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<i>Jim Blasingame</i> <i>Lori Atkins Goodson</i>	From the Editors	3
	Call for Manuscripts & Grant Information	4
<i>Cathi Dunn MacRae</i>	Teachers and Librarians Working Together for Teens and Their Reading: Keynote for “Young Adult Literature: Key to Open Minds”	6
<i>Vicki Sherbert</i>	“Ahoy, You Crazy Dreamers”: A Conversation with John H. Ritter	13
<i>Shelbie Witte</i>	Pushed Over the Line: An Interview with Paul Volponi	24
<i>James Blasingame, Jr.</i>	“What a Man Do”: Coe Booth and the Genesis of <i>Tyrell</i>	28
<i>William Broz</i>	<i>The Bully in the Book and in the Classroom:</i> The Professional Resource Connection	34
<i>C. J. Bott</i> <i>Nancy Garden</i> <i>Patrick Jones</i> <i>Julie Ann Peters</i>	Don’t Look and It Will Go Away: YA Books—A Key to Uncovering the Invisible Problem of Bullying	44
<i>Lori Atkins Goodson</i>	Clip and File	A1–A8
<i>Chris Goering</i>	Interviewing the Interviewer: Talking with Robert Lipsyte	52
<i>Kay Smith</i>	<i>From Hinton to Hamlet: Seeing Old Things New Again</i> The High School Connection	59
<i>Robyn Seglem</i>	<i>Just Listening to Sarah Dessen</i>	61
<i>Carol Lautenbach</i>	Follow the Leaders in Newbery Tales	68
<i>Margaret T. Sacco</i>	Defending Books: A Title Index	89

Co-editors James Blasingame,
james.blasingame@asu.edu
Arizona State University
Lori Atkins Goodson,
lagoodson@cox.net
Wamego Middle School,
Wamego, Kansas

YA Book Review Editor Lori Atkins Goodson

Middle School Connection Editor Claudia Katz, *National Louis University*

High School Connection Editor Kay Smith, *Utah Valley State College*

Research Connection Editor Jeffrey S. Kaplan, *University of Central Florida*

Publishers Connection Editor M. Jerry Weiss, *Jersey City State College, Emeritus*

Professional Resource Connection Editor William Broz, *University of Northern Iowa*

Library Connection Editor Diane P. Tuccillo, *Mesa Public Library, Mesa, Arizona*

Non Print YAL Connection Editor Jean Brown, *Rhode Island College*

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Instructions for Authors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ALAN Review prefers the use of the Publications Manual of the Modern Language Association (MLA).

A 3 1/2-inch IBM compatible disk in a recent version of Word format must accompany all manuscripts. Disks must be clearly labeled with author's name, manuscript title, disk format, and file title.

SUBMITTING THE MANUSCRIPT. Send three clear copies and a disk of the manuscript to:

Dr. James Blasingame, Co-Editor, *The ALAN Review*, Department of English/English Education, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, P.O. box 870302, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona 85287-0302.

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

REVIEW PROCESS. Each manuscript will receive a blind review by the editor and at least two members of the editorial review board, unless the length, style, or content makes it inappropriate for publication. Usually, authors should expect to hear the results within eight weeks. Manuscripts are judged for the contribution they make to the field of adolescent literature, clarity and cohesiveness, timeliness, and freshness of approach. Selection also depends on the manuscript's contribution to the overall balance of the journal.

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

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

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

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

FALL ISSUE Deadline:

MAY 15

WINTER ISSUE Deadline:

OCTOBER 15

SUMMER ISSUE Deadline:

FEBRUARY 15

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From the Editors

A record crowd gathered in Nashville for the November 2006 ALAN Workshop, a sign that more and more individuals are finding the value of young adult literature and understanding ALAN'S vital role in determining what's out there and how to use it.

If you missed the fall workshop, with the theme of "Young Adult Literature—Key to Open Minds," you missed being a part of the largest group ever to attend the annual workshop. But, more importantly, you missed room after room filled with authors, publishers, librarians, and educators enthusiastically sharing their expertise through conversations—both formal and informal. They formed panels, served as guest speakers, led sessions, and gathered in hallways for chats with attendees.

For those of you who attended—and there were plenty of you—you undoubtedly remember the conversations, the box brimming with young adult books, and the connections you made to help your students and your own professional development.

To help record such a significant celebration of young adult literature, this issue of *The ALAN Review* keeps with the workshop's theme and showcases some of the connections and conversations that occurred.

Leading the way is Cathi Dunn MacRae's keynote address, "Teachers and Librarians Working Together for Teens and Their Reading." She addresses three challenges regarding students and reading—No Child Left Behind, a growing number of teenagers at risk, and the growing use of technology.

While you may have been able to hear a variety of your favorite authors speak at the workshop and you,

hopefully, were fortunate enough to grab a few autographs while in Nashville, we'll add to your insight into some of your favorites. This issue features extensive interviews with several authors showcased at the conference, as well as reviews of some of their works. They include Vicki Sherbert's conversation with John H. Ritter, Shelbie Witte's interview with Paul Volponi, Robyn Seglem's discussion with Sarah Dessen, and a Chris Goering's interview with Robert Lipsyte (or was it the other way around?).

James Blasingame discusses *Tyrell*, by award-winning author Coe Booth. Booth shares with *The ALAN Review* co-editor that the protagonist's voice seemed to take shape by itself, sharing her experience as a social worker in New York City. "Follow the Leaders in Newbery Tales" by Carol Lautenbach details her examination of 17 Newbery Medal winners and the leadership perspectives they provide.

Margaret T. Sacco shares her approaches to helping classroom teachers prepare for any book challenges they may face. She provides an extensive list of resources for creating those rationales, including specific questions to be answered. Sacco demonstrates how to select books for the classroom, while compiling documentation to explain why those books were chosen, should there be any challenges.

William Broz's Professional Resource Connection focuses on C.J. Bott's book, *The Bully in the Book and in the Classroom*. The column highlights extensive resources regarding bullying. We also feature an adaptation of "Don't Look and It Will Go Away: YA Books, a Key to Uncovering the Invisible Problem of Bullying," a panel discussion at the workshop by CJ Bott, Nancy Garden, Patrick Jones, and Julie Ann

Peters. Kay Smith features a look at “Building Bridges for Struggling High School Readers” in her High School Connection.

And don’t forget to check out the Clip and File—reviews of 31 of the latest in young adult literature.

Record numbers at the workshop signal a growing interest in young adult literature. We hope this issue

reminds those who attended the workshop of all the valuable information and perspectives that were offered, while providing those who weren’t able to attend with a glimpse of just why young adult literature is the key to open minds. Find a comfortable chair and enjoy this reflection on an extremely successful workshop.

Call for Manuscripts

2007 Summer theme: Seeing Myself in the Story

This theme is intended to solicit articles dealing with the relationships between young adult readers and the characters in their reading. The theme is meant to be open to interpretation, but might, for example, deal with what kinds of protagonists individual readers find appealing and/or identify with, the effects this kind of reading may have on young readers and how teachers use this to help students on the path to making meaning of their reading and their lives. General submissions are also welcome. **February 15 submission deadline.**

2007 Fall theme: Young Adult Literature: No Genre Unwanted

This theme is intended to solicit articles about the many genres within young adult literature and the approaches teachers take in addressing them, from poetry to plays, from autobiography to horror. This theme is meant to be open to interpretation and support a broad range of subtopics, but some possibilities include choosing and using the best of young adult drama, helping students make the connections between their own lives in the present day and the lives of characters in historical fiction, creating a thematic unit on mysteries, performance poetry and more. The sky is the limit! We welcome and encourage other creative interpretations of this theme. General submissions are also welcome. **May 15 submission deadline.**

2008 Winter theme: Helping Teens Develop a Sense of “Place” and “Self” through Young Adult Literature

This theme is intended to solicit articles about young adult literature, authors and instructional approaches that facilitate young readers in exploring place and self. Some possibilities include choosing and using the best works that revolve around life in a specific region of the world, or help young adults to define who they are (and place can have a lot to do with that). This theme is meant to be open to interpretation and support a broad range of subtopics, however, and we welcome and encourage other creative interpretations of this theme. General submissions are also welcome. **October 15 submission deadline.**

ALAN Foundation Research Grants

Members of ALAN may apply to the ALAN Foundation for funding (up to \$1,500) for research in young adult literature. Proposals are reviewed by the five most recent presidents of ALAN. Awards are made annually in the fall and are announced at the ALAN breakfast during the NCTE convention in November. The application deadline each year is September 15th.

Gallo Grants

The Gallo Grants were established in 2003 by former ALAN Award and Hipple Award recipient Don Gallo to encourage educators in their early years of teaching to attend the ALAN Workshop for the first time. The grants provide funding—up to \$500 each—for two classroom teachers in middle school or high school each year to attend the ALAN Workshop. (The amount of a grant may be less than \$500 if the applicant lives within commuting distance of the convention location where airfare and housing would not be necessary.) The Workshop is held at the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English on the Monday and Tuesday prior to Thanksgiving Day. Applicants must be teaching full-time; must have been classroom teachers for less than five years prior to the year in which they are applying; and must not have attended an ALAN Workshop previously. Membership in ALAN is not required for consideration, though applicants are expected to become ALAN members if they receive this grant.

Each applicant must fill out the grant application form and submit an essay of no more than 750 words explaining their interest in Young Adult Literature, what they hope to gain by attending this year's ALAN Workshop, and how they hope to use the experience in their classrooms in the future. A letter of support must also come from the applicant's school system. The deadline for submission is September 1. Applicants will be judged on their ability to articulate their understanding of the value of Young Adult Literature as well as their explanation of how they intend to use YA books and the information they gather at the Workshop in their own classrooms.

For further information about this grant, contact ALAN Executive Secretary Gary Salvner at gsalvner@ysu.edu or 330-941-3414. Information about the ALAN Workshop may be obtained from the ALAN Website—www.alan-ya.org. Information about the NCTE Convention may be obtained on the NCTE Website—www.ncte.org—or by writing to NCTE Headquarters at 1111 West Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.



Teachers and Librarians Working Together for Teens and Their Reading

Keynote delivered at the ALAN Workshop, "Young Adult Literature: Key to Open Minds." Nashville, Tennessee, November 20, 2006

Welcome, ALAN's record-breaking audience of 480. Who knew that YA lit had become *this* hot? If it's your first ALAN workshop, you're about to discover *the* place to be if you're a language arts teacher, an English educator, a librarian, an author, a publisher, or just a plain old fan. We wouldn't be here if we didn't believe that young adult literature changes young people's lives.

Today, I'm asking you to consider how teachers and librarians can collaborate to bring this meaningful reading to teens. Having reflected on my work with schools as a public YA librarian for twenty years and having scoured *VOYA*'s pages for advice that I gathered for the next ten years from many in our professions, I was ready to make suggestions. Or was I?

Our workshop theme declares that young adult literature is the key to open minds. Naomi Shihab Nye's book, *A Maze Me*, ends with this poem:

*My mind
is always
open.
I don't think
there's even
a door.*

At the ALAN Breakfast on Saturday, Naomi was the perfect speaker to remind us that we are one human family on this planet. Every child is born with an open mind, which this unstable world is all too ready to close. What could possibly be a more important role for teachers and librarians than to cultivate young minds to remain open?

Let's examine three challenges that threaten young minds:

First, if you're an educator in a public school, No Child Left Behind is a barrier between you and your students and the books. You can't teach reading and writing when you're teaching to the test. Obviously you're here today *despite* NCLB, determined to bring teens and YA lit together anyhow.

I prescribe some excellent anti-NCLB therapy: read Edward Bloor's YA novel, *Story Time*, a wicked satire in which a magnet school boasts a "Test-Based Curriculum." Its library has actual demons living in books that *do* deserve to be burned. I can't wait to hear, when Edward Bloor speaks this afternoon, how healing it was to skewer such absurd fictional administrators! And to put the truth out there for students themselves to recognize—if they find time to read the book between tests.

How *are* students doing in reading? A September 2006 report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) gives a 22-year comparison of U.S. high school sophomores' reading proficiency from 1980 to 2002. There are messages in these figures. Increasing personal challenges are affecting students' mastery of what they read. For example, since 1980, native English-language speakers declined from 95 to 86 percent, and students living with a biological or adopted parent declined from 70 to 57 percent. Yet the percentage of sophomores planning for college or postgraduate degrees nearly doubled, from 41 percent

in 1980 to 80 percent in 2002. Does their reading achievement show this majority—80 percent—of students capable of the college-bound track?

Unfortunately reading proficiency has descended in our new century. In three groups it declined substantially: sophomores in college prep programs, or in Catholic schools, and sophomores whose parents have graduate or professional degrees—some of the students most likely to be college bound. Might such declines be evidence of parents' heavy pressure on students to achieve?

The next challenge: More teenagers than ever—even the high achievers—are at risk.

My October 2006 editorial introduced Susie Vanderlip, who has reached more than a million people in schools across the country with her "Legacy of Hope" program. Since 2000, her teen audience reports "exceptionally high levels of emotional problems" from depression to self harm—and high achievers' severe stress.

Teachers' and librarians' strong tools of reading and writing can help. In the '80s and '90s, my public library groups included alcoholics, expectant mothers, abuse victims, bullied students, and homeless teens, drawn together by their love of reading. Without library guidelines about involvement in teens' lives, I winged it. I helped sometimes *and* sometimes made mistakes; could I have prevented one girl from running away? Teachers and librarians discuss these crises among ourselves, but we often don't know what to do.

VOYA offers counsel in an article series called "How Can We Help?" In its October 2005 debut, public YA librarian Amy Alessio asked an adolescent psychiatrist all the questions that we ask ourselves. In October 2006, ALAN past president Joan Kaywell built on her 1999 ALAN workshop, "Saving Our Students' Lives Through Literature and Laughter" with "There's Hope in a Book," an article describing her projects as an English educator that help us to offer that hope to at-risk teens. Echoing Susie Vanderlip, Joan points out that "twenty-five percent of today's teenagers have inordinate emotional baggage beyond the normal angst of adolescence." Joan's forthcoming book, *Dear Author: Letters of Hope: Top Young Adult Authors Respond to Kids' Toughest Issues*, explores the healing of such angst when teens write to authors whose books have deeply touched them—and authors write back.

VOYA's December 2006 issue contains the third series piece, "The School Library as Sanctuary," by Lynn Evarts. May it convince every teacher and school librarian to see their library as Lynn does. Lynn looks out for isolated students who don't feel safe or welcome anywhere—the peer-isolated, often bullied students and the self-isolated loners, and finds subtle ways to let them know they have a home in the library. Simply by allowing students to eat lunch in her library, Lynn helps them avoid "the scariest place in any school—the cafeteria at lunchtime."

Another VOYA project that brings teachers and librarians together recognizes the best high school summer reading lists—but we're not receiving enough worthy entries. Our committee chair, Linda Williams, has researched many schools' lists and is determined to encourage their inclusion of more YA literature, fewer dead white males, and better assessment. We're interested in any strategies you suggest.

Now for the technology challenge, a challenge which is changing our landscape even faster than global warming.

When we talk teens and reading, we usually mean books. We long to inspire young people to love books as much as we do. We're worried that teens' attraction to technology interferes with reading. Yet, Gene Luen Yang, whose *American Born Chinese* was the first graphic novel ever nominated for the National Book Award—and who speaks tomorrow in this workshop—says: "Technology is changing what it means to be literary, how we read and write." I've been facing my own technophobic tendencies this year, realizing that I cannot do my job without the expert counsel of VOYA's technology columnists—who appear only on *e-VOYA* on our Web site (www.voya.com), not in print.

Joyce Kasman Valenza and Linda Braun share the column "Tag Team Tech: Wrestling with Teens and Technology"—an apt description of what they do. When Joyce—a cutting-edge school librarian—attended her state conference last summer, a librarian in her twenties spoke out. Having seen school libraries range from traditional bookish enclaves to totally wired, this young woman wondered: "What does a twenty-first-century librarian look like?" That question inspired Joyce's latest column, "You Know You're a Twenty-First-Century Teacher-Librarian If . . .," in which she logs twenty technological twists to the

standard job description, such as promoting reading with downloadable audiobooks and digital booktalks.

Our other “Tag Team”-mate Linda Braun, a technology consultant for libraries who also teaches online library courses, finds herself playing “Dear Abby” for librarians overwhelmed by trying to keep up with warp-speed innovations. For *VOYA*, she manages to produce a column about each emerging technology—blogs, podcasts, RSS feeds, You-Tube, you name it—about five minutes before everyone is talking about it. Meanwhile young people absorb each new technology effortlessly—including young teachers and librarians. Cyberspace is their habitat, and if we in older generations don’t join them there, we will be superfluous. Discounted. Quite literally out of it.

So we must do what we have *always* done when working with youth. Consult them. Learn from them. Young virtual-world natives don’t see the boundaries that older immigrants experience; they simply integrate their online and real-world lives.

If you live with a teenager, you have witnessed this behavior. When my 19-year-old niece, Liz, stayed with me last summer, we listened to audiobooks together, passed books back and forth—including graphic novels, went to the movies, and watched DVDs. She copied half my CD collection onto her laptop, where I laughed over 500 funny photos of her friends. While blogging and using both *My Space* and *Facebook*, Liz also filled one hardback journal per month with handwriting, drawings, photos, and souvenirs. Before she returned to college, she informed me that if I didn’t join *Live Journal*, it would be hard to stay in touch. She was right. Now that e-mail is for old people, she doesn’t always answer my messages. When I phone her dorm room, she’s distracted by roommates and boyfriends. *Must* I add blogging to my insane schedule? What does an Empty Nester do?

We must accept that exploring a Web page or a blog *IS* reading. Blogging or posting comments *IS* writing. Chatting and instant messaging are reading *AND* writing, as is online social networking on

MySpace. Video gaming is a form of storytelling in which you star in the story. As in those old *Choose Your Own Adventure* books, the outcome is affected by your actions, which require skill and strategy—also known as “thinking.” Most of these electronic activities are *also* communication—give-and-take responses across time zones and cultures and age ranges. If we teach safe conduct online, cyberspace offers astounding opportunities for creativity, learning, and development.

Most exciting in our field are online writing communities and author Web sites, blogs, and chats. Young people’s literary landscapes are fertilized when they communicate directly with authors. Their writing skills sharpen with ready access to readers, critics, and mentors for their own work. Frankly I’m in awe of how confident and advanced young writers are, from the benefit of sharing or co-creating their work online. For several years, *VOYA* has published “Notes from the Teenage Underground,” an occasional column in which teens tell us what they want adults to know. Since April 2005 when the column featured high school senior Elisabeth Wilhelm’s *Ink for Blood*—which listed her top ten teen writing sites along with a rant about how condescending adults can be when critiquing teen writing online—*VOYA*’s “Underground” submissions have increased in quantity and quality. (They’re finding us on the Web.) So the April 2007 *VOYA* will be devoted to teen writing. For an enervat-

ing example of an international online writing community run by teens, check out Elisabeth’s United Nations award-winning site, *Absynthe Muse*.

Although a 2005 Kaiser Family Foundation study shows that 86 percent of youth aged 8 to 18 have a computer at home, 74 percent with Internet access, and they spend 6 hours and 21 minutes daily using a mix of media—TV, DVDs, movies, videogames, audio, computers, and print—other studies show that most teens lack the critical thinking skills and expertise to use electronic resources effectively. Online at home without the guidance of teachers or

Young people absorb each new technology effortlessly—including young teachers and librarians. Cyberspace is their habitat, and if we in older generations don’t join them there, we will be superfluous. Discounted. Quite literally out of it.

librarians, they need us! That's why YALSA—the Young Adult Library Services Association of ALA, the American Library Association—is debuting Teen Tech Week from March 4 to 10, 2007, to bring teens into libraries for technologies from DVDs to databases. Says Teen Tech Week Chair (and VOYA columnist) Linda Braun: "Technology is key to successful teen development."

Books remain one choice of media. To connect teens with books, many public YA librarians not only have Web pages for teens, but blogs and a *My Space* presence. In VOYA's latest *YA Clicks* online column, public librarian Rebecca Purdy and her teen Web Surfers review librarians' blogs. The Web Surfers are amazed to find them very cool, covering music and pop culture as well as "library stuff." One teen reviewer complains that one blog doesn't mention enough books. (Let *that* warm the cockles of your literary hearts!)

Your school or library site *must* at least offer links to lively resources that recommend YA books, such as librarian Jennifer Hubert's *Reading Rants*, which has won teens' seal of approval. Link to YA author sites and chats as well as Don Gallo's superb author interviews at *Authors4Teens*. While struggling with school reading lists, VOYA just discovered that the excellent *TeenReads* site has concocted a list of 250 titles with the input of their online community of teachers and librarians.

And there's YALSA's Web site itself, containing Best Books for Young Adults, Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers, Printz Award-winning titles of literary excellence, and more. YALSA's Teens' Top Ten Books is a perfect example of teen reading online and off. Since 2003, these recent titles are chosen via national online voting during Teen Read Week each October—individuals or entire classrooms can participate. Using publishers' advance copies, selected library teen book groups make nominations which appear on YALSA's Web site so teens across the country can vote for their favorites. More than 5,000 voters chose the 2006 Teens' Top Ten, just announced last week. Its only title by an author appearing in this workshop is ranked at number 2: Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*. Stay until

Librarians can be teachers' greatest allies. School librarians (often called media specialists) exist to support your classroom endeavors.

ALAN's bitter end tomorrow to hear her speak. In September at the National Book Festival in D.C., her legions of teen girl fans were screaming! Can you guess the only title that outranked Meyer's vampires at number 1? (*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*).

Hundreds of teachers and librarians are together in this room. Yet we don't always understand each other's jobs. Let's survey our audience:

—If you're a teacher—middle or high school, college or graduate school, please raise your hand.

—If you're a school librarian, raise your hand.

—Now public librarians, YA or otherwise.

You have an assignment at the next break. Teachers, introduce yourself to the librarian sitting closest to you. Librarians, find a teacher. Tell each other one thing about what you do that the other might not know.

Librarians can be teachers' greatest allies. School librarians (often called media specialists) exist to support your classroom endeavors. Besides purchasing materials for the school library's collection and helping students to find and use these items (both paper and electronic), school librarians offer services that teachers might not realize.

Here are three school librarians to challenge your assumptions:

- Alison Follois declares in her new book, *Reviving Reading: School Library Programming, Author Visits, and Books That Rock!*, that school libraries are "underutilized havens." Alison partners with her middle school teachers to engage even the most reluctant readers. Her entire school collaborates in a year-round reading program with "highly readable" titles. Alison also runs weekly readers' workshops in the library for each class, reading aloud a book that is discussed and journaled about, followed by a visit from its author. When Janet McDonald speaks to us later this morning, you'll see why she was an unforgettable author guest at Alison's school. Alison even coordinates a teachers' reading group with YA books. Her article about reading aloud will appear in VOYA's February 2007 issue.

- Rebecca Moore describes imaginative contests and games in an August 2006 *VOYA* article, making her school library a place where students learn because it's fun.
- Past ALAN president Teri Lesesne teaches school-librarians AND teachers-in-training at her state university. As you'll see this afternoon in the audiobook session, Teri is an entire resource in herself: book blogger, prolific presenter, and a force to reckon with in teachers' AND librarians' organizations. Her two valuable professional books, *Making the Match: The Right Book for the Right Reader at the Right Time*, and *Naked Reading: Uncovering What Tweens Need to Become Lifelong Readers*, help us to connect books and teens.

Another excellent resource is *VOYA's* sister journal, *Teacher-Librarian* or *TL*, which focuses on school librarians. More research oriented than *VOYA*, it often features collaborations between librarians and teachers. *TL* borrows the teacher-librarian job title from Canada, where *TL* was founded by school library visionary, Ken Haycock.

In the public library, young adult or YA librarians—often called teen librarians—are expected to develop relationships with local middle and high schools. They visit classrooms to booktalk the latest YA books not only to promote reading, but to introduce themselves to students who need a friendly face at the public library, whether for homework help or fun programs. When school is closed all summer, teen librarians help students locate school reading list titles and also run exciting teen reading programs. If you ask them, they'll even help schools compose summer reading lists, order extra copies of its titles, and send your students back to school prepared to discuss them. When teachers send assignment alerts, public librarians reserve materials so all students can share access.

Stylish and appealing new teen spaces—both high-tech and comfortable—are multiplying in public libraries across the country. *VOYA* has profiled one in every issue's "YA Spaces of Your Dreams" since 1999. You *want* your students to gravitate to such teen spaces after school, among books, music, and computers, finding support for their study and social needs. Teachers, your first step is to visit your public library's teen space and introduce yourself to its librarian.

Some noteworthy school/public library partnerships covered in *VOYA*:

- A California YA librarian helps an ESL teacher to use audiobooks to improve students' language skills.
- An Ohio YA librarian asked teachers to send their students to her Banned Books and Pizza program; the discussion continued in classrooms the next day.
- A Kansas YA librarian and a Web developer offer trainings in schools about using cybertools such as RSS feeds, blogs, and wikis (forthcoming).
- Seattle teen librarians built an ongoing cooperative relationship with their school system, including a joint summer reading program and trainings for teachers on using the public library. Discovering the reason that schools don't always welcome relationships with public libraries—"School librarians don't want their administrations to get the idea that public libraries can replace their services"—these public librarians insisted on changing schools' perceptions.

When I was a YA librarian, I made a lifelong friend when a middle school librarian invited me to booktalk even though she booktalked beautifully herself. When her students got to know me, they became involved with my teen advisory board and my fantasy book group. As high school students, they returned to their old middle school library to present booktalks themselves! That school librarian, Nancy Moore, is here today. We stay in touch with our mutual "library kids," now in their late twenties. It was booktalking guru Joni Bodart who trained our kids to outbooktalk us—and she's here as well.

Every October *VOYA* announces *VOYA's* Most Valuable Programs (MVPs) of the year. Our top 2006 MVP, Ocean County Library's "We Empower Teens" in New Jersey, is the finest example I've seen of school and public library partnership, revolutionizing the entire county's approach to young people. First, the library hired more teen librarians, built staff awareness of teens' developmental needs, and added teen advisory boards (TABs) to most branches. Our ALAN President, Diane Tuccillo, trained their teen librarians to run TABs, based on her *VOYA* book, *Library Teen Advisory Groups*.

Next, county library staff and administrators met

with educators from *all* county middle and high schools. Teachers were amazed at the insights gained when speaking with local public librarians about their shared students. In September 2005, the library and schools joined in a Teen Summit, “Empowering Teens as Community Partners,” with more than 200 teen representatives from every school, along with teachers, librarians, local government officials, and community partners. Dynamic keynote speaker/activist/poet Kevin Powell not only spoke about leadership but listened to the teen audience’s ideas. Now everyone in Ocean County partners with teens themselves. NO teen is left behind.

In VOYA’s December 2006 issue, National Book Award finalist Patricia McCormick describes the agonizing process of re-searching, in Nepal and India, and writing her shattering novel *Sold*, about thirteen-year-old Lakshmi who is sold into prostitution. Its teen readers want to know what they can do about human trafficking. “If a book has done its job,” says McCormick, “it asks something of you. Some books . . . demand that you take action. . . . [T]eens . . . may need help from the adults in their lives: teachers, librarians, and parents. It is up to those adults to show young people how: how to invite speakers to their schools, how to plan a viewing of a film about the human rights of children, how to raise money, or how to put their creative talents to use to express their reactions to world news.”

We teachers and librarians know that such books spark action and insight in young readers. Here in the ALAN Workshop, we learn directly from authors why they write books that they trust *us* to put into teens’ hands. Combat testing by introducing your students to Lakshmi in *Sold*. You’ll be hearing Will Hobbs in a moment; bring them illegal Mexican immigrant Victor in Will’s *Crossing the Wire*. Later you’ll hear Nancy Garden; your students’ lives might depend on meeting Gray in her *Endgame*. And so on in our troubled world. YA author Julian Thompson believes that YA

“If a book has done its job,” says McCormick, “it asks something of you.

Some books . . . demand that you take action. . . .

[T]eens . . . may need help from the adults in their lives: teachers, librarians, and parents. It is up to those adults to show young people how.

novels must be full of hope—he spells hopeful as hope-full. It is in our power—teachers and librarians together—to bring the hope in YA books to the youth who need it.

Cathi Cunn MacRae served as a young adult specialist in Maryland and Colorado public libraries for twenty years before becoming editor-in-chief of Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) in 1997 (www.voya.com). From 1988 to 1995, she was YA critic for Wilson Library Bulletin, writing “The Young Adult Perplex” review column in which she also interviewed authors who write for teens. Cathi is active in the American Library Association (ALA) and is an official trainer for library professionals in “Serving the Underserved” workshops run by ALA’s Young Adult Library

Services Association (YALSA). She served on the Board of Directors of ALAN from 1999-2003, chairing the ALAN Author Award Committee during that term. She won the 1995 Econo-Clad/ALA/YALSA Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Development of a Literature Program for Young Adults, and has won two state library association intellectual freedom awards. Cathi is the author of Presenting Young Adult Fantasy Fiction (Twayne/Macmillan Reference/Gale, 1998). She lives in Annapolis, Maryland, with her Scots writer husband and their cats, Archie and Agnes.

A shortened version of the speech previously appeared in the December 2006 VOYA editorial. The items in the works cited list, along with hyper links, can also be found at http://www.voya.com/whatsinvoya/web_only_articles/resources.shtml.

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“Ahoy, You Crazy Dreamers”:

A Conversation with John H. Ritter

Amidst throngs of teachers gathered outside the Opryland Governor’s Ballroom, I heard someone call my name. Above a sea of faces, I saw John H. Ritter as he politely but swiftly moved through the crowd. We had tentatively scheduled time to sit down and talk during an afternoon session of the November 2006 ALAN workshop in Nashville, Tennessee. John had spent most of the day speaking to middle and high school students in Nashville, and had just arrived at the workshop.

I read my first book by John Ritter in 2004. For sixteen years I had been a second- and third-grade teacher. I had used children’s literature extensively in my elementary classroom, but six years ago when I began teaching sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders, I realized that I had a lot of catching up to do if I were to become knowledgeable regarding adolescent and young adult literature. With the help of our school librarian, I began to immerse myself in literature for this age group, hoping to find titles to inspire my students to read beyond their daily assignments. I attended a workshop, *Igniting a Passion for Reading*, given by Dr. Steven L. Layne. One of the many books he “book-talked” was *Choosing Up Sides*. By the time he was finished with his review, I felt that if I failed to read that book, I no longer deserved to teach middle school! So I read the book! I book-talked it to my students one day, and from then on the book moved



from student to student, rarely making it back to the shelf. My students had gained a great story, and I had gained something even more precious; my students trusted me to point them toward great books.

Ritter, whose novels include *Choosing Up Sides*, *Over the Wall*, *The Boy Who Saved Baseball*, and most recently *Under the Baseball Moon*, crafts his stories to show his young adult readers that they have choices when life throws

them a curve. He uses the game of baseball, the glory of music, and the power of the written word to illustrate how young people can overcome everyday, and not-so-everyday, challenges. Each book goes beyond the story of the game, beyond the story of the problem, right to the heart of Ritter’s message: What is really valuable in life? From the first page of *Under the Baseball Moon*, Ritter cries, “Ahoy, you crazy dreamers! Welcome to the water’s edge of North America.” Thus begins the tale of a young boy’s search for what matters most as he pursues his dream of becoming a famous musician.

As our conversation progressed, John H. Ritter, the author, revealed how the passion, pain, and purpose of John H. Ritter, the person, has brought depth and richness to the stories he writes. He shared with frankness his feelings about the fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq, and he told me how writing stories of hope helped pull him from depression and despair.

TAR: John, you have had a full day already! You spent the morning with students, and I'd be interested to learn about the workshops you conducted with them.

Ritter: Everything I do in schools depends upon the audience: What is the age range, the size of the group, their background? Have they read any of my books; which ones? I've done assemblies where they haven't even heard of me, and assemblies where the entire school has read one particular novel. Of course, the questions are always so much better when they have read the book.

This morning I spoke at a private middle school and a private high school. One thing I always try to do is give them a glimpse of what it takes to write a book. And I always tell them I've

never known another writer who writes like me. And most writers could probably say the same thing. But I really warn them that I'm weird! I start off by saying that if I could talk anyone out of becoming a writer, then I feel that I've done some good

A writer not only has to write well, but has to gather a headful of good stories.

today! It's not so much that I want to talk them out of it, but that I want to make sure that when I leave, they have a much firmer grounding as to what it takes to be a writer. So many people say, "Gee, I should sit down and write a book. Okay, then. How do you get an agent?" And that's what the general population thinks. But there is no "school," regardless of what these MFA Creative Writing programs say, especially when I was growing up. I discourage people from going into MFA programs to learn how to write because I think they can kill a good writer. I would take my chances on the street, gaining life experiences, rather than sitting down in college and learning from a barely published professor. Now, that's not always the case. I know T. C. Boyle teaches a writing class at USC. I don't know what it's like, but he doesn't qualify as the bitter professor.

But writing is still something for which there's no apprenticeship program. Every writer who comes along has to reinvent the wheel. And

now, when I give writer's workshops to adults a couple of weeks out of the year, when I'm talking to adults who want to become YA novelists, I try to save them about five years off of their road to becoming a published novelist with what I've learned along the way because it is probably a ten-year journey, or a ten-year apprenticeship, I usually call it. Sometimes, the apprenticeship happens in the public eye. Sometimes, you get published too soon. I've seen that happen with writers. They have a great idea, the book is pretty well executed. Then, BAM! Success—of some degree. So they start working on book number two, and they don't have a clue. The idea's not there, they're not that strong as far as writing goes, they're just lost. So they stumble, and the sophomore jinx comes up, and that second book doesn't do very well, and by the third book, they're out of the game. So what I'm saying to students is that writing is a tough trade. Don't rush into it. In fact, learn your chops while getting real life experience, because a writer not only has to write well, but has to gather a headful of good stories first. And you're kind of lucky if you don't have to learn your trade in the public eye.

TAR: Before you've had the seasoning time?

Ritter: Absolutely, so that you're not cringing when you read what you wrote in your first book. And a writer should continually evolve with each book. That doesn't mean each book is going to be better than the one before; it can be, but your skill level should be getting better because of what you've learned. If you just get to a certain plateau and level off, then I believe you are undershooting your stars. Because there's no reason why you can't continue to be a better writer until the day you put down the pen. The writers I read and the ones I want to run with are the ones who do that. They are constantly experimenting with form or with style, with voice, and they're getting their storytelling chops more finely honed and crafted.

TAR: That is a concept I'd like to communicate to my middle school students. Reading your novels, I've been struck by how you combine so many of your passions; your passion for baseball, your passion for music, your passion for art and writing; in each

of your books. You integrate these ideas in a different way each time. Is that a conscious choice or plan as you begin each book, or is it more of a natural result of pouring yourself into the story?

Ritter: Well, I've never thought about it before! That doesn't mean it wasn't planned, it just means that . . .

TAR: Maybe to you it seemed like a natural thing and we readers are the ones who are amazed at your craft!

Ritter: Well, maybe. I know I feel that as a writer, I feel like I can do anything. I mean that technically, craft-wise, I can do anything I want at the moment. And so if I want to tie together a baseball story with a Vietnam anti-war story, I can do it. I take that as a challenge. I was always one of those over-active, high-achieving kids who was bored with the everyday. But if I got the hint or the feeling that the teacher didn't think I could do something, then I was on fire, and I went for it! So that's why not only have I never written the same book twice, I've never written anything close to the same book twice. I'm constantly looking for new territory. I want to pioneer, to go there first, before it gets overridden with writers.

When I broke into fiction writing—short fiction—my stories were about abused children; this was in the early nineties. But by the time I got a book published in 1998, it was the status quo. They called them 'problem books.' "What's the problem in this book? This is the one with the alcoholic parent. This is the one with the kid who does drugs. This one is pregnant." Publishing *Choosing Up Sides* saved me a lot of bother, because now I can just push all that stuff off my desk and none of that "kid versus parent" or "destructive kid versus self" stuff is going to be on my agenda anymore. It's all being well-covered by tons of writers. And me, I'm constantly wanting to go into territory no one has worked before. So to put all my passions—the things I really care about—into my writing is pretty natural because, why else would you write?

There is also another level to this answer. That is, when I go into schools and talk about writing and being a writer, I never stop with that. I

always ask the audience, "Who wants to be an artist of any sort? An actor maybe? Is anybody in drama? Does anybody sing in church? Do you play music? How many of you are athletes?" And I lump all of those categories together, athletics as well as all the fine arts, because we are all essentially fighting the same battle. For anyone in those disciplines, it's going to take a miracle for you to make a living at it. So I want to talk in terms of practicality.

That is, "How do you achieve a life that allows you to be an artist?" When I decided I was going to be a writer, the first thing I started to do

was read biographies of writers. Not to find out their philosophies or their styles of writing, but I wanted to find out the answer to one question: How did they afford to be a writer?

Where did they get the free time? Mark Twain married money; his father-in-law gave him a house. Jack Kerouac lived with his mom

until he was 35. Both of those solutions are equal in my eyes, in the

sense that they bought the authors time. They were able to find a way to give themselves time to experience life, to travel, and then to come back and write about it without having to punch a time clock, without having to worry about how much income they were bringing in. So, when I'm in schools, I'm trying to get students to start to think about what professions are available to an artist so you can pay your bills while you write. Those other possibilities are there; you marry somebody who has a more normal occupation, you marry a school teacher, and you have your summers to travel and you have an insurance program!

TAR: Ah, yes, the insurance program!

Ritter: Yes, I was a contractor for many years. My wife was a secretary, and we bought two little

I'm constantly wanting to go into territory no one has worked before. So to put all my passions—the things I really care about—into my writing is pretty natural because, why else would you write?

houses in San Diego dreaming about the day when she would be a teacher and I would be a writer—which took fifteen years to achieve. I tell students that if you go to Hollywood, all your waiters and all your bartenders are actors and actresses. That’s a kind of job that allows them to be flexible enough

My last two books were written after 9/11 and after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which just broke my heart. My books had to be upbeat, because I was so depressed and so angry.

that they can show up for a ten o’clock audition three days in a row, or whatever it takes to pursue their art, rather than just saying, “Someday I’m going to do this. Someday I’m going to . . .”

And then I separate writing out and I tell them it’s the one art that you can arrive at in your thirties and forties and still be considered a young artist. We expect our

novelists to tell us something we don’t know, or that we haven’t thought all the way through. Kids hate to hear that, because nowadays, because of Harry Potter, they’ve all got a book in them; they’ve got three on the computer! But if you stop to analyze what these kids are writing, it’s all a retelling of *Eldest* or *Harry Potter* or *Inkheart*. Essentially, unless they’ve had a unique childhood, there’s really not much that they are going to discover that hasn’t already been discovered and written about by others for hundreds of years.

TAR: You are trying to help them understand what it takes to succeed as a writer.

Ritter: Yes, which goes beyond the gaining of years and life experiences. You need a highway of time in front of you so you can put it all down. And that’s the second level of passion I talk about in my books: Time. The artist needs more than dreams or talent or desire. We all do. We need unencumbered time.

My last two books were written after 9/11 and after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which just broke my heart. My books had to be upbeat,

because I was so depressed and so angry—that’s the highest emotion I could muster above depression—and then I would fall back again into depression, for over a year.

When I started seeing the children we were killing in Afghanistan for essentially no reason whatsoever, except that an angry, panicked, vengeful nation just decided that’s what they wanted to do, it just saddened me that I was living among that many people who felt that way; and so I was really thrown off track. I was talking to Robert Lipsyte about this the other day, and I just said, “I can’t write in anger. The book that would come out would not be a book anybody would want to read.” And so I just kind of had to live through it.

I lost a year of creativity between *Over the Wall* and *The Boy Who Saved Baseball* because of that huge depression. It just knocked me off my feet. It literally did. I was in bed for days and days; I went weeks without going outside. And I needed something to buoy my spirits. And the solution ended up being just that—kind of a spiritual buoy. I wanted to write a book that was just full of joy and adventure and hope. Something that was uplifting, and I knew I didn’t want it to have anything to do with a dysfunctional family, no issues with father and son, none of this crap! I wanted to have that driving force of the story to be a band of kids grouping together in order to pursue some common goal that just had to be accomplished. It was like this instant family had to form, had to get together, and had to do something wonderful, something great out there, in spite of any petty little annoyances, which, of course, were inevitable between them. And that was just a direct reaction to the world I saw out my window. I wanted to let children know, let readers know, that this world that you happen to have been born into—or that you turned age nine, ten, or eleven in before realizing that you’re part of a bully nation that has taken on a third world country and is blowing them to bits—is not the only kind of reality or community that is possible. There is something else that you can strive for. Even in America. And maybe if just by metaphor, or by my storytelling, I could at least plant the seed of possibility into the minds of these kids, that striving for money, striving for

Under the Baseball Moon

by John H. Ritter

Reviewed by Vicki Sherbert

Andy Ramos rides a skateboard. Andy Ramos plays a trumpet. At the same time.

From the very first page, the reader gets the message that this is no ordinary sports story. It is a story about passion, ambition, reflection, and love. San Diego's Ocean Beach neighborhood, OB to the locals, is the setting for a rich tale of music and fast pitch softball under the baseball moon. Among other things, the term "baseball moon" is used to refer to a daytime moon shining down on a baseball game.

Andy Ramos, the protagonist in John H. Ritter's latest novel, is a musician with ambition. After spending his childhood in the backrooms of smoky nightclubs while his mom sang and his dad played electric guitar, Andy has determined that this is his breakout summer, the summer to launch his musical career. Since the fifth grade, he has had the reputation of being a weirdo, thanks to a girl named Glory Martinez. Glory's mother sang in the band with Andy's parents, and as her drinking problem escalated, Andy found himself being called upon to calm Glory down when her world pushed her over the edge. To his relief, the summer after his sixth-grade year, her mother checked herself into a rehab clinic and Glory moved to Tucson, but not soon enough for Andy to escape the ridicule he received for simply being associated with her. In the years since her departure, Andy has thrown himself into his music. He has spent every minute he could on the rooftop, on the pier, on his skateboard; playing his trumpet, blowing like a jazzman to the beat of whatever or whoever was around him. He saw it as "painting with music".

Now at last, at the end of his ninth-grade year, Andy feels he is ready to get his start. He comes up with the name "FuChar Skool," the informal version of Fusion Charge Sk8rs Rool, for his band. The other two band members get into the new name and the enthusiasm and determination of the group soars. One afternoon, after playing to the

beat of his buddies on their skateboards, Andy cruises off toward the ball fields. There, he begins to play. He notices a girl in a batting cage and pays attention to the "dance" of her body. As she swings away at the balls popping out of the machine, he "paints" her with his music. The pitching machine keeps popping, the girl keeps swinging, and he keeps playing. Determined to meet her, Andy hangs around until her practice is over. As he steps onto the ballfield grass, he cannot believe it: the girl is Glory Martinez.

Though compelled to stay away from her, Andy finds he needs to be near Glory. A close relationship grows between them, and both find they are closer to reaching their individual dreams when they are together; Glory pitches better when Andy plays for her, and Andy plays better when Glory is in the audience. But a mysterious and somewhat sinister figure, Max Lucero, arrives on the scene, and before he knows what's happening, Andy suspects he may have sold his soul to guarantee his musical success.

Young adult readers will be drawn to the image of Andy blowing one-handed on his trumpet while skateboarding around the town. Many will relate to Glory and her purpose and determination to climb to the next level in the sport she loves. But most will relate to Andy as he must decide between his desire to succeed and the person he has come to love.

In *Under the Baseball Moon*, Ritter gives the reader a taste of the laid back, almost hippie-like atmosphere of Ocean Beach. As the characters in all their uniqueness deal with the choices they must make, a stressfulness is introduced to their daily lives that is unfamiliar to them. In the end, this book is about so much more than music or softball. It is about deciding what is important in life, and how much a person is willing to pay to get it.

Ritter, John H. 2006. *Under the Baseball Moon*. Philomel. 2006. 224 pp. ISBN: 0-399-23623-6 \$16.99.

status, striving for position and power or global oil is not the only reason to get up in the morning; in fact, getting up for that stuff is probably the wrong reason. And so I wanted to show a town and a family, who were content with a simple life, who did not declare development to be progress, did not declare economic growth to be progress. Rather,

I wanted to put across that concept that there is something rich people cannot buy. And it's a very valuable thing. It is time, it is family, it's community, it's contentment.

they saw it as being threatening and detrimental to what they valued, and what they valued was free time. In *The Boy Who Saved Baseball*, Doc says to Tom, "Rich people can't afford to live like us. They don't have the time." I wanted to put across that concept that there is something rich people cannot buy. And it's a very valuable

thing. It is time, it is family, it's community, it's contentment. All the things they had in Dillontown, beyond what Tom thought about the baseball field being magical and so on, beyond that, they had a life that wasn't driving them crazy. They didn't have to jump on the freeway and join that commute every morning.

Like Maggie LaRue says in the book, "Why not live where you work or work where you live?" Save yourself this hassle. You know, if that job that you want is so far away that you can't afford to live in that neighborhood, then wait a minute, how valuable is your life to you that you would leave this neighborhood to lose two or three hours a day to commute to work in that other neighborhood that you can't afford to live in? Maybe you haven't exhausted all the possibilities. Could you stay in your own neighborhood and do something else in life that will allow you to be close to family and meet your obligations, or if you love what you're doing, could you move to that other part of town and live in a studio and eke out a living?

What kind of example do we give our children when we spend an hour on the road everyday to and from work, and the traffic is horrible, and the development is out of control?

Although I think I've lost the parents, which is why I write for children, my idea is this: Kids, you still have a choice. So just by demonstration in my novels, I want to show that there is another way to go about life, and in *Under the Baseball Moon* I say it outright. Though it's an un-American suggestion in the sense that we are taught to always be striving; striving to go to the greatest college in order to get the greatest job in order to get the greatest income and live in the greatest house with the greatest blah, blah, blah; and then you come to the end of your life and see that you never had time to be yourself, you never had time to gather your thoughts in the evening or to walk in the woods, or to travel through Europe or South America, or you know spontaneously . . .

TAR: To really live?

Ritter: Yeah, to really live!

TAR: And your passions?

Ritter: The real passion in my life is this: Buying time!

I discovered it when I was in college. I worked construction, and we worked so hard in the summer because this was the big season for this commercial contractor that I worked for. This was their big season for out-of-town work, seven-days, fourteen-days-in-a row jobs, working twelve-hour days. At the end of that summer, before I went off to college, I had enough in my bank account to pay for my next nine months of life. And then the next summer I did it all over again. And it occurred to me fairly early on that you could go through life like this! If you lived very simply, which I did since I had the advantage of being a hippie—you could buy yourself time. My wife and I had a lot of roommates. In *Under the Baseball Moon* Andy's parents decided they were going to do the same thing—that they were going to buy a house and have a bunch of roommates who were more transitory at that time in the lives than they were. They were making this house payment that was going to be outrageous if it was just the two of them, but by sharing the home and renting out the rooms for five or six years, finally they got to the place where the payment was more manageable. It

wasn't so hard, and they could wind down, and then fifteen years later, it's like they were geniuses to have done that! My wife and I did it, and I think other young artists can too.

TAR: As I was reading the book, I realized I had really missed that boat toward financial freedom!

Ritter: And, that's why I wrote about it. When I talk to young artists, one of the things I urge them to do is to, early on, make a decision to create a life that allows you a lot of time.

TAR: I loved how in *Under the Baseball Moon* you wrote of Glory's dependence on Andy's music while she pitched and Andy's dependence on Glory's presence to enhance his music. In the beginning, Andy viewed Glory's reappearance in his life with dread. The characters then realized that they could function alone, but that they were better together.

Ritter: Right, but then it got to the point where Andy realized that he didn't need her, or that he was going to leave her behind and pursue his dream in the music world. To me, that became this critical point where he had to determine what was valuable in his life, what was important, and how important was it to be a big star if it meant living this kind of constantly irritated, constantly stressed, constantly striving lifestyle that it seemed like he had to get into in order to sustain the kind of success he was having. It meant leaving this girl behind. And so he makes this choice that I don't think very many boys would make.

He had to have come from that town and had to have come from that family in order for him to even consider making this sacrificial choice that he ends up making. And that was just part of my overall theme, and I tell you, it was driven by the war in Iraq. It sounds funny, but the whole idea driving this story is that sometimes we have to sacrifice something that is very dear to us in order to make good things happen in the world. And in America, fear became very dear to us, and we would not give it up. And when you become a vengeful nation, that's a very fearful act, and when that kind of thinking dominates the leadership of

the nation, the media of the nation, and the consciousness of the majority of the people in the nation, oppression takes over. It was my way of saying this is not the kind of country I want to live in; it's not the kind of world I want to support. And I wished I could demonstrate something, an alternative to that value system in such a way that didn't sound preachy, but had undertones of the message.

So I started the book off in the very first paragraph, "Ahoy, you crazy dreamers!" And then I talk about the wagon wheels of the Spanish fathers which cut across the Kumeyaay Indian migration trail and changed this land forever. It was an invasion that was parallel to a war; here we have the people with money

coming to take natural resources away from people who were content and were doing very well, thank you, but were told it was for their own good. Instead it did neither one of those cultures any good. It did not bring out the best in either one of those cultures, and it destroyed one of them. So, it was just my way of saying that what we're doing in Iraq is not a new thing; we're doing the same old thing over and over and over again. I carried that invasion

theme throughout the book to the point that it wasn't just this town that was being invaded, it turned out this boy's mind was being invaded by this outsider. And to me, when you lose your ability to think for yourself, as Americans did, to think critically, to compare and contrast and analyze the situation, and you're just going with the flow due to fear, you've lost the most important thing in life. And that's love. That's what drove me. Because clearly America was acting out of fear, not love.

So the book was about this whole idea that

To me, that became this critical point where he had to determine what was valuable in his life, what was important, and how important was it to be a big star if it meant living this kind of constantly irritated, constantly stressed, constantly striving lifestyle.

there are two different kinds of invasion. There are the aggressive armies that come in and destroy, bust through a border and destroy the land in order to occupy and control it. Then there are the immigrants—who come into this land, like the Mexican people who come across the border at great risk to their lives in order to do nothing more than to benefit our country, to benefit their families and enrich the community in which they end up settling by doing very humble and very necessary work for low wages. And so in California the same time this war was going on, there was this immigration battle, because the nationalism of the war

I know that there are serious situations and you have to step up and deal with them, but you don't have to be crushed by them. It takes a real generosity of spirit to be a happy person.

spilled into everything, and so the right wing hate groups had this concept that now we have to seal those borders. And they're not going to say "from those dirty Mexicans," they are going to say "from the terrorists" who could easily come over, and it's ridiculous! It was just another way to hide their racism and to push the agenda of closing off the border to those who look differently, particularly from Mexico. There

has never been the cry to seal off the Canadian border. There's always the cry to seal the Mexican border. And I hope that this new Congress will be able to underfund that double wall that they've proposed, just let it go by the wayside, because it's insanity. Those people are not the enemy.

Anyhow, that's how I juxtapose those two different types of invasions in *Under the Baseball Moon*. One based on love, one based on fear. This is nothing any normal reader or any young reader needs to know, but that was how I was able to write this book and not feel like I was surrendering to fluff fiction in order to get through my depression. I still said something that was important, but I could say it in a way that I didn't have to wake up angry every morning.

TAR: You had mentioned during an interview with

Chris Crowe that you always feel that the potential impact with any work is greater on those who aren't so set in their ways. So you have the young adult audience, and you don't preach to them, but you create the scenario with the characters.

Ritter: Right. It goes back to that basic writing axiom: show, don't tell. Don't preach to me. If you think you have such a great idea, show me how it will work. That's why I create these towns and these situations.

TAR: I appreciate the depth of story you concoct with each book, the rich characters and the tough, out-of-the-ordinary-yet-oh-so-typical dilemmas and issues faced by adolescents today. Even though you write about incredibly serious things, there is so much fun in what you write. Is it difficult to blend the lighthearted with the heavy?

Ritter: I'm going to say "no" immediately, and I think that's the right answer. I think that's the proper way to go through life, to be lighthearted, even in the face of whatever natural or man-made disaster comes your way. I know that there are serious situations and you have to step up and deal with them, but you don't have to be crushed by them. It takes a real generosity of spirit to be a happy person. Depression is very selfish. I'm not saying that you can just recognize this and talk yourself out of depression, but it is a disease that feeds on selfishness, or creates a selfish person. I don't exactly know how it works. If you are going about very serious work, say in the medical fields saving lives, or on the street feeding the homeless or in school teaching children, whatever the serious work is, there is no reason you can't do it with an upbeat attitude and a joy in your heart.

Again, that's not something that I just want to stand up and tell you, because it does no good, but I would sure like to show that, and the way to do that is to prove it. I have a lot of fun on the page. I use a lot of puns and plays on words, but they are more than that; there's a playfulness that I put into the text that's not just for my own enjoyment. I mean, I certainly do enjoy writing that way, but I also use it to demonstrate that you can go through life this way; it's possible.

TAR: In each of your books, your characters deal with some incredibly difficult things; the death of a sibling, war, a parent's depression; and yet they still are able to laugh at themselves and to find humor and relief in the midst of some pretty tough trials. I think your young adult readers need that. They, too, face some very difficult, serious things. Many carry some pretty heavy burdens. Your books allow them to connect with characters that carry some heavy loads also.

Ritter: I see it all as a part of that big picture, that idea about pondering what's important in life. Hey, you may blow the SAT's, you may get turned down by three schools, two of which you thought you were dead certain to get into, or whatever, and does that crush you? Is that the end of the world? The answer is "No." But how soon do you find that out, how soon do you realize it? It may be a year or several years. You kind of learn that those are the types of things that you can shake off, those are the types of things that don't have to kill your spirit for months and years.

TAR: What does your week typically look like, or do you ever have a "typical" week? Has your working schedule changed with each successive book?

Ritter: I never have a typical week. And it was very insightful for you to note the fact that my writing schedule has changed with each successive book. I'll just say that the only time you are a pure writer is before your first book is published. Once that first book comes out, you become a promoter; you've got to go out on the road, introduce your work to the audience. There are two hundred to three hundred young adult novels published each year. And most publishers have a budget of zero for a first novel. They may publish one or two dozen debut novels and essentially what they're doing is throwing them against the wall to see which ones stick. Meaning, which ones get star reviews; which ones win awards, not the major awards, but just awards in general; which ones are on the ALA Young Adult Best Book list? Maybe then they'll take an advertisement out, or put that book in a group ad. In other words, you have to show them you have earning capacity before they want to put too

much more than the initial investment into your career. So, how do you do that? You do it by numbers, by making sure that you earn back your advance, that they don't lose money on you. As a matter of fact, you make sure that they make money on you. And that means that you, as a first-time novelist, have to sell at least 3,000 to 4,000 hardcover books in the first year. That's not easy to do with the giant competition that's out there now. Sometimes, you get a lucky break. In my case, *The Boy Who Saved Baseball* was featured in a small article in *People Magazine*. No way could you buy that kind of publicity. And my life has never been the same since. That was unexpected; I had nothing to do with that.

By and large, to break in, what you really need to do is be just like a musical group who has to go out and play the dive bars. You have to start with small regional conferences and introduce your work to an audience with the hope that they start to buy your book. It's like selling CDs out of your van. You then hope that by word of mouth, other people will buy the book, and over a period of time, you start to gather a following and therefore build a career. So, typically, in my case, my week isn't broken into sections, but my year is.

Springtime, in my case, from about March to the end of the school year, is when I'll be on the road doing school visits and conferences and so on. In the fall, from the beginning of school until Thanksgiving I'll

be on the road doing the same thing. I know some writers who do that all year long, but I won't. I need that wintertime to create a book. That's when I have to get into that dream shell. And that's another reason why my weeks aren't typical. I'm a binge writer, and when I'm creating a book, I need to have what I call a highway of time in front of me, two or three weeks where I will work ten to twelve hours a day for twenty-one days in a row.

When I'm creating a book, I need to have what I call a highway of time in front of me, two or three weeks where I will work ten to twelve hours a day for twenty-one days in a row.

My wife will run interference on the phone and take care of the immediate concerns of the family so that I don't have to be dragged out of this

That's why I had to spend three hours with my editor, Michael Green. He has a degree in psychology and he studied screenwriting, which to me are the perfect qualifications to be an editor. He's not bogged down in literature; he's not an English major! By being a psych major, he understands character motivation.

fictional world that I'm in while I'm shaping this new story. Once I'm beyond that stage I can do my work in shorter spurts of time, two or three days here and two or three days there.

There will be days when I won't touch the manuscript at all. Then I'm in my email mode; I'm arranging my flights or my school visits, or whatever the business side of the business is. I hate to mix the two; it deadens, it adulterates my writing to mix those things in the same day. Then when the book is nearer the end, and I'm doing my simpler editing—not so much creationary stuff, but working as a chef correct-

ing the seasoning of a dish—then it's no problem to do that in two-hour periods. I look at the book as a seasonal product; the result of what I'm doing each season of my life. I'm looking at a yearly schedule, rather than a daily or a weekly deal.

TAR: And you said you usually start out with pen and paper instead of computer?

Ritter: Yes, I do. I feel like, originally, I'm painting the words; I'm tapping into that part of my brain where imagery flows. Really, all I'm trying to do is take that movie in my mind and somehow write it in some sort of short hand, as fast as I can dream it. I don't care about the writing craft, the skills, I don't care about the similes or literary devices. All that's easy for me. I can do that on draft number five or seven, later on down the road, but what's difficult for me is getting a good story in place—carving a

good story out of this lump of clay of an idea that I have.

TAR: Well, I eagerly await your next book. What can we look forward to?

Ritter: Well, you know, when I come to a national conference like this, my editor and I generally meet. We met yesterday at the hotel for a few hours over this next book. I'm working on a prequel to *The Boy Who Saved Baseball*. I've gone back to the Gold Rush days and Billy the Kid is in the story. It's really funny because my editor came to me with the idea of writing something about Billy the Kid, and I was against it because I was thinking, "Gosh, he's a gunslinger!" My perception was that he went out and killed people at random. But, because my editor suggested it and because I saw it as a challenge, I thought, "I wonder if I could tie Billy the Kid into a baseball story? Wouldn't that be amazing?"

It turns out that the Kid was an orphan, from an early age. He was bullied because he was a small kid. He was a hard worker and had to go to work at age fourteen. He was just trying to eke out a living, because his mom died and his dad was never on the scene. He saved his money and bought himself a gun because there was a full-grown man in the lumber camp where he was working who was bullying him severely. And so here's a kid who reminds me an awful lot of these kids who sometimes come to school with a gun. The first murder Billy the Kid was accused of was actually self-defense. But he wasn't going to get a fair trial because of who he killed, as well as other circumstances. So he ran away, and from the age of fifteen on, he was an outlaw. I saw this book, then, as an opportunity to give Billy the Kid this childhood that was stolen from him. So he's going to play baseball for a few weeks of his life, and he's going to come to Dillontown to do it.

That's why I had to spend three hours with my editor, Michael Green. He has a degree in psychology and he studied screenwriting, which to me are the perfect qualifications to be an editor. He's not bogged down in literature; he's not an English major! By being a psych major, he understands character motivation. By studying

screenwriting, he understands story, which is a weakness in most writers. Most writers love to write, but they're not very good storytellers. And the good storytellers tend not to be such great writers—however, they are on the best-seller lists! Which speaks to the fact that we want stories. I don't care how literary or how high-minded we think we are, we really want stories. That's what I'm working on now.

TAR: My students and I will eagerly await your next book. Thank you for giving me your story here today.

That afternoon in Opryland, John H. Ritter wove his way through a crowd of people and called my name. In each of his books, John H. Ritter weaves his way through the difficulties and

hardships that can crowd in and cause us to lose sight of what matters most. "Ahoy, you crazy dreamers!" he calls to his readers. He's calling to you. He's calling to me. He's calling to us all.

To learn more about the works of John H. Ritter, or to find reviews, a reader's guide and teaching guides, please visit his website at <http://www.johnhritter.com>.

Vicki Sherbert, B.S., M.S., teaches 6th, 7th, and 8th grade language arts at Wakefield Schools in Wakefield, Kansas. She previously taught 2nd and 3rd grades at Lincoln Elementary School in Clay Center, Kansas. She served as a Teacher Consultant for the Flint Hills Writing Project and is currently working toward her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Adolescent and Young Adult Literature at Kansas State University.

**The Writing Conference Inc. announces the 10 finalists for the
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Just Listen, Dessen
The Old Willis Place, Hahn
Sandpiper, Wittlinger
Shug, Han
Sleeping Freshman Never Lie, Lubar
The Christopher Killer, Ferguson

Check the web site for details: www.writingconference.com

Pushed Over the Line:

An Interview with Paul Volponi

There are no shades of grey with Paul Volponi, young adult author of *Rikers*, *Black and White* and his latest book, *Rooftop*. Volponi worked for several years with incarcerated adolescents on Rikers Island, and he continues to work with at-risk adolescents in a variety of capacities. Volponi writes the stories as he has come to understand them: through the eyes and experiences of young adolescents struggling to make it in the heart of New York. To hear Paul tell it is like hearing it straight from the kids themselves. Gut-wrenching, brutally honest, and so a matter-of-fact are Volponi's characters, that an educator can't help but hope that every person interested in the future of young adults reads his thought-provoking testimony to the very real existence of inequity within the criminal justice system.

The following interview was conducted through email during August of 2006.

TAR: In your novel *Black and White*, and your latest novel *Rooftop*, you examine discrimination and the racial inequities of the criminal justice system. How did you become interested in the topic?

PV: I grew up several blocks from Rikers Island, and as I wandered the streets with a basketball in my hands, many cars pulled up to ask, "Hey, kid, How



do I get to Rikers Island?" (It's on a difficult avenue to find). That happened to most people in my neighborhood, so much so, that we already knew what the people were going to ask before the words left their mouth. So I thought up a smart-mouth response that had my friends howling— How do you get to Rikers Island? Rob a bank!

But when I looked into the eyes of the people asking, how they were lost, and had to admit

to a stranger that they were going to visit somebody they loved in jail, I could never pull the trigger on that punch line. I also began to notice how everyone asking was either Black or Hispanic. Many years later, I took a job teaching on Rikers, mostly because it was one of the few teaching jobs open, and so close to my house. That's when the past and the present sort of blended together for me, and I formally began my jail education—a very interesting look into the heart of yourself and others.

TAR: While researching the facts of adolescent incarceration, I found that since 1972, the disproportionate confinement of minorities, primarily African-American and Hispanic males, has risen astronomically, with more than 30% of African-American males between the ages of 18 to 25 being incarcerated. As a teacher in a suburban area, it is

difficult to get my head around that number. How can this be? How are we losing an entire generation of African-American males?

PV: Not losing, branded—maybe, but I hope not. I encourage all my students to never hide the fact that they’ve been to jail—to turn it around and say, maybe I fell into some traps that were set for me, maybe I made some mistakes of my own, too, but I’m not down with that anymore. I learned something from it, and I’m stronger now, and can offer something to a college or a job through those experiences I had.

If society’s going to try and bury you under a wave for your past, learn how to ride that wave, and take it as far as you can.

TAR: *Black and White* examines this issue head-on, with one reason being that those who can afford the best lawyer are afforded the best of circumstances, a very large issue to tackle and a difficult concept for adolescents to understand. Did your experience with at-risk students give you more insight to this situation?

PV: Kids understand the social and economic reasons why almost every face on Rikers is Black or Hispanic, but I know that deep down they start to look at each other, and begin to think—maybe there’s something wrong with us. That’s a harsh thing for teens who are already on the bottom (in jail) to wrestle with and overcome.

TAR: You have had tremendous experience working with at-risk students through your work at Rikers Island. Many adolescents seemed resigned to the notion that their lives have already been decided, destined for a lifetime of crime. Many adolescents, like some of the students at Daytop (an outpatient drug treatment facility), have lost hope. As a writer, how difficult is it for you to show the realities of the choices adolescents make to follow the wrong path?

PV: As a writer it’s not hard at all, because I’m basically a reporter on what I see.

TAR: In your latest novel *Rooftop*, Clay is driven to intervene in Darrell’s illegal activity in hopes of saving him from the same fate as Addison, perhaps as a way to quiet his guilt of not telling the entire truth of the events from the rooftop. Did you feel it was important to show Clay redeeming himself in the end?

PV: Clay doesn’t need to be redeemed, he needs to break free and he does, standing up to the dog. I’m proud to say Darrell’s father does an equal amount of the hard work, because he loves him best and sees he has already lost one son to the streets.

TAR: I was intrigued by the fact that Clay seemed to do more for Darrell than many of the adults in the book, many of whom turned a blind eye towards Darrell’s illegal activities. Would you care to share your thoughts on the family structure in the novel and its impact on the characters?

PV: All the characters are strong—sometimes they look out for themselves first, and other times their family. I think that’s how it goes in life. But I think they are bound together by love. I don’t think there’s any real blame on their part—just the way life goes in NYC. And if it didn’t, I couldn’t write it that way.

TAR: To make your characters so realistic, do you base them on people you’ve known?

PV: *Black and White* has basis in real events. When I was an assistant coach for a NYC high school basketball team (Aviation), we went to LIC (Long Island City High School) to play a game, but there was still a gym class going on, and we couldn’t walk through the gym. We knocked at a side door

I pushed that aside like any other New Yorker who’d seen too much tragedy and had nearly become immune to it. But when I started working on the book, that all came back to me.

and a few kids from the LIC team met us there, shaking our hands and taking us around back to our lockers. Several weeks later, I saw one of those kids on the six o'clock news. The LIC team had gone upstate to play in a tournament. There was a lot of racial stuff coming out of the stands. Then the whole gym went zoo. The news had a white spotlight on that kid as the guy from the stands

Rooftop

by Paul Volponi

Reviewed by Shelbie Witte

Clay, a teenager from Long Island City High School, is placed in an outpatient drug treatment program after his parents catch him smoking pot. His cousin Addison enrolls at Daytop as well, having been arrested for dealing crack. Reunited after years of a family rift, both teens look forward to the future and to getting their lives back on track. But when a policeman shoots Addison in a rooftop confrontation, Clay is torn between telling what really happened when the police burst on to the scene and staying true to his “flesh and blood.”

Rooftop critically examines the intricacies of social justice, racial inequities, and the complexities of politics as the community responds to Addison's shooting. The neighborhood becomes consumed by the events, wondering whether the policeman will be charged with murder or with self-defense. Rhetoric and emotion surge as Clay learns the hard realities of what it mean to become an adult.

Paul Volponi gives us a realistic glimpse in to the world of the at-risk teenager, a world where the line between right and wrong is often times blurred. Profanity and violence make this novel a more suitable choice for high school students, but its lesson is one that younger adolescents could benefit from, as well.

Volponi, Paul. 2006. *Rooftop*. Penguin. 208 pp. ISBN: 0-670-06069-0. \$15.99

ripped a chair leg off and stabbed him through the back with it, killing him on the court.

I pushed that aside like any other New Yorker who'd seen too much tragedy and had nearly become immune to it. But when I started working on the book, that all came back to me, and I made the youngster who got killed a character in *Black and White* and someone for Eddie and Marcus to judge their own circumstances against.

Also the scene on the subway train in which the homeless man (“Shit Drawers”) tries to stir up racial tensions among the passengers is almost word-for-word out of a train ride I took from Brooklyn to Queens while I was in the middle of writing *Black and White*. I described that homeless man exactly the way he looked and acted on the real train, just putting Marcus, Eddie, and their teammates along for the ride.

TAR: I was impressed to find some of your pieces in a publication about thoroughbreds, *The Blood-Horse*, a much different style and genre of writing. How would you compare your correspondent work to the work of creating young adult novels?

PV: Again, in the novels, I never though I was making much up. If it wasn't true, or a least true from a perception of a whole group of people on either side, it couldn't work. But I enjoy pushing the buttons that a writer can, if he does his job right, for the reader in both a fiction and non-fiction setting.

There's nothing purer than a thoroughbred running at full speed, giving his all. Someone has to speak for him.

TAR: What is your writing process like?

PV: I like to write every day, several times a day, with lots of breaks in between—getting my daughter off to school, walking the dogs, family dinner, shooting baskets, jogging and hitting a heavy bag.

A lot of the scenes I'm most proud of occurred more or less unplanned, while I was writing, so I'm intrigued by this thought—If I don't sit down to write today, will what I come up with tomorrow be the same?

That keeps me going when I'm tired or not in the mood to write. I don't want to miss out on what may have been coming my way only today.

TAR: You obviously have a gift for working with adolescents and helping them understand life's challenges. How do you explain these challenges to your daughter?

PV: Sabrina's only eight, but we live just a few blocks from Rikers, so she sees the traffic there. My wife, April (who is an English teacher and assistant principal in a Queens high school), and I basically just answer her questions. But she's heard me give a few book speeches and usually has more questions after that.

TAR: What's next for you? Do you have other social topics you are interesting in exploring?

PV: Next year, *Rucker Park Set Up* (Viking 2007) will be out. I think it's a super book about friendship put to the ultimate test in the famed Rucker Park basketball tournament, where the pros have traditionally battled legendary street players. Two teens, who grew up across the street from the park,

get their chance to play for the championship, but plenty goes wrong, including the murder of one of them.

Then, the following year, *Hurricane Song* (Viking 2008), where I put a teen protagonist and his jazz musician father inside the Superdome during those nights of hell brought about by Hurricane Katrina. I'm extremely proud of that one, as well.

Shelbie Witte teaches 8th-grade language arts at Fort Riley Middle School in Fort Riley, Kansas. She is a co-director for the Flint Hills Writing Project. She has presented at the state and national levels on technology integration and adolescent literacy and has published in Journal of Kansas Reading. She is currently a Ph. D. student in Curriculum and Instruction at Kansas State University.

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“What a Man Do”:

Coe Booth and the Genesis of *Tyrell*

Tyrell Green is facing a man’s share of problems. His father is in prison, his mother is on probation for welfare fraud, and the New York Emergency Assistance Unit can’t find his family a decent place to live. Until more suitable housing is available, they have been deposited, along with other families, at the Bennett Motel, a dirty, roach and rat-infested, garbage littered, bloodstained dump. Over the course of one week, Tyrell needs to earn more money than a regular job can pay, secure his family a safer place to live, put food on the table, find a new high school and enroll, keep his seven-year-old brother, Troy, alive and safe and out of the custody of New York’s Administration for Children’s Services, steer clear of drug war gun battles, figure out who he can trust and who he can’t, and try to make sense of his love life. All at age fifteen.

Tyrell (Scholastic, 2006) is the creation of BRIO Award winning author, Coe Booth, whose honest and accurate portrayal of families caught in “the system,” as Tyrell puts it, comes from years of experience as a social worker in the New York City Emergency Children’s Service. Ironically, as Coe began her MFA in creative writing at New York’s revered The New School, she had not intended to write about the experiences of the typical teenage boys she encountered as a social worker. She had other stories in mind.



Jeffrey Gamble NYC

Tyrell Green, her book’s protagonist, took her by surprise. As the words flowed out onto the page, Coe had no idea where this teenaged boy’s voice was coming from or where it would take her. She hadn’t outlined the plot, didn’t know where the story was going, and had no idea how it would end.

What she did know was that the manuscript she had been anguishing over for her creative writing class wasn’t working for her, and she wanted to turn in a

different set of pages for the teacher and the class to critique, something new, something real. The basic idea for Tyrell had been tugging at the corners of her mind for a while, but she imagined him as middle school age, and when the very first line of the narrative flowed onto paper, she was surprised to find the voice of a fifteen-year-old teen, curses and all.

The spirit, as well as the details, of Tyrell Green’s story could not be more accurate. Coe’s career as a social worker in New York City provided her with plenty of background to draw from as she followed Tyrell through a few crucial days of his fifteenth year. Coe’s record as a social worker is commendable. The immense workload and high level of emotional intensity that accompany a field worker’s job in the New York City Emergency Children’s Service (ECS) are not for the weak of heart or anyone who is less than devoted to the job. In a profession in which 82% of

public agencies blame “caseloads [that are] too high and too demanding” for one of the highest turnover rates for professions requiring a college degree (O’Neill 1), Coe Booth saw a lot of human tragedy. During the first three years with ECS, she worked out of the Bronx field office, working exclusively on sex abuse cases, handling a huge caseload, interacting with families and following them through court and legal proceedings to completion.

Coe’s BA and MA in psychology gave her special preparation for dealing with the clients she encountered with ECS. Her training also gave her a different perspective on these clients from the one held by most of her coworkers, who were more likely to come from criminal justice backgrounds. Coe did not look at her clients as people in need of punishment, but rather as people in need of help, people with deep-seated emotional problems they could not solve themselves. “Obviously, criminal offenders had to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law,” she explains, but her goal was to mend dysfunctional families, figure out what had gone wrong in a parent or child’s life, try to repair the damage to a “broken spirit” and guide the family to a healthy functioning.

After an injury suffered on the job put her on the sidelines for seven months, Coe chose to switch to an even more stressful ECS position and she became a Crisis Worker. This change in responsibilities put her on the night shift, beginning each evening at midnight and dealing with middle-of-the-night emergencies in which children’s lives, safety and well-being were at risk, such as police raids or hospital emergency room patients whose injuries suggested child abuse. Rather than working solely in the Bronx, with the new position, Coe was required to cover all of New York City (the entire Five Boroughs area). As she describes that experience, she recounts how the sheer physical exhaustion of 70-hour work weeks, constantly on the run all over New York City, would often take precedence over the emotional toll of seeing families in nearly impossible situations while she was on-call 24 hours a day.

Coe’s job meant a lot to her, but she came to realize that it was totally consuming her life, leaving no time for her lifetime passion for writing.

I have been writing my whole life. I sometimes judge my happiness at a given time by my writing output, so no matter what I’m doing, if I’m writing, I’m OK, but if I’m doing

something and I’m not able to write, I’m not happy. Period! When I was working for ECS I was not writing, I had no time to write, I was miserable. I wanted to start writing again. My friends pointed out to me that I wasn’t writing and that this wasn’t right for me. They believed I was destined to be a writer.

After Coe left ECS, she would eventually move from part-time to full-time at Bronx Community College, teaching English. Even after leaving ECS, her writing wasn’t what she knew it could and should be. She was not finding the rhythm, the routine, or the discipline. Even though she was writing more, she didn’t believe her writing was improving as much as it could. She was certain that if she went back to college for an MFA in creative writing, it would be the incentive she needed to return the act of writing to center stage in her life.

Coe was determined to find the right college with the right degree program, one that specialized in writing for young people. She felt she would be out of place in an adult fiction writing MFA program if she wanted to write for teens. She was thrilled to discover that her alma mater, The New School, well-known for its strenuous but innovative programs, offered an MFA in creative writing with a concentration in children’s writing. It was there that she fell under the tutelage of David Levithan, award winning author and founding editor of Scholastic’s cutting edge PUSH imprint. The stars were moving into alignment.

David Levithan and The New School proved to be exactly what Coe needed:

It really made me write. Every few weeks we had to hand in twenty pages of what we were working on to be critiqued. I needed that. I started to feel that I was getting better.

I didn’t think I was going to be writing about the social work kind of thing, at all. I had other stories that I wanted to write. When Tyrell came along, I was writing a different story called *The Throwaways*, a book I had been writing for a long time, trying to get it out on paper, putting it away in a shoebox, trying again, and putting it away again. I just

Coe did not look at her clients as people in need of punishment, but rather as people in need of help, people with deep-seated emotional problems they could not solve themselves.

couldn't get past the sixty-five page hump, which is my personal barrier. I can write anything at all for sixty-five pages, at which point, I question where the story is going and if it's not going anywhere, the manuscript goes in a shoebox for another year.

I had dug out *The Throwaways* again as I started at The New School, but it just wasn't working. When it was my next turn to hand in twenty pages for critiquing, I wasn't satisfied with what I had, and I had the beginning of an

idea for Tyrell, a story about a middle-school-age boy, so I started writing. I wrote the very first sentence, Tyrell cursed, and I knew immediately, he wasn't going to be a middle school age student.

Tyrell, the protagonist, just sort of channeled through me. I didn't know where the story was going, but I wanted the twenty pages to hand in, so I just let it come pouring out. People in the class were excited about this new story, much more so than they had been about what I had been working on before. So, I said, 'Let's see where it goes.' I really didn't

have a plan. I had no outline or ending. I had nothing more than the first sentence when I began, and anytime I tried to force the direction of the story, it would suffer. So I just followed this teenaged boy wherever he wanted to go. He seemed to have a story to tell. I had heard authors in the past say they just followed their characters as they wrote a novel, and I thought it was ridiculous, that it couldn't possibly work. But it turned out to be true. I had no plan for the book, but just let it come out.

As I was writing, I started thinking about issues of masculinity and other aspects of Tyrell's life, but I didn't start the story with the idea of illuminating these things. The character just had a story to tell and I had to go with it.

Tyrell's story had distilled in the author's subconscious over many years from her observations on the job. One of the family issues that Coe dealt with often in ECS was the absence of a father figure living in the home. In this situation, she found that the oldest boy was likely to be forced into the role of provider and protector at a very early age. The obstacles to success in this role would discourage a grown man, let alone a boy, and the effects on the young man included a hardening, a toughness that belied his age. Later, if a

father came back or a stepfather entered the picture, a quick return to childhood would be impossible, and a new problem appeared. In a neighborhood where drugs and gang violence prevailed, how could the teenaged head of a family succeed? Often turning to crime, like selling drugs, or other illicit work, was the answer. In some communities, the drug dealers are the ones who have respect, wealth, material possessions and power.

And yet, many young men choose a different path. Coe also saw, and continues to see, young men who forego the immediate temptation of quick respect and money available to them. Coe talks about her students and how many of them walk to her class at Bronx Community College, passing, along the way, their old friends who have chosen another path in life and are out on the street at work. "I think it's amazing that some young men resist that temptation and say, 'I'm going to get those things later. Right now, I'm going to go to college.' If I were a boy that age, and I was around other guys my age who seemed to have it all, I don't know if I could resist the temptation. I admire my students for this."

In the story, Tyrell has repeated invitations from his best friend, Cal, to join him and his brothers in their family business, drug dealing. They have money, they have expensive cars, they have a nice apartment, they have respect; they have it all. Tyrell has refused this offer for as long as he can remember:

"Cal, I ain't working for you."...

Me and him had this conversation 'bout twenty times already, and he know how I feel ... "I told you, man, I get locked up, Troy gonna end up back in the system. My moms can't take care of him by herself. You know how she is." (62)

What it means to "be a man" is at the heart of this book. At fifteen years of age, Tyrell has made a man's decision. He will forego potential wealth and respect as offered by Cal for the sake of the well-being of his family, especially his little brother, Troy, who is always on the verge of being placed in a foster home due to their mother's negligence.

Masculinity is defined differently, however, according to who is doing the defining. Tyrell's mother thinks he is the man of the family and should provide for them, keep them out of the rat-hole Bennett Motel, take care of their needs, whatever that takes, and fifteen is plenty old enough to do it. In this conversa-

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tion she makes it clear, the important thing is that the family is taken care of, and the how of that is Tyrell's problem"

"You damn near sixteen. What kinda man you gonna be? [. . .]

"What you want? You want me to go out there and sell weed? That what you want?

"We wouldn't be at Bennett if you *was* out there, would we? (22)

Coe has a good understanding of how the pressures to "be a man" can wear upon a teenaged boy, especially the twenty-four hour a day expectation of being in control, as she explains: "Men are under a different kind of pressure than women. It's hard to be the man all the time, the one who must appear to be confident and in control, the one who has things figured out. It seems like it would be hard to be the person who is always expected to be brave, who is not afraid of anything."

A central problem in *Tyrell*, a "how to be a man" problem, involves being a father, and in particular, how to provide a father figure for Tyrell's little brother, Troy. Tyrell is critical of most of the father figures he knows, including his girlfriend Novisha's father, as well as his own. He criticizes Novisha's father for divorcing her mother but visiting their house and enjoying all the benefits of being married when it suits him. He is critical of his own father for spending much of his life in jail and leaving his wife and children to provide for themselves. Even so, Tyrell manages to sort through the truth and falsehood of his father's few instructions in the interludes when he is out of jail. He has been taught that a woman needs to be hit by her man sometimes, but he doesn't believe it. He has arrived at some of his own conclusions about being a man and a father, including that a man needs to think of children before thinking of himself.

Tyrell has also arrived at the conclusion that a boy needs a man in his life, all the time. A boy needs a man in his life to look out for his safety. Tyrell is constantly fearful that Troy is going to get hit by a car or harmed by some derelict because their mother has mostly abandoned her role as caretaker. A boy needs a man in his life to make sure he gets a fair chance in life to reach his potential. Tyrell visits Troy's teacher when a note comes home from school requesting a meeting, and he learns that Troy has been wrongly

placed in special education (Their mother wants to keep him there for the extra Social Security Income dollars that come with a special needs child). A boy needs a man in his life to teach him about sports and how to win and earn respect. Tyrell takes Troy to a park when he can, to "show him some moves, let him know that even though our pops ain't there, he still got somebody to teach him how to play" (222). But, most of all, he needs a man to always be there for him and to show him how to be a man:

I don't want Troy to grow up and miss all that 'cause, to be honest, he need a man to teach him what a man do. [. . .]

Now me, I know I can't take my pops place or nothing, but Troy need somebody for now. So that's what I'ma try to do. Be there. (223)

Even though she has a good handle on the problems faced by a boy trying to figure out what it means to be a man, Coe wasn't sure she could create and sustain the voice of a young man throughout a whole novel:

I would never have thought I could write a whole book from a boy's point of view. Never. I didn't assume I could do it as I was writing it, either, but I just wrote another chapter and another chapter and all of a sudden it had become a whole book. I didn't know that voice was inside of me. I don't sound anything like Tyrell. I don't know where that voice came from. He's talking about rap music and hip hop, and I don't know about those things. It came out of me in this very strange way.

Nevertheless, the voice in Tyrell's first person narration is 100% authentic in language and spirit, so much so that people are often surprised when they meet Coe Booth: "When I do author talks at libraries, sometimes the people there are surprised to find out that I am not a man. I love this because I was worried

"I think it's amazing that some young men resist that temptation and say, 'I'm going to get those things later. Right now, I'm going to go to college.' If I were a boy that age, and I was around other guys my age who seemed to have it all, I don't know if I could resist the temptation. I admire my students for this."

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that boys and men might not find it authentic, not in the real voice of a man.”

Coe’s characterization of the male voice is insightful even if she doesn’t always understand the why of it. It’s also funny. She is quite entertained by some of the characteristics:

Men have conversations with each other that are just hysterical to me. They hardly say anything, but they seem to come away with meaning from it, whereas women tend to analyze and discuss things in much greater detail.

Men’s conversations are so

quick. Tyrell has a phone conversation with Cal, for example, that consists of one or two word responses:

“Yo, Cal.”

“Ty?”

“What up?”

“Chillin’. Where you at?”

“Bennett.”

“Damn, man.”

“Word. . .” (58)

I tried to capture that brevity.

Tyrell contains humor, humor about the roaches at the Bennett Motel, humor about the flaws in human nature manifested by the people in Tyrell’s life, humor as a coping mechanism. For Coe, humor was an important part of surviving the day to day tragedy and sadness of being an Emergency Children’s Services worker, much like the humor police use to survive what might otherwise be insurmountable sadness at the plight of many human beings. “You have to find something to laugh at to survive the tension and sadness or you’ll go crazy. I had two cases involving fatalities that I had to deal with, for example, and you have to break the tension somehow or you wouldn’t be able to survive.” Tyrell’s humor comes from an

attitude, an attitude that somehow he is going to rise above all this, and if he can just laugh at parts of it, sometimes, he will survive it all.

The book is authentic, the events are informed from real life experiences and the narrator’s voice is believable. The most remarkable thing about the book, however, is the language. Coe Booth takes a chance by telling the story in first person in the most realistic language possible, and it works. It works like magic. The voice is in the exact syntax the real Tyrell would speak, captured perfectly by the author’s listening ear and released through her pen:

The voice didn’t require a lot of revising at all. It just flowed out. It was never a problem. I was concerned at times about where the story was going to go, how it would end, that kind of thing, but the way Tyrell speaks—it just came out.

Growing up in my neighborhood, I did hear this vernacular/dialect from some people. I did not grow up cursing or using nonstandard English, but I was around it a lot. David Levithan, my editor, thought the language was great, but when he was in editorial meetings, it would come up at times, in regard to how it might affect sales, but it never went beyond that.

I wrote it for teenagers and I wanted it to be real. I read lots of books where there is street lingo but no cursing, and I believe that appeals to schools and teachers, and that’s fine, but in my book, I was going for a different thing. This is how he speaks.

If anything, it is the language that makes Tyrell, the character, so real, and helps make *Tyrell*, the book, stand alone among books with similar content.

Coe’s association with David Levithan has proven to be mutually beneficial. David was one of Coe’s teachers at The New School and chair of her master’s project, the manuscript that would turn out to be *Tyrell*. He was supportive, he was instructive, and he kept a big secret the whole time she was working on the book, a secret that is a testimony to his integrity as an editor, and as a professor. The secret, which he waited patiently to divulge to Coe after she graduated with her MFA, was that he was interested in publishing the book through his Scholastic imprint, PUSH. This imprint and David Levithan are well known for discovering new talent and encouraging authors who push the envelope of good literature.

Like many of today’s best authors, and many of the authors under the PUSH banner, Coe had experienced something of a hole in the literature available to

young adults when she was a teen:

When I was growing up, most of the characters in books who looked like me were either slaves, or growing up during the Depression, or sharecroppers, or something. I appreciated those books as I got older, but when I was a teen, although these characters may have looked like me, their lives were nothing like mine and I couldn't make any connection to them. I could relate better to the Judy Blume type books because they dealt with what I was experiencing, like the regular insecurities of being a teenaged girl, just coming into adolescence.

I couldn't get those two kinds of books in one; you know, like, a story about a little black girl who was getting her first bra. But I didn't find that, and so I read what was available. A lot of kids are turned off to reading because they don't find themselves. The stories that I was writing in grade school and middle school were about girls like me and my friends who were living everyday lives and facing those problems. I also want to write middle grade novels one day.

Coe maintains a beautiful website at <http://www.coebooth.com/>, complete with a blog, links, a biography, her schedule of appearances, and information about her publications. She also has a personal site at MySpace.com/coebooth and has found that:

Kids think you're cool if you have a MySpace account. I did a library author visit recently, and the kids were on the computer looking at my MySpace site before I even left, starting to write me messages.

I get lots of emails from boys on my MySpace site. I got one, for example, from a fifteen-year-old boy who said *Tyrell* was the first book he's ever read. They email me to say that they don't like to read or that they start books but never finish them. And they are writing to tell me that they finished *Tyrell*. They always tell how long it took, like "I finished this in three days!"

Kids write me, too, who live lives that are nothing like Tyrell's, who also like the book. About the only question they have in common is will there be a part two, and then

they tell me the issues they want resolved in the sequel: What will happen to Jasmine, When will Tyrell's father get out, all the things they want me to address.

Coe's autobiography is available on her website. She tells the reader that she is a true native of New York City, and grew up in a working class neighborhood of mostly immigrants (like her mother, who is from Guyana) in the Bronx. She led the happy, normal childhood of an urban child: "dancing school [. . .] piano lessons [. . .] jumping double Dutch and riding my bike up and down the block with my friends. Parking lots were our playgrounds and fire hydrants were our sprinklers on hot, sticky summer days. It was great! (Booth 1)

She also explains that she has been a novelist since second grade although her masterpieces were sometimes confiscated by unappreciative teachers. By the time she was in middle school, however, she was well-known as a writer among her peers, and just as the manuscript for Tyrell would eventually be critiqued by her peers, her fellow middle school students enjoyed reading her "novels-in-progress" and begged her to keep writing (Booth 1).

And, thank goodness, she has!! Her second book, *KENDRA* is now in progress.

James Blasingame is an associate professor of English at Arizona State University.

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The Bully in the Book and in the Classroom

The *Bully in the Book and in the Classroom* (Scarecrow Press, 2004) by C. J. Bott (who was kind enough to loan me her title for this column) is so *right on* about school culture that the author must have spent plenty of time on hall duty in a real school somewhere. From the very beginning Bott is a straight shooter who surely has written the shortest and most concise preface to any schoolbook I have read. This categorical imperative should rivet the attention of every teacher and administrator.

If a student is afraid of being picked on, bullied, or harassed because that student is from a different culture; is female; has a different shade of skin; speaks with a stutter or a foreign or regional accent; is older or younger; practices an unfamiliar religion or a minority sexual orientation; is too tall, short, thin, heavy, wears glasses; has an intense relationship with a computer; wears secondhand clothes, all black clothes, or cheap tennis shoes; or has hair that stands straight up and is midnight blue, that student will not be able to fully operate in the school environment. So without trying any of your skills, you face failure— because like that student, you cannot do your job in an atmosphere of fear. (xiii)

Though such text represents really a small portion of this book, which is otherwise devoted to reviews of books for young adults and justifications and strategies for using them in classrooms, Bott's comments about the issue of bullying contain some great one-liners that resonate deeply with my own experiences in the high school classroom. One such truth appears under the heading "Cautions," a section of advice about trying to initiate a schoolwide anti-bullying program: "The biggest obstacle to anti-bullying programs is adult attitudes. Some of your staff members will probably be bullies—

"The biggest obstacle to anti-bullying programs is adult attitudes. Some of your staff members will probably be bullies— though, they would never admit that" (14).

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Like much of our good professional literature, Bott's words help me understand and articulate aspects of my own professional experience. I was in my first semester at a new high school. Based on five years of teaching experience and my new master's degree in English Education (from a young adult literature program), I was pretty confident in my classroom management abilities. I was new to the school, but not entirely new to the school community. These details will be important to the following story.

The classroom discipline policy in that school was about detention slips issued by teachers and administrators and the detention hall after school. I had been assured that ejecting a student from class to sit in the vice-principal's office for the remainder of the period was a serious matter, serious enough that students always actually went to the vice-principal's office without having to be escorted.

Though the event happened

many years ago, I believe it must have taken place in a section of Individualized Reading, an elective that I had brought to that school, but which, in its first iteration there had not acquired the reputation as a demanding course in which students really had to read books. I remember that one of my students was very right for the course, artistic, intellectual, and bookish. He knew the titles of modern classics he wanted to read and needed little from me beyond the quiet place and time to read them. He was of slight build, though tall, with very fine yellow-blond curly hair. He wore large glasses and excelled in music. Another of my students did not find the course to his liking. Though there were some good young adult titles in the school library by then that I likely recommended, he was not really interested in reading. He was more interested in testing the will of the new teacher. As I remember it, he wore his football jersey to school several days a week, not just on the game days when the players were required to wear them.

One afternoon early in the semester I became aware that the football player had begun referring to the artist as “Tweety-Bird,” the character of cartoon fame. I guess Tweety-Bird did have a long neck, big eyes, and yellow hair. In hindsight I am sure this name-calling was meant to challenge the artist’s maturity and sexuality as well as physique and intellectual bent. I cannot now remember if open and covert comments of “Tweet” and “Tweety” occurred in more than one class period. I suspect that in defiance to my warnings it went on longer that I

I do remember the grin of the football player as he did ignore my warnings to mind his own business and read. Part of his point was to see if he could bully me as well. Then I sent him to the vice-principal’s office.

should have let it. I do remember the angry embarrassment of the artist as he tried to ignore the comments. Some of that anger was likely directed at me, the adult who controlled the specific world in which he was being verbally assaulted. I do remember the grin of the football player as he did ignore my warnings to mind his own business and read. Part of his point was to see if he could bully me as well. Then I sent him to the vice-principal’s office. Though I was new to that school, the football player was not the first person I had sent out of class. In my first impression I was pleased by how definite things seemed. I sent the kid out and really did not have to do anything else until the end of the day when a visit with the vice-principal was on my to-do list for after school, which is what had happened the first time I had sent someone out.

The protocol was supposed to be that all I needed to do was check with the vice-principal after school to make sure the violator had appeared and had been issued his

automatic one-hour detention slip and maybe discuss whether the crime warranted additional detention. I remember thinking at the time that one aspect of this “Tweety-Bird” business confused me. This was a small community. The parents of the artist were very public and prominent people on the business scene, and their son, the artist, really was an artist who went on to a college career and degree in musical performance. He had some status then in the music and drama wing of the school and surely in the community because of the prominence of his family. Naively, I thought there should have existed some cultural pressure on the working-class football player to pick a different target, someone more vulnerable from a socioeconomic point of view. Though the artist was certainly no match for the football player physically, something seemed out of whack here.

After the final bell, and before I could order the papers on my desk enough to leave the room I got a call on the intercom to report to the office. I surmised that the football player had likely returned to the vice-principal’s office to contend that he had not deserved to be sent out of class, that his comments were all in good fun, or some other such nonsense that I and the vice-principal would listen to politely for about 30 seconds before sending him to the detention hall. But to my surprise the office secretary directed me past the vice-principal’s office into the principal’s office where I found not the vice-principal and the football player, but the principal and a football coach. The football player was already in the

locker room dressing for football practice.

For the next couple of minutes the principal and the football coach attempted to explain to me that I was likely overreacting to whatever it was that had taken place in my classroom. They did not seem to know or care much about exactly what had taken place. Because the football player's ejection from class would automatically result in after-school detention, thereby interfering with football practice, I should strongly consider taking back the ejection and the detention and getting with the program of not giving football players detention or ejecting them from class during football season. I was not a new teacher, just new to a school culture governed by winning football games, a culture that was secure enough within the school building that it could ignore the social order outside of the building. The principal and the football coach did not yell or threaten as they bullied me. Instead, they tried to good-old-boy me into going along with whatever athletes did or whatever the athletic program wanted. Though the looks on their faces indicated disbelief, I declined to revise my opinion of the football player's offensiveness or retract his punishment. If they wanted to let him off they could, but I wouldn't do it. To be fair, I also knew that the vice-principal would not be pleased with this attempt to thwart classroom discipline. He was new, too.

After that some members of the coaching staff frowned at me in the halls. But there was no more Tweety-Bird in my classroom from the football player, only a lot of his

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staring daggers at me. I am guessing that his punishment for missing football practice because he had detention was physical and unpleasant— more bullying. Two weeks later the football player made the *school district* the victim of a serious property crime and was expelled. I used to take a kind of I-told-you-so pleasure in telling this story, but that was before I began serious reading about bullying. Now, I know that the school and every adult in it failed the bully just as much as it failed the victim of his harassment. As C. J. Bott says in her book, "Each of the three roles— the bully, the target or victim, and the witness or bystander— needs to be looked at closely. The target and the witnesses need empowering skills, and the bully needs awakening and alternative behaviors to fulfill his (her) needs." (2) If his bullying had been addressed *as bullying* within

the context of a schoolwide anti-bullying program, if he had not been given the false message that his athletic performance set him above the law, if he had acquired "alternative behaviors to fulfill his [. . .] needs," the bully might have stayed in school.

I highly recommend *The Bully in the Book and in the Classroom* as a tool and as a guide. The book has seven chapters with titles like "The Bully, the Target, the Witness," "Middle School, the Peak Years . . . ," and "Hazing, Bashing, and Sexual Harassment, Grades 9-12." The book begins with two well-researched chapters addressing what bullying is and "What Teachers Can Do—Need to Do." Chapters 3 through 6 discuss grade-level specific bullying issues and offer teachers two kinds of resources. Each chapter contains several page-length reviews of young adult novels about bullying, complete with teaching suggestions for and student reactions to each book. The chapters for the upper grades give special attention to students bullied because of perceived sexual orientation, indirect bullying by females, as well as special attention to the negative impacts of witnessing bullying. Each of these chapters also offers extensive, yet briefly annotated bibliographies of other bullying titles appropriate for those grade levels. While the books reviewed and listed in Chapters 3-6 are mostly novels, Chapter 7 offers a six-page annotated bibliography of other professional resources about bullying including reviews of six websites. As Bott says, "Teachers usually do nothing about bullying. Research shows it, kids say it, and

many teachers will admit it.” (6) This book aims to change that sad state of affairs.

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Here, I will review and recommend two novels about bullying and offer readers three briefly annotated bibliographies—one is a list of young adult novels that address bullying, one is a list of recent professional articles on bullying and bullying prevention plans; finally C. J. Bott recommends some new young adult novels that address bullying.

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If you read one new book on bullying I recommend Nancy Garden’s *Endgame* (Harcourt, 2006). In this book, Garden approaches “jock pack” bullying and school violence with the same clear-eyed honesty and depth with which she approached lesbian awakening in *Annie on My Mind* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982). But here there is no joy, bittersweet or any other kind. I make this recommendation even though the book will beat you down just as the focus character, fourteen-year-old Gray Wilton, is beaten down by bullies at school and by a bullying father at home. Reading this book in the spring of 2006 is the reason I started composing this column. After a second reading of the book I remain amazed at Garden’s ability to portray Gray as a sometimes silly fourteen-year-old who can attempt to navigate a crowded high school hallway with exaggerated swimming movements, and who can also be passionate about music, and unreasonably hopeful about his

future. Throughout the book, readers see “the kid” in Gray even though on page four, from a serious cell in a serious detention center, Gray describes himself as “Son, brother, friend? Archer. Drummer. Murderer” (4).

In the book’s opening pages we learn that Gray, a high school freshman in a new school in a new town, has been bullied in middle school. His reaction to that bullying, carrying a knife to school, is part of the reason his family moved. Gray wants to start over, a hope upon which he is so intent that he develops his own mantra, “Gonna’ be better, gonna’ be better here.” But as Gray and his new friend Ross almost immediately become the target of the “jock pack” lead by Eugene “Zorro” Baker, school football hero, all hope of a happy and healthy high school experience is ripped away. The physical and verbal abuse at the hands of Zorro and his teammates is so relentless that Gray and Ross

His reaction to that bullying, carrying a knife to school, is part of the reason his family moved. Gray wants to start over, a hope upon which he is so intent that he develops his own mantra, “Gonna’ be better, gonna’ be better here.”

are forced to enter the school each day through a basement, service entrance. Their first task of the day, each and every day, is to try to make it to homeroom without having to hear “Faggotssss” (152) hissed at them, in front of teachers and other students on the front steps of the school building. Gray’s mother is cowered by his father. His father, given to fits of anger, wants Gray to be a “normal” boy who stands up for himself, likes sports, and considers playing the drums a pastime instead of a worldview. Gray cannot turn to his parents for help with the bullies, particularly not to his father, who has already blamed him for the past bullying. Gray’s older brother, Peter, and the neighbor girl, Lindsay, with whom Peter is romantically involved, are both seniors at Gray’s school and know some kind of harassment is going on. They are sympathetic, but Garden makes us see that the feelings of terror experienced by the target of continual bullying cannot be felt or understood by those who are not likewise “trapped.”

As in my football player/artist story above, the adults in the school building either do not want to see the bullying, or as Gray observes on a Monday morning after a big Friday night football victory, “Even the teachers treated [the jock pack] like kings.” When Gray and Ross decide to just go about their business, ignoring the ovations and adulations, they are immediately sought out by Zorro:

He put his hands around my throat, and I got that coppery fear-taste in my mouth again [. . .] and I wondered if maybe they were actually going to kill us this time. [. . .] I could feel his hands getting tighter and it was getting hard

to breathe. And then I heard Ross scream. Zorro lifted his knee up and snarled, "You want the same treatment as your little girlfriend [meaning Ross]? Answer me, Crater Face. Who's King of this school?" (147-148)

I wish this kind of school experience was fiction. I wish Garden could let up on readers instead of being obligated to show Gray and Ross harassed and attacked almost every day, sometimes several times a day. The "endgame" then is death at school that seems inevitable, even almost a relief—even to readers—from the bullying that Gray believes will never stop. *Endgame* does not endorse or condone victims of school bullying striking back with weapons. And certainly neither do I. But *Endgame* does correctly show school bullying as a kind of *school-sponsored* violent assault that can lead the most vulnerable students to despair and desperate action. *Endgame* shows "school violence" as a term that means more than Columbine; it also must mean bullying.

I can hear the choirs of critics now saying, "Oh, another book bashing athletes and athletics." But the "jock pack" in *Endgame* is not a necessary product of football or wrestling or any other sport. It is the product of "adult attitudes" (Bott, 14). As Nancy Garden told the session attendees at one of her sessions on bullying at the NCTE Conference in Nashville (2006),

When you set up a group of impressionable kids and say to them, "You are kings," you are asking for trouble. Because the school is also saying that these other groups of students are nothing.

*** **

***Endgame* does correctly show school bullying as a kind of *school-sponsored* violent assault that can lead the most vulnerable students to despair and desperate action.**

Finally, here are three additional resources on bullying. The first offers a listing of some recent YA titles on bullying compiled by Associate Professor Donna Niday and her YA Literature students at Iowa State University. My graduate assistant, Lucie Boukalova, who reviews a selection of recent professional articles on bullying and bullying prevention curricula and programs, compiled the second bibliography. Please note especially the annotation for the article by Kathleen Benson Quinn, et al. which describes a teaching unit based on Jerry Spinelli's book *Crash* (1996). The third bibliography is provided by C. J. Bott, who takes this opportunity to list her picks for some important novels for young adults about bullying that have appeared in print since the 2004 publication of *The Bully in the Book and in the Classroom*.

Bill Broz is Associate Professor of English Education at the University of Northern Iowa. He is the co-author of Teaching Writing Teachers of High School English and First-Year Composition (Heinemann 2002) and has published articles in English Journal, Voices from the Middle, and

Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy.

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Annotated Bibliography on Bullying

Young Adult Literature

From Donna Niday and Young Adult Literature students at Iowa State University

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*.

New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999. Melinda discovers that she is an outsider after her phone call to police stops a drinking party. When her classmates shun her and pretend to ignore her existence, she retreats by not talking to friends or family. Only Melinda and one other person know the true reason for the phone call. HS

Bloor, Edward. *Tangerine*. New York: Scholastic, 1997. Paul must readjust when his family moves to Tangerine, Florida, but he fights his way onto a tough soccer team. Perhaps Paul's greatest adversaries, though, are his older brother and his brother's friends, who threaten him in dangerous ways. MS, HS

Brugman, Alyssa. *Walking Naked*. New York: Delacorte Press, 2002. When Megan befriends Perdita, she risks alienating her current circle of friends. Even though others call Perdita "Freak" loud enough for Perdita to hear, Megan views her differently after she glimpses her personality, interests, and home life. The peer pressure builds to a crescendo until Megan must

- choose between friendships. MS, HS
- Crutcher, Chris. *Whale Talk*. New York: Greenwillow, 2001. T. J. decides to assemble a swim team consisting of seven “outsiders,” including those who are physically or mentally challenged. While other teams and coaches in the school system deride the team, T. J.’s team members strive to improve their records. On the home front, T. J. and his adopted parents try to help an abused wife and children. HS
- Flinn, Alex. *Breaking Point*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002. Paul is excited when Charlie invites him into his elite group of friends, but Paul soon realizes the cost of Charlie’s friendship and must decide whether or not he can always carry out Charlie’s wishes. HS
- Friesen, Gayle. *Men of Stone*. Toronto: Kid Can Press, 2000. Kat’s “crush” on Ben angers Claude, who has no trouble throwing punches. What first begins as teasing escalates into Ben’s hospitalization. Ben debates whether to use violent or non-violent means, but when his aunt tells him about the “men of stone” who guarded the prison camps in Russia, he realizes that some people use power to bully others. MS, HS
- Howe, James. *The Misfits*. New York: Atheneum, 2001. Skeezie, Addie, Joe, and Bobby decide to run for seventh grade offices on a Freedom Party ticket, trying to stop their peers from name-calling. Each of the four has a special reason for wanting to rid the school of horrendous names. Compassion, caring, and a generous dose of seventh grade wit help maintain reader interest. MS
- Koss, Amy Goldman. *The Girls*. New York: Dial Books, 2000. Candace and Darcy decide to drop Maya from their group of five while Brianna and Renee watch guiltily. At first, the other girls fawn over Candice, but gradually they realize her manipulative manners. MS
- Lubar, David. *Hidden Talents*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1999. Martin is sent to an alternative school for his abusive language. He discovers that his roommates and his pals, who are supposedly “freaks,” actually possess “hidden talents.” It is only his friends, though, who can see his own talents. MS, HS
- Oates, Joyce Carol. *Big Mouth and Ugly Girl*. New York: Harper Collins, 2002. After Matt jokes about bombing the school, rumors start circulating that he is planning to be a terrorist. The rumor mill increases, panic escalates, and Matt’s peers—even his closest friends—begin avoiding him. Ursula defends Matt and tries to help him reclaim his reputation. Some students decide to combat the “terrorist” by finding, harassing, and physically harming him. MS, HS
- Plum-Ucci, Carol. *What Happened to Lani Garver?* San Diego: Harcourt, 2002. In their brief but close friendship, Claire and Lani discover that others do not understand them. While Claire copes with her own emotional and physical frailties, Lani must withstand ridicule of sexual identity. Claire’s world changes when her friends turn from mocking Lani to using physical violence. HS
- Spinelli, Jerry. *Stargirl*. New York: Scholastic, 2000. Stargirl, a new student with an unusual name, is really different from his other peers, and her classmates consider her ways of caring for others to be odd. Eventually, though, they find her to be funny and endearing. Leo, the story’s narrator, starts falling in love with her until Stargirl’s popularity once again begins plummeting. MS, HS
- Wilhelm, Doug. *The Revealers*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 2003. When Russell, a seventh-grader, becomes a target for abuse, he decides to uncover why bullies torment others. After questioning other victims such as Elliot and Catalina, he decides to take action to stop bullying. Catalina and Russell begin producing an internet newsletter called *The Revealer* to post stories by victims about their harassment and abuse. He also asks the boy who bullied him about his actions and later befriends his own bully. MS

Analyses of Bullying

- Coloros, Barbara. *The Bully, the Bullied, and the Bystander: From Preschool to High Schools—How Parents and Teachers Can Break the Cycle of Violence*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003. This book analyzes the roles of the bully, the victims, and the

observers and provides suggestions for how parents/guardians and teachers can change the bullying scenario.

Dr. Donna Niday is Associate Professor of English Education and Director of Communications Foundation Courses in the English Department at Iowa State University. She is the author of books on mentoring young teachers and has published articles on YA Literature in, among other places, this journal.

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Professional Articles about Bullying

by Lucie Boukalova

- Canter, Andrea S. "Bullying at School: Strategies for Intervention." *Principal* 85.2 (2005): 42-45.

In her discussion of youth bullying, Canter argues that it is a common but often overlooked problem in most schools (affecting nearly 70 percent of all students) because of a "tolerant culture that ignores or minimizes it." Radically opposing the view of bullying as a "normal part of childhood" and as a "rite of passage," she emphasizes the critical importance of close cooperation of the principals with staff, parents and students in order to create a school culture where bullying can be identified and eliminated. The article offers a succinct yet complex overview of physical and psychological factors characterizing the victims and the bullies as well as an instructive approach to the identification of a case of bullying (which should rely on a combined assessment of peer nomination, teacher ratings and

self-report). Canter advocates a comprehensive approach to the issue that should include an action and intervention on several levels (schoolwide: formulating and publicizing new school policy, school assemblies; classroom: class discussions, enforcing classroom rules against bullying; individual: individual and family counseling). Includes several instructive web resources.

- Christie, Kathy. "Stateline: Chasing the Bullies Away" *Phi Delta Kappan* 86.10 (2005): 725-726.

Supported by recent research on bullying at schools, Christie emphasizes the need for a clear anti-bullying legal policy on both state and local levels. She points to the prevalence of bullying in K-12 schools, to the often ignored socio-emotional consequences of bullying, as well as to the impact of bullying not only on its victims but also on the school climate in general. She illustrates her argument with several alarming statistics: in its 2003 report, the National Center on Education Statistics found that during the 1999-2000 school year 29% of schools reported having more difficulty with student bullying than with any other single discipline problem; a similar 2004 NCES report revealed that in 2003 students' grade levels were inversely related to the likelihood that they would be bullied, with 14% of sixth-graders, 7% of ninth-graders, and 2% of 12th-graders reporting being bullied at school. Based on a 2005 report by Jennifer Dounay, policy analyst of the Education Commission of the States, the article maps the legal definition and action embraced by

the individual states (seventeen states and Guam, reports Dounay, have enacted laws aimed at reducing or eliminating bullying in schools). It informs, among other facts, about individual state sanctions (e.g. in Georgia, any student found to be bullying for the third time in a given school year must be assigned to an alternative school) and parent rights (e.g. New Hampshire law requires principals to inform all parents of students involved in a bullying incident within 48 hours of occurrence). As an example of a comprehensive state anti-bullying policy, the author quotes Vermont's "H.B. 629."

- Harris, Sandra, and Jody Isernhagen. "Keeping Bullies at Bay." *American School Board Journal* 190.1 (2003): 43-45. Constantly emphasizing the seriousness and extent of the problem of bullying in schools (nearly 5 million of America's 53 million students are bullied every year), the authors propose a ten-step agenda for an effective prevention of violence. With the factual and practical support of their own research, which explored incidences of bullying at four schools in Texas and Nebraska (surveying 250 ninth- and tenth-grade students in both rural and urban areas), the authors of the article offer constructive advice to school boards and educators about how to keep their schools and students safe. Among other recommendations, they stress the importance of open communication between the students and the faculty (only 2.6 percent of the bullied students tell a teacher or a counselor), and of the involvement

of the entire community. The article gives numerous concrete examples of local anti-bullying programs and includes a list of numerous bibliographical and electronic resources.

- Quinn, Kathleen Benson, et al. "Using a Novel Unit to Help Understand and Prevent Bullying in Schools." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 46.7 (2003): 582-591.

This article connects research with a practical approach and specific methodology addressing the issue of school bullying. Even though the authors recognize the relative efficiency of zero tolerance policies, they argue in favor of a more proactive strategy that would make dealing with the problem a "part of the daily curriculum." The article presents their educational experiment of a "novel unit," developed and implemented with the belief that a novel offers a natural and powerful way to "open discussion and increase awareness of the topic of bullying." The work they selected for their study was *Crash* by Jerry Spinelli (1996) for its wide appeal to a mixed audience of third- to eighth-graders of various socio-economic backgrounds. A brief synopsis of this story, a progressive emotional and relational reformation of a young bully, is followed by an instructive and inspiring overview of various text-based classroom activities. The novel unit consists of three stages reflected in specific activities. The "prereading" stage activates students' knowledge and interest (brainstorming; sharing perceptions on bullying; making predictions); the "during-reading" phase encourages students to extend their response beyond the previous limits

(response journals, guided reading, literature circles, readers theatre, graphic organizers); the postreading activities stimulate personalization of the reading experience (role-playing, creative arts). The novel unit opens the way to an intense individual response and connection to the issue of bullying in the classroom.

- Scarpaci, Richard T. "Bullying: Effective Strategies for Its Prevention." *Kappa Delta Pi Record* 42.4 (2006): 170-174.

Scarpaci believes that reduction of bullying can be best accomplished through a comprehensive, school-wide effort that involves everyone—especially teachers. He argues that to accomplish this important goal, "teachers must confront their own beliefs and misconceptions about bullying, learn skills for recognizing the indications of bullying, and practice strategies for addressing and deterring bullying." His article offers a singularly informed and targeted remedy. Its form clearly supports the instructive mission: several listings of strategies, definitions and symptoms offer quick and concise reference materials for educators. The author tries to dispel some of the most persistent and harmful myths about bullying ("Bullying is just teasing" and "Bullying is a normal part of growing up"); he offers a comprehensive overview of behavioral and academic symptoms characterizing the victim of bullying and draws a list of the right questions for teachers to ask in case of serious suspicion of bullying. The list of practically oriented propositions, "What Teachers Can Do," combines the focus on the social skills of both the victim and

the bully. The article includes numerous bibliographical references.

- Smokowski, Paul R., and Kelly Holland Kopasz. "Bullying in School: An Overview of Types, Effects, Family Characteristics, and Intervention Strategies." *Children & Schools* 27.2 (2005): 101-110.

Grounded in an extensive research of youth bullying, "the most enduring and underrated problem in U.S. schools" which affects approximately one in three children, the article presents an in-depth discussion of its dynamics, types, characteristics and consequences. The authors identify bullying as the most prevalent form of youth violence which may escalate into extremely serious forms of antisocial behavior. They recognize no less than four varieties of bullying behavior: physical, verbal, relational and reactive. Approaching the issue in its psychosocial and environmental complexity, they offer a comprehensive presentation of the profile of both the bully and the victim. They discuss not only explicit personal characteristics of the two, but also a more general impact of family background on individual behavior as well as short and long-term effects of the (repeated) confrontation for both sides (e.g. 60% of boys labeled as bullies in grades 6 through 9 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24; the issue might be perpetuated through an intergenerational cycle when former victims of bullying adopt an overprotective attitude toward their children). The article also draws attention to a highly problematic category of "bully-victims" (also

called “reactive bullies” or “provocative victims”), children who bully others and are bullied themselves. It discusses their characteristics, backgrounds and identification strategies. Finally, the authors present a series of prevention and intervention strategies for educational institutions. An extensive list of bibliographical reference is appended.

- Trautman, Melissa L. “20 Ways To . . . Identify and Reduce Bullying in Your Classroom.” *Intervention in School and Clinic* 38.4 (2003): 243-246.

Presented in a purely instructional format, this article presents a list of twenty suggestions and directives for teachers that can help them quickly recognize and effectively eliminate bullying in the school setting. The author offers a highly complex approach to the issue addressing all social and psychological aspects and stages of the problem as well as the position of all those involved in an incident of school bullying. Among other prevention and intervention recommendations, Trautman urges teachers to educate themselves, to get to know the facts about bullying (pointing to a survey by the National Educational Association which reported that almost 160,000 students miss school daily because of bullying or the effects of bullying, and that a typical student has a 25% chance of being bullied or being involved in bullying). She emphasizes the educator’s awareness of various types of bullying, including verbal and written (name-calling, sending negative e-mails), physical (pushing, gesturing, damaging personal possessions) and social/relational

(engaging in gossip, making personal information public) as well as the key importance of detecting early warning signs in children (including reluctance to go to school, reluctance to academically and socially participate, nervousness when another child approaches). The author’s proactive approach to bullying calls for a positive, friendly atmosphere in class, and the use of cooperative group work and role-play activities in the classroom.

Lucie Boukalova is a graduate student and research assistant at the Department of English Language and Literature of the University of Northern Iowa. She holds a double master’s degree in English and French philology from Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic. She is currently working on her thesis dealing with the reflection of T.S. Eliot’s modernist poetics in the works of David Jones and Basil Bunting. Besides pursuing her scholarly interests and various research projects, she has been actively engaged in teaching. She privately tutored grade school and high school Czech students in English and French, and she volunteered as a teaching assistant in the Czech language classes at UNI. Assisting in Dr. Broz’s research project focusing on school bullying has made her fully aware of the serious extent and consequences of this issue (not only in American classrooms).

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Most Recently Published Books on Bullying compiled by C. J. Bott

Flinn, Alex. *Fade to Black*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005. Alex is HIV positive and while sitting at a red light, someone

attacks his pickup with a baseball bat and smashes in all the windows. Clinton, who has a history of harassing Alex because of his AIDS, is charged. (MS/HS)

Gallo, Donald R. ed. *On the Fringe*. New York: Dial, 2001. Each story in this collection focuses on teens who are on the fringe of acceptance. (MS/HS)

Jones, Patrick. *Nailed*. New York: Walker Books/Bloomsbury, 2006. Bret Hendricks will not conform which gets him a girlfriend but also gets him in trouble at school and with his dad, who understands him more than Bret ever could have guessed. (HS)

Jones, Traci L. *Standing Against the Wind*. Boston: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006. Patrice Williams’ southern ways are no match for the tough kids in her new Chicago middle school, where she gets called Puffy because of her unruly hair, but Monty sees more in her, and the two start a friendship that will not only help them survive but also flourish. (MS)

Koss, Amy Goldman. *Poison Ivy*. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2006. Ms. Gold had her government classes conduct a mock trial on an issue present in their school, the harassment of Ivy by three alleged tormentors, Ann, Sophie, and Benita. The jury of adolescents brings in what they believe is their only possible verdict. (MS)

Muharrar, Aisha. *More than a Label*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 2002. Muharrar was still in high school when she wrote this book, but it isn’t

an English class assignment. She compiled her research from over one thousand Teens Label Surveys and wove that information with her thoughts—which are pretty down to earth. (MS/HS) Non-fiction

Peters, Julie Anne. *Between Mom and Jo*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2006. Fourteen-year-old Nick introduces himself in memories that tell the story of his life with his two lesbian moms: Erin, his biological mother, and Jo, his heart's mother. (MS/HS)

Ruby, Laura. *Good Girls*. New York: Wendy Lamb Book/Random House, 2006. When Audrey realizes Luke DeSalvo is not good for her, she decides to end their relationship with “good-bye oral sex.” She doesn't know someone opens the door and takes a photo until it shows up on everyone's cell phones and her parents' email. (HS)

Sanchez, Alex. *Getting It*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006.

Carlos Amoroso doesn't have the confidence to talk to Roxy Rodriguez, but he notices Sal, the gay guy at school, has no trouble talking to girls. Inspired by TV's “Queer Eye,” Carlos asks Sal for some help. (HS)

Sanchez, Alex. *So Hard to Say*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004. New to the school, eighth-grader Frederick starts playing soccer with the other boys after school and questions his attraction to one of them. The treasure of diversity in this book deals with the needed acceptance of one's self and others. (MS)

Wittlinger, Ellen. *Sandpiper*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005. In eighth grade, Sandpiper learned that the easiest way to get a boyfriend was to offer oral sex. Now in the tenth grade, she is tired of her reputation, but finds it impossible to change it. All the stereotypes are here. (HS)

Picture Books

Ross, Tony. *Is It Because?* Hauppauge, NY: Barron's, 2005. Questions plague the narrator as he tries to figure out why Wally Wormhead bullies him.

Kristiansson, Leif, Dick Stenberg illus. *Not My Fault*. Alhambra, CA: Heryin Books, 2006. Told in the voices of children witnessing bullying and not knowing what to do, the book ends first with the question “Does it have anything to do with me?” and then black and white photographs from history around the world where the action of bystanders was and is needed. (M/H)

C. J. Bott is an educational consultant who taught high school English for thirty years in northeastern Ohio. She has piloted programs for African American men, women students, and gay and lesbian students, and was recipient of the 2003 NCTE/SLATE Intellectual Freedom Award.

Don't Look and It Will Go Away:

YA Books—A Key to Uncovering the Invisible Problem of Bullying

Adapted from a panel presentation given at the 2006 ALAN Workshop in Nashville, Tennessee, November 20, 2006

C. J. Bott opened the session by posing this question to the entire 480 in attendance: How many of you have been bullied at some time in your life? Raise your hand. How many of you have been a bully? Older brothers and sisters must raise their hands here. I am the oldest of four and I admit that I resorted to bullying to keep my sisters under control. How many of you have witnessed a bullying incident at anytime during your life? And finally, how many wish you could had done something differently?

All those hands in the air are the only statistic you need to know this is a problem that we cannot ignore any longer. If we are all carrying the bruises from bullying, what is happening to our students?

At this ALAN conference in Nashville, we have the largest audience ever with 480 people. If two-thirds of you are classroom teachers, and that is a low estimate, that means 322 of you will go back to your classrooms. If you average four classes, that is 1288 classes, and I know many of you teach more than four. If we take an average of 25 students in each of those classes—that means that what is said on this panel today can touch the lives of 32,200 students. Think

about it; think about the ripple that will start here today and could change the lives of over 32,000 kids.

Let's start with the official definition of bullying created by Dan Olweus, the international authority on this problem. "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, *REPEATEDLY AND OVER TIME*, to the negative actions on the part of one or more other students." A student can't call someone a name once and be classified a bully. It has to happen repeatedly—and it can't be all in one setting; it has to happen over time, day after day. I would also add that there is an imbalance of power, one who has power over one who does not.

You know this, if I give you pairs of stereotypes, you can pick which is more likely to be the harasser. Ninth-grader or fifth-grader? Golfer or football player? Cheerleader or choir member?

Besides not looking and hoping it will go away, another thing we do wrong is we don't start early enough. We should be starting anti-bullying programs in elementary school. Another statistic from Olweus: "Bullies identified by age 8 are six times more likely to be convicted of a crime by age 24 and five times more than non-bullies to end up with serious criminal records by the age of 30." Age 8, that is third grade. If that child gets locked into bullying behaviors to get his or her power needs met, that child's potential is lost. Males who

What is said on this panel today can touch the lives of 32,200 students. Think about it; think about the ripple that will start here today and could change the lives of over 32,000 kids.

are confirmed bullies often turn into abusive partners, and females who are confirmed bullies turn into abusive moms. We have to start early, and we have to work with everyone. Bystanders make up about 75-80 percent of your school's population. If you were going to sell a product, wouldn't you want to market it to the largest population? We have to create programs that call upon the witnesses and bystanders to be responsible friends and citizens.

There are different ways to categorize a bully, but the most common is direct bullying and indirect bullying. Direct bullying is face to face and the target knows the bully's identity—e.g., the big kid saying, "Give me your lunch money." The target knows where the threat is, and if the bully is not around, can enjoy a certain degree of safety. Indirect bullying is not like that. It happens behind the back, and the bully could be anyone. It's notes written on bathroom walls, lockers, desk tops, slips of paper dropped into book bags—it is a secret and scary attack because the bully could be anyone. Cyberbullying is the fastest growing form of indirect bullying. A kid sitting in the security of his or her own home, gets on line, and finds a message directing him or her to a website. When that child opens the website, it is all about him or her. It contains embarrassing photos taken by cell phone in locker rooms, hallways, classroom—anywhere. There are bulletin board postings from unknown students and sometimes votes for being the dorkiest, ugliest, fattest, whatever-est imaginable. That teen or preteen has no idea who created this and suddenly the whole world becomes enemy territory. He or she cannot tell anyone because the first thing that person will do is look at the site. The target feels afraid and ashamed and very alone. For more information on cyberbullying, check out the website < www.cyberbullying.ca > .

You are going to hear from three authors in this order, Nancy Garden, Patrick Jones, and Julie Ann Peters. A bibliography is attached to give you a fuller introduction. Knowing we had a very short time to impress you, each author picked the question she or he most wanted to speak to. Trust me, we know this topic. Listen carefully; take notes; there will be an assignment. Each author has one question to answer.

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"How can teachers create and maintain a climate that discourages bullying in the first place?"

Nancy Garden

Some of what I'm about to say will serve as a bit of a review to what C.J. has said.

When Columbine happened, I, like all of you, was shocked and saddened. And as time went on, I was also shocked when I read people's assessments of what had made Eric and Dylan shoot up their school. That was when I found that the fact that they'd been bullied was usually mentioned only as an after-thought. I found that to be the case, too, in accounts of other school shootings, both before and after Columbine, and that led me to realize that bullying hasn't really been considered a serious problem in America. That's why I wrote my novel, *Endgame*, which is about a boy who's so badly bullied, so ignored, and so devalued by his school, his peers, and his family that one day he takes a gun to school and shoots a number of his fellow students.

For generations, we've considered bullying a natural part of childhood, almost a rite of passage for some kids. We've said, "Boys will be boys," and we've told bullies to stop bullying because it isn't nice and it is hurtful; we've given them detention, suspended them—and we've also ignored them. We've told victims not to react, not to "ask for it," and to become less like themselves; we've told gay and lesbian kids and gender-queer kids to act straight, and we've told sensitive, gentle kids to fight back.

But bullying hasn't gone away.

Are kids bullied in your school?

Have you seen kids systematically tease, exclude, spread rumors about, or beat up other kids?

Have you heard them call other kids names in a mean way? Have you heard kids use the put-down "It's so gay!"?

**It has to happen repeatedly
—and it can't be all in one
setting; it has to happen
over time, day after day. I
would also add that there
is an imbalance of power,
one who has power over
one who does not.**

Have you heard about kids who extort money from other kids, steal from them, damage their belongings, threaten them, force them to do things they don't want to do?

All of these examples, of course, are forms of bullying.

Even if you're well aware that bullying does exist in your school, you may be seeing only the tip of the

iceberg. Most bullying goes on in places where teachers and administrators don't—and often can't—see it: on the playground, in the lunchroom, in locker rooms, parking lots, on the bus, and—especially—in bathrooms. Increasingly, too, and far easier to hide, a surprising amount of bullying occurs online, as cyberbullying.

Bullies who are allowed to go on being bullies are at risk of continuing their pattern of escalating cruelty and violence into adulthood, becoming criminals or adult bullies.

Yes, but maybe, since this and the statistics C. J. quoted show that bullying is so common as to be ubiquitous, it might be better to ignore it. Maybe it really *IS* a necessary rite of passage that kids have to weather.

It's hard for me to accept that my having been beaten up periodically on my way home from elementary school was a necessary rite of passage, or that it was a necessary rite of passage for a young lesbian to have been raped with a coke bottle by a group of girls in a school in which I was student teaching, or that it was a rite of passage when a boy who my partner and I helped bring up was hung by his feet from an upper story of his high school. Years later, shortly after Columbine, that boy, then an adult, told me that if he hadn't had basketball and music and people like us to talk to, he might well have taken a gun to his school and done what Eric and Dylan did at Columbine.

Again, many, perhaps most, school shooters have been victims of bullying. That's one reason why stopping bullying is so vital. But even when they don't end up shooting their classmates and teachers or bombing their schools—and most, of course, don't—bullies who are allowed to go on being bullies are at risk of continuing their pattern of escalating cruelty

and violence into adulthood, becoming criminals or adult bullies.

Victims of bullies often skip school because they're afraid, or can't concentrate on their lessons. They lie awake at night dreading the next school day because someone has threatened to "get" them. Bullied kids become depressed, insecure, or even suicidal because of being bullied. And, of course, some end up becoming bullies themselves.

Bystanders who witness bullying but don't report it or otherwise act to help victims frequently feel guilty and are afraid themselves of becoming victims, especially if they do report bullying incidents.

So what are we to do? My research tells me that a good start involves having a firm, specific anti-bullying policy that is followed consistently by *ALL* staff members and *ALL* kids—not a one-size-fits-all zero-tolerance policy that doesn't allow for special situations, but one that does set up a predictably escalating scale of reprimands, warnings, and punishments for repeated bullying incidents. But it's equally important to remember that *bullies* frequently need careful professional counseling, as well as punishment. Remember that many bullies have been bullied themselves. It's important to treat the cause as well as the result.

Any bullying prevention policy also needs to address the problems of bystanders. It needs to encourage them to report bullying incidents, and—this is vital—it needs to provide reliable protection for them when they do report incidents.

Of course, anti-bullying policies should address the needs of victims in a way that ensures that victims are *NEVER* made to feel that they brought the bully's actions on themselves.

Just as important as having a consistent anti-bullying policy, it seems to me, is the atmosphere of the school itself. Is your school a happy, friendly place, in which all kinds of people are valued? Or is it one in which some groups—athletes, for example—are valued above all others and given special treatment. Or is it a tense, unfriendly place in which all students are divided by clique and hierarchy?

As an author, I've visited happy classrooms in which kids and teachers have been relaxed and eagerly engaged, and grim ones in which everyone has seemed tense and uninvolved. It's easy to guess which schools or classes might be likely to have a problem

with bullying, and which probably would not.

Because bullies so often single out kids who don't fit in or who are "different," it's vital for schools to do everything they can to be welcoming and inclusive, and it's equally important for schools to have books that are inclusive, as well. Patrick and Julie will be talking about both those vital areas. It's important, too, for schools to offer a range of clubs and organizations that validate and empower minorities—including sexual minorities.

When I was growing up, my mother often said to me, "Put yourself in the other guy's shoes." Encouraging kids to imagine how other people have felt in various situations, both real and in the books they read, can foster empathy—which in turn can contribute to a climate that doesn't accept bullying.

I think all of us are baffled to some degree about bullying; despite everything I've said here, I know I sure am. Luckily, there's now helpful information both in books and on the Internet. Just Googling "Bullying" can lead you to much of it. One resource that I've found especially valuable is a pamphlet developed in Maine by the Maine Governor's Children's Cabinet in response to that state's antibullying law. It's called "Maine's Best Practices in Bullying and Harassment Prevention." Its URL is < < www.maine.gov/education/bullyingprevention/index.shtml > >

I hope you'll all go home after this conference to examine your school's climate in general and your school's bullying situation in particular. And if you find either needing repairs, I hope you'll be able to talk about it with your fellow teachers and your administrators—and yes, your students and their parents, as well—and begin to work together on making changes. That can be a long, difficult process, but it's one that, in addition to improving academic performance and fostering student mental health, can also save lives. I don't think there's anything more important than that!

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"Hammers and Nails: the Hardware of High School."

Patrick Jones

Let me introduce you to Bret Hendricks, the main character in novel, *Nailed*:

"Freak faggot."

I outwardly ignore All-American asshole Bob Hitchings' usual greeting as I take my seat, but the words beat me down inside. It's first period on the first day of my junior year in English class, the great melting pot that makes big fat fibbers out of Our Founding Fathers. All men are not created equal; some are smarter, some are stronger. If Jefferson, Madison, and the rest of their ilk had spent a day at Southwestern, they would have flushed that claptrap right down the toilet. I'm smarter than a lot of people in this room, more talented in the things that matter to me. But guys like Hitchings, who are stronger than most people, and guys like me, who are smarter than most people, are not equals. A born athlete, Hitchings cares about kicking a football, capturing a wrestling pin fall, and catching a baseball. I'm a born artist who cares about books, music, and theater. In my eyes, he isn't better than me, nor am I better than him; we're just different, and different is okay with me. (26)

Bret's a nail: a kid who doesn't fit in. Hitchings is a hammer: a kid who does. It seems increasingly the hardware of schools consists of hammer and nails.

Not all nails are like Bret: artistic kids, creative kids. Odd kids. Underdogs. Readers. But the kids who get bullied are often those outside the mainstream. Nails that stick out.

Not all hammers are like Hitchings: jocks, popular kids. Water walkers. Non-readers.

These are created characters, but they are also types. The types of kids we find in our schools and libraries.

We need to challenge the hammers and stand up for the nails.

Especially now as standardized testing is so prevalent, it seems we seek conformity as a good thing. Everybody falls in line.

But there's a problem.

You can't really test creativity.

You can't test for sensitivity.

You can test for respecting diversity.

You can't test for empathy.

Because bullies so often single out kids who don't fit in or who are "different," it's vital for schools to do everything they can to be welcoming and inclusive, and it's equally important for schools to have books that are inclusive, as well.

But this work isn't just about giving kids a list of great books, it is about listening to them tell about their lives. It is about relationships.

tell about their lives. It is about relationships.

Listening to real teens, like Johanna in my novel *Things Change*, trapped in a violent dating relationship; teens like Bret in *Nailed*, a well-rounded victim of violence trapped in a square box; and teens like Christy in my forthcoming novel *Chasing Tail Lights*, trapped in a generational poverty and a horrific family life. These are made-up teens, but the stories of real teens need to be heard. But they're afraid to talk, not fearing retaliation, but afraid to admit their victimization and thus unable to find validation.

Sometimes we provide them a sanctuary, as my friend Cathi Dunn MacRae mentioned earlier. A sanctuary for these kids to be themselves. A place for kids who read, write, paint, create, sing, and dance. A place for kids to read, then talk about books, and thereby talk about their lives.

But sanctuary isn't enough, because it's temporary. The problem isn't going away.

And the problem *IS* the problem approach. The problem isn't bullying, the problem is looking at kids as problems to be solved.

Instead, we need to look at the assets of the nails and the assets of the hammers.

A strength-based approach, like that of the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets framework, challenges us to see the strengths that kids have and shines light on the assets they need to develop. (Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota. <<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>>)

The assets are a different kind of test. Not about reading and writing. Not about math and science. The assets are the essence of adolescence. And the key to building assets is building relationships. Relationships we can build through literature.

You can't test for humanity.

Maybe you can't test for it, but you can teach all these things to your students.

Three words: Young adult literature.

But this work isn't just about giving kids a list of great books, it is about listening to them

Helping kids, though literature and through listening, build assets is our test.

It is how we test our humanity in this world of hammers and nails.

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Is there proof that such books need to be available and read by our young people?

Julie Ann Peters

What is the proof that such books need to be available and read? My mail.

I wish you could read one week's worth of the mail I receive from young people, so you could see what's going on with them. Wow. It's brutal in the trenches. For the most part, kids are resilient, but we forget how fragile they are. They break.

Ms. Peters,

Hello. My name is Laili (lay-lee) and I'm an 18 year old who just graduated from high school and im queer. I don't like to label myself as lesbian or bi, just queer. Ive been having some troubles with my "fellow peers" and I feel very discouraged . . . when I started coming out there were friends who decided not to be friends with me anymore, others who totally shut me down, calling me disgusting and saying I'd lied to them, then sasha my best friend told all her friends, and now its all spiraled out of control. Ive become so depressed . . . I've started cutting myself again (I had stopped for a year) and I am thinking of taking my own life. There is no support here at all. I know you aren't a counselor Ms Peters but I just needed to tell someone my story. I don't expect you to have solutions but did you ever have times like this? I don't think there is any solution anymore other then suicide . . . im sorry to burden you but I really needed someone to know me.

For me, for my community, bullying extends to verbal and physical assault. When you have this constant barrage of negative messages about who you are; when you are never celebrated as a person; when you are not even equal in the eyes of the law, you develop so little confidence and self-esteem. You feel diminished.

Bullying is disrespect and dismissal. It's the total denigration of a person.

Every day is a struggle, people don't accept me for who I am. Some teachers even treat me differently. But my English teacher, Ms. Wolfe, saw me reading *Keeping You a Secret* one day, and asked me what it was about. So I told her. She asked if there was anything really inappropriate in it, and I said not really, so she said she'll read it and see if she can put it on the summer reading list. Wouldn't it be great if all those people who make fun of us would read this, and understand? Understand what they're doing? Understand who we really are? Understand who THEY really are? It would be amazing.

—Catherine

Discrimination infests my school. To admit that you're lesbian, gay, or bisexual is like writing "attack me" on your forehead. I cried twice while reading *KYAS* [*Keeping You A Secret*] because it reminds me so much of how it is here. Luckily, I'm not alone because my two best friends in all the world are bi and gay. We stick together when it comes to fighting the disease of prejudice.

—Rose

I was wondering two things.

1) Do you get a lot of annoying emails like this, from crazy fans, that aren't actually fanmail?

2) I'm trapped in a stereotypical Middle School. Meaning: Everyone is always saying, "I don't like this assignment. Its gay." And "you're stupid. You did something stupid. You're a fag. Haha, wasn't that funny?" I am lesbian, not that these people know. It really hurts me and I want to stand up for everyone who doesn't stand up for themselves. Do you know what I should say?

—Cheez

My friend David is on the newspaper staff. He wrote this LONG article on gay relationships, and the marriage amendment here in VA . . . It was an AMAZING article. It became our front page story . . . David got 6 death threats and 137 hate emails in response to the article.

—Ang

For what I have in intelligence I lack in size and strength. I'm one of the shortest and tiniest kids at my school, so an easy target. There would be days when

there would be large groups of guys. GUYS. And they would grab me and push me up against the walls. They would just hit me and hit me over again. And nobody would stop them.

—Quinn

Stephanie, a 13-year-old, was asked to choose her favorite book and do an oral report in school. She chose *Keeping You a Secret*. I wrote and told her how brave I thought she was. Because that takes courage. I wished her luck and told her I'd be there in spirit. She wrote to say that after school, she was ambushed and beaten. Her arm and three ribs were broken. I told Stephanie to please report this as a hate crime. Please tell people at school; they'll know what to do. Stephanie, I said, they'll take care of you. Her reply:

One of my friends went to the counselors and principals at our school asking about it and how we could report that sort of thing. The most of an answer we got to that question was the guidance counselor telling us that she would 'see what she could do.' So we just had to let go of the problem, because nobody was willing to help us figure out what we could do about it.

—Stephanie

What you can do is step up. Stand up. Give young people role models. Give them tools and trust in you. It saddens me to hear how few trusted adults young people seem to feel they have in their lives.

The other day I was at work when a gay couple walked in and a co-worker of mine was making fun of them and I ended up arguing with him about how wrong I felt that it was for him to be saying what he was saying and I realized it was because of YOU that I spoke up. I began to cry and to myself asked why do people had to make it so hard for other people to be happy with themselves? Thank you because with this one book you gave me and so many others a voice and a place in our hearts for what others go threw day to day.

—Gabi, 18

What you can do is step up. Stand up. Give young people role models. Give them tools and trust in you.

Recently, Ms. D came out at school. A girl at school was being harassed, and there was a board meeting. Ms. D spoke up for the girl, and basically said, “look, I know what it is to be harassed. But our school doesn’t do enough to stop it, even for teachers like myself. We hide who we are everyday.”

—Ang quotes, “I believe we are given the gift of a poetic platform so we can use it to speak for all the millions who are silenced.”

Books can provide comfort and solace, strength and solutions. Books can be friends when you don’t feel you have a friend in the world.

It’s amazing how cruel people are. I would think, “maybe I’m going through so many things that no one

else goes through” but when I read your book and so many things are exactly like things in my life, it was interesting and calming for my mind. The spray painted locker, to the harassment by big

Books can be friends when you don’t feel you have a friend in the world.

groups of people, it all matched my life and things that I knew my friends had gone through too. Keeping You a Secret was like my reassurance that I wasn’t alone. So I really want to thank you. You’ve put a smile on my face, that had been missing for a long time.

—Jessy

People listen to books in a way they listen to nothing else, partly, I think, because they identify and get lost in the story world (you can really start to see things from another point of view, put yourself in someone else’s place), and partly because when people read a story they let their guard down. People don’t think of a story as something that will change their minds, so they fully open them—and look what happens. I never gave thought to TG people before I read Luna and now I’m astounded and sympathetic to what they go through.

—Elizabeth

Bullying is a pervasive problem, and it’s not limited to peer interactions.

Hey my name is Angelle . . . I decided to try out for the basket ball team and I did. I thought I did good and so did every one else but I didn’t make it . . . and I asked around and EVERY one I asked said the coach hates lesbians. I look just like most girls, pretty, smart, lots of friends . . . love sports . . . but ever since I came out it all went down the drain. How do I handle this how do I react to the basket ball situation when I absolutely love the sport. I cant handle this I love being gay but sometimes I wish I could have a break on it.

Me too. Why should we care? We dedicate our lives to growing good people, to making a difference in the world. We should care out of love.

Hey dude,
I went to my very first anime con and made friends with what seems like every hot gay guy alive. I even held up a sign that said “Hug me, I’m gay” and like 390,674,530,956 people hugged me.

I love being alive.

—Miles, age 12

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C.J. Bott: Did you hear it? Did you hear your assignment? I am very proud of my profession, but I am also embarrassed because for too long we have supported the Don’t Look philosophy, and the problem has NOT GONE AWAY.

Your assignment is simple—Do Something. YOU. MUST. DO. SOMETHING.

Yesterday someone asked my why I do this work, and I thought about it all night. The answer is simple. How could I not? And now, how could you not? The lives of over 32,000 students depends on it.

(And if every teacher who reads this article decides to do something—think of how many more lives could be touched.)

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www.authors4teens.com
www.connectingya.com
www.JulieAnnePeters.com
www.NancyGarden.com

<p>All Q. No A: <i>More Tales of a 10th Grade Social Climber</i> by Lauren Mechling and Laura Moser Graphia/Houghton Mifflin, 2006, 277 pp., \$7.99</p> <p>Teen Girls/Humor/Moral Issues ISBN: 0-618-66378-9</p> <p>This sequel to <i>The Rise and Fall of a 10th Grade Social Climber</i> finds transplanted Texan Mimi returning to Baldwin, her ultra-progressive New York City school, and writing "Texan in Gotham," a column chronicling her experiences for their newspaper.</p> <p>Baldwin's finances fall, but art dealer Serge Ziff's huge donation means Mimi is assigned his interview; she uncovers and reveals his unfair business practices in her article. Baldwin halts publication, but her piece is leaked, causing chaos until an alumni newspaper owner uses Mimi's story and financially saves the school.</p> <p>This simple, contrived plot is almost overshadowed by sophisticated, sarcastic narration of complicated events, items potentially troublesome for its marketed younger females. Descriptions are over-long, numerous characters mean uneven development, and events are not always chronological, causing confusion. Still, Mimi is delightful with perceptive, hilarious narration; she nails NYC's pretentiousness and matures. Advanced readers should find her adventures enticing and enjoyable.</p> <p>Lisa A. Hazlett Vermillion, SD</p>	<p>Archer's Quest by Linda Sue Park Clarion Books, 2006, 167 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Time Travel/Fiction ISBN: 0618596313</p> <p>Kevin dreads his social studies homework. After all, why memorize things you will never need? As he is throwing a rubber ball against the wall, he hears a loud noise and an arrow darts through his hat, pinning it to the wall! The strange older man that appears calls himself Chu-mong and claims he is from Koguryo, now known as Korea. He says he was riding a tiger in the mountains before finding himself with Kevin in New York. Kevin and the Archer discover they were both born in the year of the Tiger. They realize there is one more day left in this year of the Tiger, and they must find a way for the Archer to get back to his country in 55 B.C.</p> <p>Kevin learns his heritage comes with fascinating stories and is amazed at what the Archer is able to do. Along the way the Archer tells Kevin he is successful because he keeps his eye on the goal and practices regularly. Practice is not boring; our minds can make anything interesting.</p> <p>Barbara Ray Tulsa, OK</p>
<p>The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation by M. T. Anderson Candlewick Press, 2006, 351 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Racial Discrimination ISBN: 0-7636-2402-0</p> <p>The acclaimed author of <i>Feed</i> now escorts readers to a haunting, almost Gothic, Boston, just as the Revolutionary War brews. Octavian appears the privileged recipient of a classical education and lifestyle with rational scholars. Only after he dares to open a forbidden door does he realize that he is really the object of a ghastly experiment affecting not just him but his entire race.</p> <p><i>Octavian Nothing</i> gains verisimilitude from supposedly first-person sources—from classical, scholarly testimonies by Octavian to rough but idealistic soldiers' letters. However delightful the style, the story's implied questions are tough: Has our country from its origin been motivated more by economic gain than by ideals of equality? When and how does rational scientific investigation mislead the public?</p> <p><i>Octavian Nothing</i> provokes thought by its haunting retelling of history with sophistication enough for adults as well as young adults. Both can look forward to volume 2.</p> <p>Judy Beemer Junction City, KS</p>	<p>The Beautiful City of the Dead by Leander Watts Houghton Mifflin, 2006, 254 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Science Fiction ISBN: 0-618-59443-4</p> <p>"It starts with fire." It is Zee's first day of high school, and she has a 102° fever. The day is a blur except for meeting Relly, the only one who really sees past her name. Relly is the leader of a Ghost Metal band, and when they need a new bass player, Zee is their girl. Zee is swept up into a world of gods and goddesses who have powers over fire, water, earth, and air. She is a goddess of water and, though she does not believe Relly in the beginning, she soon sees both his and her own powers at work. But what will happen when another group wants Zee to join them?</p> <p>Leander Watts uses dynamic characters and a fast-paced story to create a fantasy world filled with music and power. When stepping into the world Watts has created, a reader steps into a modern world much like today's, thus giving the story a more believable edge. The plot's twists and turns will keep readers interested until the last page is turned.</p> <p>Colleen Freeburg Shorewood, IL</p>

<p><i>Behind the Curtain</i> by Peter Abrahams Laura Geringer Books, 2006, 346 pp., \$16.89</p> <p>Mystery ISBN: 0060737042</p> <p>Ingrid is trying to find out why she was kidnapped. Because Ingrid is a fan of Sherlock Holmes and loves the theater, everyone thinks she made up the mystery and is doing a good job of acting. The fact that she says she was chloroformed, blindfolded, tied up, put in the trunk of a car and yet escaped is hard to believe. She has suspects and motives. Mrs. Groome picked her for the MathFest, and she was on her way to the event when she was kidnapped. Ingrid discovered that someone is selling steroids to teen athletes, her brother being one of the victims. Julia LeCaine, assistant soccer coach, kicked a soccer ball so hard it knocked Coach Ringer out, allowing Julia to coach Ingrid's team in the most important games. The Ferrand Group would do most anything to get Grammy to sell his farmland.</p> <p>This is the second book in the Echo Falls Mystery series, but it stands on its own. There is lots of humor, suspense, and intelligent deductions as she works to solve the case.</p> <p>Barbara Ray Tulsa, OK</p>	<p><i>Behind the Eyes</i> by Francisco X. Stork Penguin Group, 2006, 246 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Fiction/Gangs ISBN: 0-525-47735-7</p> <p>In the projects of El Paso, Texas, there's no shortage of trouble and grief for sixteen-year-old Hector Robles. After being hospitalized from a fight with the local gang called the Discipulos, he's sent away to Furman, a boarding school for troubled teens who show promise. However, Hector slowly realizes that his problems didn't remain in El Paso and that his so-called "safe and undisclosed" environment may not be all that it appears. As Hector tries to make sense of his past, he is bombarded by his future. With the arrival of El Topo, a potential hit-man sent by the Discipulos, the story's intensity rises. This new rivalry huris Hector into a battle that he does not desire to be part of. He must decide if he'll resort to violence or maturity, a decision that will shape the rest of his life.</p> <p><i>Behind the Eyes</i> is a smartly written page-turner that mature young adult readers can't afford to miss. Some strong language and intense subject matter may keep it away from middle-grade readers.</p> <p>Matt Coasdone Narragansett, RI</p>
<p><i>Blind Faith</i> by Ellen Wittlinger Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006, 280 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Death/Family Relationships ISBN: 978-1-4169-0273-7</p> <p>For Liz Scattergood, the only escape she has from her grandmother's recent death and her mother's resulting depression is the piano. She soon finds that this isn't enough, as Liz's mother begins attending the Singing Creek Spiritualist Church in an effort to speak to her own dead mother. With a father scarred as a child by religious experiences, Liz finds her once intact family cracking like the discarded pottery in her mother's shop. But, through her newfound friendship with Nathan, whose mother dragged her children to her hometown to await her death, Liz begins to work through her grief and helps Nathan and his younger sister along the way.</p> <p>Wittlinger's melodic sense of humor and compassion create a story that all teens who have suffered a loss of any kind can relate to. It's a story that illustrates that although blind faith in an institution can be deceiving, blind faith in those you love can make you stronger.</p> <p>Robyn Seglem Olathe, KS</p>	<p><i>Born to Rock</i> by Gordon Korman Hyperion, 2006, 261 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Coming of Age/Family/Friendship ISBN: 0-7868-0920-5</p> <p>Woven with wit and anecdotal wisdom, <i>Born to Rock</i> is a charming story of adolescence, politics, music, sexuality, family, and friendship. When Leo, a typical 4.0 Young Republican bound for Harvard, finds out his biological father is the lead singer in an '80s punk rock group, one crazy summer ensues. King Maggot, said biological father, invites Leo along for the group's revival tour, and Leo commences to live the life of a roadie—minus the drugs, parties, and women—for two months. Amidst late-night poolside pursuits, drummers embezzling emeralds, best friend blog revelations, and cavity searches, Leo learns the meaning of friendship, loyalty, and responsibility.</p> <p>While the title and subject matter may suggest a raucy book loaded with sex, drugs, and profanity, Korman manages to pack in the adventure and open the discussion without raising the censorship flag. With a cover that rocks on its own and a story that draws kids in from the first line, this novel is "born to rock."</p> <p>Julie Jones Hutchinson, KS</p>

<p><i>Bushnell's Submarine</i> by Arthur S. Lefkowitz Scholastic, 2006, 136 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Few people realize the first submarine to appear in the history of warfare was the "American Turtle," developed by David Bushnell during the Revolutionary War. <i>Bushnell's Submarine</i> is a brief account of Bushnell and his craft.</p> <p>Although the tone of the book is somewhat pedantic, Lefkowitz includes a number of fascinating details about the construction of the Turtle, and chapters are interspersed with frequent discussions of related events or issues (e.g., the destruction of most university libraries during the Revolutionary War) provided as asides in boxed format. <i>Bushnell's Submarine</i> attempts to balance the historical details with personal details of Bushnell and other figures surrounding the development and deployment (such as it was) of the first submarine.</p> <p><i>Bushnell's Submarine</i> should be appealing to middle school students interested in military history, construction, or engineering; however, the book might also be considered for inclusion in interdisciplinary or thematic studies.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>	<p>Dear Author: Letters of Hope edited by Joan Kaywell Philomel Books, 2007, 240 pp., \$14.99</p> <p>Being a teenager is tough business. Young adult authors have the pulse of today's teens and show it with their willingness to approach the very real issues that teens face each day. When young adult literature connects to teens, teens often have the desire to connect with the authors, to share ways in which the words latched onto their souls. <i>Dear Author</i> highlights the best of the letters received by today's most beloved authors. T. A. Barron, Laurie Halse Anderson, Nancy Garden, Neal Shusterman and others write letters of hope to the teens, offering their insightful, heartfelt, humorous, and sometimes emotional responses in return.</p> <p>Whether faced with a life-changing decision or reflecting on events that robbed their innocence, teens profiled speak for the infinite number of people who have been forever changed by reading a book. <i>Dear Author</i> shows that although young adult authors cannot change the tough lives teens have to face, they can guide their readers to finding the hope within their books and, ultimately, the hope within their lives.</p> <p>Shelbie Witte Manhattan, KS</p>
<p><i>Falling</i> by Doug Wilhelm Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007, 244 pp., \$17.00</p> <p>Matt was good—really good—at basketball, but he's not playing this year. All he can think about is walking around listening to his iPod and trying to ignore what's going on at home. But what is really going on? Matt has his suspicions, but is too afraid to confront his older brother Neal, a former high school b-ball star who didn't get the scholarship to play Division I ball like he planned.</p> <p>One night, Matt logs in to a teen chat room and "meets" a girl (Katie), and when they discover they attend the same high school, they "connect," spending time together after school. But when things begin disappearing from Matt's house, enough to alert the parents to call the police, Matt is under suspicion for the burglaries.</p> <p><i>Falling</i> is a great story, even if it is a little contrived. Chapters alternate between Matt and Katie, keeping the book flowing, and elements of high school gossip and popularity keep the book interesting for girls as well as boys. <i>Falling</i> is a recommended, quick-read, high-interest title for students in grades 7-10.</p> <p>Nancy A. McFarlin Wamego, KS</p>	<p><i>Fallout</i> by Trudy Krishner Holiday House, 2006, 315 pp., \$17.95</p> <p>Genevieve must face her ninth-grade year alone. Her best friend Sally has moved; her cousin Wills is allowed to stay home after completing eighth grade. Her father is obsessed with hurricanes, Communists, and preparing for a nuclear attack. Her mother tries to be the perfect housewife and Tupperware consultant. Gen doesn't quite know what to make of the new girl Brenda Wompers or her liberal-thinking parents. When Brenda is assigned as Gen's Algebra tutor, a hesitant friendship forms. But Brenda's parents begin to question the school's required Civil Defense courses, and the rumor mill of the small town begins to grind. An assigned project on the Salem witch trials shows Gen that the climate of insecurity that fed the suspicions in Massachusetts in the 1600s was not that different from the climate of insecurity in North Carolina in the 1950s.</p> <p>Krishner has done a remarkable job developing characters that, through their own social struggles, personify the distrust and suspicion that often prevailed during this period in our nation's history. Middle and high school readers will relate to Gen as she reconciles the hypocrisies she sees in friends and family with the faith to which she clings.</p> <p>Vicki Sherbert Wakefield, KS</p>

<p><i>Geography of Girlhood</i> by Kirsten Smith Little, Brown & Company, 2006, 184 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Contemporary Fiction ISBN: 0316160210</p> <p>All Penny can think about is getting away from her dull, small-town life, just like her mother did when Penny was six. Her story begins at the end of ninth grade. She is consumed by the great life she sees her sister living. Tara is pretty, popular with boys, and able to defy their father. Problems are compounded when Dad marries and adds a stepbrother, Spencer, to the equation. Penny shares her first kiss, infatuation with her history teacher, experimentation with drinking and sex, and finally running away with her sister's ex-boyfriend, Bobby.</p> <p>Kirsten Smith shares, in the form of verse, how fragile life can be while growing up. Penny gets her wish and runs away with Bobby, only to realize that dreams are so different from the reality of those dreams. Penny learns how to accept things for what they are, not wishing to be someone else or go some place else. It is okay to just be.</p> <p>Barbara Ray Tulsa, OK</p>	<p><i>Grand and Humble</i> by Brent Hartinger Harper Tempest, imprint of HarperCollins, 2006, 212 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Mental Health/Family ISBN: 0060567279</p> <p><i>Grand and Humble</i> is an intriguing tale of two young men, Harlan and Manny, whose lives are intertwined in a mysterious journey of similarities and opposites, making the reader presume they are connected. Harlan, the good-looking, popular teenage son of a senator, has premonitions of disaster that haunt his life. The forebodings cause anxiety attacks and a greater rift between his mother and him.</p> <p>The Chess Club geek, Manny, is consumed with nightmares that leave him terrified and exhausted. The geek controls the lighting in the theatre, but he cannot control the frightening scenes of his nightmares. His easygoing father becomes aloof and avoids Manny's questions regarding Manny's childhood.</p> <p>The connections between the two teenagers seem to surface and the plot unravels, until the engrossed reader realizes an astounding new twist is added. The secret of the two boys lies at the intersection of Grand and Humble.</p> <p>Paulette Clark Junction City, KS</p>
<p><i>Heroes of Football: The Story of Americas Game</i> by John Madden with Bill Gutman Dutton Children's Books, 2006, 80 pp., \$18.99</p> <p>Nonfiction/Football ISBN: 0-525-47698-9</p> <p>On the shelf, <i>Heroes of Football</i> appears to be a glossy, light celebration of professional football. The book's cover and design suggests lots of colorful pictures and limited text, a book suitable for struggling readers at the middle-school level.</p> <p>The inside of the book does not match those expectations. The book is a surprisingly detailed and rich history of American football from its origins in the early days of the 20th Century through the contemporary National Football League. The text is well written, replete with lively anecdotes about the personalities involved in the evolution of the game and a thorough discussion of rule the development of the way the game has been played through the years.</p> <p>While the book is clearly well done, it does present two concerns. First, struggling readers will be drawn by the book's style and design and become frustrated by the density of the text. Conversely, strong readers might well be put off by those same design elements. Nevertheless, <i>Heroes of Football</i> is an invaluable resource for young people with an interest in the history of football.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>I Am the Great Horse</i> by Katherine Roberts Chicken House, 2006, 401 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Action ISBN: 0-439-82163-0</p> <p>Alexander the Great was a mighty conqueror and a powerful warrior. Little is known about him personally. Perhaps that might be different if his greatest friend could tell his story. That is the premise behind Roberts' <i>I Am the Great Horse</i>. Alexander's story is told by his powerful horse, Bucephalas.</p> <p>After Bucephalas kills his first master, he is shipped north to be sold in Macedonia. The instant Alexander sits on his back, their fates are forever intertwined. Bucephalas and Alexander ride into battle, cutting down all who oppose them. Never far from their side is the groom, Charm. Like Bucephalas, who sees ghosts in one eye, Charm, too, has many secrets. She often acts as Alexander's conscience, questioning his self-proclaimed role of liberator and hero. The reader is often left wondering who is right, a question our equine narrator never totally answers.</p> <p><i>I Am the Great Horse</i> is an exciting look at one of the world's great military leaders. Roberts' approach allows the reader to revel in the battles while still being able to see the negative consequences of Alexander's conquests.</p> <p>Karolinde Young Manhattan, KS</p>

<p><i>The Keys of the Kingdom Book Four: Sir Thursday</i> by Garth Nix Scholastic Press, 2006, 352 pp., \$ 16.99</p> <p>Arthur wants nothing more than to go home and lead a normal life. Unfortunately, nothing has been normal since he first encountered the mysterious Monday and found himself appointed heir to the architect. In book number four of <i>The Keys of the Kingdom</i>, Arthur's problems go from bad to worse. Not only is his leg still broken, but he finds himself unable to return home from the mysterious House, home of the immortal demizens. Just as things seem to be at their darkest, a messenger arrives with draft papers.</p> <p>While Arthur's friend Leaf battles an evil Arthur look-a-like on Earth, Arthur must try to keep his true identity hidden from Sir Thursday and his minions. Even more frightening, an evil army has managed to enter the House and is quickly taking over Sir Thursday's dominions.</p> <p>Just as in the previous three books in the series, Nix spins an intricate tale of deception and survival. The only caution: The series is best read in order to understand the complete story. <i>Sir Thursday</i> is sure to be popular with fantasy and action lovers in middle school and high school.</p> <p>Karolinde Young Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>The Killing Sea: A Novel about the Tsunami that Stunned the World</i> by Richard Lewis Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006, 183 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>ISBN: 1416911650</p> <p>It is a beautiful morning in Meulaboh, Aceh, Indonesia. Sarah and her American family are on a sailing vacation and in need of some engine repair. Going ashore, they meet Ruslan, a boy working at a café on the shore. Ruslan guides them to his father who fixes their engine, and they sail on, but not before Ruslan notices Sarah and her crystal blue eyes.</p> <p>Later that morning, both Ruslan's and Sarah's worlds are shattered by an oceanic earthquake, followed by a tsunami that devastates the area. In the aftermath, Sarah and her brother Peter discover their family's sailboat wrecked, their mother dead, and their father missing. Ruslan, thinking his father is on a job fixing the engine on a tanker in the harbor, desperately begins searching for him. Thus the story begins for both teens as they search for their missing fathers in a devastated countryside.</p> <p>The story, told in alternating chapters, is a disturbing one, but one that will pluck at the heartstrings – the strength of these teens, and the challenges they face alone, and then together, reflect only slightly the immense sorrow that overtook this region in December 2004. Recommended for grades 7-10.</p> <p>Nancy A. McFarlin Wamego, KS</p>
<p><i>Love, Football, and Other Contact Sports</i> by Alden R. Carter Holiday House, 2006, 261 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Alden Carter's most recent offering is a collection of stories following a group of young people through high school, football, and relationships. In typical Carter fashion, the narratives are set in rural Wisconsin, the characters are deeply sympathetic, and a strong sense of the Midwest permeates the book.</p> <p>While the book addresses serious themes, it is a genuinely funny book. Of particular note is the story "Pig Brains," in which our protagonist declares he is going to take Lithuanian fried brains with Cossack sauce to his social studies class as an example of food reflecting his ethnic heritage. This story would be an ideal read-aloud selection for high school students.</p> <p>Likely to appeal to both girls and boys, <i>Love, Football, and Other Contact Sports</i> is a well-crafted, gentle exploration of the extraordinary nature of ordinary adolescents. Secondary teachers can recommend this book for independent reading without reservation.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>Naïted</i> by Patrick Jones Walker and Co., 2006, 216 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>ISBN: 0-8027-8077-6</p> <p>The nail that sticks out the farthest, Bret Hendricks just invites someone to hammer him down. At school, the "jockarchy" call him "Freak Faggot" because of his preference for theater and music over sports. At home, his tough-guy dad criticizes Bret's green-tinted ponytail and baggy Goodwill clothes, then ignores him to spend time, instead, with a cherished vintage red Camaro. Bret's one refuge, girlfriend Kylee, even dumps him when he refuses to fight the jocks who taunt him.</p> <p>After a year of being hammered on, Bret decides not to yield but to stick out even more. He runs for student body president on an anti-bullying platform that endangers both his school career and his physical safety. He also learns he has support from unexpected quarters.</p> <p>Bret's voice will call to adolescents who feel they also don't quite fit in and will urge them to consider constructive, rather than token, ways to take a stand.</p> <p>Judy Beemer Junction City, KS</p>

<p><i>Mergers</i> by Steven L. Layne Pelican Publishing, 2006, 206 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Racial Intolerance/Leadership ISBN: 1589801830</p> <p>In a world where all races have been blended into one, Dirk, Mateo, Nicci, and Keiko are unique. In addition to their supernatural abilities, they've retained their ethnic features, and that's why Senator Broogue will stop at nothing to destroy them. The Merger, a vision of utopia originally designed to abolish racial differences and eliminate conflict, has become a nightmare of reality that only Dirk and his friends have the ability to reverse. With the help of a mysterious trio of Elders whose ethnicity and abilities mirror those of the teens, Dirk and his friends refine their abilities and prepare to step back in time to meet Senator Broogue and prevent him from ever setting the Merger into motion.</p> <p>The characters are well-crafted, likeable and vivid; adolescent readers are sure to identify with them. Layne weaves a fantastic story full of action and tender moments, conflict and teamwork. Engaging to reluctant and avid readers alike, <i>Mergers</i> blends science fiction, fantasy, and our all-too-human struggles—providing a story that resonates from beginning to end.</p> <p>Rachel Lance Elgin, IL</p>	<p><i>The Murder of Bindy Mackenzie</i> by Jaclyn Moriarty Arthur A. Levine Books, 2006, 494 pp., \$ 16.99</p> <p>Mystery ISBN: 0-439-74051-7</p> <p>Bindy Mackenzie can do no wrong. She is in the top of her class, notices everything around her, and offers self-help sessions for her fellow students. Bindy is the last person who needs a friendship and development class. Her fellow classmates take on the personality of vicious animals, and her too American teacher is too much to deal with. Life couldn't be worse, until it gets worse.</p> <p>The mystery behind two teachers' arguments, the enigmatic and cute Finnegan Blonde, and her own family's hidden secrets unfold as Bindy tells her story through memos, ponderings, letters, and her ever present electronic journal. More mysterious are the changes within Bindy herself. Is she being poisoned? Or is she just losing her mind?</p> <p>Moriarty spins a fascinating story of an overachiever forced to deal with her own limitations, at the same time presenting an intriguing mystery. Not until the end are all of the mysteries revealed. An excellent book for upper middle school and high school.</p> <p>Karolinde Young Manhattan, KS</p>
<p><i>Private</i> by Kate Brian Simon Pulse, 2006, 227 pp., \$8.99</p> <p>Coming of Age/Suspense ISBN: 13: 978-1-4269-1873-8</p> <p>Reed Brennan has won a scholarship to Easton Academy. She has dreamed of this moment when she can escape her gray, suburban life and her alcoholic, prescription drug dependent mother. When her kind, good-hearted father drives their dented Subaru onto the manicured campus, Reed has a moment of misgiving. But seeing this as her only hope, she puts on a brave face and says good-bye.</p> <p>This is the story of a young girl's attempt to escape her painful world and find her place in a privileged one. As Reed tries to break into the inner circle of the most elite group on campus, she finds she must choose between the new love in her life and the hope of becoming one of the Billings Girls. Better suited to high school readers, this first book in a series left me in complete suspense about the choices Reed will make, the disappearance of her boyfriend, and the ceremony that could change her life. Reading the sequel is a must!</p> <p>Vicki Sherbert Wakefield, KS</p>	<p><i>Pucker</i> by Melanie Gideon Razorbill, 2006, 273 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Fantasy ISBN: 1595140557</p> <p>Burn victim Thomas Gale is ignored by his classmates and referred to as "Pucker." Now, his closest friend is his dying mother. As Thomas' mother is facing her last days, she asks him a favor: Thomas must find a cure for his mother's illness in Isaura—the home dimension from which they were banished years ago.</p> <p>As Thomas cons his way back into Isaura, something extraordinary happens—he is healed of his wounds. People finally notice him without disgust. Thomas enjoys the attention and starts having trouble deciding how to use his time. Does he want to stay in Isaura and have friends, or should he be searching for his mother's cure? His deceit gets dangerous as he starts to arouse suspicion. Now, Thomas and his new friends are facing danger, and he must make the right choice—fast.</p> <p>Melanie Gideon writes a gripping tale on redemption, love, and the blessing of the unknown future. Readers will walk away from this book inspired to live life fearlessly.</p> <p>Patrick McGrath Bartlett, IL</p>

<p>Ruby Parker Hits the Small Time by Rowan Coleman HarperTempest, 2007, 240 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Identity/Friendship/Family ISBN: 0-6-077628-5</p> <p>Ruby Parker, at 13, would be the envy of every middle school girl as she has the ingénue role on a popular British soap opera, <i>Kensington Heights</i>, and attends Sylvia Lighthouse's Academy for the Performing Arts. Troubled teens pour out their hearts to her in fan mail, and she solves their problems with ease. Her best friend Nydia supports her fame and celebrity. Her parents live an upper middle class life, while they bank her money in trust and provide the stability every teen needs.</p> <p>Then her parents decide to divorce; her dad moves into an apartment; her mom is in tears; the advice letters begin to mirror her life. She overhears that her role may be cut, but she thinks she is saved by the aging actress who plays her mom. Her first screen kiss looms with her secret crush, her teen hunk co-star. Ruby slowly grows up amidst all the drama, both onscreen and off. This novel was first published in England in 2005 and includes fan mail, Ruby's answers, and sections of TV script.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>	<p>Secrets, Lies, Gizmos, and Spies: A History of Spies and Espionage by Janet Wyman Coleman (with the International Spy Museum) Abrams, 2006, 114 pp., \$24.95</p> <p>ISBN: 0-8100-5756-6</p> <p>The International Spy Museum in Washington, D. C. is fast becoming one of the most popular field trip destinations in the city, and this colorful, glossy book brings the resources of the museum to classrooms and libraries. It is hard for adolescents not to be interested in spies and spying, and this text is replete with high-interest illustrations and photos of cool spy gadgets, as well as discussions of spies and spying throughout history and in the popular culture.</p> <p>This book is an invaluable addition to any social studies class, providing examples of the kinds of historical details that never find their way into the textbooks. While passing reference is made to other historical periods, the vast majority of the book focuses on the World War II and Cold War eras. Any discussion of 20th century American history would be enriched by this text, and many reluctant adolescent readers would be captivated by the discussions of umbrellas that fire lethal pellets, listening devices hidden in decorative wall plaques, and all of the other treasures compiled here.</p> <p>F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>
<p>7 Days at the Hot Corner by Terry Trueman HarperTempest, 2006, 160 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Baseball/Friendship/AIDS ISBN: 0-06-057494</p> <p>This page-turner opens with Scott, a senior in high school, nervously sitting in the waiting room of the Spokane Public Health building to take an AIDS test. His best friend Travis has outed himself in an anonymous interview published in the school newspaper, and his parents asked him to leave home because they are worried he will negatively influence his younger brother. Scott's dad is allowing Travis to live with them, much to Scott's discomfort. During impromptu practice at the batting cage, Travis gets hit and develops a massive nosebleed. Scott now fears the worst result of an unexpected homosexual encounter and gets tested.</p> <p>The novel follows Scott during the seven days he must wait for the results. He is the third baseman on the undefeated high school baseball team, and Trueman highlights the plot with baseball action, sports allusions, and flashbacks. This is the powerful, well-written story of a young man who plays the "hot corner," a reference to both his baseball position and the tense place he finds himself in life. As a bonus, myths about AIDS are dispelled with accurate information.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>	<p>Shug by Jenny Han Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006, 248 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>ISBN: 978-1-4169-0942-2</p> <p>As the summer comes to an end, twelve-year-old Annemarie Wilcox, known as "Shug" to her family, realizes junior high school is going to be completely different from elementary school. Everything around her is changing, and everything is happening fast. All Shug wants is for her life to stay just the way it is.</p> <p>All the boys her age are starting to take an interest in girls; however, Annemarie finds herself being left behind. She thinks of herself as too tall, too flat-chested, and too freckled. Annemarie has a crush on her longtime friend, Mark, but he is oblivious. When Annemarie is forced to tutor her worst enemy, Jack, she discovers he can relate to her problems better than anyone. Tension mounts at home as Shug's parents constantly fight because of her father's extensive traveling and her mother's drinking binges.</p> <p>Jenny Han's descriptive style and realistic dialogue brings Annemarie's character to life. Han is able to effectively express the trials and tribulations that an average 12-year-old girl faces in her first year of middle school.</p> <p>Nicole Runge Algonquin, IL</p>

<p><i>Split Screen</i> by Brent Hartinger HarperTempest, 2007, 304 pp., \$16.99</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Gay/Lesbian Relationships/Friendships ISBN: 0-06-082408-5</p> <p>Split screen refers to more than a visual effect as this novel is a flip-the-book. The plot is told from two points of view—Russel Middlebrook and his best friend Min Wei, 16-year-olds who sign on as extras in the locally filmed version of <i>Attack of the Soul-Sucking Brain Zombies</i>, which is also the title of Russel's tale. Min writes of her adventures in <i>Bride of the Soul-Sucking Brain Zombies</i>, which the reader finds by flipping over Russel's story.</p> <p>These two intelligent and sensitive characters, along with their other pals previously created the secret gay-straight alliance at Robert I. Goodkind High School the year before; that story was told in Hartinger's award-winning <i>Geography Club</i>. The filming provides students from other schools who also act as extras playing normal high school students who gradually morph into zombies. The setting provides the backdrop for teen romance, adolescent treachery, prejudice, and resolution. Hartinger has another winner in this well-written and often poignant story.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Judith A. Haym Little Rock, AR</p>	<p><i>Trigger</i> by Susan Vaught Bloomsbury, 2006, 262 pp., \$16.95</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Suicide ISBN: 1-58234-920-7</p> <p>Jersey Hatch can't remember the past two years. He can't remember why he's blind in one eye, why his once-athletic body no longer works quite right, and most of all, what happened the night he was shot. The night he shot himself. After months of rehabilitation, Jersey returns home, sending him on a quest to find the answer to what made him pull the trigger.</p> <p>Told in the stilted language of a young man who cannot control his thoughts and speech, Jersey's story unfolds through the help of his childhood neighbors: Mama Rush, Leza, and finally, his ex-best friend, Todd. Along the way, he must also face and accept the impact his actions had on his own family.</p> <p>Although not a conventional mystery, this book keeps the reader guessing and wondering what drove this once seemingly perfect boy to attempt the ultimate act. Jersey's story is not one that will quickly be forgotten.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Robyn Seglem Olathe, KS</p>
<p><i>The Unresolved</i> by T.K. Welsh Dutton Books, 2006, 149 pp., \$16.99</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Historical Fiction/Ghosts/Romance/Prejudice ISBN: 0-525-47731-4</p> <p>In an interesting twist for historical fiction, T.K. Welsh's first young adult novel, <i>The Unresolved</i>, develops a tale of romance told from the point of view of a ghost, a victim of the true-life burning and sinking of the steamship the General Slocum in New York City's East River in June 1904.</p> <p>In the novel, the steamship fire is started after our protagonist, 15-year-old Mallory, receives her first kiss from a young man. He attempts to save her, but the ship's lifejackets are rotten (a historically accurate detail), and she drowns after he pushes her into the water. He survives, only to be blamed for causing the fire, and our now ghostly narrator cannot rest until justice is done.</p> <p>No doubt many adolescents will enjoy this blend of romance and the supernatural set against the backdrop of an American tragedy that is often overlooked.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">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>

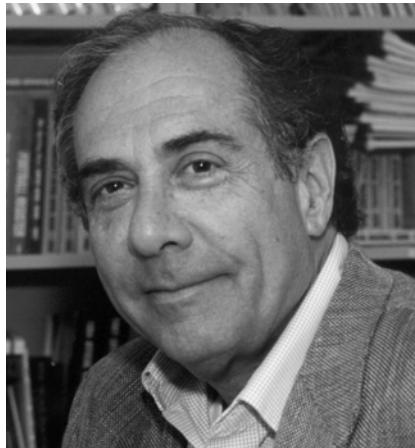
Interviewing the Interviewer:

Talking with Robert Lipsyte

Intimidating. As a sportswriter, Robert Lipsyte covered beats ranging from NASCAR to high school football for *The New York Times*. His 40-year career has taken him into the locker rooms of professional athletes, out to dinner with coaches, and behind the scenes of the American sports machine. His successes as a journalist and young adult novelist are well documented. Just outside of the 2006 ALAN Conference, I sat across the table from him and felt myself slipping out of my comfort zone. Suddenly, the legend I eagerly agreed to interview was interviewing me.

In talking about his latest book, he asked about my experience playing and coaching high school football. I talked about much of the jock culture that I had witnessed firsthand, the steroids and the pressure to perform at all costs. He understood; he had seen it before. Just as his new novel, *Raiders Night*, is making some of the high school sports establishment uncomfortable, I started feeling a bit uneasy. After all, I had sworn secrecy when my teammate decided to take steroids in high school. He wanted to be bigger, faster, and stronger as our weight program proclaimed we should be. I, too, was part of that jock culture, but I had escaped.

Lipsyte asked why I hadn't taken steroids. He asked what had happened to my friend that had. He asked if the coaches knew. He followed up when I



gave half answers. He pried. All at the same time, his soothing voice and warm manner made me feel comfortable sharing with him, a man I had just met who proved anything but intimidating.

The topic of this interview deals in part with Lipsyte's thoughts and experiences with writing and young adult literature. Additionally, we discuss his latest novel, and he shares experiences unique to the high school sports culture. It was an honor to

interview an author I have admired for many years. His frank, realistic, and forthcoming voice can be heard in his words and stories.

TAR: What inspired you to be a writer and how much of your writing relies on your contact or former experiences with people as a reporter?

RL: Writing is the only thing I have ever wanted to do. I was lucky. Emily Dickinson, whom I always liked a lot, never left her room, and I don't know how many people she talked to. I don't know if that is the only thing, but I think it has always been necessary for me that journalism is where I got my ideas. That is really where I got my training.

TAR: How often are you still writing for the newspapers?

RL: Whenever I need instant gratification. Whenever I think nobody's listening to me. I sporadically write editorials for *USA Today*. I do a lot of work for ESPN and occasionally for ESPN.com. I'm starting now to write these long pieces every other month; *The Nation* has a blog called Tom Dispatch (www.tomdispatch.com). I just did one on why the Republicans didn't win; it's because they alienated NASCAR fans. That's my whole theory, but it's really kind of about NASCAR. I spent a lot of time covering NASCAR. But at the time I'm kind of writing semi-sports political pieces. I write for *USA Today* and ESPN just to keep my hand in journalism. The day-to-day work is fiction.

TAR: What's a typical day look like? Do you have a typical day?

RL: You've got to keep hours. I get up at eight o'clock, something like that. My wife and I, we split our time between Manhattan and we have a house on Shelter Island. We have exactly the same setup. We each have the same desktop in each place. So, at both places, I get up around eight o'clock, get a cup of coffee and go to work. If it's warm enough I don't put clothes on. It's my house. My office is like ten steps away from the bedroom. If it is the first draft, I write it in long hand in pencil. After that, I write on the computer, and I generally can fit in a good six hours. In the afternoon, I'll do journalism or answer mail. If I'm in the city, I'll go to the gym. If I'm in the country, I'll go bike-riding. That's the day. I see my kids, see friends and laugh.

TAR: You mentioned your son is a writer and has published books of his own. Do you see yourself in his writing? How?

RL: Yep, he's a wonderful writer and his name is Sam Lipsyte. He's written two novels and a book of short stories. He's a professor of creative writing at Columbia. I don't see myself in his writing style. He writes very darkly comic novels, every so often I cringe because I see myself in his stories. Something I did or parts of myself. I wonder how he knew about that. Uh, he's absolutely honest, has no shame in using anything in his life. His mother, my former wife who's deceased, was also a writer,

so he grew up in a household with two people who were writing and that kind of demystified the process. He got the idea that it was something not all that difficult. These people whom he had seen bleary eyed or picking their noses were writers, so anybody could be a writer.

TAR: Is there something that's happened in your career as a young adult author that nobody or not as many people know about that you consider a highlight? Is there like a single letter, maybe that you've gotten back from a student?

RL: There have been a lot of things. I guess the thing that's in my mind happened about an hour and a half ago. I was signing, and this guy came up and said "I don't want to make you feel old, but I read *The Contender* 30 years ago and it changed my life. I was a really reluctant reader; people thought I was retarded. Then I read that book and I'm going to have my first young adult novel published next year." Something like that kind of gives you shivers. Every so often, you hear something like that and it's thrilling. I think that there are a lot of young adult writers that would tell you the same story, and I think that I was just lucky to hear that story about *The Contender*.

But I think that's what empowers young adult literature. It's not about *The Contender*, it's about people who are still open to new ideas, the process of becoming, and some really smart teacher put the right book in his or her hands and made the difference. That's what young adult literature can do; that's what keeps us going.

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TAR: How does your career as a journalist compare to your career as a young adult novelist? Is the writing process greatly different for you when you are working on a young adult novel compared to an article?

RL: Actually what happened was I was a pretty fast typist. In the Army they sent me to clerk typist

In the army they sent me to clerk typist school. Which is great for deadlines and journalism, but it really gives a staccato beat to my writing. When I was writing *The Contender*, the first long fiction I wrote, I began to realize that every sentence looked and sounded the same. That is when I started writing in longhand.

school. Which is great for deadlines and journalism, but it really gives a staccato beat to my writing. When I was writing *The Contender*, the first long fiction I wrote, I began to realize that every sentence looked and sounded the same. That is when I started writing in longhand. There is a real difference when I am writing in longhand, and ever since that, I have written all first drafts of all fiction in longhand and all journalism I do completely with the computer. That is mechanical. I have always needed both. I enjoy the journey of getting out, seeing places, and meeting

people with journalism. Almost everything fictional I have written has either come out of my personal life or out of journalism.

TAR: What is the best book you've written?

RL: I don't know. Every book has something that might make them first. *One Fat Summer* was the closest to my own life. I have a soft spot in my heart for a book that really went into the toilet: *The Chemo Kid*. It may not have been a good book; that is always a possibility. I think people just didn't get it. It was about a kid who got cancer and during his

chemotherapy treatment lost all of his hair, turned slightly green, gained a lot of weight, and had superhuman powers. The evolution of that was that about thirty years ago I had cancer, lost all my hair, though I didn't turn green or get superhuman powers, my kids were small. During the treatment I was sitting around the house; I was pretty sick. If I was sitting in a chair, my wife would have to help me out. I started telling them these stories about this kid who had cancer and superhuman powers. At the end of the book his cancer is cured and he has to face this enormous problem, should he keep taking the chemotherapy or give up his superhuman powers. I have always written realistic fiction and there was an element of fantasy in this; I don't think people ever quite got it. Or, as I said, maybe it was a bad book, but I liked that book. I don't know about the best one I have ever written, but I have the softest spot in my heart for it.

TAR: Do you have a colleague in young adult literature that is your favorite or that you look up to the most?

RL: Yeah, there are a lot of people out there that I admire. Personally, Judy Blume, Walter Dean Myers, Chris Crutcher, Francesca Lia Block, M.E. Kerr, and I think the all-time best is Robert Cormier. I think he is the man, I really do. One of the books is *After the First Death*. Actually maybe the best book on terrorism I have ever read. It captures the whole sense of terrorism from both sides. It captures the terrorists and the victims. He is an amazing guy. I found him very inspirational because he was a newspaper columnist and a really nice man. I think that of everything in young adult fiction, *After the First Death* is really the most powerful. I remember the first time I read it, I read it on a plane, a long flight. I just finished it as the plane landed and I couldn't get up. Finally the flight attendant came over and said "Sir, is there a problem?" It is the kind of book that makes me glad to be part of this genre.

TAR: What do you see as the biggest obstacle for young adult literature in the next twenty years?

RL: Well, I think there is an awful lot of crap being

published, pandering series with books that don't seem to be in the best interest of kids, books that seem to be commercial projects. It muddies the waters. The problem seems to be that teens are reading less, and I think the pressure is on teachers, writers, librarians to get better books into kids' hands. YAL, as a genre, it has a great responsibility to not lie to the youth. It is a real responsibility of young adult literature to tell kids the truth no matter how complex and painful it might be to get the truth in a book. We can't lie to them.

There is a teaching element to these books. There is kind of a reaching out from one generation to another telling people that you can survive. Other people have done it, and here are some tips on how to do it. Adolescents must understand they are in the process of becoming. It is like the neurobiology of a brain that is vulnerable to steroids. For the same reason I wouldn't give steroids to high school kids, I really don't want to give them bullshit, false values, lies, sentimental, and manipulative stuff. I want to give them the real literature. Some of the stuff out there is as harmful as giving the kids dope. You may be screwing up their lives worse or at least as surely as if you were giving them dope.

TAR: *Raiders Night* certainly takes a realistic look at high school sports. You mentioned that it is causing some controversy. Are you surprised that this book is a subject of censorship efforts?

RL: Censorship is too strong a word. It is more insidious than that. I have been invited to school by librarians and English teachers and then uninvited by the coaches, athletic directors, and principals. It is not the language. It is not the sex and drugs. It is kind of like Friday night darks. It is seen as a negative look at jock culture that these guys are really invested in. That has been different and interesting to me.

TAR: Do you have previous experiences with censorship?

RL: Not really. So much of censorship is not like *Fahrenheit 451*. There was a case in Tacoma,

Washington, where some families wanted to have *The Contender* banned just a couple years ago because there were no middle class black role models in the book. It turns out they had not read the book because there were middle class black role models in the book. It actually became a case and there was a hearing. An educator flew out from Harvard University, from their education school to testify. For a time *One Fat Summer* was briefly taken off the shelves in Levittown, New, York. A mother reading over her son's shoulder had seen a masturbation scene that I do not remember writing. That was a case where the teachers revolted and made a case out of it. They were not going to be pushed around. In both those cases, it seemed like small stuff.

But with *Raiders Night*, I sense something different happening. It is not ideological. It happened in Tennessee, it happened in Texas, and it happened in the District of Columbia, that I know about. I really think it is about money. I really think there is now an understanding that high school sports, particularly football and to a lesser extent basketball, are going to be major money makers for school districts. When you've got Texas high school ballparks selling their naming rights for a million dollars: Tyler, Texas, went for 1.9 million. When you've got ESPN televising games nationally and Gatorade, Pizza, and cell phone companies waiting in the wings to sponsor national tournaments (if they ever get that off the ground), you're talking about a billion dollar industry so this is not something you want to mess around with. When

The problem seems to be that teens are reading less and I think the pressure is on teachers, writers, librarians to get better books into kids' hands. YAL, as a genre, it has a great responsibility to not lie to the youth. It is a real responsibility of young adult literature to tell kids the truth no matter how complex and painful it might be

your school district stands to benefit from that, you don't really want anybody saying, "So, do your boys take steroids?"

TAR: My feeling is that this book would and should create those questions. What is the central issue at hand here?

RL: I wrote an op-ed piece just a couple of days ago in *USA Today* about mandatory steroid testing for high

school athletes. Right away the paper got these email responses from organizations saying "very good idea to a point, but here are the five reasons that it can't work." There are all of these kinds of financial, privacy reasons. Right away, you know that their skin is itching. It is no violation of privacy at all. Don't play. If you don't want to be tested, go play softball.

You've got to make a stand to stop it (steroid use) somewhere. With a case like Barry Bonds, the

Raiders Night

Reviewed by Chris Goering

Only a handful of high school athletes are considered to be blue chip prospects, top recruits good enough to play at the collegiate level. They have NCAA Division I scholarships waiting and often the local fan following reserved for heroes. Between the hype and fanfare, they must deal with pressure beyond their years. What Matt Rydek, senior co-captain of the Nearmont High School Raiders football team, did not realize before practice started was that he would be the underdog this year. It would be left up to him to stand for what was right, even if it cost his team the entire promising season.

The pressures facing protagonist Rydek are at a boiling point as the novel begins. Using the steroids, pain killers, and sleeping pills to deal with a handicapped brother and an incorrigible father, he tries to balance responsibilities of school, football, a failing romantic relationship, and steering clear of his co-captain, Ramp. Coach Mac's cliché speech as the team heads to camp resonates throughout the novel. "You are heading into Raider country now, a band of brothers going to eat, sleep, breathe football for the next five days. Your coaches will be putting you through the meat grinder, and if you make it—not everybody does—you will be a Raider (42)." Matt's world is upset as he and the other seniors witness a sexual assault on transfer sophomore standout Chris Marin during Raiders Night, the traditional hazing event that gets out of hand under Ramp's control.

As the novel progresses, Matt struggles with what he has witnessed and whether or not he should help the sophomore and reveal the truth. Sarah, a strong female character and love interest, befriends Matt and becomes a confidant, eventually helping him toward understanding what has happened and what he must do. As he nears a decision, his teammates and community turn on him and "not everybody" makes it to be a Raider. Lipsyte effectively captures the results of the mounting pressure on high school athletes to entertain the public through Rydek, the story of a Mr. Everything who becomes a true underdog.

This book would appeal to anyone who deals with high school athletes—teachers, romantic interests, parents, students, coaches—from the perspective of understanding the participants of high stakes high school athletics. Lipsyte, himself, cautions teachers and librarians against using this book with younger readers without reading it carefully—this is not *The Contender* (1967), a book often used in middle schools. Though it does contain violence, profanity, and some sexual content, it is handled thoughtfully. I would not hesitate to give it to high school students and feel the book's appeal reaches far beyond the boundaries of a male high school athlete.

Lipsyte, Robert. *Raiders Night*. HarperCollins Children's Books, 2006, 232 pp. ISBN: 0-060-59946-4. \$15.99

genie is out of the bottle. When you think of the neurobiology of 15-16-17-year olds, you don't want to mess with that. We are putting the pressure on them to entertain us.

TAR: If you could address the administrators, athletic directors, and coaches that rejected your visits, what would you tell them?

RL: I would like to know what is on their minds. They are the ones that are holding the cards. What is it in the book that disturbs them? What don't they want these ball players to be thinking about? And then if they ask me what I have learned, I would tell them that when I do talk to their ball players, they are talking about the profound distrust they have for adults, especially their coaches. Players really feel trapped in this situation. They feel like the coach doesn't care about them because he is playing them hurt, exploiting them, manipulating them against each other. On the other hand, they really want to play ball. They love the game; they love the contact; they love being with the guys, but there is no way out. What are they going to do? They are stuck.

TAR: In your preparation to write this book, did you interview specific high school athletes or was it based more on an overarching experience? Also, what were your experiences working with a partner?

RL: Two things. One, I started out as a high school reporter with the *New York Times*. That was my first beat for a couple of years. I have always liked high school, and I have always over the years gone back to high school for stories. Two, I had some real serious help from a sports psychiatrist, Dr. Mike Miletic, who really opened his files and we talked a lot. I was a little out of my area psychologically, and I wanted to make sure I connected with the problems.

I worked with a historian once on a history project and my wife and I have written newspaper stories before. As far as Miletic goes, it was interesting because he didn't do any of the writing, but I really kind of passed everything through him to make sure it was medically and psychologically accurate.

TAR: How long did the process of writing *Raiders Night* take?

RL: I think that maybe the mechanical process was a year, but the gestation of it was a number of years. It really all started out when Mike Miletic and I had met on a panel. We did a panel on sports for the American Psychoanalytic Association. We were both on the panel. We'd never met before. And we really liked each other a lot and went out to supper afterwards and became friends. He was a psychiatrist, and in the course of the friendship, we realized that we both had very similar attitudes towards jock culture. We decided that we wanted to write a book together about the impact of jock culture in America. He, from a psychological point of view, and I, from a journalistic point of view. And we found out that our views were seen as radical. About steroids, about the idea that there was a clear line from the field house to the white house, about the use of shame and humiliation by coaches, the sexism, the homophobia. This stuff pervaded the culture.

We actually learned about it playing sports—you're on the team; you're not on the team, black and white. We found that there was so much resistance to the book that nobody wanted to touch this subject. Particularly male editors would cross their legs when we talked. The more we thought about was even if we wrote such a book the people who read it, it would be preaching to the chorus. We wanted to get the teens, to get to the boys, to get to the athletes. So that was the process when we said we probably should write a novel. So, it

When I do talk to their ball players, they are talking about the profound distrust they have for adults, especially their coaches. Players really feel trapped in this situation. They feel like the coach doesn't care about them because he is playing them hurt, exploiting them, manipulating them against each other.

I spend a lot of time at signings, through email warning teachers that this is not *The Contender*, that you should not be giving this to your eighth-grade and ninth-grade class. It is a tough book.

kind of evolved differently than any other book I've ever done in that sense.

TAR: If you could talk to the teachers out there for a minute thinking about bringing this book into their classrooms, schools to use, what would you say?

RL: I would tell them I saw it used very creatively in a high school outside of Chicago. It was taught by a psychology/ sociology teacher. The kids, seniors, read the book and they talked about moral choices. I thought that was an interesting way. It wasn't being taught as a unit per se. That was where I had interaction with a lot of those kids, spent a day in the high school talking to the football players. They were the ones who started, though now it has really mounted up in emails and letters, they were the first ones that told me about

how they distrusted coaches. I thought it was interesting how the teacher approached it. I spend a lot of time at signings, through email warning teachers that this is not *The Contender*, that you should not be giving this to your eighth-grade and ninth-grade class. It is a tough book. It should be hand carried to ballplayers, and to their girlfriends. I enjoy hearing from kids that have read it. I don't mind spending an hour or two each day answering email; it seems like an extension of the book, part of the process, but I don't kid myself, my parents were teachers and I know what the life is like—very intense—this is like being a grandfather and giving the kid back at the end of the day.

Bob Lipsyte invites teachers, librarians, and students to contact him about their experiences reading *Raiders Night* and other books of his. He can be reached at robert@robertlipsyte.com and through his website at www.robertlipsyte.com.

Chris Goering is a doctoral candidate in curriculum and instruction at Kansas State University, where he teaches and serves as a Co-Director of the Flint Hills Writing Project, an affiliate of the National Writing Project. He is currently in his seventh year in education.



From Hinton to Hamlet Seeing Old Things New Again

Wonderful, can't-put-down books on pedagogy and literacy practice are rare, but a second edition of a wonderful, can't-put-down book on pedagogy and practice is a real treasure. In Sarah K. Herz and Donald Gallo's second, revised, and expanded edition of *From Hinton to Hamlet: Building Bridges between Young Adult Literature and the Classics*, teachers and parents feel invited to join a meaningful conversation which includes the need to consider stages of students' reading development; providing a "comfort level in students' reading choices," and "providing quality literature that is accessible."

Sound interesting? Yes, it is! Learning HOW to connect teens to text is an interesting part of our craft, and yet this book offers so much more. Consider the aforementioned discussions as only the tip of the iceberg; this book is filled with new connections, new young adult literature discussions, and fresh links to new methods of instruction. Who could ask for more? Although great from its first

creation, ten years have passed since this book's first publication, and in those ten years, animals have been cloned and digital music now drifts out of mini Ipods. In the ten years since the first edition of *From Hinton to Hamlet*, the range

As an old-hand at teaching, one who began her career when our main objective was to underline nouns and verbs, I always find it extraordinary when I am visiting schools and see old practices, such as reading and re-reading canonical texts, employed in exactly the same way they were too many years ago.

and quantity of adolescent titles has also grown exponentially. With change and growth, new connections are always welcome, and here's why:

As an old-hand at teaching, one who began her career when our main objective was to underline nouns and verbs, I always find it extraordinary when I am visiting schools and see old practices, such as reading and re-reading canonical texts, employed in exactly the same way they were too many years ago. Not only does tradition still embrace the practice, but also the identical titles we read ten, twenty, and even thirty years ago. Timeless literature is a moniker that may be meaningless to our techno-savvy and active adolescents. Luckily for those who still valiantly usher young readers through the time-honored likes of *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Great Expectations*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Scarlet Letter*, and of course, *Hamlet*, we can once again thank Herz and Gallo for showing us the way to couple canonical texts with an adolescent text, thereby making the read relevant and even fun. Some might

disagree, but even the standard, the rule, the norm, the canon, and the law is not compromised when reading it becomes fun and relevant. You'll be convinced when you experience the talent and craft of Herz and Gallo.

Showing how to design "themed" connections by pairing canon with young adult literature is definitely one of this book's greatest appeals, especially to English teachers. However, with the encouragement all teachers receive to create cross-curricular units, the new and paramount appeal of this book can be found in a chapter with an interesting name: *Other Backyards: Using Young Adult Literature across Other Disciplines*. With that title, with the invitation for all disciplines to use young adult literature to make connections to content, this book should be on every teacher's Christmas list. Why? It's an easy consideration: A physical education teacher could make fitness memorable by assigning reading! What a novel thought, but after teen athletes finish *The Basket Counts* by Arnold Adoff or *Tangerine* by Edward Bloor, the

I especially liked Herz and Gallo's suggestions that the Westward Movement, issues of immigration, and nature and ecology could be taught as part of an interdisciplinary approach that shows "reading and writing are not the exclusive purview of English/language arts teachers."

lessons of fitness become indelible. I especially liked Herz and Gallo's suggestions that the Westward Movement, issues of immigration, and nature and ecology could be taught as part of an interdisciplinary approach that shows "reading and writing are not the exclusive purview of English/language arts teachers."

With this wonderful second edition of *From Hinton to Hamlet* on our personal and library shelves, teachers will find that their content is enriched, and most importantly, that young adult literature is a bridge to comprehension and cognitive work with age-old, wise, but nevertheless prescribed texts. This book is a must-have . . . and as I said before: It is a real treasure!

Kay Smith is an assistant professor of English at Utah Valley State College, in Provo, Utah. She is an alumna of Utah State and Brigham Young Universities, with degrees in English and music education, and school administration. After seventeen years as a high school teacher, principal, and college adjunct faculty, she left what she loved and decided to do what she loved even more: teaching English education on the college level. She currently teaches Young Adult Literature and Methods of Literacy at Utah Valley State College. She is married to Michael D. Smith, and they are the proud parents of seven children and proud grandparents of six. She can be reached at smithky@uwsc.edu.

Just Listening to Sarah Dessen

It was the second week of school, and I had just brought my copy of Sarah Dessen's *Just Listen* to my classroom to put on my shelves. As we waited for first hour to begin, Callie, a bright-eyed 7th grader, rushed toward me, explaining that she had just seen the list of recommended books in my classroom newsletter and had noticed the newest Sarah Dessen title. Did I have it? Reaching for it on my shelves, I shared with her that I not only had the book, but I would have the privilege of interviewing and meeting Sarah in Nashville at the ALAN convention. From that moment, Callie and I shared a bond that went beyond the student-teacher bond: it was a bond shared by avid readers.

August, September, October and, finally, November were peppered with Callie's questions. Would I ask her this? How about that? Could I get an autograph? Could I please take her with me? And Callie's enthusiasm was not unique. When it came time to actually write the review of *Just Listen*, I approached student after student in search of my copy. I cannot say I was surprised. Similar reactions to Sarah's books have occurred throughout my career as a teacher and an advocate of YA lit. Sarah Dessen understands the fears and triumphs of young girls, and it is because of this that I was interested in learning more about not just her books, but her approach to writing.

While this interview was conducted via email, I had a chance to meet with Sarah at both the ALAN



reception and at the conference, where she spoke about romance and YA literature. As expected, she was easy to talk to, and shared insights into her career as an author:

TAR: I first discovered your work when I was teaching sophomore English in 2000. When my librarian recommended *Dreamland* to me, I immediately read it and fell in love with Caitlin's story. My

students quickly began passing it around, and I'm not sure it ever went back on the library's shelves that year. Then, a couple years ago, I switched to seventh grade English, and figured I would have to discover new authors that would appeal to a younger audience. To my surprise, these younger girls embraced your characters just as quickly, and today, I'm not sure which girl has my copy of *Just Listen*. Why do you think your characters speak to such a wide range of age groups?

SD: I like to think that it's because there are a variety of themes in each book, and many of them are universal. When I was a teen, I never wanted to read just about girls my age. I was always interested not only in what was happening, but what came next as well. In addition to that, several of the books have a strong family component, which I think many girls can relate to even if they haven't yet had experience with boys or any of the other

issues that are part of the story. In all truth, though, I think as an author you can't put too much focus on trying to appeal to everyone. I just try to write the story I want to read, and then hope for the best.

TAR: In *Just Listen*, Annabel finds herself afraid to speak to the classmates she has grown up with, simply because of an act that has been done to her. Do you think this is a typical reaction of teenage girls who find themselves in similar situations?

SD: In my mind, it's more complicated than not wanting to speak to people because of what's

happened to her. It's also that she's had conflicts with many of these people in the past—her former friends Clarke and Sophie, for instance—that have made it that much harder to be open with them about anything, much less something as big as a sexual assault. Annabel is afraid of confrontation, which I think is very typical for girls. At the same time, though, there is a lot of shame associated with sexual assault, which makes it very difficult for anyone, and teenagers especially, to be open about it.

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TAR: It used to be that bullying was considered an issue only among boys. However, it has become more and more apparent that girls participate in a subtler version of bullying. Many of Sophie's actions, as well as those of her followers, reflect this type of bullying. Were you trying to illustrate the effects of these actions while writing about Sophie?

SD: It was necessary to show how Sophie operates—intimidating people, getting revenge on those she believes have wronged her—in order to make it believable that Annabel would be so isolated once

they were no longer friends. The fact that Annabel was there when Sophie did these things means that people aren't exactly reaching out when the same thing happens to her. At the same time, I had to show why Sophie was appealing to Annabel in the first place, that she was dynamic and different and opened up this whole new world that hadn't been there before. It's a delicate thing, to show the draw and the subsequent price paid for befriending someone like that. It was actually very similar to what I had to do with Rogerson, the abusive boyfriend, in *Dreamland*.

TAR: Speaking of Rogerson, many of your other characters have unusual names. Every time you write a new story, you essentially give birth to new people. With so many new people populating your world, how do you come up with the names for all your characters? Have you ever had to change a character's name because it didn't seem to fit the character's personality?

SD: When I'm starting a new book, the narrator's name always comes first. I find them in all kinds of places: Halley from *Someone Like You* was obviously from the comet, but I've stolen names from people I've met (Colie, from *Keeping the Moon*, was the name of a girl who came to a book signing) or just heard of (Remy, from *This Lullaby*, was the first name of a football player I overheard interviewed on the radio). To me, names are crucial: if I pick the right one, at least some of the attributes of that character jump into my head soon after. I think I always pick somewhat unusual names because when I was younger, I always wished my name was more exotic. Now, I love being a Sarah, but then I was so envious of my best friend, whose name is Bianca. I've never changed the name of a narrator, that I can remember, although I have changed other characters' names. Usually it's because it conflicts with another name, or I realize the character has changed, and the name doesn't work for them anymore.

TAR: Honesty and self-confidence seems to be recurring themes within your novel. Is this a conscious decision on your part as you are developing your characters?

SD: It's not as much a conscious thing as it is the fact that these were things I was struggling with a lot as a teen. It's easier to be confident once you're older, with a lot of experiences under your belt, but in high school everything is happening for the very first time. There's no primer, or flow chart, to show you how to handle every situation, which can lead to a lot of doubt and stress. You only grow confidence and strength by enduring things, and I try to show that with my characters, that they're girls who go up against challenges and come out changed in many ways on the other side.

TAR: Many authors who write stories that deal with issues that young adults experience find themselves approached by their readers. These readers frequently feel thankful that a story similar to their own has been told. Have you ever had any such experiences?

SD: I'm often very overwhelmed by what I hear from my readers. The most emotional responses I've gotten have been via email, through my website. For example, since *Just Listen* was published in April, I've heard from several people who told me about their own experiences being assaulted, a few of whom had told no one else. I also heard from a lot of girls after *Dreamland* came out who wanted to tell me about being in abusive relationships. On the one hand, it's amazing that they feel comfortable enough to reach out to me and be so open. At the same time, I do worry about the right way to respond. It's a lot of responsibility. Usually, I encourage them to talk to someone else, their parents, a clergyperson, a counselor or a friend.

TAR: What is the most difficult aspect of the writing process for you?

SD: The first draft is definitely the hardest part for me. When I'm working on a book, I work every day, seven days a week, and it's usually pretty slow going, because I'm very meticulous. I think it's partially because I've learned a lot from writing seven books (that were published: I have about seven more that will never see the light of day). I like to think that I have a better idea now what works and doesn't work for me, although this is

certainly not always the case. (See those seven books, above.) I don't outline, but I do write in order, always, which means that each scene and chapter has to be strong enough to support what comes after it. So I'm often tinkering, and rewriting, trying to get things right, and that takes time.

TAR: You mention that you have several books that won't see the light of day. Do any of the elements or characters reincarnate themselves in your other books? What are your feelings about these unpublished books? Are they as valuable to you as the published ones?

SD: I've definitely used things from books that haven't worked. *Dreamland*, in particular, came from a novel that was too long and weighty, but had a subplot with Caitlin and Rogerson, although it was much different in its initial incarnation. I put the same amount of work and time into

every book, whether it works or not; I'd never start a book if I expected it to fail. So I'm attached to all of them, even the ones that no one but me will ever read. In some ways, I might even learn *more* from them because I have to figure out what doesn't work. It can be hard to let go. If you read *The Truth About Forever*, there's a character mentioned at the very beginning named Amy Richmond. I wrote an entire book about Amy, and know everything about her and her story. It ended up not working, so I snuck her into the next one in the hopes that she'd still get out there somehow. And she did.

TAR: Some authors build support networks with other authors to help each other over the rough spots that often come when crafting a story. Do you have other authors that you converse with regularly? Or is there another support network that you rely on?

SD: I'm lucky to have several friends who are writers, which I think can be very helpful. I don't discuss

Since *Just Listen* was published in April, I've heard from several people who told me about their own experiences being assaulted, a few of whom had told no one else.

the specifics of what I'm working on with anyone—I tend to be very private, the book's like a secret I want to keep for as long as possible—but it's always nice to have someone to commiserate with who really understands, especially when you're stuck or frustrated. Writing is one of those jobs that

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there's really no right way to do, no manual you can buy and follow. You just learn as you go, and sometimes, that learning is hard. It helps to be neurotic, I think, so you're already used to feeling a little crazy every day. I'm fortunate in that I have a great husband and very supportive friends, who at this point just roll their eyes when I say I'm convinced I've lost any

talent I ever might have had and am considering a new career path, like, say, working at the CVS or something. They, unlike me, always remember that there's a point in every book when I think I can't go on. And then they tell me to do just that.

TAR: It's great that you have such a support system.

Do you ever read fellow authors' novels and provide feedback before they reach the published stage?

SD: I have on occasion, but only with my students, and close friends. It's a very vulnerable thing to show someone an unedited manuscript, and I think you have to trust them very much. I get asked a lot through my website to read manuscripts, but for legal reasons, I just can't.

TAR: You stated on your web page that you hated being told what you were to write when you were in high school. What advice would you give English teachers about writing instruction?

SD: I understand that it's hard to motivate kids to write, and that in high school, it's crucial to learn how to write argumentatively and craft essays. But writing creatively has its own benefits, as well. I

think there's a lot to be said for allowing students to just write, with a minimum of a prompt or no prompt at all. It's not easy, and I know, because I taught Intro to Fiction Writing at UNC-Chapel Hill for seven years. My students were often completely overwhelmed when I'd say, "Write about something that really affected you," or just "write a story." They'd sit there, blank faced. But once they started, something came, and often it surprised them. It's like a different way of thinking about words and your use of them, and I think it can only help all the other ways you write. But that's just my opinion, of course.

TAR: With today's focus in education on high-stakes tests, many English teachers feel that there has been a tendency to neglect writing instruction within schools. As a creative writing teacher at the university level, do you feel that this shift in focus has impacted student writing?

SD: My students had a really hard time breaking the rules they'd been taught about writing. They never wanted to use contractions, for example: I got a lot of "We are going to the store," and "I will take the bus." I kept saying to them, "Real people don't talk like this!" Also, like I said above, they had a hard time just writing without being told very specifically what to write. They didn't want to use first person. Their writing was so clean, but fiction isn't supposed to be clean: it has to be messy, especially in a first draft, when you're just getting it down. Eventually, they learned this. But it did take time.

TAR: To build upon the idea that many secondary English teachers feel forced to neglect writing instruction in order to prepare for reading tests, what do you think about this neglect? Do you think that students are being short-changed in their English instruction? Or do you believe that natural writers will pick up the skills on their own?

SD: I would hope that natural writers are reading enough to be learning on their own, but it's hard to say. There's always been that debate about whether writing can be taught at all, and I believe it can, to a point. You can take what someone writes and show them how to improve it. But there are some

Just Listen

by Sarah Dessen

Reviewed by Robyn Seglem

What makes the perfect girl with the perfect family tick? Despite appearances to the contrary, don't ask Annabel Greene. Annabel is the girl that younger girls idolize. A teen model, groomed by her mother from a young age, Annabel's image flashes across television screens and across the stage as she models for Kopf's department store. By all appearances, Annabel has everything a teenage girl can want. But perfection is seldom a reality. Annabel's reality includes Sophie, a volatile girl who Annabel once called best friend, but who now stalks the halls verbally attacking Annabel at every turn of the corner; Annabel's sister Whitney, an ex-model who has returned home from New York to battle a serious eating disorder; and her mother, a woman driven to battle her own depression by pushing upward her daughters' modeling careers, careers that mean more to Annabel's mother than the girls themselves. It's no wonder that Annabel feels she has no one to confide in, to let in on the secret that destroyed her friendship with Sophie and eats away at her soul.

When Annabel meets Owen Armstrong, she is intrigued by the strange boy who appears to be as much an outcast as she has become. At first, she watches him from afar, but in a moment of weakness, when Sophie's cruelty drives her to sickness,

it is Owen who reaches out and rescues her. Through Owen, she learns the value of friendship, of listening to oneself, of telling the truth, no matter the costs. Despite these lessons, however, can she find the courage within herself to help others by telling the truth about the event that ended her friendship with Sophie? And can she reach out to her family, helping them heal themselves without sacrificing her own self?

Fans of Sarah Dessen will not be disappointed by Annabel's story. Told from Annabel's point-of-view, Dessen's book has captured the voice of young girls across the country. Unfortunately, today's schools are filled with girls who have been attacked both physically and mentally, and Annabel's story captures the range of emotions this abuse creates. Yet, Annabel's story illustrates the power friendship and trust can have over the healing process. While her journey is not an easy one, the ultimate destination brings her a newfound peace and confidence, teaching her the power of just listening. In an era where many teen issue stories do not have happy endings, this one does, giving girls who can connect to Annabel's situation a belief that there is hope for healing.

Dessen, Sarah. *Just Listen*. Viking (Penguin Group), 2006, 371 pp. ISBN: 0-670-06105-0. \$17.99.

things you either come to naturally, or you don't. I saw this again and again in my classes, where I often had students who were decent writers and worked hard, but never could get that real spark that makes words jump off the page. Then there would be the ones who had that the very first day and wrote something that blew me away. I would hope that students like that would seek out creative writing in college if they weren't able to have it in high school. But you just never know.

TAR: As a daughter of a classicist and a Shakespearean professor, you were obviously well-versed in the value of the classical canon. Today's schools often debate between the philosophy of teaching only the literary canon and teaching young adult literature. What place do you see young adult literature having within schools? What would you say to the critics who label the genre as "brain-candy" with very little literary value?

I do think it's important to read the classics, but why can't there be a balance of classic literature and more modern voices? The most important thing about reading, to me, is connecting with a story and its characters. It would be great if everyone could do that with Beowulf, but I just don't think it's possible.

SD: Well, of course as a YA writer I'm not going to agree that all fiction for adolescents is mindless. That's a ridiculous assumption. I do think it's important to read the classics, but why can't there

be a balance of classic literature and more modern voices? The most important thing about reading, to me, is connecting with a story and its characters. It would be great if everyone could do that with Beowulf, but I just don't think it's possible. However, if you give students something that they can relate to, it can open up an appreciation of reading that they might not find otherwise. My mother is a very intellectual reader, and when I was in high school, she was always dismayed that I preferred Stephen King over the more "literary" books she was hoping to interest me in. "At least you're reading!"

she'd sigh, and I was. Not just Stephen King (who I love) but also lots of other things. I loved to read because I'd been allowed to try all kinds of things, and find out what really appealed to me.

TAR: As an English teacher and lover of YA lit, I completely agree that it's important to expose kids to a variety of authors and genres, and I have had great debates with fellow teachers about the ability to teach traditional literary elements with YA novels. In fact, your books do possess these elements, i.e. the symbolism of the glass house in *Just Listen*. In my own experiences, I frequently find symbolism difficult to pull off in a way that doesn't seem forced. Do you ever have similar problems when developing a symbol within your story or does it come naturally as the story evolves?

SD: One of my writing teachers at UNC, the great Doris Betts, always told us that forced symbolism doesn't work. She said that you have to trust that your story will provide you with the things that you need to make it resonate. (I'm paraphrasing here, of course: Doris would say this much more eloquently.) If you decide a sandwich is a symbol, and plant it with that intention, its purpose will be obvious to the reader and take away from what you're trying to do. The best symbols in my books have been completely unconscious, ones that just come in the course of writing and then later I think, "Oooh! That's good." But doing that requires a lot of faith, and a giving up of control, neither of which is my strong suit when I'm working. I try, though.

TAR: Having had some censorship issues within my own classroom, I have found adults who fear the tough issues that many young adult books, including your own, possess. What are your thoughts about this fear? Would you ever change the way you craft a story because of fears of censorship?

SD: I long ago learned that certain people are not going to like the books I write, and me trying to argue otherwise was about as fruitless as them convincing me to write differently. It's just not happening. Adolescence is a tough time, and I think to write honestly about it, you often have to address dicey issues. When I'm working on a book, I'm not thinking about how someone might be offended by the choices I'm making on the page. It's entirely counterproductive, because you'll never be able to please everyone. Instead, I focus on writing the best book I can. That's all I can do.

TAR: In your on-line journal, you reference several favorite TV shows, and you have had the experience of two of your books being turned into a movie. Have you ever considered moving beyond the female YA audience into screenwriting or perhaps another genre?

SD: I'd like to write a novel with an older narrator, eventually. I mean, a lot has happened to me since

high school that would be fun to write about. But as long as I keep having good ideas that intrigue me, I'll probably stick to YA as well. For whatever reason, it works for me. As far as a screenplay, I think it would be fun to try sometime. But since that is MUCH more like writing by committee, I have a feeling it might be hard for me. Never say never, though.

TAR: What is it like to have become a celebrity within the community you grew up in? Do you find that people you knew as a child treat you any differently?

SD: I don't consider myself a celebrity at all. Now, if I played forward for the UNC basketball team, THEN

I'd be a big deal here. But there are so many amazing writers, and everyone's known me forever. Occasionally, people recognize my name, or my face, but more often than not they went to high school with me, or know me from my waitressing days. And that's fine with me.

Robyn Seglem is a language arts teacher at Trailridge Middle School, Shawnee Mission, Kansas. She is a co-director of the Flint Hills Writing Project, an affiliate of the National Writing Project. She has been teaching for seven years and is currently working on her Doctorate in Curriculum Instruction from Kansas State University.

Follow the Leaders in Newbery Tales

Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders." This statement, or some variation of it, can be seen on billboards, promotional brochures, and advertisements for a variety of organizations and institutions. However, the time lag implicit in the statement reveals a misunderstanding about youth leadership; after all, aren't today's youth *today's* leaders? Young leaders are less like dormant seeds and more like saplings that need nurturing, pruning, and strengthening to develop.

The youth leadership garden can be tended right now by providing growing leaders with young adult novels in which young people are putting their leadership skills and perspectives into practice (Hanna, 1964; Hayden, 1969; Friedman & Cataldo, 2002). What better books for this purpose than the venerable Newbery Medal winners? This prestigious award has been given to authors since 1922, encouraging creativity, emphasizing the significant contributions authors make, and giving children's librarians an opportunity to promote good writing. Because all literature is born in a context, it seems that a content analysis of carefully selected Newbery works could yield information about leadership perspectives. So I set out to discover what leadership perspectives exist in Newbery realistic fiction, and in the pages of those books I met some amazing adolescent leaders who

weren't waiting for adulthood before putting their skills to productive use.

I selected eight leadership perspectives for this study, all of which have been well documented in studies of leadership, are cited in comprehensive resources on leadership, and provide a good overview of the range of interpretations possible when analyzing leadership. These perspectives include the personality, formal, democratic, political, subjective, ambiguity, moral, and the cultural/symbolic perspectives (Table 1). In the process, I looked for the answers to four questions: (1) What leadership perspectives are evident? (2) Which perspectives are dominant? (3)

Does the portrayal of the perspectives change over time? (4) Does the gender of the protagonist have an effect on leadership perspective?

I examined seventeen Newbery Medal winning fiction books, each with a protagonist between twelve and fifteen years old, that convey a variety of leadership perspectives cloaked in narrative form (Table 1).

While my study focused on identifying leadership perspectives in the selected stories, my interest in the characters themselves led me to look at them in a broader way, to see what picture of leadership readers would get as they vicariously faced the challenges the protagonists faced and experienced the consequences of their actions. So, a narrow focus drove my

My interest in the characters themselves led me to look at them in a broader way, to see what picture of leadership readers would get as they vicariously faced the challenges the protagonists faced and experienced the consequences of their actions.

Table 1: Perspectives, Descriptors, and Cited Summary Descriptions

Leadership perspective	Descriptors characteristic of those displaying perspective	Cited summary descriptions
Personality perspective	Possessing physical traits, cognitive abilities, affective abilities, supernatural traits, creativity	Leadership is a function of the leader's charisma and personal traits (Starratt, 1993; House, 1997; Northouse, 1997); leaders can be heroes with supernatural ability to lead (Gardner, 1995); vision of leader inspires others (Starratt, 1993).
Formal perspective	Creating structures promoting leadership, demonstrating and/or valuing efficiency, demonstrating management skills, valuing productivity, valuing action	Leadership exists to create, maintain, and manage the workplace so that productivity goals are met (Bush, 1995) and vertical and horizontal structures are maintained (Yukl, 1998); management, not leadership, is primary (Northouse, 1997); emphasis is on action not traits (Carlson, 1996).
Democratic perspective	Demonstrating expertise, attempting to build consensus, sharing responsibility	Every voice in an organization must be heard (Bush, 1995); consensus-building a hallmark (Bush, 1995; Carlson, 1996); personal initiative valued (Fiedler, 1967); expertise honored (Bush, 1995).
Political perspective	Manipulating others to retain power, negotiating to maintain control, using compromise to retain power; dark side of Democratic perspective	Negotiation and compromise are needed to move an organization forward (Bush, 1995). Power is a driving force (Pfeffer, 1992); interest groups influence decision making (Bush, 1995; Carlson, 1996).
Subjective perspective	Expressing interpretations of situations, acknowledging changing realities, demonstrating personal qualities resulting in power; less desirable complement of Personality perspective	Individuals' interpretations create the reality of an organization (Bush, 1995). Personal qualities, not position in the organization, determine leadership roles (Bush, 1995).
Ambiguity perspective	Expressing uncertainty about the leadership situation, experiencing unpredictability, ambiguity, chaos, and disorder, relying on luck or chance	Leaders will have trouble with purpose, experience, and success (Bush, 1995) and will experience inevitable unpredictability and uncertainty (Bush, 1995).
Moral perspective	Valuing followers' personal growth, relying on a guiding principle to make decisions, putting own interests behind those of followers	Organizational leaders exist to strengthen individuals (Greenleaf, 1980; DuPree, 1990), acknowledge individual interpretations (Bush, 1995), and lead a moral enterprise (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998).
Cultural/Symbolic perspective	Referring to or creating group codes/symbols, acknowledging importance of rituals, participating in ceremonies	As an active transformer of society (Starratt, 1993), the leader acknowledges rituals and symbols of organization (Bush, 1995) and engages others in discussions which promote renewal of the organization.

research, but a broader view captured my interest. While I will briefly identify the perspectives I discovered, I'll focus my discussion on the stories as wholes, thus giving my reader the opportunity to choose books from this set to read, enjoy, and use as leadership models. The books I analyzed included:

1. *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* (Avi, Hyperion, 2002)
2. *Dacey's Song* (Cynthia Voigt, Atheneum, 1982)
3. *A Gathering of Days* (Joan W. Blos, Macmillan, 1979)
4. *It's Like This, Cat* (Emily Cheney Neville, Harper & Row, 1963)
5. *Jacob Have I Loved* (Katherine Paterson, Crowell, 1980)
6. *Johnny Tremain* (Esther Hoskins Forbes, Houghton Mifflin, 1943)
7. *M.C. Higgins, the Great* (Virginia Hamilton, Macmillan, 1972)
8. *Missing May* (Cynthia Rylant, Orchard, 1992)
9. *The Midwife's Apprentice* (Karen Cushman, Clarion, 1996)
10. *Onion John* (Joseph Krumgold, Crowell, 1959)
11. *Out of the Dust* (Karen Hesse, Scholastic, 1996)
12. *A Single Shard* (Linda Sue Park, Clarion, 2001)
13. *The Slave Dancer* (Paula Fox, Bradbury, 1973)
14. *The Trumpeter of Krakow* (Eric P. Kelly, Macmillan, 1928)
15. *Up a Road Slowly* (Irene Hunt, Follett, 1966)
16. *A Year Down Yonder* (Richard Peck, Dial, 1998)
17. *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze* (Elizabeth Foreman, Winston, 1932)

Leadership Perspectives

In order to focus on identifying, quantifying, and analyzing the eight common leadership perspectives, I created a code book derived from an analysis of research conducted about the eight perspectives, assigning a code to significant, contiguous blocks of text, counting the number of times each of the thirty-eight possible codes appeared, and ranking the codes by prevalence.

For example, the personality perspective was analyzed using the following codes derived from a review of leadership literature. I added Code 1.6 after I noticed its prevalence in the Newbery literature and absence in the code book:

- 1.1 The protagonist has physical traits that indicate leadership.

- 1.2 The protagonist has cognitive abilities that indicate leadership.

- 1.3 The protagonist has affective abilities that indicate leadership.

- 1.4 The protagonist has supernatural traits that indicate leadership.

- 1.5 The protagonist has other traits consistent with the personality perspective.

- 1.6 The protagonist has creative/artistic abilities that indicate leadership.

Performing the content analysis in this way allowed me to determine which of the eight perspectives were most and least common in this subset of Newberys. Most of the books conveyed multiple perspectives. The moral perspective came out on top (16 of the 17 books), followed by the personality and ambiguity perspectives (14/17), the subjective (9/17), the democratic (6/17), the political (4/17), and the formal and cultural/symbolic (3/17).

While these and other corollary findings were gratifying to discover (after all, moral leadership won a rousing victory), it was even more interesting to have the opportunity to get to know the literary leaders in these fiction works as well as I did, so well that their stories interested me far more than the leadership perspectives on which I focused my attention. The protagonists in these stories exhibit behavior ranging from bossy arrogance to meek humility to noble service. They participate in a variety of leadership tasks; leading a country to revolution (Johnny Tremain) and protecting the ashes of a loved one on a journey home (Dacey Tillerman) are just two examples. The seventeen authors who gave birth to this brood of eight girls and nine boys call them "hero," "prodigal son," and "outcast." Of the seventeen, most are Caucasian, two are Asian, and one is African American. They are a diverse lot, and they react to the scripts written for them in diverse ways. The leadership summaries that follow will allow the reader to enjoy getting acquainted with this group of leading adolescents.

Whole-book Rankings and Summaries

What follows is a summary of each book, written to focus on the leadership activities, attitudes, and behaviors in each book as a whole. Instead of introducing the protagonists and their stories in historic

order, they will be introduced in order of strength of leadership perspectives portrayed in the books under consideration. The focus in the research study was on the protagonist and his or her leadership perspective(s); the focus here is on the books as whole units, thus highlighting that a good story transcends the sum of its parts. So, for example, while the protagonist may be a strong leader, the tasks (s)he had to accomplish may diminish the overall reading experience (e.g. *The Trumpeter of Krakow* and *M.C. Higgins, the Great*). The purpose of this method is to highlight the “wholeness” of each piece of literature.

The order presented below was arrived at by assigning each book a 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1 (high to low) in terms of five categories: (A) Strong, clear leadership perspectives(s) presented in protagonist’s activities, attitudes, and behaviors; (B) Believable leadership tasks within probable plot; (C) Balanced protagonist who exhibits normal range of human emotions; (D) Engaging story; (E) Other leaders who also inhabit the story. Ranking results are presented in Table 2; bold type indicates books with a female protagonist.

This whole-book ranking produced the following results ranked from strongest to weakest leadership perspective. Ties within each place are presented chronologically:

- 1st place: *The Slave Dancer*; *Dacey’s Song*; *A Single Shard*
- 2nd place: *Johnny Tremain*
- 3rd place: *Out of the Dust*; *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*
- 4th place: *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze*; *The Midwife’s Apprentice*; *A Year Down Yonder*
- 5th place: *Onion John*; *Jacob Have I Loved*
- 6th place: *The Trumpeter of Krakow*; *M.C. Higgins, the Great*
- 7th place: *Up a Road Slowly*; *Missing May*
- 8th place: *A Gathering of Days*
- 9th place: *It’s Like This, Cat*

First place (1 of 3): *The Slave Dancer* by Paula Fox

Ironically, the book that received one of the highest whole-book rankings has one of the most reluctant leaders in the sample. Thirteen-year-old Jessie Bollier is kidnapped from the streets of New Orleans in the mid-nineteenth century. Told he is going on a “fine sea voyage” (p. 11), he quickly

discovers that that is a gross misrepresentation of the truth. In fact, Jessie’s talent for playing the fife has landed him on the ship; his dreadful leadership role is to play tunes to make the slaves—that soon will inhabit the filthy holds—dance, so that they arrive at port in marketable condition. His confusion is understandable, and expressed often in this first-person, historical fiction account.

Jessie fulfills his role, sometimes belligerently, but mostly uncertainly. He feels his “life [has] turned upside down” (p. 51), and he spends much of the rest of his journey expressing his confusion in contrasting couplets: he hates the crew’s cruelty but admires their fearlessness (p.40); he dislikes one man’s slowness but thinks his sudden burst of energy repulsive (p.71); he remembers the delight he felt when he spied on a young woman undressing but is mortified as he is

now allowed to look at the naked bodies of the slaves (p. 75). Jessie tries to make sense of the contradictions in his new-found life, but his interpretations of his role in the sorry affair leave him unsatisfied. Even though he pities the slaves, he grows to hate them for being the reason he is on the boat in the first place (p. 79).

As master of the slaves’ exercise program, Jessie performs his duties with dread, so much dread that his music suffers (p. 101). In fact, he exhibits few personality traits that would make him fit for the task he has been pressed into. He does sort out the personalities of the crew, and he avoids those who will bring him harm. The rich cast of characters he learns to interpret include the dangerous Captain Cawthorne, kind Purvis, dishonest Stout, and unfortunate Spark, a Mate who was bound and thrown overboard after killing a murderous slave—thus reducing the profit the Captain will reap. The crew members’ leadership roles

The protagonists in these stories exhibit behavior ranging from bossy arrogance to meek humility to noble service. They participate in a variety of leadership tasks; leading a country to revolution (Johnny Tremain) and protecting the ashes of a loved one on a journey home (Dacey Tillerman) are just two examples.

are prescribed and rigid, and Jessie often cannot see the logic in the actions of others on board.

As if this human drama were not enough to keep the reader interested, Fox increases the tension in the final chapters of the book. When it becomes clear to the captain that an American ship has discovered their dirty trade, he orders all the shackles thrown overboard. Before the splash of the iron restraints hits the deck, the slaves are hurled overboard too. From this point forward, *The Slave Dancer* belongs to Jessie Bollier. Whether the leadership tasks he has been forced to perform or his own resources guide him, he takes charge and helps Ras, a slave boy his own age, escape the chaos on the deck. As the weather and the behavior of the crew become rougher and rougher, Jessie and Ras hide below deck, sharing a bit of food and “strange conversation” (p. 127), given that neither speaks the language of the other. The bond serves them well; they manage to survive the storm that crushes the ship (the only ones on board who do survive). Jessie’s heroic actions lead them to land and to safety. Daniel, the man who finds and cares for them, leads Jessie to his home and Ras to freedom in the north.

First place (2 of 3): *Dacey’s Song* by Cynthia Voigt

Getting kids ready for school, holding a job, planning for the family’s future, restoring a boat, and helping a child with a learning disability are uncommon tasks for most 13-year-olds. Dacey Tillerman, though, is a rather uncommon person. Her position as the oldest of four gives her the status she needs to ensure cooperation from the younger kids, and the unfortunate situation of being parentless (due to her father’s absence and her mother’s mental illness) creates a void that Dacey is ready and willing to fill. She is as confident in her leadership role as Jessie of *The Slave Dancer* is hesitant in his. This contemporary story opens at Gram’s house in Maryland, the destination that Dacey and her siblings hoped to reach from Boston before summer ended.

Grateful to Gram for taking them in, Dacey decides that having a job would ease the burden, so she negotiates hours and duties for herself with a local shopkeeper. She recognizes the same reading disability her young sister has in Millie, her employer, and Dacey

broadens her influence at the store by helping her fill out merchandise order forms. Likewise, at home, Dacey’s self-imposed responsibilities increase; sister Maybeth’s inability to read is making her lag behind the other third-graders. Dacey consults and cooperates with others to solve this problem creatively and successfully. So, with 30 pages down and over 300 to go, how is Dacey going to keep up this leadership pace? Fortunately, Gram rescues her: “You’re not the only one responsible, girl. You’ve been responsible a long time and done a good job. Take a rest now.” (p. 37).

Dacey takes the advice, though the book hardly becomes *Gram’s Song*. Dacey spends more time restoring her beloved boat, but even this activity becomes an opportunity to help brother Sammy figure himself out. James, her oldest brother, becomes her idea man; she realizes he has the brains while she has the management skills needed to carry out the plans he concocts. She tries to follow Gram’s guiding principle—“Hold on to people. They can get away from you” (p. 126)—advice which Dacey thinks may reveal her grandmother’s own regrets.

Though Dacey handles adult responsibilities better than many adults, she doesn’t fare as well in age-appropriate situations. She snubs and avoids two peers who show interest in her, she refuses to achieve in classes that don’t hold her interest, and she is falsely accused of plagiarism when she writes an essay about her ailing mother. Mina, a classmate who shares Dacey’s intellectual capabilities, declares, “You are a hard person to be friends with, Dacey Tillerman” (p. 84). But friends they become, and Dacey continues to learn that being part of a group can help one tackle life’s problems. Gram’s adoption of the four siblings is concrete evidence of the truth of that statement.

At the end of the story, life’s problems come to Dacey’s world via the postal service. Gram receives a letter from Boston, and she makes hasty plans to travel there with Dacey. Dacey follows, literally most of the time, as Gram leads her to her dying mother’s hospital room. As Dacey takes a break from the emotional scene to buy Christmas gifts for the others, she experiences the kindness of strangers.

Galvanizing Gram’s guiding principle—reach out and hold on to those you love—both Gram and Dacey discover who the dying woman was to them personally. Dacey leads the way home by calling and telling

her siblings the news and by carrying her mother's ashes in a hand carved wooden box that a sympathetic stranger gave to her. Though Dicey is again completing adult tasks, she does so with less pride and more good will to others who reach out to her, realizing the "confusion [called life] was going to be a permanent condition" (p. 359).

First place (3 of 3): *A Single Shard* by Linda Sue Park

Both of the other first place finishers in this whole-book leadership ranking lived and led in adult worlds. Likewise, Tree-ear, a Korean orphan from the 1100's, wakes each day to forage for food for himself and his elderly companion Crane-man. For many in his situation, that would be the end of the story. But 12-year-old Tree-ear's curiosity, courage, and creativity transform him from lackey to hero, and much more.

Tree-ear's historical fiction adventure begins as he patiently, daily, fetches clay and wood to be used by the potter, Min, as he creates his celadon-tinted pottery, renowned in all of Korea. He has a debt to pay to Min, a master potter, and it was Tree-ear himself who suggested he toil for the man whose work he had carelessly broken. However, when the obligation is paid, Min keeps Tree-ear on as a willing servant, a very fortunate choice for both master and boy.

Tree-ear picks up the trade quickly, and daily he hopes for the chance to make a pot on the wheel. Min's wife shows kindness to him, even providing food and clothing that he shares with Crane-man. His own personality serves him well in his new life: he is courteous, curious, and contemplative. His humility (fostered by cultural norms) leads him to credit good fortune with much of his happiness.

But it is curiosity and a respect for doing the right thing that turns the tale into a great adventure. Tree-ear notices that a rival potter, Kang, is trying out a new technique, one that will be sure to catch the Emperor's eye and earn him the highest honors. Knowing that taking ideas that do not belong to him is stealing, Tree-ear waits to tell Min of the pottery method. When Kang's work is put on public display, Tree-ear knows that the idea belongs to everyone, and he shares the secret of the inlaid design with Min. Min, being a greater craftsman than Kang, produces two beautiful vases to be presented to the Emperor, in

hopes of gaining a lifetime commission. Tree-ear volunteers to deliver them to the capital, Songdo, a journey that will take many weeks. He is pleased when Min accepts his offer, but is heartbroken when Min also tells him that he will never teach him to make pottery; that honor can only be bestowed on a son, and Min's son died long ago.

He leaves Crane-man in the care of Min's wife (being careful to guard his elderly friend's pride by telling him that she needs his help with household tasks), and he begins the journey that each day "is only as far as the next village" (p. 93). Nearing his destination, Tree-ear is robbed and his precious cargo is thrown over a cliff. Recovering a single shard which shows the handsome inlaid handiwork of his master, he continues on, gains the royal commission, and returns home. His happiness turns when he finds out Crane-man has died, but returns when Min helps him construct a pottery wheel and Min's wife addresses him as a son.

Second place (1 of 1): *Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes

Another historical fiction character joins his male counterparts Tree-ear and Jessie in the Newbery exemplary-leadership lineup. His emotional life isn't as balanced as Tree-ear's and, unlike Jessie's tale, the length of the story makes it lose its steam by the time it reaches its destination. Like Dicey, he is a leader from the first page in the story, a story that includes fictionalized details about many leaders in early American history. He is a poster boy for the personality perspective. He's "boss of the attic [workshop], and almost of the house" (p. 2) and, though his personality softens a bit, he finds ways to be in charge throughout the story that ages him from 11 to 16.

Johnny, like Tree-ear, is a craftsman's apprentice. He is talented at silver smithing, and he is arrogant about his skill. He orders, argues with, and belittles the boys who work alongside him, and his "semi-sacred" ability (p. 4) and ability to read and write make him a rival, not a companion. He even disputes his master when he thinks it is necessary, and, fortuitously, obtains work from John Hancock after doing so. To top this hubristic personality off, he also has three names, unheard of among poor folk, and this link to a wealthier past proves to be both a

stumbling block and a step up in the future. Johnny is setting himself up for a fall—which comes in the form of an “accident” which burns his hand and renders it useless for silver work. His detailed future plans disappear, and his new life in pre-revolutionary America begins.

Lucky for him, Rab, another orphan a few years older than he, gives him a delivery job for the *The Observer*, a newspaper. As a role model, Rab shows him how to dress to impress, how to temper his volatile personality, and, most importantly, how to be a member of the Sons of Liberty revolutionaries. When he is falsely accused of stealing a silver cup which his mother gave him (the inscription “Lyte” links him to a wealthy merchant), Rab and Johnny’s friend Cilla help in obtaining his release and in earning the anger of the wealthy man.

His life as a secret patriot begins well: he tames a spirited horse—“an almost impossible thing” (p. 93), learns about politics and current events, masters the use of his left hand, reads prolifically, and continues, through Rab’s prodding, to modify his character. His quest for revenge on Dove, the boy who orchestrated the maiming accident, fades as his interest in regaining his lost silver cup rises. The old, unsettled Johnny still surfaces.

However, he has earned the “implicit trust” (p. 117) of Samuel Adams, and Johnny is one of the many Sons of Liberty leading the Boston Tea Party. He is entrusted with delivering codes, blowing the whistle for action, and remembering a secret countersign, which he repeats to Paul Revere. Through Rab’s help, he earns a job delivering messages for a British doctor. By doing so, he discovers the plans of the British and helps the patriot’s cause. His crippled hand keeps him from learning to shoot, but his intellect keeps him at the center of the revolutionary drama. He predicts war will come as he interprets the events around him. When given the opportunity to take back the cup that is rightfully his, he refuses to have anything to do with the wealthy British: “This is the end. The end of one thing—the beginning of something else. . . . [T]he cards are going to be reshuffled. Dealt again . . .” (p. 165).

The “something else” that is soon to begin frightens Johnny, for he is not prone to violence. Sam Adams asks Johnny to call the rebels together, and at

the ensuing meeting Johnny realizes that the local fight is a battle against tyranny everywhere. His leadership in it takes on heroic status, and his work as a spy results in early victories. He befriends a British stable boy and negotiates a trade: a disguise for the boy so he can escape in exchange for his musket. But the young deserter is caught and shot, and Johnny wonders if he himself has as much courage as his role model Rab. His dreams evoke his wakeful leadership fears.

When Rab goes off to war with the musket Johnny acquired for him, Johnny’s world turns upside down: “He half wished he might cry and was half-glad he was too old for tears.” (p. 209). His continued spying helps alert the patriots; his continued quest for real action is denied. He has a role to play, and he saves many lives by doing it well. In a strange twist, he becomes the heir to the Lyte fortune: His mother was a Lyte, and, in an even stranger twist, his wealthy relative symbolically bestows the family fortune on him as she touches his widow’s peak—“all that he had ever got from the beautiful Vinny Lyte [his mother]” (p. 235).

In disguise, Johnny surveys the war landscape. He discovers that Rab has been shot, and he comforts his friend before he dies. He is numb from all the bloodshed and confusion, but as the doctor remedies his crippled hand by cutting the scar, Johnny also is freed from his crippling experiences, now able to see the larger significance—human freedom—of the current events in the American colonies.

Third place (1 of 2): *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse

Billie Jo is a protagonist who likes to think things through. She muses and interprets her way through the hardships of life. Her personality and introspective nature are reflected in this first-person historical-narrative poem. Rather than producing the tedious rambling of a 14-year-old, however, the author skillfully personalizes a very difficult time in a family’s life and in America of the 1930s.

Billie Jo tells us at the very beginning of the story that her daddy wanted a boy; thus, her feminized male name. Later in the story, Billie reveals that Ma is pregnant again, so the future is full of hope, even though dust, wind, and drought threaten their Okla-

homa farm. Billie Jo has quite a life to live. She is an accomplished pianist, and she negotiates with her mom to let her accept an invitation to play weekly at the Palace, a local club. Her dreams to earn money to help the family and to play someday for President Roosevelt seem to be on track. Smart, talented, and honest, she rises above the chaos of dust and debt, joking about the family's "peppered" potatoes and "chocolate milk" (p. 21):

when really all our pepper and chocolate,
it's nothing but dust.

She also is surly, loves companionship, tries to figure out her mom, and wants to move away. In other words, she is a character most adolescent readers could understand.

It's that identification with the protagonist that makes what follows so compelling. Ma, preparing coffee, mistakes a pail of kerosene for water, and pours "a rope of fire" (p. 60) from pail to stove. As Ma runs outside for help from Daddy, Billie Jo wisely grabs the burning pail and flings it out of the door. But Ma was on her way back in, and she turns in to a "column of fire" (p. 61). More painful than the burned hands (cf. Johnny Tremain) that keep her from her piano are the nightmares Billie Jo has as she watches her Ma and baby brother die (p. 64):

Daddy called to me. He asked me to bring water,
Ma was thirsty.
I brought up a pail of fire and Ma drank it. She had
given birth to a baby of flames. The baby
burned at her side.

Billie takes on a familial leadership role at the funeral. When her father does not respond when asked the baby's name, Billie Jo names him "Franklin," after her beloved President Roosevelt. Faulting her father for putting the kerosene by the stove in the first place, Billie Jo grows uncertain, afraid, and a co-leader in a household where she is quietly resented.

She continues to interpret life through analogies, and the encouragement of others makes her try playing the piano again. In little ways, hope seems to be returning: she longs to see a bigger world, she continues to do well in school, and she's inspired by the creativity of others. She tries to fill the void left by her mother, but Daddy is preoccupied and distant, believable reactions given that:

Dust
piles up like snow
across the prairie,
dunes leaning against fences,
mountains of dust pushing over barns. (102)

The whole community is in the same boat, and others are even less seaworthy than Billie Jo's (*Out of the Dust*) family. She takes the challenge, sharing and serving others who also are drowning in dust. She emulates Ma's previous action by donating her brother's feed-sack nightgown to a newly born baby. This generosity is a temporary catharsis; Billie's piano playing earns third place at the Palace talent contest.

Billie Jo knows that she is no substitute for the wife that Daddy now seems to be looking for. As another bout of dust descends, Billie Jo seems even more in need of escape. She leads a car and lost driver through a storm, thinks of the cattle dying of mucky lungs, eats food laced with grit, and sees hopelessness in her father's eyes. Life has to be better somewhere else.

So she leaves. Getting on a train in the middle of the night, she heads west, out of the dust. Her boxcar escape transforms her; a man who left his family also rides the rails away, and she realizes that her place is with her father:

As we walk together,
side by side,
in the swell of dust,
I am forgiving him, step by step,
for the pail of kerosene.
As we walk together,
side by side,
in the sole-deep dust,
I am forgiving myself
for all the rest. (206)

She leads her dad to physical and emotional healing by convincing him to seek treatment for the dust cancer on his face and by accepting his new wife. Billie Jo leads herself home.

Third place (2 of 2): *Crispin: Cross of Lead* by Avi

The second third-place whole-book leadership contender is 13-year-old Crispin, an orphan living in medieval England. Unlike the orphans before him, Dicey, Tree-ear, and Johnny, he has even bigger problems than finding food and work. Like Johnny, he

has a secret past, is falsely accused of theft, and learns the meaning of the word “freedom;” unlike Johnny, he lives in a more dangerous time where courts of law are hanging ropes. His life is endangered early on in this first-person historical fiction tale; the reason why is not resolved until the end.

Crispin is a product of his world; as a serf he feels both fortunate—he does have food, and unfortunate—he is not free to choose a life for himself. He expects God to produce both prizes and punishments, and he is sure he deserves the latter most often. He is shunned, even as his mother lives; he is hunted when he becomes an orphan. Known only as Asta’s son, he doesn’t know he has his own name—Crispin—until his friend Father Quinel tells him. All of this ambiguity adds up to mass confusion: For reasons unknown to him, Crispin has been declared a “wolf’s head” by the manor’s steward; he can be killed without fear of retribution, a most disgraceful situation to be sure. The kind priest gives him his mother’s lead cross, into which she scratched an inscription. He was not aware that she could read and write, and he certainly cannot, so he looks forward to the priest’s promised explanation.

Which never comes. The priest is murdered, and Crispin is pursued, finding himself leaving the only life he knows. He relies on Christ, crosses, saints, and signs for protection, protection that ironically comes in the form of a mere man named “Bear.” Crispin swears a sacred oath to this unpredictable man, and his life as a juggling musician’s apprentice begins. Bear recognizes Crispin’s talent and wit, but chides him for his religious beliefs: “As God is near—and surely He always is—He needs no special words or objects to approach Him” (p. 99). As if Bear’s view of the next world were not shocking enough, he tells Crispin that he is his own master. Crispin’s worldview is rocked: “Surely God Himself put us all in our places: Lords to rule and fight. Clergy to pray. All the rest—like me—were on earth to labor, to serve our masters and our God” (p. 101). Meek Crispin hardly sounds like an exemplary leader, but this story is full of surprises.

Under Bear’s guidance, Crispin learns his trade. He is shocked when Bear upsets the global order by giving him the coin he earned entertaining others. He remains undetected, though rumors about the “wolf’s head” circulate through the towns and villages they visit. Bear continues to help him interpret experiences,

transforming him from servant to master, and teaching him to think for himself—essentials for the leadership task he will perform later.

His first experience of consciously choosing to be his own master turns disastrous. He leaves the lodging he and Bear share, even after being warned not to. He is recognized and pursued. His skill and plan help him escape, but it takes Bear to make a full rescue. He begs forgiveness, but Bear says none is needed because it is he who has forgotten how little Crispin really knows. Though his own past is mysterious to him, he is beginning to piece together Bear’s true life as a leader in a rebellion against the norms of medieval England. His suspicions are confirmed by the widow who provides them lodging. She urges Crispin to look out for Bear—to preserve the life of both master and servant. Crispin’s leadership role has been defined.

Fortunately, Crispin has many personality characteristics which help him through the ambiguity that crowds around him. He is observant, and he notices when armed men are about to invade the place where Bear and his compatriots are meeting. Furthermore, he recognizes that one of the men is John Aycliffe, the steward of the manor and the one who has declared him a “wolf’s head,” so he puts himself in mortal danger when he alerts Bear and his band. Bear assists the others as they escape, but he himself is captured. He cries out, “Go Crispin. Get out of the city. It’s you they want, not me” (p. 204).

Crispin returns to the widow’s ransacked house. He comforts her, and she reveals what has been secret to him throughout the tale: His cross is inscribed with the words, “Crispin—son of Furnival.” Though Crispin thinks he understands the significance of the revelation—Lord Furnival is nearing death and Crispin has a claim to his land—the widow makes it plain: “What ever noble blood there is in you is only . . . *poison*. Lady Furnival, who’s the power here, will never let you have the name. She’ll look on you as her enemy, knowing that anyone who chooses to oppose her will use you and what you are” (p. 217). Her other revelations about his past make his present clear: Bear is being held as bait to catch him.

He takes the bait, frees Bear from torture, and negotiates their release. He boldly declares himself Lord Furnival’s son, and compromises his own noble position by saying that if he and Bear are escorted safely out of the town gates they never will return nor

claim his rights. To seal the deal he agrees to hand over the cross, the only evidence short of DNA testing that proves his parentage. They are double-crossed and a bloody fight ensues; Crispin and Bear gain the upper hand. True to his word, Crispin lays his cross of lead on the steward's body and, accompanied by Bear, emerges from the town "a full member of the guild of free men" (p. 261).

Fourth place (1 of 3): *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze* by Elizabeth Foreman Lewis

The second (and final) Asian protagonist in the sample is Young Fu. He has much in common with other protagonists in previous rankings. Like Tree-ear, Johnny, and Crispin, he is an apprentice. He lives in China, a world proscribed by rules and roles, as does Crispin; but, unlike Crispin, he early-on questions the social order and suggests new interpretations. He is fatherless like Jessie Bollier, but Young Fu's mother is less a victim of circumstances than Jessie's is. Though he leads in many ways, the episodic nature of this historical fiction story set in the early 1900s fails to engage the reader as fully as the stories in previous rankings.

Young Fu begins his life in the city of Chunking, apprenticed to the coppersmith Tang. He is ridiculed as a country bumpkin, but he is driven to learn the trade so his mother will have life's necessities. His mother's superstitious ways are not his; for example, he shows no fear of foreigners who, according to his mother, could bring harm just by catching one's eye.

He learns the ways of the shop and city. Running errands for Tang, he becomes familiar with the city. He remains curious throughout the story, even after being victimized by a soldier. Work demands his time, but he longs to learn to read and write. Though he knows his duty is to Tang, he takes time to observe Chinese writing, and he welcomes Wang Scholar's offer to teach him. However, he disappoints his wise neighbor by failing to see the ultimate value of learning: "It has been given that men might learn how to live, not to win fortune" (p. 54), Wang teaches. The lesson takes. Young Fu vows to live a life that is honorable to his father and ancestors. This proves a difficult promise to keep; immediately afterward he gets lost in thoughts of his own self-importance and

damages the copper piece he was sent to deliver. Young Fu seems like a leader, but, as yet, an unpolished one. Once again he vows to do better, and he hopes his success will mean his mother does not have to work anymore.

His skill and knowledge increase (as does his overweening pride). He is conned into buying a watch and then sells snow ("Dragon's Breath") to pay his debt. His quick mind causes him to doubt superstitions; so, despite his mother's warnings against foreigners, he rushes to watch as fire burns the foreign hospital. Serendipitously, he helps a foreigner save her house from the widening fire, an action which reaps future benefits. The grateful woman rewards him with money; Young Fu gives her a gift from the shop in return. He imagines what wealth a foreign patronage might bring the shop, and he concludes that, twice, he has tested superstitions and won.

Predictably, his bold defiance of accepted social norms produces fruit. When his friend Small Li collapses, he decides that the foreign woman can help him. He uses humor, charm, and negotiating skill to convince Li's very traditional family to try the foreigner's remedy. Small Li is cured and would surely have died from his ruptured appendix otherwise.

Next, Young Fu accompanies Tang on a journey down the river, to deliver brass pieces to a customer. He is honored to have been asked. He saves the silver that has been given in payment for the brass by hiding it under himself, undergoing severe discomfort as he is stepped on by the bandits in his hiding place. Again, his ability and personality save the day. His pride, once again, surfaces as he plans to share his tale with his shop mates. His mother's superstitions are voiced again, but, even so, Young Fu doesn't mind his next adventure either: spending the night outside the city gates. When the river floods, it's Young Fu to the rescue! He leads many who live outside the gates to safety. His charisma and courage save the day.

When revolutionaries begin ruining businesses and attacking citizens, Tang puts Young Fu in charge of the shop while he is away. Young Fu turns away intruders, but narrowly escapes death due to Tang's intervention. Young Fu continues to think about his many experiences, to question superstitions and prejudice, to learn to read and write, and to look forward to owning his own shop. Echoing the confidence his employer has in him, his mother leaves him

alone while she travels to visit a sick relative. Unfortunately, Young Fu gambles away the money she left him. He worries that she won't trust him, and strikes a bargain with Tang to repay his debt. She is pleased when she returns, "you are beginning to fill your father's place in the household" (p. 195), and admires him for his honesty about the gambling debt.

But his episodes of leadership are not over. He discovers his master's stolen pieces in the marketplace, and his status and wages continue to rise. Though he credits the gods for his success, his drive to do well for his master also motivates him. Like Tree-ear, his merits are noticed by his employer, who treats him as a son. Like Dicey, he is adopted, and wears the garments in which "he would resemble one of Tang's intimates rather than an employee" (p. 228).

Fourth place (2 of 3): *The Midwife's Apprentice* by Karen Cushman

The fourth apprentice in the sample is also the first female apprentice in this whole-book ranking. Her life is ambiguous from the start: She is of indeterminate age (12 or 13), and her name changes in five pages from "Brat," to "Beetle," to "The Midwife's Apprentice." Her intelligence and cleverness get her into this job, and her personality gets her reinstated at the end of the tale. Furthermore, she dubs herself "Alyce," and she makes a practice of symbolically legitimizing the people and animals around her by giving them respectable names.

She learns early on that "midwife's apprentice" doesn't necessarily mean "birth helper." It seems she is more of a "supply carrier." She's quite sure the midwife doesn't want to reveal her secret skills and spells, but she is smart and observant and picks up the trade in her own way. She doubts that superstition and magic have much to do with the process (cf. Young Fu), though later in the story she may wish she had had some magical intervention.

Forced into tending alone to a mother in labor, she panics. Trying the midwife's own routine of verbal assault on the laboring woman produces results: a shower of household implements thrown at her, but no baby born. When the midwife herself comes to the rescue, she slaps the mother, forces wormwood tea down her throat, and, order restored, delivers a baby. Beetle is frightened by the chaotic leadership situation

she was forced into (cf. Jessie Bollier), but is even more afraid of being "turned cold and hungry out of the midwife's cottage" (p. 24).

A case of mistaken identity transforms "Beetle" to "Alyce," and she decides that, hard as it may be, she will answer only to that name. She proceeds to bestow the same favor on others; as though she were Adam himself, she names the cat, the cow, and the young boy she rescues, symbolically transforming them to creatures with lives of worth. She can be noble, but she can be manipulative too. Alyce dupes the superstitious villagers into thinking the Devil himself has been wandering through the town, visiting those who have been less than scrupulous. The Devil leaves indeterminate tracks in the snow as he wanders about, courtesy of the blocks of wood Alyce carved just for this deceptive purpose. Not only does she gain retribution, she also reveals (only to the reader) her logical mistrust of superstitions (cf. Young Fu).

She is getting bolder and more skillful; some grateful mothers even pay her for her help, thus earning a little for herself (cf. Crispin). Ironically, she learns that kindness can assist a birth better than insults not through her experiences with human birth, but by watching a farm boy help twin calves enter the world ("Twins, Alyce!" cried Will. "You have brought me great luck, for Tansy be having twins" [p. 51]). She crafts her own trade by combining the best of what kindness and the midwife have to offer. Much more, now, than "the midwife's hand or arm" (p. 53), Alyce is learning to lead in her own way, though she worries about easing reluctant babies into the light, a foreshadowy foreboding. Her failure to do so for a villager named Emma forces her to leave the best life she has yet known.

She finds a place for herself and her cat at an inn, as kitchen sweeper and mouse chaser. A guest at the inn befriends her and teaches her to write letters. He respects her enough to ask what she wants, to which she replies, "A full belly, a contented heart, and a place in the world" (p. 81). She needs the help of others to see that she is entitled to those things, and, ironically, it is her hard-hearted mistress who gives her courage to try her craft again.

But not right away. Before she returns to Jane she makes sure Edward, the boy she rescued earlier, is safe, and she delivers a baby from a woman who didn't know she was pregnant. Her courage comes

from remembering the words and advice of those in her past, and she returns to her “place in the world” (p. 81), to Jane’s house, to a future as the midwife’s apprentice.

Fourth place (3 of 3): *A Year Down Yonder* by Richard Peck

Though this protagonist has less of a strong, clear leadership perspective than others rated lower overall, the believable protagonist and the strong supporting actress kept it in fourth place in the whole-book ranking. Though the story is in the first-person narrative point of view, it seems less about “I” and more about the quirky grandma who the reader learns to love early on. It takes the protagonist longer to love her.

Hard times have hit Chicago in 1937, and desperate measures were used to survive. Mary Alice, 15, is sent south to live with her grandmother (cf. Dicey): “No telephone . . . [Y]ou had to go outdoors to the privy. Nothing modern” (p. 2). In other words, no good. But good does come to Mary Alice; though, with a sneaky, manipulative, heart-of-gold grandmother to watch out for, the road to happiness is a bumpy one. Most of Mary Alice’s time is spent trying to stay two steps behind Grandma: she plays along as Grandma teaches a neighbor a lesson, she helps make glue that will mark the boys who intend to knock over her privy, she’s a partner in crime as Grandma steals pumpkins and pecans to make pies for charity, and she watches as Grandma manipulates others to raise money for a needy woman. “I walked in Grandma’s shadow” (p. 61) sums life up well.

Mary Alice is not entirely passive, however. She recognizes bad omens (cn. Young Fu and cf. Crispin) as she gets ready to play the lead in the Christmas nativity, a show that is talked about (for various reasons) for many years. Mary Alice begins to love Grandma by looking past her quirks to that good that inspires her. Mary Alice reaches out to others, adopting Grandma’s manipulative ways as necessary: She pens anonymous “Newsy Notes” for the local newspaper, revealing harmless gossip and highlighting community shortcomings in her cryptic words, and she orchestrates a Valentine scam to deflate the ego of an overbearing classmate. But she’s a mere amateur in the conniving department: As Mary Alice entertains

her hoped-for-boyfriend Royce, Grandma, shotgun in hand, scares a woman clad only in a snake out of the attic she has rented to an artist. Mary Alice thinks the embarrassment will end her life, but of course, Grandma has other plans for her.

Mary Alice’s concern and care for Grandma grows. She leaves graduation practice to check on her during a tornado. Grandma passes the kindness on by checking in on ailing neighbors during the storm. With Grandma as role model, they together clean up the community. It comes as no surprise when the author fast forwards through time, and the reader learns that Mary Alice will be married in her beloved grandma’s house.

Fifth place (1 of 2): *Onion John* by Joseph Krumgold

If the tenth book in this whole-book ranking followed suit with the previous nine, the protagonist should be the product of a home split by death, abandonment, uncertain paternity and/or financial hardship. But it doesn’t fit the pattern. *Onion John* is like an Ozzie-and-Harriet breath of fresh air in a place grown stale from the problems defining it. Twelve-year-old Andy starts his first-person narrative proclaiming the value of team work, and the book retains that theme throughout. He wins the championship baseball game by hitting a home run. He shares the credit for the win with his teammates, and he credits luck and superstition with partial responsibility (cn. Young Fu and Alyce, cf. Crispin and Mary Alice). Preferring to visit his friend John in the dump instead of joining the team for an ice cream celebration, Andy is again the recipient of magic power as he interprets what old John says: “‘Cows in the sky?’ I asked him. ‘Is that what you said?’ . . . He nodded. They were right, the words I’d heard. No one else ever understood anything he said . . .” (p. 20). Andy’s ability to interpret both Onion John’s words, actions, and emotions fuel this story’s plot; the boy’s many personality traits are often used to determine what to do in the subjective situations Onion John draws him into.

The story contains at least three plots. One involves Onion John and his interactions with Andy and his friends. The second includes Onion John, Andy, Andy’s father, and his father’s friends. The third

revolves around Andy's relationship with his dad. So, first things first. Onion John is a mystical man who talks in indecipherable codes (for most people, that is), lives in an unconventional house, and has unorthodox ways of dealing with the problems in his world. Andy is charmed by him, and, because of his stable home life, is able to form opinions about the man with the care and concern of his parents.

When Onion John wants to try to break the drought by fasting, having a procession, carrying torches, singing, etc., Andy doesn't see what harm it could do to try: "It'll make him happy. And it can't do any harm. And what if it works? We'll be the first ones in Serenity who ever made it rain!" (p. 30). His dad is less sure that this spectacle will do no harm, but he respects Andy's right to learn for himself. When it pours three days later, Andy's dad is the first to congratulate the rain makers. However, when Onion John cooks up a Halloween plan to fumigate Andy's house of witches, dad draws a line in the sand: To be friends with Onion John either they have to regress to the fourteenth century ideas he has, or he has to be brought up to the 20th century life they are living. Andy is not sure he wants to give up the rituals, secret codes, and excitement that Onion John brings, but he accepts the obvious choice. His dad puts flesh on the bones of the plan by suggesting that building Onion John a new, modern house would be a step in the right direction. Onion John is consulted, agrees, and sub-plot 2 is underway.

The Rotary Club and the members' wives are excellent examples of the formal perspective on leadership in action. They plan, schedule, assign, and act—all in an effort to construct Onion John's house on schedule. Andy helps in this effort, and from demolishing, to framing, to shingling and painting, he is there to interpret events for the rather confused Onion John. The stove and the bathtub cause Onion John to fret, and one of these modern devices later causes Andy's dad to do the same. When the house is finished, it is a marvel of modern construction. Andy helps Onion John prepare a speech to thank all those who helped. He steps out of the best-friend-of-Onion-John spotlight, and he declares his father the best friend Onion John could have. But Andy himself takes the blame when Onion John burns down the new house, thinking that the new stove needed wood to fuel it. However, through conversations and musings,

he comes to realize that the loss of the modern house is a good thing, for now Onion John can choose his own life for himself, even if that life includes ritualized gold-making and unorthodox goat-based remedies.

Likewise, Andy and his dad are learning something about shared decision making. Andy's dad sees the potential Andy has in science and math, and he dreams that Andy will become an astronaut. He even arranges a summer job for Andy at General Magneto, a local leader in technology. Rather than welcoming this opportunity, Andy realizes that it will take him away from his dad and their pleasant summers working together at the hardware store. He decides his only escape from a future that is being planned for him is to run away with Onion John. His parents get wind of the plan. Eventually, they reconcile in a way which values the worth of both parties' opinions. Andy's dad tells him his life is his to plan, and he leaves room for Andy to make his own decisions.

But Onion John already knew he was master of his own life, and he decides he will stick with the plan to run away. He feels that Andy has outgrown him, and he also wants to avoid having a new house built for him to replace the modern marvel that almost killed him. The town has learned a lesson about deciding someone else's future: Everyone agrees not to rebuild. Andy's dad has learned a lesson: Don't use others to make up for your own losses. And Andy learned a lesson: He can confidently make his own decisions, knowing his dad will support him because "the only [person he] ever come across, who's anything great, is [his dad]" (p. 241).

Fifth place (2 of 2): *Jacob Have I Loved* by Katherine Paterson

As good an example of the ambiguity perspective as *The Slave Dancer*, this tale falls to a lower place in the whole-book ranking because the main character is so consumed by jealousy she is almost crippled and because the book doesn't offer much help for her in the form of other leadership examples, because most of the characters we meet are as self-involved as she.

It doesn't take long to figure out what makes Louise Bradshaw, 13, tick. She's barely welcomed us to her world when she reveals that the very sound of her twin sister's voice makes her nauseated. Her

animosity throughout the book seems to be fueled only by her own self-centered jealousy; the first-person narrative form makes this negativism immediate and raw. Twin sister Caroline, her beauty and talent well-known, seems much better able to handle the comparisons that are inevitable in twinships.

For Louise is no slouch. She has talents which bode well for life on an island: a sense of humor, skill at poling a skiff and finding oysters, and a love for the water. She is unhealthily introspective, and she spends a lot of time figuring herself out. Unlike Billie Jo's (*Out of the Dust*), Louise's observations about life make her less believable, especially if extent of hardship in the two cases is compared. Louise and her sister live with both parents and a grandmother, and, though poor, they all work together to make a life on Rass Island in Chesapeake Bay.

Early on, Louise gets rid of her victim mentality long enough to set out on an adventure with her serious-minded friend Call. They stake out the house of a man who has just arrived on the island; Louise dreams that he may be a spy and that she will be hailed as a wartime hero. Using many admirable leadership skills—planning, adopting a code, and being observant—they come face-to-face with the mysterious man. He turns out to be a former island resident, and almost as mysterious as a spy: "If he was not a spy, if he was indeed Hiram Wallace, why had he come back after all these years . . .?" (p. 83).

Louise catches crabs on the beach, and sells them to make money to help her family. She rationalizes keeping some of the money for herself, but makes a point to honor the conservative Christian values held by the islanders. She reminds the newcomer of the Biblical principles that guide the island, but realizes that her own life has its share of inconsistencies. She does reach out to another when she agrees to clean up the house of a neighbor, and she shows more love for cats than for her own sister. Her leadership—she quotes the commandments as her authority—spares the lives of many of the marauding felines. When Caroline comes up with an ingenious remedy to the cat problem, Louise's jealousy resurfaces.

Her heroic deeds continue. During a storm, she alerts Hiram and helps him get to safety in her own home. After the storm, she poles him to the wreckage of his house, imagining herself like "a wise [Egyptian] slave who can read and write and dare to advise their

masters" (p. 129). She comforts Hiram as he realizes all is lost. Her chaotic feelings about him reveal an adolescent crush, one that causes her many ambivalent feelings as she and her family offer their home to him as a temporary refuge. She is miserable, and she lets those around her know it.

But the world keeps spinning, and time moves on. Through a chain of events involving Hiram and his past, a sum of money is entrusted to him. He credits Louise with giving him the idea, and announces that he is going to use the money to send Caroline to music school on the mainland. How does Louise interpret this good fortune?: "God had chosen to hate me" (p. 181).

With seemingly nothing left to lose in her miserable, overshadowed, self-dominated life, she negotiates a deal with her parents. She'll stay out of school so she can catch crabs with her father. She finds happiness in this teamwork, and she even manages to find humor in her grandmother's strange outbursts. But this doesn't last long. Her friend Call announces his marriage to Caroline, and Louise's jealousy flares again. Grandma hits her with a Bible when she quotes deprecating Scripture, and Louise is befuddled about how her own mother can abide this woman so calmly. Is there any hope that Louise will find balance in her life, or will she forever identify with the Biblical Esau, the outcast twin brother of Jacob, who was loved?

Balance comes in the form of schooling off the island, marriage, and a family. The final scene is of Nurse Louise, a new mother herself, nursing a weak newborn twin for a mother who was feeding the stronger sibling. She is a leader who has learned, finally, that those who give get more in return.

Sixth place (1 of 2): *The Trumpeter of Krakow* by Eric P. Kelly

As readers get further away from the top whole-book leadership ranking in the sample, even noble characters in the stories have a harder time measuring up to a Billie Jo or a Jessie Bollier, two well-rounded characters who perform their leadership tasks in believable ways. The trumpeter of Krakow, Pan Andrew, is a very noble man, as is his son, the future trumpeter. The fifteenth-century Polish patriot hides a national secret in his home, and he has sworn that he will deliver the object safely to the king. On the

journey to do so, his son carries on the family tradition of doing good deeds. Josef, at 15, demonstrates many traits which serve him well in leadership roles: He observes, plans, thinks ahead, wonders, and, most of all, interprets situations. In addition, he is brave, intelligent, pious, and humble. These characteristics and actions help him foil a bandit, save a girl from a savage dog, and discover a place for him and his parents to stay in the beautiful city of Krakow. But life is about to take an unexpected turn, and the future of Poland seems to be falling into Josef's hands.

Literally into his hands. For his father, in addition to harboring a national treasure, also has a job to do in the city. He stands at each of the four sides of the tower of the Church of Our Lady Mary, and he plays the Heynal, a hymn to Mary "which every trumpeter in the church had in the past sworn to play each hour of the day and night—'until death'" (p. 4). In the past, death had come to one trumpeter before he finished the song, and a new tradition of playing the song without the final notes began. It is this tune that Josef's father plays, and it is this broken tune that Josef wisely repairs to save the city.

He is a quick study and picks up the tune well. After a brief time of playing just one of the four Heynals with his father, his chance to go solo arrives. As the hourglass sands drop closer to the hourly duty, the same evil man who had threatened him and his family earlier in the tale shows up in the tower. He is after the hidden treasure, which Josef now learns is the Great Tarnov Crystal, and it is up to Josef alone to be sure that the traditions of the country—the Heynal and the crystal—are preserved. Can he do it? Fortunately, Josef had thought about just such a situation happening, and had arranged a code with Elzbietka, his friend. If he played the Heynal all the way through, she would know trouble was brewing. So he does. Elzbietka notices, alerts the authorities, and saves the day.

However, in an exciting twist, the author reveals that the crystal is not in his father's possession, but that it had fallen into the hands of the alchemist Kreutz; his selfish experiment to make gold from brass almost torches the entire city. He gives the crystal that he has hidden in his robes to Josef's father, and Kreutz declares madly that it is cursed. Realizing that the crystal must be delivered as quickly as possible, Josef, his father, Elzbietka, and the scholar-priest Jan Kanty

set out with the alchemist to do so, thus fulfilling Josef's father's oath. The crystal's significance and history are made plain, and the king promises him a proper reward. All seems well. However, the alchemist, realizing the power of the stone, grabs it and throws it in the river, where it still rests: "There had been in its history too much of suffering and misfortune to make it a thing at all desirable to possess, in spite of the purity of its beauty" (p. 214). Josef's story, part of that suffering and misfortune, ends—happily—with his university education and his marriage to Elzbietka. He is a shining example of the positive characteristics of his people.

Sixth place (2 of 2): *M.C. Higgins, the Great* by Virginia Hamilton

In *M.C.*, the reader meets the first and only black protagonist in the sample. Similar to his whole-book co-sixth-place finisher, M.C. takes family responsibility seriously, maybe too seriously. He and his family live in the shadow of an oily coal mine spoil heap that, M.C. believes, is going to dislodge and bury them. He is like a prophet, proclaiming doom and destruction to those who won't heed his words. His quest is to convince his dad to move, the outcome of which the reader doesn't learn until late in the tale.

Though his obsession makes him seem weak, 13-year-old M.C. has many personality traits which equip him for his leadership roles. He is tall, intelligent, strong, imaginative, graceful, creative, has keen senses, and is in touch with people around him. He motivates a new friend to do an impossible thing, and he accepts the "witchy" six-fingered Killburn family. He, himself, is quasi-supernatural. M.C. has secret ways of doing things, and his visions and premonitions sometimes give him clues about the present. And why shouldn't he be all these things? He is "the Great" after all, and the 40-foot-pole in his yard that he sits atop seems a suitable throne for this God-pretender: "He fluffed the trees out there and smoothed out the sky. All was still and ordered, the way he like to pretend he arranged it every day" (p. 27).

He proves his greatness in a variety of ways. He loves his family, valuing the traditions and songs that have been passed down. He shows this love in at least three ways: First, "[m]ost of the time, the children were in M.C.'s care" (p. 72), because his father works,

though sporadically. His mother's employment and M.C.'s hunting skill keep them from starving, and the pole he sits atop inspires them: "It had been M.C.'s fancy to make the children cherish the pole even more than they would have, by putting shiny wheels and hard-looking pedals on it" (p. 54). He resents his custodial role because he has responsibility but little power to make the decision to move, the one decision that would really benefit his family. Another way he cares for his family is by encouraging his mother: he recognizes that her singing talent may be their ticket out of the shadow of the slag heap, and he directs the recruiter to their home and orchestrates the audition. A third way he shows he cares for his family is his concern for his father and his drinking problem. M.C. is comfortable enough with his dad to negotiate about moving, but he also fears and misunderstands him. It takes his mom to sort out some of this relationship, and the information M.C. gains from her helps him cope.

But M.C. leads others too. He encourages a new friend to swim through a tunnel, taking her where she didn't even know she wanted to go: "They were in a world all their own, where she was older but he was the leader" (p. 157). He negotiates a good price for the supply of ice they need. Though he accepts the witchy Killburns and their six-fingered, ice-selling, snake-charming ways, he is wary of them. When he realizes that, despite their strange habits, their worldview makes sense, he accepts them.

His crowning achievement is the wall he builds at the end of the story. Accepting his mother's explanation for his father's unwillingness to move—the pole actually marks ancestral burial ground—M.C. begins building a wall. His father contributes the gravestones that he had tucked under the porch, and M.C., putting his own pride aside, accepts the building materials "to make the wall strong" (p. 277).

Seventh place (1 of 2): *Up a Road Slowly* by Irene Hunt

Julie lives in a house where something is "terribly wrong" (p. 2). Upset by news that she may be moving, she is sedated and sent off to live with her Aunt Cordelia. She describes herself in this first-person historical fiction account as overindulged. As she ages from 12 on, "self indulged" describes her best. To compound her troubles, her aunt is not only her no-

nonsense guardian, she is also her emotionally-detached teacher. Uncle Haskell provides some comic relief in the plot, though his lying and thinly-disguised drinking hardly make him a good role model for this young person.

Her first act of leadership is to organize the ongoing shunning of a mentally-challenged schoolmate. Her next leadership role is to help her sister when her daughter, Julie's namesake, is born. Even this role is clouded by self-interest: She resents her brother-in-law's primary status in her sister's life. The pages in between these events have to do with her inner life and "manipula[tion] . . . in the world of adults" (p. 29). She's lonely, resentful, and dismissive of those who don't suit her purposes: "I had no interest in anyone's feelings save my own" (p. 37). Uncle Haskell does what he can to modify her character by talking to her and writing her pointed notes.

She does reach out to Aunt Cordelia, assisting in the kitchen, and she defends her aunt's strictness to a wealthy classmate. When her Father remarries, she is her one attendant. When it comes time for her to move back home, though, she negotiates to stay with Aunt Cordelia. She seems to be learning that marriage relationships do take priority, and her decision pleases all involved. In a rather Gothic twist, Julie helps tend to a woman who, out of her senses, wanders off and gets lost. She offers to help Brett, another classmate, with his schoolwork. Soon, he takes advantage of her intellect and, in another Gothic twist, of her infatuation with him. Uncle Haskell rescues her, and her integrity remains untarnished. With Aunt Cordelia's help, she recovers from her broken ego and heart, and finds room in her life for two new interests: Danny and writing. Contributing to her transformation, Uncle Haskell encourages her writing ability, (and dies soon after from a mysterious fall from the bridge), and little Julie "followed me around with a devotion I had never known before . . ." (p. 147). The book ends with a characteristically narcissistic Julie glowing with pride at the applause rendered for her marvelous graduation speech.

Seventh place (2 of 2): *Missing May* by Cynthia Rylant

Once again, the Newbery award-winner is about an orphan. Summer tells the reader the story of her

life with the aunt and uncle she has lived with for six of her twelve years. They are a loving couple who dote on Summer. Aunt May declares, "I always told [Uncle] Ob he was my moon and sun. And when you came to us, Summer, honey, you were my shining star" (p. 87). When May dies, this little universe spins out of kilter. Following his wife's advice to hold on to those you love (cf. Dicey), Ob decides that the way to restore balance is to contact May through a spirit interpreter, an idea planted in his head by Summer's friend Cletus. Summer is so afraid that Ob's grief is going to kill him, that she goes along with this plan "to mend his sorry broken heart" (p. 16).

Her care and concern for Ob are real and expressed often in word and deed. She cooks for him, encourages him to pursue his whirligig hobby, and tries to encourage him. Her own self worries are also real. She's not sure happiness is always around the corner, and she wishes that she were enough to make Ob want to go on. The formal systemized funeral parlor way of dealing with death has left her cold, and books and popular media offer no answers. She is on her own in helping Ob.

Though she doubts that contacting May is possible, she sees it as her only hope: ". . . if it kept Ob grinning and chasing after some hope, I knew I'd have to be willing to follow him" (p. 54). Fortunately, some of her leadership burden has been shifted to Cletus, though she expresses doubts about the plan they have agreed to. After manipulating Cletus' parents so that Cletus can accompany them, they, "like three visitors heading for Oz," (p. 71), set out. Unfortunately, their savior, the Reverend Miriam Young of the Spiritualist Church, has died. They set out to return home; Summer is dejected, depressed, and worried, "praying for something to save Ob and me" (p. 76). That salvation comes in the form of a detour to the West Virginia state capitol, a place Ob revered. When Summer breaks down in grief as an owl, May's symbol, flies in front of her, Ob is able to comfort her, putting life back in her. The natural order is restored when Ob reclaims his parental duties and rediscovers the joy his whirligig hobby brought to him. In an authoritative, fatherly way, he states that the spirit messages' purpose is to console those who suffer. Summer's quest for Ob's healing seems to be over.

Eighth place (1 of 1): *A Gathering of Days: A New England Girl's Journal, 1830-32* by Joan Bloss

This first-person, historical fiction story begins with a letter from a great-grandmother to her namesake great-granddaughter, explaining that she, herself, penned the journal the year she turned 14. Similar to *Out of the Dust*, this story records details in the life of Catherine Hall, from daily events, to decision-making, to duties fulfilled. It is a tale of a life defined by goodness, guiding principles, and a girl's own discoveries about herself. Catherine is motherless (cf. Dicey, Billie Jo, and Julie), but loved by her father. She is virtuous and skillful, valuing good handwriting, self-discipline, and care for others. When confronted with a moral dilemma—helping a stranger who left her a note by giving him one of her mother's quilts—she agonizes over its many mysteries: Is the stranger a sinner or sinned against, slave or free, young or old? She feels sorrow for leaving her father and her best friend out of the discussion about what to do. She decides, after consulting with her friend Asa and weighing the principles involved in the matter, to leave a quilt in the woods for the stranger to warm himself. She confirms her decision in her mind by praying for the man on Christmas. Her phantom, as she calls him, is not through with her yet.

Life goes on. She's happy when spring comes, and she admires the schoolteacher for his stand on using classroom materials that advance moral development, though the materials are not approved by the school officials. She has a birthday and resents it when her father implies that her childhood has been taken from her because of her responsibilities (cf. Dicey). She wins a spelling bee, wisely uses their dwindling supply of food, mends, and does the family laundry. It appears that her adult-like duties may soon be over: Father has expressed interest in a new wife.

She is conflicted about this, ("I will not call her mother" p. 75), and her emotions spill over when the missing quilt affair is revealed and her father's wife promises to help her make a new replacement one, the punishment decided on by the newlyweds. As the step-relationship grows, she begins to call her "Mammann"—a hybrid name which seems to fit the situation well.

Crisis comes to Catherine when her friend Cassie dies. Guiding principles offered by others help her cope. She realizes that Cassie was dear to others too. Moving beyond self-pity helps restore order to her world of learning, farming, and news of unrest in the South. Aphorisms, Biblical sayings, and guiding principles are the wind in her sails as she moves on with life. When a letter arrives, written in the same handwriting as the message that began the quilt incident, Catherine learns that the man she helped is now free—and very grateful—in Canada.

Catherine discovers that life is full of opposing realities, and, as she prepares to leave home to care for her aunt's new baby, she leaves the reader with this characteristic dichotomy: “. . . [N]ever is a place so loved as when one has to leave it” (p. 142). Reminding the reader of the writer of the journal, the author ends the tale with a letter written, again, from the great-grandmother. It closes characteristically: “Life is like a pudding: it takes both the salt and the sugar to make a really good one” (p. 144).

Ninth place (1 of 1): *It's Like This, Cat* by Emily Neville

Meet Dave, a 14-year-old boy who decides to get a cat because his dad thinks a dog would be a good pet. Their bickering is a constant sub-plot in this book, though Dave does manage to overcome his adolescent rebellion long enough to convince his dad to help two of his friends. Neither of these humans, though, get as much page time as Cat, the pet who is loved because “[a]nything a cat does, he does only when he wants to” (p. 7). He acquires the cat from Kate, a reclusive cat-lover who, later in the story, inherits her brother's fortune. Dave's dad helps her manage both the cats and the cash.

When Cat gets lost and Dave trespasses to find him, he meets Tom Ransom, a young man who is a suspected burglar. Because he is nicer than the superintendent of the New York apartment in which he lives, Dave hopes that Tom makes a big haul. There seems to be a guiding principle here, but moral doesn't describe it. Dave writes to him when he finds out he's in jail, and he and his family befriend and help Tom.

Dave's friend Nick is a little annoyed by Cat. He spoils a date he arranges for him, Dave, and two girls,

though Dave's reluctance to interact with the opposite sex seems to be the real trouble here. Dave and Nick eventually come to blows, literally, and the friendship is put on hold.

Tom reappears, and, after meeting Dave's mom, he and his friend explore the sidewalks and subways of the city. He interprets Tom as “an island” (p. 46). His ex-friend Nick shows up and he and Dave start summer vacation together, a “dull routine” (p. 54). Then Tom reappears, with a girlfriend, and Dave and Hilda discuss what Tom should do with his life. Dave decides to enlist his dad's help, which he agrees to do. Dave takes the lead in suggesting employment, and his dad makes the contact. Tom gets the job.

One of Dave's biggest dilemmas is whether or not to have Cat neutered. He gets advice from others and decides that the surgery is in his wandering cat's best interest. Cat survives the surgery and Dave's worrying. Cat is the beneficiary of Dave's concern later when Dave braves traffic to rescue him.

Dave overcomes his girl-phobia and takes Mary, someone he met earlier, to see a play. The meeting wasn't prearranged, and Dave doubts that he has the skills needed to make the effort needed to pursue a relationship: “I sort of can't imagine calling up and saying, ‘Oh, uh, Mary, this is Dave. You want to go to a movie or something, huh?’” (p. 78). So, he takes the lead by orchestrating another “chance” meeting, leaving the details to work themselves out. Mary lives a bohemian life, and Dave thinks about the differences between his family and her family. Dave gets annoyed with independent Mary; he wants to be in the lead, and she won't let him. When she turns to him for assistance, Dave recruits his dad and they help her.

Ben is the newest entry in Dave's cavalcade of friends. He attends school with him, and Dave introduces him to Tom and to New York's natural world. Tragedy strikes, however, when Cat pounces on the salamander that Ben captured. Dave and his dad agree to reduce bickering so Mom's asthma doesn't flare up; Dave gives Cat partial credit for bringing together some of the people in this tale.

The Nature of Leadership

The study focused on eight well-documented leadership perspectives, and, obviously, was crafted to affirm these perspectives given that the codes used to

It is instructive to note whether the dominant perspectives (moral, personality, ambiguity, and subjective) are indicative of a transformational or transactional emphasis on leadership.

between the two types: Transactional leaders engage in you-scratch-my-back, I'll-scratch-yours tactics to accomplish goals common to both parties. In transactional leadership, an exchange of goods is always made. These relationships can be short lived. In fact, Burns (1978) says that the relationship will last only as long as necessary; it is fluid and changeable. To use an analogy, transactional leaders are like merchants, exchanging, bartering, and trading to achieve goals.

Transformational leaders, on the other hand, are intellectuals who use criticism, imagination, and thought to affect ends beyond present means. Transformational leadership links people together by inspiring engagement with one another so that a common purpose is achieved; trust, vision, and empowerment mark transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Carlson, 1996). Transformational leaders are like gardeners, tending to the needs and growth of others. This study favors transformational leadership, because most of the four top-ranked perspectives favor a transformational approach: Moral and subjective are part of a transformational emphasis, personality is either, depending on the leader's qualities, while the ambiguity perspective is the only leading perspective clearly not within the transformational emphasis.

The Value of Adolescent Literature in the Formation of Leadership Characteristics

Adolescents want to make sense of the world, of good and bad, of work, even of death; these are the

gather data were constructed from thirty-eight sub-categories that describe the perspectives. And, indeed, every perspective was represented to one degree or another within the sample. It is instructive to note whether the dominant perspectives (moral, personality, ambiguity, and subjective) are indicative of a transformational or transactional emphasis on leadership. Burns (1978) makes the following distinctions

themes of literature, especially literature that has withstood the test of time (Probst, 1984). Kinman and Henderson (1985, p. 887) highlight the importance of realistic fiction:

Adolescents are confused over what they will become, as well as who they are, and they role play attitudes and behaviors. Literature then must deal with characters assuming adult behaviors and searching for adult identity. The books' characters and situations must have an element of reality: Readers can then accept that the character's experiences are similar to their own.

Because adolescent readers live in the present moment, the books that appeal to them probably will be "grounded in the realities of their own lives" (Hamilton, 2002, p. 61). The study I conducted was crafted to analyze these books in light of Probst's, Kinman and Henderson's and Hamilton's parameters. Newberys have withstood the test of time and the sample correlates to the lives (as measured by characters' ages and realistic story lines) adolescents live. "It is true now, as it was true when John Newbery published children's books, that what is published for children reflects the contemporary society's opinions of what children should read . . ." (Sutherland, 1997).

The content analysis and summaries presented here are intended to give readers another tool to use as they choose books that will help grow adolescent readers and leaders. This study should serve as a valuable tool for those who wish to harness the implicit themes in stories to help develop leaders who are aware of the transactive and transformative powers of leadership. It affirms Burns' conclusions, which are based on theories of need hierarchy, moral development, and personal growth: "If the origin of the leader's value system lies in childhood conscience, adolescence and adulthood bring new overtures and new closures as norms are interpreted and applied in ever-widening, ever more differentiated social collectives (1978, p. 73). Adolescent experiences with literature could very well be a "new overture" in the development of leadership attributes and characteristics. Fiedler (1971) and Burns (1978) say that adolescent leadership is spontaneous and not influenced by overt attempts to develop it; therefore, implicit messages may be a powerful influence. This study helps one begin to understand adolescent leadership in this way (using dominant sub-categories as the sources for the descriptors): The adolescent leader is

Table 2: Whole-book Ranking in Five categories

	1. Strong Leadership Perspective	2. Believable Tasks	3. Balanced Protagonist	4. Engaging Story	5. Other Leaders	Total	Whole-book Rank
Trumpeter of Krakow	4	3	2	3	2	14	6 th
Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze	4	5	4	3	3	19	4 th
Johnny Tremain	5	5	4	3	5	22	2 nd
Onion John	3	3	3	2	5	16	5 th
It's Like This, Cat	1	1	2	1	2	7	9 th
Up a Road Slowly	1	2	3	2	2	10	7 th
The Slave Dancer	5	4	5	5	4	23	1 st
M.C. Higgins, the Great	5	3	2	2	2	14	6 th
A Gathering of Days	1	2	3	1	2	9	8 th
Jacob Have I Loved	5	4	2	3	2	16	5 th
Dacey's Song	5	5	4	4	5	23	1 st
Missing May	1	1	4	2	2	10	7 th
The Midwife's Apprentice	5	4	4	3	3	19	4 th
Out of the Dust	5	4	5	5	2	21	3 rd
A Year Down Yonder	2	4	5	3	5	19	4 th
A Single Shard	5	4	4	5	5	23	1 st
Crispin: Cross of Lead	5	4	4	4	4	21	3 rd

emotionally connected to others (1.3) as s/he willingly shares responsibility (3.3) in a selfless way (7.3), as s/he discovers solutions (5.1) to confusing leadership situations (6.2), and as s/he feels both interested (5.1) and uncertain (6.1) about the leadership situation.

If educators are to transform culture, they must critically examine the implicit and explicit curricula and materials that inhabit the classroom. This study will enable decision-makers to understand what kinds of adolescent leaders are hiding in exemplary literature and to use this understanding to transform culture.

Carol Jasperse Lautenbach teaches English Language Arts at Lee Middle School in Wyoming, Michigan and Secondary Content Area Literacy at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. She earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

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Defending Books:

A Title Index

“. . . It takes a village to raise a child, but it takes only one complaint to raze a curriculum.”

—Reid & Neufeld 1999, p.1

Back in the winter of 1993, I contributed an article, “Defending Books: A Title Index,” to *The ALAN Review*, encouraging teachers to find reviews and write their own rationales for books using ideas from the published ones (Sacco1993). A rationale is defined by Jean Brown and Elaine Stephens (1994) as the articulation of reasons for using a particular literary work, film, or teaching method (1). The sources of book rationales in that 1993 article are presently out of print even though they are still very useful and should not be weeded from teacher or library collections. It appears from examining the reports of book challenges by Charlie Suhor and Millie Davis that books with rationales sent by NCTE are more likely not to be banned than those that do not have rationales although empirical data on this likelihood are not currently available.

Since that 1993 piece of mine, many excellent, newer sources of rationales have come into print of challenged and/or more recently published books. Therefore, I prepared an up-to-date title index (see Appendix A, An Index to Rationales) to the best sources of rationales presently in print to help educators locate rationales and to assist them in writing their own

before the censor appears. The titles that comprise the index are predominately young adult fiction with classics and a few films, plays, poetry books, and nonfiction. For the sake of brevity, the children’s books have not been indexed as well as an additional 700 or more rationales that are available from the National Council of Teachers of English when a challenge occurs. New rationales are frequently added to NCTE’s database. Every teacher and educator should become familiar with the rationales indexed and documents at the NCTE’s Anti-Censorship Center website as well as American Library Associations’ *Intellectual Freedom Manual* (2006). An educator does not have to be an NCTE member to go to NCTE’s

website and fill out the “Report A Censorship Incident Form” to report a censorship problem or call 1-800-369-6283, ext. 3634 to get the excellent assistance of Millie Davis, NCTE Director of Communications and Affiliate Services, if films and videos, teaching methods, or literary works are challenged.

I continue to help as many as twenty teachers each year with censorship challenges, but only one teacher in the past five years was prepared with written rationale. Teachers are well-advised to be proactive as they select the litera-

It is imperative, for example, that they have written rationales available to parents and the community for each book taught in a classroom, although no books should be required reading.

ture that enters their classrooms and may also find themselves better prepared to teach. It is imperative, for example, that they have written rationales available to parents and the community for each book taught in a classroom, although no books should be required reading. Students should be able to select their reading from an approved English department book list. The instructional materials should be

Once a book is used in classroom teaching, teachers should collect student work to prove that their educational objectives were achieved. All this information should be put in a file to defend the book if it is challenged.

selected to meet the written educational objectives and philosophy of the English department as well as specific literary criteria stated on an evaluation form. Each member of the English department should read and evaluate each book and sign and date the evaluation form. In point of fact, Don Gallo once recounted the experience of a Connecticut curriculum specialist who successfully defended *Bridge to Terabithia* by using

evaluations forms to prove that teachers judiciously selected the book for classroom teaching.

If a book is selected for use, all available rationales, photocopies of the reviews that recommend the book and entries of the books in recommended bibliographies should be collected. Once a book is used in classroom teaching, teachers should collect student work to prove that their educational objectives were achieved. All this information should be put in a file to defend the book if it is challenged. Additionally, since teachers with censorship problems are vulnerable to being formally reprimanded, educators should insist that their teachers' union put an academic freedom clause in their teaching contracts prohibiting reprimands from being placed in their personnel files if they receive a censorship challenge. Instructional materials policies must be written stating that the complainant must prove in writing that the material challenged is inappropriate to insure intellectual freedom.

Writing Rationales

Ken Donelson (1991) gives his usual wisdom to educators when he suggests that one of the best rationales for writing rationales is that "they force teachers to write and have their writing available to the public." He insists that a good rationale answers the following questions:

- (1) Why would you want to use this work with this class at this time?
- (2) How do you believe this work will meet your announced objectives?
- (3) What problems of style, texture, tone, and theme exist for students in reading this work and how will you meet those problems?
- (4) Assuming that the objectives are met, how will the students be different for having read and discussed this work? (18)

Additionally, there are numerous resources, articles about rationales with forms for teachers to fill in to write rationales and examples to help them write a rationale at NCTE's Anti-Censorship Center.

Recommended Sources of Rationales

The resources that are annotated over the following pages should be purchased and made available to teachers in English departments and/or school libraries not only because they are examples of excellent defenses of books but also because they can be used to get ideas to defend similar works or works by the same author. For example, when I write a letter to defend the use of the offensive "n-word," in school literature, I have found individual essays defending Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* written by Jack M. Kean (1993) and Arlene Harris Mitchell (1993) in Nicholas Karolides, Lee Burrell and John M. Kean's (1993) *Censored Books: Critical Viewpoints* to be very useful. Additionally, there are many valid arguments in these sources that educators can use to defend intellectual freedom. Educators should think of well-written rationales as food for the brain. The various writing styles used in the individual sources to defend books illustrate that there is no one best way to write an effective rationale.

(CD1) *Rationales for Challenged Books, Vol.1.* (CD-ROM). Urbana, IL: The National Council of

Teachers of English and The International Reading Association, 1998. (NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801, No. 38276 members: \$29.95; nonmembers: \$39.95)

(CD2) *Rationales for Challenged Books, Vol.2.* (CD-ROM). Urbana, IL: The National Council of Teachers of English, 2005. (No. 73314 members: \$29.95; nonmembers: \$39.95)

In 1995, NCTE and SLATE devised a plan to collect rationales for educators. I made a presentation to the Standing Committee Against Censorship and SLATE suggesting the necessity of creating a database of rationales and offering the services of Miami University young adult literature students to contribute to the collection. M. Jerry Weiss solicited donations from publishers so the rationales would be available to teachers for a modest price. *Rationales for Challenged Books, Vol. 1* consists of over 200 rationales of over 170 books and film titles appropriate for young adults. All titles are arranged alphabetically. Miami University young adult literature students wrote most of the rationales. Rationales vary in length from three to over twenty pages. There are a few children's books, nonfiction, and films in the collection. Rationales usually contain an introduction that identifies awards won by the book or author; suggestion of youngest age or grade level that the book is appropriate for with an APA citation; summary of the book, theoretical and redeeming values of the book; teaching objectives; lesson plans; why the book is controversial, why the book should not be banned; annotated alternative books, information about the author, and references.

In *Rationales for Challenged Books, Vol. 2*, 112 rationales are arranged alphabetically by title and written by Jocelyn Chadwick's Harvard University School of Education graduate students and Miami University young adult literature students. The collection consists of less-known and well-known young adult titles and classics that may be used in middle and high schools. Each three- to four-page rationale frequently includes intended audience of the work; a brief plot summary, potential objections to the work and advice on how to address such objections; list of reviews of the work and awards, if any, it has received, and usually alternative works are suggested. In addition, valuable resources are provided such as NCTE Guidelines on Censorship & Intellectual Free-

dom, a form for writing your own rationales, and a sample presentation to a school board in defense of a challenged book.

(CB1) Karolides, Nicholas J., Burress, Lee & Kean, John M. (Eds.). *Censored Books: Critical Viewpoints*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1995. (ISBN 0-8108-4038-3 \$44.50 pap.)

(CB2) Karolides, Nicholas J. (Ed.). *Censored Books II: Critical Viewpoints, 1985-2000*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002. (Scarecrow Press, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706, ISBN 0-08108-4147-9 \$48.)

Both editions contain scholarly rationales of often challenged poetry, nonfiction, and/or fiction for children and young adults that are frequently taught in schools. The rationales are well-written by acclaimed authors, librarians, and/or scholar teachers and illustrate several ways to write an effective defense of books. There are several rationales written by the authors of the frequently censored books. The brief essays address why the books are challenged and the outcomes and gives specific reasons why the books should not be banned. *Censored Books: Critical Viewpoints* covers controversial books challenged during the years from 1950 to 1985 and is comprised of two parts. Part I consists of essays by noted authors on perspectives on censorship by omission and commission; and Part II is composed of 63 rationales in alphabetical order. *Censored Books II* includes rationales of the most challenged books available to children and young adults from 1985 to 2000 and consists of an excellent foreword by Nat Hentoff and 65 rationales that include five series titles. The rationales are in alphabetical order with an index of authors and titles in one alphabet.

(RCM) Reid, Louann (Ed.). *Rationales for Challenged Materials*. Fort Collins: CO: The Colorado Language Arts, 1987. (Louann Reid, English Department, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1773 \$8).

The purpose of *Rationales for Challenged Materials* is to help teachers select and defend good books and films for young adults. Educators contributed 25 well-written rationales of books that would appeal to and benefit young adults. Each article contains bibliographic information; intended audience, a summary of the work, relationship of the material to

the educational program, impact on readers; potential problems with the work and ways to address them; references used; and alternative works. Articles about censorship and resources for combating censorship are included. In one article, Reid suggests and annotates the following novels that can be used singly or as pairs or groups to teach young adults about censorship: *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Day They Came to Arrest the Book*, *Memoirs of a Bookbat*, *A Small Civil War*, and *The Last Safe Place on Earth*.

(HLC) Becker, Beverley C. & Stan, Susan M. *Hit List for Children 2: Frequently Challenged Books*. 2nd Ed. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2002. (ALA, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611, ISBN 0-8389-0830-6 nonmember \$25, member \$22.50).

(HLYA) Lesesne, Teri S. & Chance, Rosemary. *Hit List for Young Adults 2: Frequently Challenged Books*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 2002. (ISBN 0-8389-0835-7 members \$22.50 nonmembers \$25.)

Both of these publications of the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom contain rationales of the most commonly challenged books appropriate for young adults and/or children and update the previous out-of-print editions, *Hit List for Children: Frequently Challenged Books* (1996) and *Hit List: Frequently Challenged Books for Young Adults* (1996). *Hit List for Children 2* offers suggestions for protecting 24 books, which includes two series and is arranged in alphabetical order by author. In *Hit List for Young Adults 2* the editors suggest how to protect 20 books and the essays are arranged in alphabetical order by title. Each entry in both books gives full bibliographical information and range in length from 1–4 pages. The essays include a summary of the challenged book with information that defends the use of the book in the curriculum or library; a history of its censorship with results; reviews of the book; articles about the book; background articles; references about the author; and sources recommending the book. An appendix in *Hit List for Children 2* informs the reader what ALA does to help librarians. *Hit List for Young Adults 2* has the following invaluable appendixes: reference works about authors, resources recommending challenged books, selected recent books on intellectual freedom, internet sites of intellectual freedom advocates, internet guides to intellectual freedom, tips for dealing

with censorship and selection, how to write a book rationale by Gloria Pipkin, the Library Bill of Rights, and ALA's statement, *The Freedom to Read*.

(RTYAL) Reid, Louann, & Neufeld, Jamie Hayes (Eds.) *Rationales for Teaching Young Adult Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook, 1999. (Heinemann, P. O. Box 6926, Portsmouth, NH 03802-6926, ISBN 1-693056-04-X \$23.)

Contains 22 excellent rationales of worthwhile books for young adults arranged in alphabetical order and recommended for classroom teaching. Each rationale contains bibliographic information, an excerpt from the book, intended audience, summary and relationship of the material to the program, impact on readers, potential problems with the work and ways to address them, references, and alternative works. The thought-provoking introduction and afterword should be read by all in-service and pre-service teachers. Additionally, there is an author index of titles mentioned in the text and an index of rationales by recommended grade level and theme.

In addition, educators have so many other invaluable resources that can be used for defending individual works and/or justifying the use of young adult literature in the classroom such as *From Hinton to Hamlet: Building Bridges Between Young Adult Literature and the Classics* (Hertz and Gallo 2005), *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics* series (Kaywell 1993-2000), *Reading Their World: the Young Adult Novel in the Classroom* (Monseau and Salvner 2000), *Interpreting Young Adult Literature: Literary Theory in the Secondary Classroom* (Moore 1997), *Teaching Banned Book* (Scales 2001) and *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource for Stories* (Warner 2006). These excellent resources should be in every English department library.

A chart of previously challenged books and the sources for their rationales follows.

Margot T. Sacco is an associate professor in the Department of Teacher Education, at Miami University of Ohio. She has been teaching Adolescent Literature for 33 years and has been a member of ALAN since its beginning. She was a member of the Standing Committee against Censorship for three terms. Her publications have appeared in *The ALAN Review*, *The ALAN Newsletter*,

Computers in Libraries, Emergency Librarian, Preserving Intellectual Freedom, Writers for Young Adults, Vol 3, Ohio Media Spectrum, ERIC: Resources in Education, and Focus: Teaching English Language Arts. *She is a contributor to Rationales for Challenged Books*, Vol. 1 & 2 (CD-ROM) (NCTE).

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Title	CD1	CD2	CB1	CB2	HLC2	HLYA2	RCM	RTYAL
365 Days, Ronald Glasser	X							
About David, Susan Beth Pfeffer	X							
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain	X		51-71					
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Mark Twain		X		1-9				
After the First Death, Robert Cormier	X							
After the Rain, Norma Fox Mazer	X							
The Afterlife, Gary Soto		X						
Alice (series), Phyllis Reynolds Naylor	X			10-19	31-35			
All Hallows' Eve, Charles Williams	X			20-27				
All-American Boys, Frank Mosca				28-38				
Always Running, Luis J. Rodriguez								
Am I Blue? Coming Out of the Silence, Marion Dane Bauer						1-2		10-19
Angel Face, Norma Klein	X							
Animal Farm, George Orwell	X							
Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl, Anne Frank	X		72-79					
Annie on My Mind, Nancy Garden	X		80-86			3-4	3-4	81-88
Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret, Judy Blume	X		87-97					
Arizona Kid, Ron Koertge	X							
Armageddon Summer, Jane Yolen & Bruce Coville		X		42-50				
As I Lay Dying, William Faulkner								
Athletic Shorts, Chris Crutcher						6-8		
Baby Be-Bop, Francisca Lia Block						9-10		
Battle of Jericho, Sharon Draper		X						
The Bean Trees, Barbara Kingsolver		X						116-123
Beggar's Ride, Theresa Nelson	X							
Beginner's Love, Norma Klein	X							
Being There, Jerzy Kosinski				51-57				
The Bell Jar, Sylvia Platt		X						
Beloved, Toni Morrison				58-69				
Best Girl, D.B. Smith	X							
Beyond the Chocolate War, Robert Cormier	X		98-108				10-13	
The Bible								
Black Boy, Richard Wright	X			109-116				

<i>Black Ice</i> , Lorene Cary	X								
<i>Black Like Me</i> , John Howard Griffin	X			117-124					
<i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> , Rudolfo Anaya	X			70-79					
<i>Bless the Beasts and Children</i> , Glendon Swarthout	X			125-129					
<i>Blubber</i> , Judy Blume	X			87-97		80-86	3-5		
<i>The Bluest Eye</i> , Toni Morrison	X			87-94					
<i>Boy Meets Boy</i> , David Levithan	X					95-99	47-48		
<i>The Boy Who Lost His Face</i> , Louis Sachar	X			130-143					
<i>Brave New World</i> , Aldous Huxley	X								
<i>A Break with Charity</i> , Ann Rinaldi	X								
<i>The Breakfast of Champions</i> , Kurt Vonnegut	X								
<i>Bridge to Terabithia</i> , Katherine Paterson	X					100-106	38-40		5-7
<i>Broken Bridge</i> , Philip Pullman	X								
<i>Bucking the Sarge</i> , Christopher Paul Curtis	X								
<i>The Bumblebee Flies Anyway</i> , Robert Cormier	X								
<i>The Canterbury Tales</i> , Geoffrey Chaucer	X			144-158					
<i>Captain Underpants and the Perilous Plot of Professor Poopyants</i> , Dav Pilkey	X								
<i>Carrie</i> , Stephen King	X			107-114					
<i>Catch-22</i> , Kurt Vonnegut	X			167-178					
<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> , J. D. Salinger	X			159-166					11-14
<i>Catherine Called Birdy</i> , Karen Cushman	X								
<i>The Cay</i> , Theodore Taylor	X								
<i>Chain Letter</i> , Christopher Pike	X								
<i>Cherokee Bat and the Goat Guys</i> , Francesca Lia Block	X								
<i>A Child Called "It"</i> , Dave Pelzer	X								
<i>The Chocolate War</i> , Robert Cormier	X			179-184				15-18	8-12
<i>Christine</i> , Stephen King	X								
<i>The Clan of the Cave of Bear</i> , Jean Auel	X					115-119			
<i>Class Trip</i> , Bebe Faas Rice	X								
<i>A Clockwork Orange</i> , Anthony Burgess	X			185-190					
<i>Cold Mountain</i> , Charles Frazier	X								
<i>The Color Purple</i> , Alice Walker	X			191-200					13-15
<i>Continental Drift</i> , Russell Banks	X								
<i>Crazy Horse Electric</i> , Chris Crutcher	X								
<i>Crazy Lady</i> , Jane Leslie Conly	X					120-125			47-54

"The Crucible," Arthur Miller						
Cujo, Stephen King	X		201-208	126-137		
Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, Mark Haddon		X				
Curses, Hexes, and Spells, Daniel Cohen		X		138-143		
Dancing Naked, Shelley Hrdlitschka	X					
David and Jonathan, Cynthia Voigt		X				
David v. God, Mary E. Pearson	X			152-158	19-21	
A Day No Pigs Would Die, Robert Peck		X	209-219			
"Death of a Salesman," Arthur Miller	X		87-97			
Deenie, Judy Blume	X		220-225			
Deliverance, James Dickey		X				
The Devil's Arithmetic, Jane Yolen						16-17
The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition, Anne Frank	X					
Dixie Storms, Barbara Hall	X					
Dogsong, Gary Paulsen	X					
Don't Look Behind You, Lois Duncan	X					
Double Date, R. L. Stine		X				
Dragonwings, Laurence Yep		X				
Drowning Anna, Sue Mayfield		X				
The Drowning of Stephan Jones, Bette Greene				159-162	22-23	
The Duplicate, William Sleator	X					
Eats: Poems by Arnold Adoff	X					
The Ear, The Eye, and the Arm, Nancy Farmer						63-71
The Eclipse of Moonbeam Dawson, Jean Davies Okimoto		X				
"The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-In-The-Moon Marigolds," Paul Zindel	X					
The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test, Tom Wolfe			226-236			
Ethan Frome, Edith Wharton	X					
Ever After, Rachel Vail		X				
The Executioner, Jay Bennett						
The Face on the Milk Carton, Caroline Cooney		X				
Fade, Robert Cormier		X		163-166		
Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury		X				
Fallen Angels, Walter Dean Myers				167-172	24-25	163-170
Family of Strangers, Susan Beth Pfeffer	X					
Family Secrets, Norma Klein	X					

<i>A Farewell to Arms, Ernest Hemingway</i>	X				237-248	
<i>Farewell to Manzanar, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston</i>		X				
<i>Feed, M. T. Anderson</i>		X				
<i>Fell, M. E. Kerr</i>	X					
<i>Finding My Voice, Marie G. Lee</i>	X					
<i>Flowers for Algernon, Daniel Keyes</i>	X				249-255	
<i>Forever, Judy Blume</i>	X				256-260	26-28
<i>Fountainhead, Ayn Rand</i>		X				
<i>Franny and Zooey, J. D. Salinger</i>		X				
<i>Freak the Mighty, Rodman Philbrick</i>		X				
<i>Frenchtown Summer, Robert Cormier</i>		X				
<i>Gangsta Rap, Benjamin Zepaniah</i>		X				
<i>Gathering Blue, Lois Lowry</i>		X				
<i>Geography Club, Brent Hartinger</i>		X				
<i>Girl, Interrupted, Susanna Kaysen</i>		X				
<i>The Giver, Lois Lowry</i>	X				173-175	26-27
<i>The Giver, Lynn Hall</i>	X					18-20
<i>Go Ask Alice, Anonymous</i>	X				261-267	29-31
<i>The Goats, Brock Cole</i>						7-9
<i>Going After Cacciato, Tim O'Brien</i>		X				
<i>Going for the Big One, P.J. Petersen</i>	X					
<i>The Golden Compass, Philip Pullman</i>		X				
<i>The Good Earth, Pearl S. Buck</i>	X				268-277	
<i>Good Night, Maman, Norma Fox Mazer</i>		X				
<i>Good-bye and Keep Cold, Jenny Davis</i>	X					
<i>Goosebumps (the series), R. L. Stine</i>		X				
<i>The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck</i>	X				176-181	57-58
<i>The Grass Dancer, Susan Power</i>		X			278-287	
<i>The Grass Harp, Truman Capote</i>		X				
<i>The Great Gilly Hopkins, Katherine Paterson</i>	X				182-186	41-43
<i>Grendel, John Gardner</i>	X				187-191	21-22
<i>The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole, Sue Townsend</i>	X					
<i>The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood</i>		X			199-205	
<i>The Harmony Arms, Ron Koertge</i>	X					
<i>Harry Potter (series), J. K. Rowling</i>		X			206-212	44-46
<i>The Headless Cupid, Zilpha K. Snyder</i>					213-224	

<i>Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad</i>	X			32-33	
<i>Heartbreak and Roses, Janet Bode & Stan Mack</i>		X			
<i>Hello, I Lied, M. E. Kerr</i>		X			
<i>Here's to You, Rachel Robinson, Judy Blume</i>		X			
<i>A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich, Alice Childress</i>		X		288-293	
<i>The Hobbitt, J. R. R. Tolkien</i>		X			
<i>The House of Spirits, Isabel Allende</i>	X			225-233	
<i>House of Stairs, William Sleator</i>		X			
<i>The House on Mango Street, Sandra Cisneros</i>	X				
<i>How I Paid for College, Mark Acito</i>	X				
<i>How the Gracia Girls Lost Their Accents, Julie Alvarez</i>	X				
<i>How to Eat Fried Worms, Thomas Rockwell</i>		X		234-242	
<i>I Am the Cheese, Robert Cormier</i>	X			243-249	
<i>I Heard the Owl Call My Name, Margaret Craven</i>		X			
<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou</i>	X			299-316	34-36
<i>I Never Promised you a Rose Garden, Joanne Greenberg</i>	X				
<i>If Beale Street Could Talk, James Baldwin</i>		X		294-298	
<i>If I Should Die Before I Wake, Han Nolan</i>		X			171-179
<i>In Country, Bobbie Ann Mason</i>		X			139-145
<i>In the Spirit of Crazy Horse, Peter Matthiessen</i>		X			
<i>Interstellar Pig, William Sleator</i>		X		250-258	
<i>Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison</i>		X			
<i>Invitation to the Game, Monica Hughes</i>		X			
<i>Ironman, Chris Crutcher</i>		X			55-62
<i>It's Not Easy Being Bad, Cynthia Voigt</i>		X			
<i>It's Ok If You Do Not Love Me, Norma Klein</i>		X			
<i>It's Perfectly Normal, Robie Harris</i>		X		322-330	
<i>Jack, A.M. Homes</i>		X		259-263	22-23
<i>Jacob Have I Loved, Katherine Paterson</i>		X			96-103
<i>Joey Pigza Loses Control, Jack Gantos</i>		X			
<i>Johnny Got His Gun, Dalton Trumbo</i>		X		331-337	
<i>The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan</i>		X			
<i>Jubilee, Margaret Walker</i>		X			
<i>Jubilee Journey, Carolyn Meyer</i>		X			
<i>Julie of the Wolves, Jean Craighead George</i>		X		338-342	269-278
<i>Kaffir Boy, Mark Mathabane</i>		X		279-284	19-20

<i>Keeping Christina, Sue Ellen Bridgers</i>	X					
<i>Kill the Teacher's Pet, Joseph Locke</i>	X					
<i>Killing Mr. Griffin, Lois Duncan</i>	X	285-289	37-38			
<i>The Kitchen God's Wife, Amy Tan</i>	X					37-46
<i>Lakota Woman, Mary Crow Dog & Richard Erdoes</i>	X	290-295				
<i>The Last Mission, Harry Mazer</i>	X					
<i>The Last Safe Place on Earth, Richard Peck</i>	X					
<i>The Late Great Me, Sandra Scoppetone</i>	X					
<i>Learning How to Fall, Norma Klein</i>	X					
<i>The Learning Tree, Gordon Parks</i>		343-350				
<i>A Lesson Before Dying, Ernest J. Gaines</i>	X	485-489	54-56			72-80
<i>A Light in the Attic, Shel Silverstein</i>	X				23-28	
<i>Like Water for Chocolate, Laura Esquivel</i>	X					
<i>The Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe, C.S. Lewis</i>	X					
<i>Little Altars Everywhere, Rebecca Wells</i>	X					
<i>Long Live the Queen, Ellen Emerson White</i>	X					
<i>The Lord of the Flies, William Golding</i>	X	351-357				
<i>The Lords of Discipline, Pat Conroy</i>	X					
<i>"The Lottery," Shirley Jackson</i>	X	358-362				
<i>Love is Not Enough, Marilyn Levy</i>	X					
<i>The Lovely Bones, Alice Sebold</i>	X					
<i>Lucky, Alice Sebold</i>	X					
<i>Lucy, Jamaica Kincaid</i>	X					
<i>Lyddie, Katherine Paterson</i>	X					
<i>The Man Who Fell In Love with the Moon, Tom Spanbauer</i>					27-29	
<i>Manchild in the Promised Land, Claude Brown</i>						
<i>Maniac Magee, Jerry Spinelli</i>	X	363-369				
<i>The Maritain Chronicles, Ray Bradbury</i>	X					
<i>"Master Harold"... and the Boys, Athol Fugard</i>	X					
<i>May I Cross Your Gold River, Paige Dixon</i>	X					
<i>The Merchant of Venice, William Shakespeare</i>		370-378				130-138
<i>Memoirs of a Bookbat, Kathryn Lasky</i>						
<i>The Messenger, Lois Lowry</i>	X					
<i>Mick, Bruce Brooks</i>	X					
<i>The Midwife's Apprentice, Karen Cushman</i>	X					
<i>Montana, 1948, Larry Watson</i>	X					187-196

<i>The Monument</i> , Gary Paulsen	X			27-36
<i>The Moves Make the Man</i> , Bruce Brooks	X			
<i>My Brother Sam Is Dead</i> , James & Christopher Collier	X	305-323	10-12	
<i>My Crooked Family</i> , James Lincoln Collier	X	311-323		
<i>My Darling</i> , My Hamburger, Paul Zindel	X	379-381		
<i>My Losing Season</i> , Pat Conroy	X			
<i>My Posse Don't Do Homework</i> , Lou-Anne Johnson	X			
<i>Native Son</i> , Richard Wright	X	324-332		
<i>Never Cry Wolf</i> , Farley Mowat	X			
<i>Night</i> , Elie Wiesel	X			
<i>Night Kites</i> , M. E. Kerr	X			
<i>Nightjohn</i> , Gary Paulsen	X			
<i>Nightmares: Poems to Trouble Your Sleep</i> , Jack Prelutsky	X	333-343		
<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> , George Orwell	X	382-387		
<i>The Obsession</i> , Jesse Harris	X			
<i>Oedipus Rex</i> , Sophocles	X			
<i>Of Mice and Men</i> , John Steinbeck	X	388-394		
<i>On Fire</i> , Ouida Sebestyen	X			
<i>One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich</i> , Alexander Solzhenitsyn	X	395-397		
<i>One Fat Summer</i> , Robert Lipsyte	X			
<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i> , Ken Kessey	X	398-413		
<i>Ordinary People</i> , Judith Guest	X	414-423		
<i>Othello</i> , Julius Lester	X			
<i>Other Bells for Us to Ring</i> , Robert Cormier	X			
<i>Our Bodies, Ourselves</i> , The Boston Women's Health Collective	X	424-430		146-154
<i>Out of Control</i> , Norma Fox Mazer	X			89-95
<i>Out of the Dust</i> , Karen Hesse	X			
<i>The Outsiders</i> , S. E. Hinton	X			
<i>Pardon Me, You Are Stepping on My Eyeball</i> , Paul Zindel	X	431-441	39-40	
<i>Pay it Forward</i> , Catherine Ryan Hyde	X			
<i>Peace Like a River</i> , Leif Enger	X			
<i>Pedro and Me</i> , Judd Winick	X			
<i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i> , Stephen Chbosky	X			41-42
<i>Pet Sematary</i> , Stephen King	X			
<i>The Pigeon</i> , Jay Bennett	X			
<i>The Pigman</i> , Paul Zindel	X	344-350	43-44	

<i>Plainsong</i> , Kent Haruf						X
<i>The Power of One</i> , Bryce Courtenay						X
<i>The Prince of Tides</i> , Pat Conroy						X
<i>Push</i> , Sapphire						X
<i>Ragtime</i> , E. L. Doctorow						X
"A Raisin in the Sun," Lorraine Hansbury						X
<i>The Rats Saw God</i> , Rob Thomas						X
<i>Rebecca</i> , Daphne Du Maurier						X
<i>The Red Badge of Courage</i> , Stephen Crane						X
<i>The Red Pony</i> , John Steinbeck						X
<i>Remembering the Good Times</i> , Richard Peck						X
<i>Revolting Rhymes</i> , Roald Dahl					351-356	
<i>Ricochet River</i> , Robin Cody						X
<i>A Rock and a Hard Place</i> , Anthony Godby Johnson						X
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (film), Franco Zeffirelli						X
<i>Ruby</i> , Rosa Guy						X
<i>Run, Shelley</i> , Run, Gertrudeamuels					442-448	30-33
<i>Running Loose</i> , Chris Crutcher						X
<i>The Sacred Circle of the Hula Hoop</i> , Kathy Kennedy Tapp					357-365	30-33
<i>Sahara Special</i> , Esme' Raji Codell						X
<i>Saturnalia</i> , Paul Fleischman						X
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i> , Nathaniel Hawthorne					449-455	
<i>Scary Stories</i> (series), Alvin Schwartz						X
<i>Schindler's List</i> (Film), Steven Spielberg					366-371	49-51
<i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> , Susan Monk Kidd						X
<i>A Separate Peace</i> , John Knowles					456-463	45-46
<i>Shade's Children</i> , Garth Nix						X
<i>The Shadow Brothers</i> , A. E. Cannon						X
<i>Shattering Glass</i> , Gail Giles						X
<i>The Shining</i> , Stephen King					107-114	
<i>Shizuko's Daughter</i> , Kyoko Mori						X
<i>Show Me!</i> William McBride					372-379	155-162
<i>Siddhartha</i> , Herman Hesse						X
<i>Singularity</i> , William Sleator						X
<i>Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady</i> , Selina Hastings & J. Wjngaard					380-386	
<i>The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants</i> , Anne Brashares						X

<i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i> , Kurt Vonnegut	X	464-470		
<i>Slave Dancer</i> , Paula Fox	X			
<i>Snow Falling on Cedars</i> , David Guterson	X	395-402		
<i>Song of Solomon</i> , Toni Morrison	X	387-394		
<i>Sons and Lovers</i> , D. H. Lawrence	X			
<i>Soul Daddy</i> , Jacqueline Roy	X			
<i>Space Station Seventh Grade</i> , Jerry Spinelli	X		47-48	
<i>Speak</i> , Laurie Halse Anderson	X			124-129
<i>The Spirit House</i> , William Sleator	X			
<i>Spite Fences</i> , Trudy Krisher	X			
<i>Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes</i> , Chris Crutcher	X			
<i>Steffie Can't Come Out to Play</i> , Fran Arrick	X			
<i>Stranger in a Strange Land</i> , Robert A. Heinlein	X			
<i>Stranger with My Face</i> , Lois Duncan	X			
<i>Stuck in Neutral</i> , Terry Trueman	X			
<i>Summer of Fear</i> , Lois Duncan	X	409-413		
<i>Summer of My German Soldier</i> , Bette Greene	X			
<i>Summer Rules</i> , Robert Lipsyte	X			
<i>Surviving the Applewhites</i> , Stephanie Tolan	X			
<i>Sweet Sixteen and Never</i> , Jeanne Bethancourt	X			
<i>Taming the Star Runner</i> , S. E. Hinton	X			
<i>Tears of a Tiger</i> , Sharon Draper	X			
<i>Tell Us Your Secret</i> , Barbara Cohen	X			
<i>Tenderness</i> , Robert Cormier	X		37-38	
<i>The Terrorist</i> , Caroline B. Cooney	X		49-50	
<i>That's My Baby</i> , Norma Klein	X			
<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> , Zora Neale Hurston	X			
<i>Then Again Maybe I Won't</i> , Judy Blume	X	471-475		104-115
<i>Tiger Eyes</i> , Judy Blume	X	414-418		
<i>Time Windows</i> , Kathryn Reiss	X			
<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i> , Harper Lee	X	476-484		
<i>The Truth Trap</i> , Francis A. Miller	X			
<i>Tunes for Bears to Dance To</i> , Robert Cormier	X			
<i>Tunnel Vision</i> , Fran Arrick	X			
<i>Twist of Gold</i> , Michael Morpurgo	X			
<i>The Unfinished Portrait of Jessica</i> , Richard Peck	X			

<i>Up a Road Slowly</i> , Irene Hunt	X				
<i>Up Country</i> , Alden Carter	X				
<i>Up in Seth's Room</i> , Norma Fox Mazer	X				
<i>Ups and Downs of Carl Davis III</i> , Rosa Guy	X				
<i>Valley of the Horses</i> , Joan M. Auel			115-119		
<i>Vampire Almanac</i> , R.C. Welsh	X				
<i>Vision Quest</i> , Terry Davis	X		419-426		
<i>Walk Two Moons</i> , Sharon Creech	X				
<i>The Warmest December</i> , Bernice L. McFadden	X				
<i>Wart, Son of Toad</i> , Alden Carter	X				
<i>The Watcher</i> , James Howe	X				
<i>The Water is Wide</i> , Pat Conroy	X				
<i>Watership Down</i> , Richard Adams	X				
<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963</i> , Christopher Paul Curtis	X				
<i>A Way of Love</i> , A Way of Life, Frances Hanckel & John Cunningham	X				
<i>We All Fall Down</i> , Robert Cormier	X		427-435		20-26
<i>Weetzie Bat</i> , Francesca Lia Block	X				
<i>The Westing Game</i> , Ellen Raskin	X				
<i>What's Happening to My Body?</i> , Lynda Madaras			436-445		
<i>When Dad Killed Mom</i> , Julius Lester	X				
<i>When She Hollers</i> , Cynthia Voigt					
<i>Where the Sidewalk Ends</i> , Shel Silverstein	X				
<i>Where'd You Get That Gun, Billy?</i> , Fran Arrick	X		485-489		
<i>The White Mercedes</i> , Philip Pullman	X				
<i>Who Killed My Daughter</i> , Lois Duncan	X				
<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i> , Edward Albee	X				
<i>Winning</i> , Robin Brancato					
<i>The Witches</i> , Roald Dahl			446-451	15-16	
<i>Witness</i> , Karen Hesse	X				
<i>Woman Hollering Creek</i> , Sandra Cisneros	X				
<i>Words by Heart</i> , Ouida Sebestyen	X				
<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i> , Madeline L'Engle	X		452-457	23-25	
<i>Wuthering Heights</i> , Emily Bronte					
<i>The Year of the Gopher</i> , Phyllis Reynolds Naylor	X				
<i>The Year without Michael</i> , Susan Beth Pfeffer	X				42
<i>A Yellow Raft in Blue Water</i> , Michael Dorris			458-465		