl’s imagination, a late addition to the game and one added specifically to lure Robin Hood back under control. Thus, Friesner’s text demands that we chart the experiences of two female heroes.

But Friesner’s dualism is ultimately expansive, embracing and recognizing not only the shared experiences of Laurie and Maid Marian, but also those of Carl and Robin Hood, Eddie and Little John, and the text and reader. And it is this quality of *The Sherwood Game* that discloses the effects of the text on the reader even as it reverses the focus to examine the effects of the reader on the text. Such embracing, recognizing, and subverting empower Friesner’s readers and allow her “real” characters, like *their* own computerized and andromechanized creations, to be self-aware and to describe their own heroism by referencing others and sharing their experiential knowledge.

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Laurie describes the potential benefits of this awareness when explaining the Comanche peyote ritual to Eddie, his own cultural heroic inheritance, while strolling through the virtual Sherwood Forest:

“The peyote rite was also intended as a ritual of healing. When everything hurts so much that all you can do is cry out to God, ‘why me?’ it’s good to have a way to get an answer, or at least to feel as if you’re not just standing there hollering into the void. You’re not supposed to live in the ritual—or any healing time—any more than you’re supposed to live in the game. You get help, you get out, you go on.” (275)

Significantly, what Laurie is describing is her own, and Maid Marian’s, emotional impetus for self-discovery and self-improvement. Each is driven to assist her respective Robin Hood but also to serve a higher goal: the protection of the rights and the safe development of children.

Robin Hood’s Internet activities in the outside world bring to light the understanding that, because they have been based on the character programming of Robin Hood, the child andromechs are destined to be self-aware entities: children who know who they are and exactly what is happening to them at the adult amusement park. But Robin Hood has been confined, especially by his own good word, to the game. It is up to Maid Marian and Laurie, Carl, and Eddie to enter the game, to ensure that Robin will stay there and that he will not cause any more trouble. They may then return to Manifest, Inc. so they can set things right for the child andromechs by exposing Regis Lyons, the owner of the company (his name a pun on King Richard, Couer de Lion), Mr. Ohnlandt, the manager in Sales (a pun on John Lackland), and Mr. Genjimori, the visiting representative from the Japanese company.

Of those entering the game, Marian is the first, and easiest, entry, involving the release of her program disk from her temporary andromech body (a tall and stunning black woman) and the downloading of her “person” into the Sherwood game:

“Put me in,” said Marian. “Let me deal with Robin on his own level. I’ll stop him from causing any further trouble for you.” “How?” She shrugged. “I’ll reform him.” “That never works with men,” Laurie objected. “*Cosmopolitan* says so.” “In that case I’ll stick to his tail so closely that when he lies down, I’ll hit the mattress before he does.” (Friesner 255)

Marian, who is very much invested—as is true to her belated programming—in the controlling of Robin Hood, has some tricks up her sleeve. Perceiving that the welfare of the child andromechs is the primary concern of her cohorts and creators, and fearing that any delay in the reformation of Robin Hood could prove disastrous, Maid Marian takes control of the game. She alters the automatic shut-off to her command alone and has changed the sense ratio (which controls how much pleasure or pain a player is able to feel) to 1:1. By the time Eddie and Laurie arrive at Robin Hood’s camp, and Carl arrives sometime later in the midst of Sherwood Forest, the Sherwood game, like Robin Hood, Maid Marian, and the child andromechs, is very real indeed.

Because Maid Marian and Laurie Pincus’s experience involves the rescue and resources of the child andromechs, Friesner’s text comes to recognize the significant relationship between women, children, and the making of stories. Christine Daae reminds us that:

The tellers of the tales were often the older women, passing on experience to the young, telling tales which outlined social functions and places, which saw the virtuous rewarded, and adversity overcome [. . .] while the voices of women were unheard politically, they were passing on knowledge to the young. (Daae 24)

In that Marian, Laurie, and the children all enter the game and enact powerful change both for themselves and against a corrupt system, Friesner’s text highlights the empowerment of women and children—a broader category than is usually included both in Howard Pyle’s and other, traditional Robin Hood retellings. Similarly, while Friesner’s retelling does include male disguise, as Friesner tells it, this is specifically a matter of choice and personal style and is not performed in order to gain entrance and acceptance into a man’s world. Rather, it is an internal impulse neither necessary nor prescriptive for inherent heroism.

For Maid Marian, the choice is compelling. She sheds her entire skin (in the form of the tall, black andromech body chosen for its preferment by the erring Robin Hood). Once within the game, Marian returns to her original programming and to a more traditional and expected form of Maid Marian: “Blond, blue-eyed, with skin like blush-stained ivory and a petite body slender and fragile as a river reed.

No vestige was left of the tall, healthy, dark-skinned beauty she'd been before" (Friesner 265). Maid Marian does not mind this change; in fact, she has engineered it. But her justification for doing so includes a verbal shrug, as if she is well aware both andromech shell and virtual visage are merely useful palettes, and it is the choosing that is much more significant than the choice. When Eddie remarks on Marian's changed appearance, she explains that it was not based on either his or Robin's preference. Marian states:

"It struck me that I'd do better to suit my appearance to this place, no matter how much I preferred my former looks. Which I didn't. That shell was chosen for me, with the specific purpose of making me more attractive to Robin. It was a choice beyond my control." (Friesner 266)

That Marian has opted for "a russet gown more suitable to the castle and the town than to the forest vastnesses" with "a golden fillet and veil adorn[ing] her head" (Friesner 265) only more firmly suggests Laurie's subsequent choice is one made for convenience and by personal preference.

Laurie is not inclined to forsake her femininity. Upon being shown to a computer terminal within the game (cleverly and compellingly concealed in the altar stone of a ruined abbey), Laurie selects for herself rugged gear that will stand up to the impending forest adventure:

Laurie shrugged and went back to typing. As she worked, the blue gown with its fancy tippets faded away, leaving her naked for an instant before new garb swam itself over her body and jelled into its final color and shape. Laurie stood up wearing a belted green wool tunic, brown hose and boots, and a rough gray cloak the color of cookfire smoke. A brown pouch hung from her belt, along with an empty wineskin. (Friesner 282)

Yet when Eddie notes that Laurie still has a wreath of flowers in her hair, a vestige of the game-imposed feminine clothing she had on earlier, it is clear both that she has forgotten to remove the wreath and that she wishes it to remain: "Laurie's hand flew to her brow and encountered the wreath still on her hair. 'Oh. May as well leave it'" (Friesner 282), thereby subverting her gender identity according to her own rules—not those of society.

Maid Marian, Laurie, and Eddie seek out Robin Hood and the Merry Men and arrive to find Robin has already incorporated the child andromechs into the

game. Robin explains how he was able to explore the Manifest system from the confines of the game and download the children's personalities, thereby saving them from the trauma of sexual predation. As a result, Laurie's primary concern is suddenly collapsed into her secondary concern to permanently reinstate Robin in the Sherwood game and to ensure the consistency of the game's programming. This allows Laurie to focus more steadily on Robin Hood and the swift punishment of the unjust and the immoral. True to her inherent heroism, she immediately announces her intentions:

"Laurie let out a whoop of joy that brought all movement in the glade to a dead halt. "What was the purpose of that?" Maid Marian demanded. "I think she just declared war on the Apaches," Eddie said" (Friesner 289).

But, though it is Laurie who declares war, it is Robin Hood who plans it—and who alters Laurie's appearance to suit that plan.

As befits the subversive spin on tradition in Esther Friesner's *The Sherwood Game*, a great altercation is to take place at the archery competition. Maid Marian is decidedly against it; the arrows are those of a computer-hacker and the target so many points on the World Wide Web. But Robin cannot resist the call to his skill and his ego. While Marian perceives this correctly as a setback to her goal of confining Robin's activity, Laurie is a prisoner of the game. Laurie can no more bring justice to the purveyors of the child andromech scheme than she can alter Marian's modifications to their virtual reality. Until the archery competition is resolved, Laurie happily joins the adventure, complaining only when Robin oversteps his boundaries and goes against her personal interests by completing her gesture at cross-dressing:

"He cut off my hair," Laurie grouched as the motley band passed beneath the portcullis of Nottingham Castle's great gate. "He cut off my *hair*." She tugged at the ragged ends that scarcely reached her earlobes. "He had to," Eddie whispered. "Otherwise you wouldn't fit in with the crowd. This way you look like a Saxon peasant boy" [. . .] "I think he did it on purpose," she went on as their group struggled through the crowd already present and took their places behind makeshift barricades [. . .] "lighten up; it's not like it's your real hair [. . .]." (Friesner 307-308)

Like the previous experiments with changing one's appearance, it is clear the subject of importance here is the exercising of choice. Laurie's complaint is

not that her hair has been cut to match the very outfit she has chosen for herself, but that Robin has decided upon the look. The cutting of Laurie's hair is but a practical application, and Eddie's comment that it is not her "real hair" does much to remind the audience that the freedom of choice is of utmost importance and that changes or modifications made in play, however successful their result, do not have to be permanent should they go against the player's wishes.

Nevertheless, the complete adoption of the traditional role of Maid Marian presages the final lesson in Laurie's experience. For it is Laurie who organizes the children in an attack against the Sheriff and his men when, to conclude the archery contest, a single, black-fletched arrow pierces Maid Marian's heart. Thus we have two very different experiential tales: the first tale, Laurie's, in which she learns to trust herself, to stand by her own convictions, and to value her freedom of choice; and the second tale, Maid Marian's, involving her frustration at trying to control Robin Hood and how doing so seems to cost her her (however virtual) life.

Laurie Pincus, the female hero in Esther Friesner's Robin Hood retelling, *The Sherwood Game*, is a highly successful hero. The benefits of her actions and experience span beyond her immediate community. Following the death of Maid Marian, Laurie organizes the revolt of child andromechs as well as their safe retreat, leaving Carl to battle Prince John (who appears for the first time in the game as the guise for Mr. Ohnlandt, the sales manager behind the child/sex toy scheme) while Robin Hood, fittingly, is preoccupied with the Sheriff of Nottingham. A masked warrior who reveals himself to be no other than Mr. Genjimori (the corporate executive from Japan) happily and conveniently aids Carl. King Richard (Regis Lyons, the founder and director of Manifest, Inc. whose "pardon" means the security of Laurie, Carl and Eddie's jobs), as befits tradition, also steps in for the conclusion of the game. Genjimori's and Lyons's presence ensures that they were not aware of the unauthorized use of the child andromechs as well as it promises the success of Laurie's heroism. In the end, Laurie restores her faith in herself, she saves the world from the sexual predators and pedophiles whose appetites will only grow and become more dangerous in the adult amusement park, and she finds peace and promise for the chil-

dren within the Sherwood game. What's more, and most befitting our desire for a happy ending, Laurie rescues Maid Marian from virtual death through the use of her intellectual talents by preserving Maid Marian's entity to a floppy disk. As she describes it, "[a]lways make a backup, *bubbaleh*" (Friesner 377), her use of Yiddish slang signaling Laurie's reinvestment in, and pride for, who she is.

Laurie's heroic character gives us much to celebrate in this forward-thinking retelling. For, while she disguises herself as a man to achieve heroic status, it has been done more for personal comfort than in a relegation of her gender; indeed, it is not a disguise put on to fool any of her male cohorts into treating her as an equal. Her male cohorts are aware and, especially in the case of Robin Hood, are participants in discovering *and maintaining* what cross-dressing reveals about Laurie's true, and heroic, self. Additionally, because Laurie's experience takes place in a virtual world, her return to our world does much to restate and affirm what she and the reader of this Friesner's retelling have already begun to learn: strength of character, a courageous heart, and the freedom of choice—not the clothes of traditional gender roles—are what makes a woman a hero. This is a lesson one can take away from Carl's Sherwood game in the very way we take it away from Friesner's *The Sherwood Game*. And it is a lesson that can be "relearned" each time the game is played, each time the novel is read.

Though the virtual Maid Marian's experience is cut short by an arrow, there remains much to celebrate in her tale, too. Given her "artificial" intelligence, Maid Marian's character is especially compelling as one who shares in the knowledge that Laurie gains. Marian's heroic experience is best seen as cyclical in nature and never-ending—even when she must, as she is destined to do, return to the Sherwood game. Maid Marian's experience serves to underscore Laurie's, encouragingly suggesting that no

Stories have the power to shape our view of reality. If girls rarely see stories that put female characters at the center, how do we learn to see ourselves at the center of our own stories, of our lives?"

challenge is too great for the female hero—nor must it end in disappointment. Friesner's *The Sherwood Game* accomplishes what, in *A Psychiatric Study of Myths and Fairy Tales*, Julius Heuscher has described as a gift of literature for the young reader. *The Sherwood Game* “nourishes [. . .] courage to widen [our] horizons and to tackle all the challenges successfully” (56). Though set in the future and involving the character development—both textual and plot-based—of artificial intelligence, in its use of the traditional Robin Hood legend, Friesner's Robin Hood retelling has much to offer Robin Hood studies and the young adult reader.

Those writers personally affected by the considerations of female characterization and potential heroism in their formative reading, and looking to their reading as an impetus in their own writing, may see the Robin Hood legend, traditionally described by Howard Pyle, as one that represents a repressive and limiting social role of woman. And they may see the cross-dressing female hero as a way out of that role. For women writers making good on Virginia Woolf's demands that women record their own lives special considerations of literary history apply. Will they, as Robin McKinley does in *The Outlaws of Sherwood*, be true to literary history and the traditional legend? Or (as is the case with Esther Friesner's *The Sherwood Game*), will they use time and technology to provide a liberating narrative overlay for readers of the Robin Hood legend? Kathleen McDonnell reminds us that:

People in the [television] industry contend the situation is dictated by the bottom line rather than sexism. Advertising revenues are based on the audience size and, in the words of one industry executive, ‘You have to have boys watching [. . .] for it to succeed. . . . It is well known that boys will watch a male lead and not a female lead. But girls are willing to watch a male lead.’ [. . .] This, in a nutshell, is the major obstacle to female-centred narrative: the perception that it's somehow not of general interest. That is, while we regard the male hero-story as the norm and expect girls and women to spend lifetimes watching stories built around male protagonists, we simply don't expect the same of boys and men. Female experience is still a side dish. (McDonnell 70)

Like McDonnell, I question a loyalty to tradition that demands that we continue to relegate girls and women to submissive and secondary roles in which “the problem resides in the enormous narrative imbalance. Stories have the power shape our view of reality. If girls rarely see stories that put female char-

acters at the center, how do we learn to see ourselves at the center of our own stories, of our lives?” (McDonnell 10). And this is not a concern for girls and women only. Additionally and similarly, we must ask: If developing readers rarely see stories that put female characters at the center, how do they learn to see women as equal partners, as heroes, as deserving of being at the center of their own stories and their own lives?

Happily, the answer is supplied by literary history: developing readers will learn to see everyone, including themselves, as a potential, central hero by reading through the continuum of legend and by engaging contemporary retellings. As they come into contact with legends and their retellings in our libraries and classrooms, and as they discuss their reading with us, young adult readers are introduced to their own heroic potentials and those of their peers.

It is possible to weave some of the above ideas (namely, an attention to the influences literature has on society, culture, and our lives) into a consideration of readings from the Robin Hood legend. I have found that legend—spanning hundreds of years and consistently reimagined and revised—paired with readings of contemporary retellings—allows students to appreciate the influences of our relationship to the mirroring and modeling among the rewards of literary history. Ultimately the study of legend, to include contemporary retellings, shows us our current demands on legend, our part in the development of literary history.

To help students articulate their findings, I designed a student questionnaire to be filled out once *before* students read an archaic or contemporary retelling of the Robin Hood legend, and once *after* their reading. These questionnaires function in a manner similar to in-class writing journals in that I use student comments to generate class discussion. I then ask students to consider what changes to their perceptions of the legend they have found in the archaic/contemporary retelling and what those changes suggest about contemporary attitudes through the option of a comparison/contrast essay.

The results are remarkable. Student engaged in the topic are surprised to learn that the medieval depiction of Robin Hood and his legend differs greatly from those of other periods. This allows me to help students question just what purpose those changes serve in the Robin Hood legend. I ask them,

“Why/How do you think those changes met/meet ‘contemporary’ audience demands?”

Their thoughtful comments result in lively class discussions on the many ways one might approach literature (as democratic as Robin Hood himself!) as a series of additions and developments. Considering the level of abstraction such discussions demand, and the necessary engagement of student intellect required, I take it as a measure of success when—as sometimes happens—a student reminds me that he or she was challenged by the reading and by the assignment².

As with most students’ comments, it is necessary to encourage any reaction. I find myself that same scholar, critic, and reteller when I endeavor to hear their wonderful insights (however clumsily they are sometimes articulated) and to return those insights to them as valuable and worthy of celebration. It is an elusive learning process and a fragile symbioticism. But the rewards of such a project and the benefits of those hard-worked class discussions are best identified as they culminate in the critical essays generated by these young scholars—the readers to which I am most frequently exposed. Among the multifaceted nature of literature and literary criticism, and the advantages the student reader/writer gains by a variety of readings, the findings that I celebrate the most in my students’ works describe the rich multiplicity of literature, the post-modern understanding that there never is just one side to a story, and that their readers (like themselves) are equally valid and valuable.

The most important act a teacher of legend and retelling can encourage is that of respectful and thoughtful balance—for this is a requirement in both scholarship and fiction. Practicing an appreciation for, and loyalty to, oneself as a critic and thinker, to the literary materials with which one is working, and to an audience, is a strenuous but rewarding task. Mindful of the intellectual and emotional benefits of such a practice, I would be neglecting this same task if I did not encourage the readers of this article to apply their individual creative geniuses to the use of retellings in the classroom. Therefore, I offer the above sketch as a possible guideline in the spirit of generosity and in the hope that, in return, I may receive other interpretations and considerations for the use of these literary materials.

Our mindful attention to, and presentation of, new and forward-thinking retellings is a non-interferential and positive way to counter consistent literary

limitations to a developing readers’ gendered, social development. The gifts of retellings of traditional narratives, such as McKinley’s *The Outlaws of Sherwood* and Friesner’s *The Sherwood Game*, are, happily, as individual and mutable as the characters themselves. In the texts’ assimilations of women, of male disguise, of the Robin Hood legend, and of social transgression, the character of the female hero is delightfully resistant and impervious to formula and pattern—however much she might be informed by tradition. Likewise, as recent literary criticism and literary production seem to assure us, by involving ourselves in these discussions in our reading and our classrooms, and continuing to draw attention to limitation in any manifestation, we further the liberating advances of the twentieth century. We are always in the process of forming new retellings of classic texts that nourish contemporary wisdom and awareness. What’s more, and as a direct result of our presentation of these retellings in our libraries and our schools, our readers are getting savvier, more demanding, and more heroic. It is up to us to provide readers, especially developing readers, with positive and forward-thinking texts, and with critical reading skills. But, having done so, it is finally up to them, *and we must leave it up to them*, to have the courage to use those skills, the intelligence to find the wisdom of the text and the heroism to use that wisdom, and the strength to demand, as well as create, new dimensions of that wisdom: new retellings.


Evelyn M. Perry received her B.A. and M.A. from Simmons College and her Ph.D. from the University of Rhode Island. A literary scholar and creative writer, Dr. Perry’s work not only appears in professional journals and collections but also in poetry journals, as well as in The Looking Glass, for which she writes a regular column entitled “Curiouser and Curiouser.” Evelyn M. Perry teaches writing and literature at Framingham State College.

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- 1 Other female-authored Robin Hood retellings include, most notably, Monica Furlong's *Robin's Country*, Theresa Tomlinson's *The Forestwife*, and Roberson's *Lady of the Forest*; male-authored retellings include Parke Godwin's *Sherwood* and *Robin and the King* (a sequel), and Michael Cadnum's *In a Dark Wood*. There are many others.
- 2 It is often a point of pride for students to admit to the challenge of retellings and literary history, and, as a result, they are eager to continue reading and testing retellings (of which there are so many! Indeed, I almost always point students in the direction of Robin McKinley's *Beauty*, *Rose Daughter*, *Deerskin*, and *Spindle's End*, and Gregory Maguire's *Wicked* and *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*).



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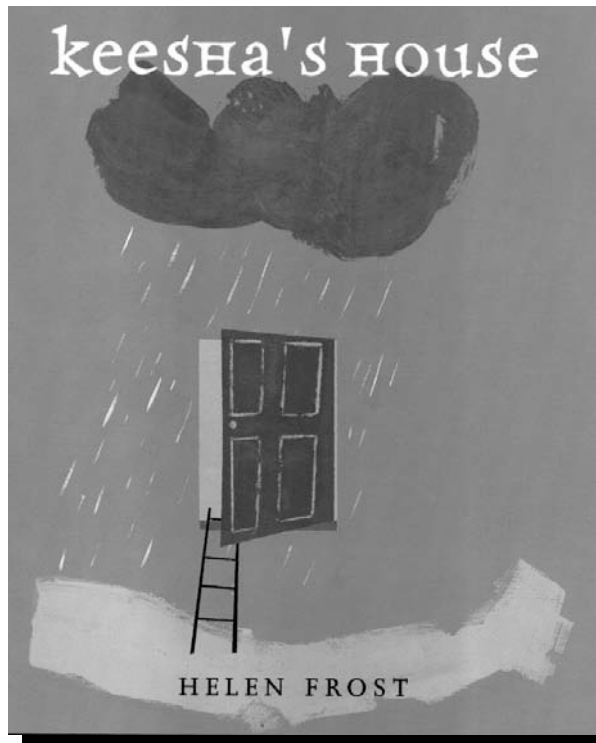
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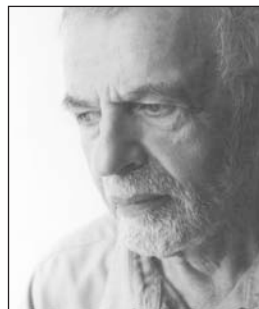
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"A Sea of Stories"

A Conversation with 2003 ALAN Award Winners Norma Fox Mazer and Harry Mazer

Since 1974 the ALAN Award has recognized outstanding contributions to adolescent literature by a publisher, author, librarian, scholar, editor, or anyone whose gift to the ALAN community calls out for recognition. For 2003 the ALAN Award co-winners are wife and husband, Norma Fox Mazer and Harry Mazer. Together or individually, the Mazers have published well over 50 noteworthy titles, mostly for young people. Lori Atkins Goodson spoke with the co-winners (who chose to answer separately) by email:



Many young people who have said, "I've never read a book I liked" changed their attitudes about reading when they read their first book by Norma Fox Mazer or Harry Mazer. Why do you think that is?

Norma: I don't know. I'm very glad about it, though. Actually, I think boys respond to Harry's books on one level because he's so in touch with the boy in himself and is able to put that out in a story. Okay, maybe the same can be said of the girl in me.

Harry: I write because I'm excited about something, a feeling or an idea about things that I'm trying to express. I write about troubled characters trying to find their way in a world they barely know. I write survival stories. In my lexicon, what story is not a

survival story? Those are the stories that, once they have engaged the reader, can't easily be put aside.

Your collective well of good stories never seems to go dry. How do you explain that?

Norma: Luck? Work? Genetics? All of the above?

Harry: We live, all of us, in a sea of stories. Stories we're being told. Stories we tell ourselves. Every day - so many moving, touching, god-awful stories. Norma and I toss stories back and forth all the time, at the table, out on the street, in bed at night. Is this one for Norma? For me? For the two of us? We live in those stories. To live without stories, for us, is not to be alive.

Does censorship of YA lit continue to be a problem or is the situation improving?

Norma: Improving? I doubt it. Without being pessimistic, I think there will always be that core of people who long to press us all into their own small, confined world, and there will always be those of us who resist.

Harry: The censors are always out there. I don't know that they will ever go away or even should. It's good to know that there are people who take

books so seriously they want to burn them. Resisting censorship is part of the territory for all book lovers, be they publishers, writers, parents, teachers or librarians. We need to stand our ground. There are more of us than there are of them.

You have written roughly 60 books separately and three or four together. How would you characterize the difference between writing together and writing separately?

Norma: When we're writing together, I can't get as lost in the created world as when I'm alone. The dreaming is done more efficiently, if that's not a completely impossible and oxymoronic idea. So that's a loss. But to balance it, there's the fun of working together, although when we were writing our first book together, we snapped and bickered and disagreed a whole lot, and I was exasperated enough at the end to tell at least half a dozen people, "I will never write a book with that man again!" Ten years later, when our second collaboration appeared, those half dozen remembered exactly what I'd said.

Harry: Writing for me is a very mixed experience. I love the idea of the story. It's there, bubbling in my head. I love the voice of a character, but then language fails me. The words don't flow easily. I resist writing the words. Are they right? Are they good enough? Rub it out, erase. Start again. Language ensnares me. The words flow or they don't flow. I don't write enough. I write too much. I can't believe I'll ever get the whole thing down on paper. I get it done, but it's not easy.

When I write with Norma, little of this happens. The process is different. We talk through the book, the characters, even some of the scenes. Then I write the draft and Norma revises it. The best part is when we sit down together to revise again. Sometimes, as it does when I'm working alone, the words are roiling around in my head, and Norma has to encourage me. A little slap on the back, an elbow, and the dam breaks, and I spit out the words, come what may, and she writes them down. The work gets done without the blocks, the hesitations and doubts. In a word, working alone is hell. Collaboration is a joy.

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"A Love of Young Adult Literature"

ALAN 2003 Ted Hipple Service Award Winner M. Jerry Weiss

In honor of Ted Hipple's many years of service as ALAN Executive Secretary, The Ted Hipple Service Award is given each year to recognize remarkable service to the ALAN community. Since its inception in 2000 the award has gone to Ted Hipple, Don Gallo (2001), Terry Borzumato (2002) and in 2003, to M. Jerry Weiss. Regarding this year's recipient, Ted Hipple modestly observed, "The Ted Hipple Service Award honored me in ways I neither expected nor deserved, and it is an even greater honor when people like Jerry Weiss get it. Jerry's service to ALAN and to the whole field—as author, as editor, as critic, as professor, as friend—is inestimable."

Jerry's experiences with adolescent literature over the years are exciting, humorous and poignant, as a visit with him illustrates:

TAR: You have worked with a multitude of young people and famous authors, as you collected information, stories and poems for such works as *Books I Read When I Was Young: The Favorite Books of Famous People*, *Lost and Found* and *Big City Cool: Short Stories about Urban Youth*, among others. What were some of the most memorable moments, and what were some of the most surprising?

Jerry: *Books I Read When I Was Young* was a great project that originated with the Commission on Literature. It was published by Avon Books and



donated to NCTE for its members. I was impressed that my letters to performers, politicians, sports figures, authors, etc., could generate such an avalanche of good stories and suggestions. An interesting answer came from Mrs. Kennedy Onassis, who indicated she was too busy to respond. So I wrote her another letter, pointing out that since at that time she was working as an editor at a publishing house, didn't she think it was important to take just a few minutes to respond to students' requests to know what books

had made an impression on her when she was young? She then wrote a lovely note by hand, and it was published in this book.

Recently, Caroline Kennedy, in *The Best Loved Poems of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis*, Hyperion, 2001, has as a final section of the book, "In Her Own Words.," in which Caroline refers to *Books I Read* and includes the text of the letter her mother sent to me. It's nice that this happened.

In developing our anthologies, *From One Experience to Another* and *Lost and Found*, Helen, my wife and coauthor, and I had often heard teachers report that when they asked students to write personal essays, the students would complain, "We don't have anything to write about." Well, we contacted award-winning authors representing a wide range of literary genres and asked each author to write a brief essay describing a true personal experience and then to write a short story

based on that experience. We wanted to show students that there can be a story in even the simplest experience.

We thought a writer well-known for fantasy would write us a fantasy story, a mystery writer, etc, but it didn't turn out that way. We received wonderful stories, with some authors exploring new fields for them. This confirmed our belief that we have to let each writer find the genre which is best for him/her rather than say everyone has to write a story or a poem or whatever.

Big City Cool came about through a friend who told us of an editor who wanted a collection of stories about growing up in urban America. This was an interesting project. We did many searches for stories that take place in different cities. However, it was important that the city be identified by its name or the mention of a prominent landmark. Of course, the characters must appeal to contemporary young adult readers. We needed stories from a good variety of urban settings. While New York and California were no problem, the rest of the country was not as easy. After extensive research, we concluded there just weren't any contemporary tales about growing up in America that identified the location.

Up to now, we had been using stories already published, but at this point, our gracious and intelligent editor worked with us in contacting authors to develop original stories. We were thrilled with the result and are very grateful to those authors who developed new stories for us as well as those who gave us permission to use previously published materials.

TAR: You and Helen have worked on so many big projects together. Does the conversation in the Weiss household often turn to young adult books and their authors?

Jerry: Fairly often. Of course, when we are putting together an anthology, there is a great deal of conversation about young adult literature and authors. Also, when we are preparing our talks, there is much discussion about authors. We always attend sessions at NCTE and IRA to hear authors, new and old, and it's always exciting to see our old friends and meet new friends.

TAR: What was your reaction upon hearing that you had been chosen to receive the Ted Hipple Service Award?

Jerry: When Bill called to say I was to receive the Ted Hipple Award, I was totally surprised and humbled. How can one express gratitude to those colleagues who made such a serious decision? I tried to think of what I might have done to be worthy of this honor? ALAN has been a dream fulfilled. As a charter member, I always hoped that young adult authors would become more and more a part of the annual convention. We needed to show that there were good writers for young people who should be included in the school curriculum. While I have always supported the ALAN Workshop, I was anxious to get authors on the regular program, especially for those teachers who could not attend the Workshop. Finally, Bob Harvey gave his approval for developing the Featured Author Strand. I feel very blessed to be a part of ALAN in promoting and developing a love of young adult literature. I thank ALAN for its many kindnesses.

Revolutionary War and Contemporary Students

It Happened a L-O-N-G Time Ago!

Before the sad events that occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001, the war experience had become quite remote in the imagination of the average American student. These students often thought of war as a Third World problem, or the actions of the economically deprived nations in Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and South East Asia. In so doing, they are unable to recognize the similarities that exist among people of different societies involved in the common struggle for survival and justice. The constant threat on our nation's security in the twenty-first century, however, is beginning to change this perception. More and more, people are coming to terms with the fact that war can actually occur once *again* within the boundaries of this country, as it did a long time ago. This means, then, that we need to educate students to understand the phenomenon of war: its causes and destructive effects on every aspect of human life, as well as the opportunity it offers to reaffirm the human spirit for survival.

Exposing students to literature about war is one way teachers can begin this awareness process. This is because literature provides answers to some of our questions and enables us to ask a few more about the human experience as we (readers) reflect on our individual lives and/or collective experiences. Also, as Nilsen and Donelson (2001) note, “[r]eading literature about war [. . .] acquaints young people with the ambiguous nature of war, on one hand illustrating humanity's evil and horror, on the other hand revealing humanity's decency and heroism” (pp. 247-248). When we use literature to teach about the war experience, we empathize with the soldiers authorized to kill

each other, parents forced to deal with the early demise of their teenage children, and children who become orphans at an early age. We also reckon with the fact that war destroys whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans. It destroys foes and friends, for, as Stephen Ambrose (1997) remarks, “when men undergo the same privations, face the same dangers before an impartial enemy, there can be no segregation” (349-350). Indeed, war spares no one.

Many adolescent novels have been written about this subject from different cultural perspectives (see Appendix A for a partial list). Although there are more than two sides to the story, I will use two novels to demonstrate how war creates universal suffering and touches every aspect of the life of those involved for generations; it has a way of spilling over to those not even directly participating in the conflict. I have decided to focus on the Revolutionary War, not only because of its significance within America's national and international history, but also, with the current trend of events, it is necessary to examine America's involvement in the struggle to protect its people from outside forces and to establish its national identity based on clearly defined principles.

Collier and Collier's (1974) *My Brother Sam Is Dead* and Lunn's (1997) *The Hollow Tree* are two award-winning novels that tell the story of war from two distinct perspectives. While Lunn focuses on the Canadian view and uses a female protagonist to relate the experience, Collier and Collier explore the United States' perspective with a male narrator at the center of the story. Although some may argue against pairing *The Hollow Tree*, a young adult novel, with *My Brother*

Sam is Dead, read by children in grades five through seven, both versions of the war story appeal to middle school students. In the course of the discussion, I will examine the sufferings this particular war caused to soldiers and civilians alike.

One War: Two Nations

Collier and Collier's (1974) *My Brother Sam is Dead* captures the plight of the Meeker family during the American Revolutionary War. As the story unfolds, we are introduced to Sam's conflict. He wants to join the Patriots and fight the Tories to liberate the colony from British oppression. His father, however, sees this as an act of subversion that must be curbed. Hard as

the older man tries, he is unable to dissuade his son from becoming a soldier. Sam joins the army, placing his family members, residents of the loyalist town of Redding, in a complicated situation.

Ironically, he is eventually killed while protecting them against his peers—soldiers from his own troupe who attempt to steal from his family. Collier and Collier (1974) eloquently

depict the dilemma of a son torn between two loyalties, the family he loves and the nation he must serve. Choosing his family over his greedy peers lands him in the gallows, which is no laughing matter. Tim, the young narrator, is confused and disappointed with this kind of justice.

Lunn's (1997) *The Hollow Tree* tells a similar story, only from a different perspective. It is one of the few novels that actually captures an adolescent girl's view of the Revolutionary War and establishes the United States' historical connection with Canada. In this novel Phoebe's father, a college teacher, opts to fight against the British to liberate America from colonization. Although Phoebe, like Tim Meeker in *My Brother Sam is Dead*, does not understand why there is war and never actively takes sides, she is accidentally entrusted with the responsibility of delivering spy papers to the British—a task meant for Gideon, her favorite cousin,

who had been captured and hanged by the Sons of Liberty for treason. The entire process of carrying and hiding the papers and walking through the wilderness for months is tedious, dangerous, and at times, frustrating to this teenage orphan. Nonetheless, she survives and ends up in Canada with “the King's loyal American supporters [who] had not been welcome back in their old homes” (253).

Thematic Analysis

Like most books about war, these two novels explore powerful themes and raise issues about the human condition, including oppression, betrayal, starting anew, acting on one's personal/political beliefs, and human suffering. Although there are other themes a reader could focus on, these five are particularly compelling because they reflect our universal concerns. Oppression and betrayal can take many forms in our society, and we do not necessarily have to wait for a crisis to experience these. The other three are also integral to our existence. Human beings must continue to adapt as we search for better options in life; in our quest for justice, most often it is inevitable that we experience some form of suffering, especially if we have a clear sense of what we actually want in life.

As the authors describe the war experience through their young narrators' eyes, we are also faced with some of the ethical questions the protagonists confront. For example: would you kill another to save yourself? Would you fight against your father or siblings knowing you might kill each other? Would you willingly deliver spy papers to the people responsible for your father's death? Would you kill someone for food? Who really is a good guy—a Patriot, a Tory, or a Rebel?

In the two novels the protagonists are, at times, also confused about some of the actions of their relatives, friends, and community leaders. Consequently, they must abandon their former values and forge new ones to help them survive the chaos that surrounds them. Tim must mask his emotions and watch the Rebel soldiers execute his brother for what they consider in wartime as treason, and Phoebe must carry on with Gideon's mission, even though she knows the action could lead to her own death. These events contribute tremendously to the suffering each of these characters' experience.

The more questions they pose after reading these books, the better they are able to understand that human pain and suffering transcend the individual.

Suffering of the Individual

Collier and Collier (1974) and Lunn (1997) expose our vulnerabilities as human beings and illustrate our fortitude in the face of challenges. In doing so, they capture the different kinds of suffering prevalent in the fictional world, drawing the reader into the characters' lives, their struggles, and victories. As the war rages on and more friends, relatives, and "enemies" die, these youths must survive in their war-torn environment. Their primary goal, then, is to stay alive. They must continuously seek ways to protect themselves from assault, feed their hungry stomachs, and heal their sick bodies. To accomplish this, Tim maintains close ties with his mother and continues to run the family tavern the way his father had. He is also wary of the people around him, including his brother, Sam, whom he can no longer trust.

Phoebe cannot carry on as Tim does; her father's and Gideon's deaths leave her with nobody to hold on to. However, to make herself useful to others, she decides to complete her cousin's mission. The responsibility of dispatching the spy papers then becomes an obsession and gives her an additional reason to leave the village she no longer feels attached to and do something meaningful with her life. The magnitude of the task means she needs to protect herself against the "Patriots," who are aware of her father's ideological stance in the war, and the Rebels, whose fate she carries in the packet. Depending on whom she runs into, she is a traitor or hero as she guards the spy papers with her life. Thus, Phoebe must stay alert at all times, eat whatever she can catch or fix with her own bare hands, and occasionally rely on kind fellow travelers also fleeing from the turmoil. Despite this, she is careful about what she says and to whom, for she is aware that doing the "work of a Loyalist scout" (99) can get her hanged as it did her cousin.

Suffering within the Family Unit

Another kind of suffering conspicuous in both novels has to do with family. Adjusting to the loss of relatives within the nuclear and extended family units and dealing with issues of trust and betrayal threaten to tear families apart. The two protagonists must accept, or at least live with, the pain that comes from losing their fathers and other close relatives in a war that makes no sense to them. Tim loses his brother, Sam, who thought he was fighting for a good cause,

and loses his father, who sold beef to the British enemy. Tim wonders whether his brother, Sam, was indeed fighting against his own father.

Phoebe also loses her father and her cousin, Gideon, two people she loves dearly. In an emotional outburst, she asks, "Why did [Gideon] care so much for the King that he would leave his precious plants to go off and fight? Why had her father cared so much for being free of that King that he had let himself be killed for it?" (22) Through these characters, we get a sense of the ambiguous nature of war and are able to understand why and how families disintegrate during war. The reader is faced with the fact that often in war teenagers must assume grownup roles and carry on from where their parents left off. Tim, a pre-teen when the war begins, must support his mother emotionally and materially as they struggle to salvage what is left of their small family. Phoebe must carve out a new future for herself by fulfilling a promise. She also has to renegotiate relationships with her aunt and cousins and adopt a new family out of mutual love and respect as she tries to create a life for herself within a new community far away from home.

Suffering Within the Community

The communities where both protagonists have grown up are torn apart by war. The Meeker family is shunned because of Sam's decision to join the Rebels. Together as a family, they must endure the ridicule and disparaging comments from those who matter in Redding Ridge, Connecticut, a community where people knew each other very well and were supposed to uphold similar values. Tim recalls, "[N]obody was going to let me forget about it [Sam running off to fight for the Rebels], that was sure. Mr. Beach made it a subject of his sermon" (p. 28). Although Tim is upset about the war and would like to understand the issue at stake, he is still unable to comprehend people's position in the argument. He remarks,

"What kept confusing me about it was that the argument didn't have two sides. Some people said that the King was the King and that was that, and we ought to do what he said. Other people said that men were supposed to be free to govern themselves and we should rebel and drive the Lobsterbacks out together. Some others said, well, they were born Englishmen and they wanted to die Englishmen, but that the colonies ought to have more say in their own government, and that maybe we'd have to give the Lobsterbacks a taste of blood just to show the King that we

meant business [. . .]. You see how confusing it was when you realize that sometimes Sam's side was called Patriots and sometimes they were called Rebels (25-26).

This comment is at the heart of the issue in these novels and invites the reader to be part of this debate. Who then should Tim really believe are the Patriots or Rebels if the interpretations keep changing back and forth with each group of people he meets? Who should he believe is right or wrong in this conflict that is wrecking so many lives and homes? These are questions to ponder as we attempt to understand the causes and effects of war on local and global communities.

In Lunn's novel, Phoebe is forced to leave Hanover, New Hampshire, first when her father dies. Later, she flees from Orland Village, a community torn apart as people take sides between the Loyalists and Sons of Liberty. In the ensuing tension the town's people actually lynch those identified as spies or suspected to be Loyalists. Neighbors turn against one another, accusing each other of treason. Lunn (1997) notes, "There were stories of families — children and adults alike — being hounded from their homes, injured, and even killed, by neighbors who called them enemies, sometimes in the name of the King, sometimes in the name of the rebellious Continental Congress" (23).

Even family members turn against each other, as Gideon and Phoebe's father do when they fight on opposing sides in the war. By the time the war is actually over, many have lost their lives, and two nations have emerged.

When relatives, neighbors, and friends are killed because of conflicting beliefs, such acts remain deeply engraved in the collective memory, and the healing process usually lasts longer than many anticipate. Tension and hostility linger as people struggle to resettle, rebuild old communities, relocate, and hope for peace and a better future. This post-war adjustment process poses a challenge, and some people must decide whether or not they want to go back and live with the same people who had betrayed them or killed their loved ones during war, as is the case with our two protagonists. Tim and his mother must relocate to Pennsylvania after the loss of their loved ones, while Phoebe crosses over to Canada.

War and the Human Condition

War has a way of touching each one of us in our local and global communities. In some cases we profit from the experience if tyrannical and exploitative leaders are overthrown, but often times we lose a great deal, as well, and must take time to heal. This means individuals within a given society must attempt to process the pain involved in killing enemies or friends, the agony of dying, and the suffering inflicted on all by war. Focusing on this aspect of our collective human experience is more beneficial to society than simply itemizing the causes of the war and identifying the winners and losers. Our two novels explore these issues.

As we exit Collier and Collier's *My Brother Sam Is Dead*, we see an aging Tim reflecting on the war. While he accepts the positive social change brought about by the event, he is skeptical, however, about the use of excessive force to resolve the conflicts between the Patriots and the Rebels. These sentiments are also echoed by an older Phoebe, who now believes that "[w]hatever the future would bring she did not fear [. . .]. She belonged to herself now" and would continue to live with the loyalist strangers she had come to love dearly (251-252). She does not consider being a Loyalist a crime. Rather, she cherishes the moment she had shared with kind people scattered across the continent by a war that showed mercy neither to the Sons of Liberty nor the Loyalists. During the war they all had a common goal of escaping to wherever there was peace, where they could put the past behind them, learn to forgive and start afresh. Tim does a similar thing even though he remains in America.

The novels end on a hopeful note, leaving the reader breathless, tentative, and eager to understand the different roles we play in perpetuating human conflicts. They empower us to critically examine our relationships with each other and authority figures and force us to deal with some of the issues raised in the two novels. We come to realize that even though both Tim and Phoebe take pride in their heritage as an American and a Canadian, they also wonder why the conflict couldn't be resolved without war.

These two novels, therefore, have great potential in the classroom. The rich themes they explore, ethical questions raised, and other socio-cultural issues addressed make them worthwhile for students in

junior high/middle school. Teachers can use them to introduce an interdisciplinary unit on war or historical social conflicts, with the goal of raising awareness about the human experience, survival and social in/justice. Within this framework, they can explore some of the ethical issues raised in the novels to help students to understand the phenomenon of war or the concept of conflicts in general. One strategy teachers can introduce in the classroom to begin the meaning-making process with literature is the “grand conversation.”

Engaging Students in the Meaning-Making Process

When using the grand conversation instructional strategy on particular novels with students, the teacher or discussion leader is careful to let participants share their honest feelings about the story they have read (Paterson & Eeds). Sharing personal responses is a great way to informally assess the students’ understanding and processing of the novel and sets the pace for a healthy discussion of the issues raised by readers and/or the author. Because meanings negotiated from texts initially can be refined, expanded, or connected to other aspects of life and media, the teacher can probe further for clarification. This way students can maximize their use of prior knowledge to bear on their interpretations of events that take place in the fictional world they’ve read about. The teacher can then discuss the historical background of the Revolutionary War in some detail to give students a sense of the state of the country and the world when the war occurred. If they wish, students can re-examine their responses based on this new knowledge.

Another way to get students to negotiate personal meanings from these two texts is to ask them to write readers’ theater scripts of their own based on their understanding of the characters and plot. They should select six to ten powerful passages from the two novels that represent any aspects of the war experience they find interesting, making sure they record the page numbers for future reference. After doing this in groups of three or four, they can now work on scripts for readers theater on different themes that make the connection among war, human suffering, and social change. The readers’ theater should include only three characters: the narrator, one symbolic youth, and a symbolic

parent or adult. Students can arrange these passages carefully so the script reads as though it was written by one person and taken from one book. Or they can paraphrase these in their own words and come up with a new script that still reflects the original message of the quotations used. The narrator should give the background of the themes that run through the two-page script. Passages selected should reflect the predominant attitudes manifested toward war by the young people and parents in the two fictional communities.

Once this is done, each group of students will read their scripts aloud, injecting the desired feeling manifested by the characters. By doing this, students will somewhat experience the war as characters as they attempt to communicate the young men’s desire to enlist in the army, the parents’ anguish/disillusionment about war, and the narrator’s solemn comments on the pain and suffering involved in the process of social change. Therefore students will claim ownership of the literature experience as they fuse thought and feeling to bring the Revolutionary War experience alive in their own way (Rosenblatt). Johannessen (1997) also notes that “when students have a choice in what goes on in the classroom, then they have a genuine stake in the outcome and will be more likely to approach such assignments with enthusiasm, and the products from these assignments will usually be of a higher quality” (61).

After each presentation of the Readers Theater, students can comment on what they found compelling in each other’s performance. Later, the teacher can ask them again to share personal reactions as they engage in what Probst (1988) and Karolides (1992) refer to as reader response. Only this time the responses would be geared toward particular experiences in the novels. This is another way of making them active participants in the learning process. The discussion should eventually evolve to critical issues about the human experience in contemporary society. This is important because, as Ruddiman (1997) rightly observes, “[A]sking students to critically think about the consequences of war and to relate those events to today encourages awareness of human behaviors, both heroic and evil” (71).

While working with my eighth-grade son on a similar project for a conference, we came up with a well-scripted text from five novels that explored war experi-

ences. Because our topic was “war across cultures,” we were able to capture basic elements about war from different perspectives and make the newly constructed text tell a story of universal pain and suffering. We rounded out our presentation with the ethical question of whether it was really necessary to go to war (see Appendix B).

An alternative way of bringing the experience alive is to get students to have an email dialogue with Canadian students regarding the American Revolutionary War, as depicted in Collier and Collier’s *My Brother Sam Is Dead* and Lunn’s *The Hollow Tree*. Which of the two versions do they prefer, and what are their reasons? The dialogue can last three weeks; at the end of this phase the teacher can divide the class into six to eight new groups of three to four students. Each group should create a Web page on the Revolutionary War from a particular perspective. Thus three to four of the groups must include specific information on their Web pages from the United States perspective (Sons of Liberty) and the remaining three from the Canadian view (Loyalists). On these web pages, students can also add original lyrics written by members of their group that reflect their attitudes toward war.

Working with these two novels, our students are able to see the emotional turmoil people underwent as they fought for freedom or to maintain the status quo. Did Sam do the right thing by enlisting to fight for freedom against his father’s orders? Did Phoebe do the right thing in delivering the spy papers when her father had given up his life for the freedom cause? These are questions students could pursue as they attempt to further understand the world they live in, their history, and our collective struggle to co-exist as human beings with different worldviews. The more questions they pose after reading these books, the better they are able to understand that human pain and suffering transcend the individual.

Students will see that literature is a powerful tool enabling us to come to terms with who we are, where we have been, and where we may be going. They will also see that the America we know today did not always exist and that people have made, and are still making, tremendous sacrifices so that we may live and study in peace. Thus, they should not be quick to judge other nations still engaged in the liberation struggle. Neither should they look down on their immigrant classmates who could be refugees from war-torn countries, coming to the U.S. to start afresh, just as most American’s ancestors did . . . once upon a time.

Appendix A

Adolescent Novels on War: A Global Experience.

Revolutionary Wars:

- Avi (1984). *The Fighting Ground*
 Collier, J. and Collier, C. (1987). (19). *War Comes to Willy Freeman*
 DeFord, D.H. and Stuart, H. (1987). *An Enemy Among Them*
 Forbes, E. (1943). *Johnny Tremain*
 Fast, H. (1961). *April Morning*
 Gregory, K. (1961). *Winter of Red Snow: The Revolutionary War Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania*
 O’Dell, S. (1980). *Sarah Bishop*
 Weaver-Gelzer, C. (1992). *In the Time of Trouble*

Civil Wars

- Collier, J. and Collier, C. (1994). *With Every Drop of Blood*
 Crane, S. (1990). *The Red Badge of Courage*
 Emecheta, B. (1982). *Destination Biafra*
 Filipovic, Z. (1994). *Zlata’s Diary*
 Hansen, J. (1988). *Out of This Place*
 Hunt, I. (1986). *Across Five Aprils*
 Jiang, J. (19). *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*
 Kidd, D. (1989). *Onion Tears*
 Myers, W. (1988). *Fallen Angels*
 Paterson, K. (1996). *Jip: His Story*
 Paulsen, G. (1997). *A Soldier’s Heart*
 Reeder, C. (1989). *Shades of Gray*
 Rinaldi, A. (1988). *Last Silk Dress*

World War II

- Choi, S. (1991). *Year of Impossible Goodbyes*
 Coerr, E. (1993). *Sadako & the Thousand Paper Crane*
 Cormier, R. (1988). *Heroes*
 Greene, B. (1973). *Summer of My German Soldier*
 Ngugi, W. (1987). *Weep Not Child*
 Pearson, K. (1989). *The Sky is Falling*
 Reiss, J. (1972). *Upstairs Room*
 Silko, L. (1977). *Ceremony*
 Uchida, Y. (1991). *The Invisible Thread*
 Yep, L. (1995). *Hiroshima: A Novella*
 Yolen, J. (1990). *The Devil’s Arithmetic*

** For more information about Young Adult novels (historical fiction), read Stix, Andy & Marshall George (1999). “Using Multi-level Young Adult Literature in the Middle School American Studies.” In www.interactiveclassroom.com

Appendix B

Readers Theatre

CHARACTERS: One Youth, one Parent and the Narrator.

Narrator: “It was in the morning when the youth first heard the bell. He was standing in the warm open field feeling hot, dirty, and bored. His father, not far off, limped as he worked along the newly turned rows of corn. As for the youth, he was daydreaming about being a soldier. His older brother and cousin were soldiers. He dreamed of one day taking up a gun himself and fighting the enemy; but his father no longer spoke of war.

The youth had burned several times to enlist. He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts, and he had longed to see it all. His busy mind had drawn for him large pictures extravagant in color, lurid with breathless deeds. But his mother had discouraged him. She had affected to look with some contempt upon the quality of his war ardor and patriotism. But he enlisted anyway.”

As the scene opens we meet the youth discussing his/her plans with a parent.

Youth: “Ma, I’m going to enlist.”

Parent: “Don’t you be a fool.”

Youth: “I am going to enlist and there’s nothing you can do to stop me. I am going to fight to keep my country free.”

Parent: “You, fight? Is it worth war to save a few pence in taxes? Must you fight because our politicians are corrupt?”

Youth: “It’s not the money. It is the right to live free in my own homeland!”

Parent: “Freedom! Justice! What do you know about them? You may be thirteen, fifteen, seventeen or twenty for all I care. One thing you don’t know anything about is war!

Have you ever heard a man shriek when he felt his bayonet go through the middle of his back? For whom do you really want to die?”

Youth: “For my country, Father.”

Parent: “Your family ought to be more important than your country.”

Narrator: “The youth strolled away lost in his thoughts. Thinking about the possibility of fighting with the enemy brought a smile on his lips.”

Youth: “Oh Lord, make it be a battle. With armies, big ones, and cannons and flags and drums and dress parades! Oh, I could, *would* fight. I would fight the *enemy!*”

Narrator: “And indeed it was a grand battle; almost the way the youth had imagined it. But not quite. For not only was there fighting, there was also hunger, cold, and fatigue. There was anxiety, death, misery, and none of the glamour he had anticipated. First, he was afraid of his own gun. Then he thought about dying slowly from an *enemy* bullet. At this thought, he shuddered and laughed hysterically. Knowing that he was considered somebody’s enemy on the battlefield, the thought of escaping crossed his mind several times. But he could not. That was desertion. So instead, he got nightmares about the treatment and maybe punishment he would receive from society if he performed this cowardly act. To the youth it was an onslaught of redoubtable dragons. He seemed to shut his eyes and wait to be gobbled. A man near him, a soldier who up to this time had been working feverishly at his rifle, suddenly stopped and ran with howls. The youth threw down his gun, too, and fled. There was no

shame on his face. He ran like a rabbit. He ran in terror, straining every muscle, pumping his legs, his arms, not daring to look back. He was a frightened animal!”

Meanwhile his parents are at home waiting frantically for either his corpse to arrive or he, himself unhurt.

Parent: “Why did my son have to go to war? Why did my son have to kill his brother, the enemy? Why did he have to become a *methodical idiot*? Why is glory so important to him? Why must he become a murderer in order to attain justice? Why should people die from gunshots, hunger, and disease because of our quest for social justice?”

Narrator: “The advance of the enemy had seemed to the youth like a ruthless hunting. He began to fume with rage and exasperation. To him the fighters resembled animals tossed for death struggle into a dark pit. His mind pictured the soldiers who would place their defiant bodies before the spear of the yelling battle fiend, and he saw their dripping corpses on an imagined field, he said that he was their murderer.”

Parent: “I wonder what I’ll become after the war.

A hero? An orphan? A widower? A pauper? A homeless person? A colonial master? A revolutionary? An armed robber? A corrupt businessman? I truly wonder what the future holds for me!”

Narrator: “It took the loss of many lives for the youth to understand the futility of war. It took the death of relatives, friends, & strangers — all human beings, for us to begin to understand that we are somewhat connected. It took the maiming of young children in distant lands, famine in far away countries, political upheavals in neighboring nations, poverty and violence in our backyard, out break of disease, an upsurge of mental illness—crisis after crisis for the United States, its allies, and the rest of the world to come to terms with the fact that we are not resolving disputes and conflicts in a constructive manner. Can we continue to use violence to seek the path of peace? Can we really?”

** The above script is adapted (some passages are taken directly) from the following texts:

Avi’s *The Fighting Ground*
Collier & Collier’s *My Brother Sam is Dead*
Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage*
Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra*
Myers’s *Fallen Angels*
Ngugi’s *Weep Not Child*

Vivian Yenika-Agbaw is an associate professor of English Education at Bloomsburg University, Pennsylvania, where she teaches children’s and young adult literature and coordinates the secondary English education program. She has published several articles on literature and critical literacy. She is currently working on a book entitled: *Liberating the Self: Reading Power in Children’s and Young Adult Literature*.

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A Tribute to William C. Morris

When William C. Morris, vice president and director of library promotion for HarperCollins Children's Books, died on September 29th at his New York home, ALAN lost a singular friend, while the publishing world lost a legend.

Bill Morris, quiet and soft-spoken, may have seemed an unlikely revolutionary and, certainly, he was never heard to call citizens to the barricades, but in fact, he did revolutionize the way publishers brought books together with librarians and educators.

Born in Eagle Pass, Texas, Bill graduated from Rice University and subsequently earned a masters degree in American Literature from Duke University. Moving to New York, he began a 48-year-long career with HarperCollins as a salesman of both adult and children's books in 1955. He quickly came to focus on his first love, though, promoting literature for young readers. Over the years he developed an encyclopedic knowledge of this literature and an uncanny knack for introducing the right book to the right reader at the right time. ALAN members quickly learned to value his judgments and recommendations, since his literary taste was more than discerning; it was impeccable.

He was a fixture at ALAN conferences, where he introduced generations of conference-goers to Harper

authors, making it possible for countless numbers of these writers to attend and speak. For these and many other services to the Assembly, Bill received the ALAN Award in 1996, becoming only the second publisher ever to win this prestigious honor (Margaret

McElderry was the first in 1976). He was also the very first recipient of the Distinguished Service Award of ALA's Association for Library Service to Children. Though he modestly referred to himself as "a simple middleman," the professional world clearly knew he was vastly more.

His great good friend, Charlotte Zolotow, another legend who was, for many years, publisher of the Children's Division at Harper's, once called him "the soul of publishing." He was that and more: he was also its heart. Bill loved good books; he loved their readers; he loved his work, and he loved HarperCollins. In return he was, himself, universally loved.

His friends in ALAN and everywhere mourn his passing but celebrate the extraordinarily rich legacy he left and find comfort in the truth that legends never die.

Michael Cart is president of the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English.

Bill Morris, quiet and soft-spoken, may have seemed an unlikely revolutionary and, certainly, he was never heard to call citizens to the barricades, but in fact, he did revolutionize the way publishers brought books together with librarians and educators.

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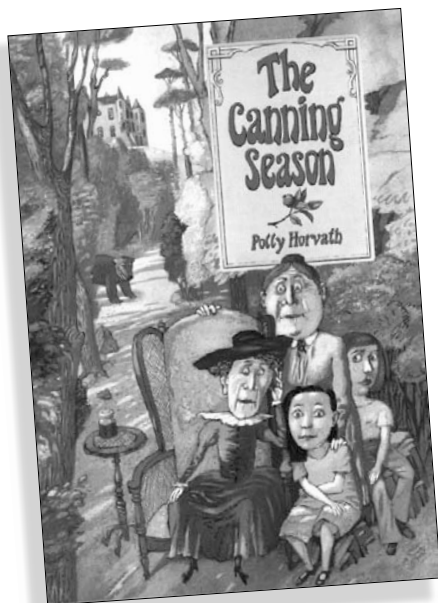
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Why Read?

In *How to Read and Why* (Touchstone, 2001), Harold Bloom writes, "It matters, if individuals are to retain any capacity to form their own judgments and opinions, that they continue to read for themselves. How they read, well or badly, and what they read cannot depend wholly upon themselves, but why they read must be for and in their own interest [. . .]. One of the uses of reading is to prepare ourselves for change, and the final change, alas is universal [. . .]" (21).

Students come into classes with different interests, needs, and abilities and bring a variety of experiences and attitudes toward reading. It seems important to me that more teachers have recognized the importance of using a thematic approach, thus allowing students to choose from a variety of books in studying a particular theme. As another year rolls around, I offer some suggestions of some themes and titles worthy of exploring. Please remember that some students and teachers may not enjoy a particular author's style or even the book itself. There is a subjectivity in listing so few books per theme. This is just to provoke thought about the possibilities available. But the more, the merrier.

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- Avi. *Crispin*. Hyperion, 2002.
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