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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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Jim **Blasingame &** Lori **Goodson**

From the Editors

Summer has rolled around again, and we have an issue filled with articles, research, and reviews to make the most of any free reading time through the warm summer months.

Jennifer M. Miskec explores the appeal of young adult novels written by young people in "YA by Generation Y: New Writers for New Readers." The technology-savvy Generation Y provides a unique perspective of young adults' roles in the world. Allison L. Baer shares the results of her ALAN Grant research project in "Constructing Meaning through Visual Spatial Activities." In her study, Baer examines how 10 sixth-graders, through various projects, constructed meaning from stories they read.

This issue also features research by Russell Greinke examining a literature program designed to help juvenile offenders use young adult novels to create a better understanding of issues in their own lives.

Meanwhile, Kristen Nichols provides a look at how teen pregnancy is portrayed in young adult literature. She concludes that real-life situations and fictional accounts don't mesh—especially regarding decisions on abortion and family support. In a similar approach, Sharon Pajka-West explores how deaf characters are perceived in YA lit. Pajka-West's article looks at six contemporary YA books featuring deaf characters through reader response surveys of adult readers.

Eva Gold, Ruth Caillouet, and Tom Fick tackle the "wholeness" and other word play possibilities and concepts waiting to be discovered in Louis Sachar's *Holes*. In another article providing connections between readers and the opportunities provided by young adult literature, Kenan Metzger and Jill Adams offer "Opening Dialogue Amidst Conflict: Utilizing Young Adult Literature in the Classroom to Combat Bullying." As schools introduce anti-bullying programs, Metzger and Adams suggest a list of books to help students understand various aspects of bullying. Mildred D. Taylor's *The Gold Cadillac* takes center stage in an article by Cicely Denean Cobb, who explores Taylor's narrative style and her characters' dialogue and storytelling.

In our regular features, Jeffrey S. Kaplan discusses "Recent Research in Young Adult Literature: Three Predominant Strands of Study" in The Research Connection. He discusses three major strands in YA lit—using the literature to help change young people's lives; the genre's ability to reveal young adults' often confusing lives, thus creating opportunities for better understanding of themselves; and how YA lit changes to reflect society, especially regarding sexual orientation.

M. Jerry Weiss, in The Publishers' Connection, provides several valuable sources for educators promoting young adult literature in the classroom. And, don't forget to read through Clip and File for a review of 31 of the latest in young adult literature—more reading opportunities to explore this summer.

And, finally, everyone who attended the ALAN Workshop in Nashville received a complimentary copy of Joan Kaywell's *Dear Author: Letters of Hope—Top Young Adult Authors Respond to Kids' Toughest Issues* (Philomel, 2007). We were so impressed by this book, we asked YAL guru Teri Lesesne to write a quick piece about it. Dr. Lesesne chose the form of a letter, which fits the book perfectly. The letter follows. Thanks, Teri, and thanks, Joan.

So, as summer rolls around again, we also say thanks to our *ALAN Review* readers for continuing to join us in our journey to discover the latest in research and book releases in the world of young adult literature. Enjoy your summer!

Call for Manuscripts

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.**

2008 Summer theme: Life at My House: Depictions of Family in Young Adult Literature

This theme is intended to solicit articles about young adult literature, authors, and instructional approaches that deal with family relationships. One possibility is a discussion of how the concept of family in young adult literature has evolved to reflect a different reality from what might have been considered a traditional family at one time. Other possibilities might include discussion of books that celebrate family relationships, illuminate the problems inherent in a dysfunctional family, or address any aspect of groups that function as a family. This theme is meant to be open to interpretation and support a broad range of subtopics. General submissions are welcome, as well. **February 15 submission deadline.**

2008 Fall theme: How Will Life Be in 2053? Visions of the Future in Young Adult Literature

This theme is intended to solicit articles about young adult literature, authors, and instructional approaches that speculate on the nature of life in the future. This need not be limited to science fiction or fantasy by any means, but could center on any books that deal with trends that may impact life in the future. This theme is meant to be open to interpretation and support a broad range of subtopics. General submissions are welcome, as well. **May 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.

Applicants 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.

NEW P.O. BOX FOR ALAN

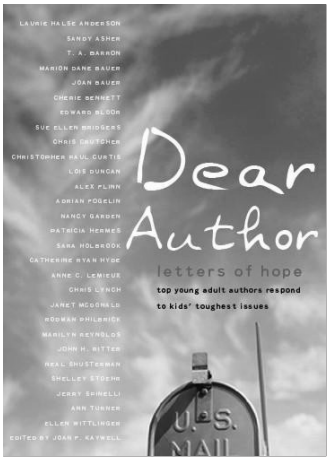
We now have a new ALAN Treasurer in Marge Ford. As a result, we have a new P.O. Box for ALAN memberships. Effective immediately, please discard any old forms you might have and use this new address:

ALAN
PO Box 234
Campbell, OH 44405-0234

Please spread the word and make note of the change of address. If you are unsure of your membership status, please email Joan Kaywell at kaywell@tempest.coedu.usf.edu, and she will check the database for you. If you've recently renewed, we have a forwarding order in place for the next few months so you'll be all right. It is important, however, that you send Dr. Kaywell any changes in your mailing or email address so you will receive your journal and other ALAN information.

Dear Joan

[*From the Editors:* We were so taken with the complimentary copies of Joan Kaywell's *Dear Author: Letters of Hope* we received at the ALAN Workshop, we asked noted YA scholar Teri Lesesne to write a review. Dr. Lesesne chose the innovative and highly appropriate format of a letter.]



January 2007
Dear Joan:

Thank you so much for your dedication to teens, especially those whose lives are not always the stuff of movies. You know, those kids who do not see a "happily ever after" in their lives because of all the troubles they face now. Those kids are often the nameless and marginalized. Their problems are all too often discounted by the adults that should care for them. You are their hope, you and your new book. Through the work on this book you proved once again how much you care for teens and how much you hold out hope to them so that they can continue to grow and become the successful adults inside of them all.

There have been so many teens in my life in my 30 years of teaching, teens that face some of the same issues tackled by the incredibly talented authors in your book, *Dear Author: Letters of Hope*. I wept as I read the letter from "Debbie" to Laurie Halse Anderson in which she talked about her own fear of men stemming from her rape when she was a freshman (much like Melinda in *Speak*). But then to read the powerful words of Anderson in response to the letter from Debbie moved me beyond tears. Here is an author writing about the power we all have, the GIFT that keeps the spark of our humanity alive in us even after disastrous things happen that are out of our control.

Every one of the letters from readers and every one of the heartfelt responses from these gifted and giving authors will speak volumes to those who work day in and day out with kids. In this time of No Child Left Behind, you are truly accomplishing that statement. With *Dear Author: Letters of Hope* you are ensuring that all those voices are heard: the voices of the bullied and tormented, the voices of those who may be about to give up hope that anyone cares about them.

Thank you, Joan, for bringing together this luminous group of authors including Christopher Paul Curtis, Chris Crutcher, Ellen Wittlinger, and Joan Bauer. Thank you on behalf of all those teens out there who believe no one could possibly know what they are experiencing. Thank you for showing them the power of words and books and reading in the healing process. May this book reach all those who hold out hope to their students.

Sincerely,
Teri
P.S. *Dear Author* is available from Philomel.

Jennifer M. **Miskec**

YA by Generation Y:

New Writers for New Readers

The variable, unstable nature of technology is intricately connected to today's youth. Often called Generation Y, those born after 1980 have lived a distinct way of knowing the world because of their connection to technology—a very different experience than those in the generations that preceded them. Because of this state of being, traditional literary relationships, adult author to adolescent reader, are troubled.

In his article "The Irony of Narration," Mike Cadden reminds us that because YA novels are almost always written on behalf of adolescent readers, there always exists a fundamental inauthenticity. With an adult author writing from the perspective of a young person, the result can be "an artless depiction of artlessness," an adult writer writing as an unsophisticated thinker in order to appeal to unsophisticated thinkers. Thus, when the protagonist shares with the reader the lesson she learned, for example, the text becomes an apparatus of a top-down power relationship (Cadden 146), where the adult comes first, as author, maker, and giver, and the young reader comes after, as the object of the adult's speech (Rose 2).

This already ironic situation is further complicated by the paradigmatic changes fostered by Generation Y's connection to technology, growing increasingly perceptible because of the fundamental differences between authors (non-Generation Y) and readers (Generation Y), that were arguably less intense in years past. The changes technology has wrought in sensibility have exacerbated the already notable disparity between adult authors and teen readers to the point where a new type of literature has begun to flourish: literature for young adults by young adults, YA literature for, by, and about Generation Y. At least in theory, Generation Y-aged authors, who are still under 30, are more attuned to the technical considerations and ways of knowing and thinking that Generation Y members seem to exhibit.

Literature written for young people by young people seems like an essential genre to examine in order to better understand the possible effects of the digital age on young people. How these young authors narrate their own relationship to technology may shed some light on how technology can affect the way people see the world. Furthermore, in order to more clearly see the irony of narration always present in YA literature, we might compare literature written for adolescents by adults to literature written for young people by their same-aged peers to help expose the disconnect between adult writers and their young readers. To note the perhaps minor, perhaps unconscious, differences in how technology is

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treated in stories by Generation Y authors helps in analysis of both the evolution of the field and the ideal readers of YA fiction, too.

Many psychoanalysts report that a result of growing up in a multi-media, wired climate is a psychological sensibility that allows fictional and nonfictional space to resist the binary of diametric opposition, instead coexisting as "belief and knowledge, sliding and slipping over one another" (jagodzinski 144). That is not to say that Generation Y cannot make the distinction between reality and fantasy; rather, Generation Y seems most psychically invested in media and technology and conditioned, more than other generations, to respond to virtual and mediated reality in intense, personal, and specific ways, reactions that older generations can only begin to understand. Using Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Zizek's psychoanalytic theories to define the phenomenon, psychoanalyst jan jagodzinski explains that as a result of the psychic investment in technology and media, members of Generation Y seem to exhibit "split" selves, creating and projecting alter egos that they can perform (2).

Using Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Zizek's psychoanalytic theories to define the phenomenon, psychoanalyst jan jagodzinski explains that as a result of the psychic investment in technology and media, members of Generation Y seem to exhibit "split" selves, creating and projecting alter egos that they can perform (2).

In novels like *Be More Chill*, written by 23-year-old Ned Vizzini; *Doormat,* written by 15-year-old Kelly McWilliams; and finally *Never Mind the Goldbergs,* by 26- year-old Matthue Roth, all published in 2004, we see the very tendencies jagodzinski articulates played out in interesting ways. But where jagodzinski and others see this as an ultimately limiting sensibility, common in Generation Y is a sense that fragmentation and the performance of self—or many selves—are empowering abilities. In all three novels, an embedded story of a theatre production, or in the case of *Never Mind the Goldbergs,* a TV sitcom, seems to metaphorize the young protagonists' ability to perform a variety of identities. Their intimate and often-contradictory relationship to media and technology is also apparent in these novels. Above all, though, the young protagonists' awareness of the spectacle that constitutes the reality that surrounds them, and their power to manipulate it through performance and textual manipulation, is played out in a recurring metaphor of theatricality. In all three texts, the protagonists' performances are not just on a literal stage. Instead, all three stories evolve as the characters become increasingly aware of the performative nature of their reality and the importance of being active within the spectacle of reality.

Doormat is a novel about 14-year-old Jaime and her best friend Melissa, also 14, who has just discovered she is pregnant. Not wanting to tell her parents, Melissa draws Jaime into her drama by making Jaime promise that she will help Melissa without telling any adults. Although Jaime is uncomfortable with this situation, she attempts to help Melissa solve her problem by staying level-headed and rationally exploring all of Melissa's choices. Melissa, however, makes it very difficult for Jaime to help. Although Melissa does know how far along she is in her pregnancy, she is unwilling to acknowledge the very rigid timeline that they are on if she really wants to consider her options. While Melissa becomes more and more difficult to help, Jaime struggles to find a balance between loyalty and personal growth, learning finally to attend to her own life instead of just Melissa's.

Running parallel to the drama of Jaime and Melissa's real lives is a literal drama, the high school production of *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, in which both Jaime and Melissa have parts. Appropriately cast, Jaime is Tillie, the younger daughter who finds comfort in scientific fact. Melissa, of course, is Beatrice, Tillie's mother, an alcoholic who is plagued with regret and in one scene tragically kills her daughter's pet rabbit. The parallels to real life are overplayed. Melodramatic Beatrice (Melissa) takes account of her life and comes up with nothing, reflecting how Jaime sees Melissa's future. Serious Tillie (Jaime), though, does not hate the world as "Beatrice the Loon" does and seems to be on her way to having it all figured out.

It is through the characters in the play that Jaime makes sense of her own life, which reflects back to jagodzinski's point about contemporary teens' reality and unreality slipping and sliding over one another through mediation. Likewise, the very performative nature of McWilliams' novel also reflects the connection to mediation. For instance, when she first mentions that her best friend might be pregnant, Jaime admits that her friend's situation is very stereotypical of the images of teens on TV, and thus is probably not true. She says, "Personally, I think Melissa is wrong, but it's not my body. Teen pregnancy is so melodramatic: lonely, living off the streets and welfare . . . No, fourteen-year-olds don't get pregnant anywhere except in the newspaper and on TV" (1). Jaime feels conflicted because she is so aware of the media image of her peer group as constantly in trouble. But her failure to believe the reality of it suggests that she knows the difference between reality and media narratives, and her reality so far has not been at all like it is on TV. However, she also refers to her knowledge of TV to find the answer to the pregnancy scare once and for all. Jaime tells Melissa, "We don't know you're pregnant yet . . . We need to get one of those tests. Like you see on TV" (7).

In the last scene of the novel, Melissa has had her baby and is doing well, though Jaime is quick to point out how very unglamorous it all is. She says, "I will help Melissa whenever I can—she has it hard, really, the media don't exaggerate" (131). Jaime is also an aspiring playwright and dreams of conquering the silver screen (113), which demonstrates her duplicitous relationship to popular media. She is wary of it, but believes it at different moments, looks to it for answers, and even wants to join it.

The novel ends with the words "Lights, camera, action" (131). Throughout the novel, the very performative nature of Jaime's story is evident. When Melissa verifies that she is pregnant, it is as if she goes from being a generic teen in the suburb in the middle of nowhere, starved for attention (she wants to be a model because she wants to be beautiful [2]), to attracting unwanted attention because she is a pregnant teen, a statistic (37). As such, the spotlight seems to be trained on Melissa—and Jaime because of her involvement in Melissa's drama—because she is fulfilling the role that media has created for teens, making her actions a part of someone else's script. It stands to reason that Jaime decides that she wants to be a playwright, to write her own roles, since her experience has always been playing the roles that other people have written for her and her friends who have not always been empowered. Quite literally, teen "drama" is a performance that has an audience.

Knowing this, perhaps, propels McWilliams to include monologues every few chapters where Jaime talks about herself, appealing directly to the audience, an aside to the drama that is unfolding around her. She also speaks directly to the audience in anticipation of the audience's likely response. In one instance she says, "Disclaimer: If you're at all cynical about my description of that encounter, and were rude enough to say anything about it, then I'm sorry, but I couldn't hear you . . . There was sunshine in my ears" (107). After Jaime has made the decision to be a playwright, McWilliams depicts certain dialogues in the form of a play manuscript, complete with stage direction as if making more visual her story. McWilliams utilizes other visual elements to tell her story, as well as visual cues designating different rhetorical situations, from story to play, focusing again on the visual, performative nature of a text in the digital age. For McWilliams, it means separating sections within a chapter with dots or giant periods, the absence of which (Melissa is pregnant, after all) is the main antagonist in the novel. It may be a stretch, but McWilliams also uses thick, phallic, vertically placed chapter titles that seem to be about to penetrate the very chapter itself.

In one instance she says, "Disclaimer: If you're at all cynical about my description of that encounter, and were rude enough to say anything about it, then I'm sorry, but I couldn't hear you . . . There was sunshine in my ears" (107).

Ned Vizzini offers a similar narrative structure in *Be More Chill*. In this sci-fi-lite novel, Vizzini creates a possibility that is slightly reminiscent of *Feed* but in the much nearer future, where a person can buy a pill-sized super computer, called a "squip," swallow it, and have the computer help him or her do any

number of things, such as "memorize information for tests, smooth out occupational challenges or help people with stuttering problems" (108). The squip quickly reasons that what Jeremy, the protagonist, needs, is "a complete behavioral overhaul"; he needs to be "more chill" (108). At first, the squip does good work, making Jeremy "more chill" by helping him dress better, act cool, and attract females. In turn, Jeremy gets attention from people he would never have before, gets invited to some parties, and isn't paralyzed by his shyness. In fact, he is able to stop keeping track of his daily humiliations on his pre-printed Humiliation Sheets.

But Jeremy soon realizes the problems inherent in the squip, most disastrously that the squip becomes outdated and begins to malfunction. Because the computer relies on a finite realm of possibility, it cannot compute the unexpected. After it encourages Jeremy to break character during his performance in the middle of the school play and declare his love for Christine, also acting in the play, ultimately ruining any chance Jeremy has of building a relationship with Christine, as well as ruining the play, Jeremy makes the decision to disable the squip.

That is not to say that computers can't help us out in certain situations, but there are always limits to the finite reasoning that computers promise, that x will always equal x.

The squip tells him how to do this, then reminds Jeremy, "There are better versions of me, Jeremy. It's not like with people. With people you can argue and have tests and music reviews and wars to decide who's better, but with software it's pretty clear. I get evolved beyond my version number, and then I'm useless" (283). In other words, the unstable nature of the squip reminds Jeremy that in our chaotic world human unpredictability will always trump the assumed predictability of computers. That is not to say that computers can't help us out in certain situations, but there are always limits to the finite reasoning that computers promise, that x will always equal x.

Douglas Rushkoff addresses these very issues in *Playing the Future*. It is his contention that as a part of nature, human society has now evolved to a global culture that is hardwired together through technology (7). He argues, "We invented most of our systems of thought and technological devices to shield us from the harsher realities of nature, but now, ironically, they appear to be forcing us to reckon with them once again" (7). Thus, Jeremy's desire to erase variability by living his life according to the formulaic approach to "cool" that his supercomputer designates suggests his rather old-fashioned belief that there is order to the universe, that computers help maintain that order, and that it is logical to believe that for a mere $600 one can tap into this knowledge and exploit it. Of course, by the end of the novel, Jeremy understands the limits of his computer and the limits of thinking that something as human as physical attraction can be coded into a computer program. Jeremy's story could be read as a metaphor for the human evolution that Rushkoff explains in *Playing the Future*. Rushkoff believes that it is this new generation of young people (whom he calls "screenager" and I call Generation Y, but whom both of us define as being "the child born into a culture mediated by the television and computer" [3]) who lead the way in understanding how we can learn to adapt to and even thrive amidst unpredictability when it is accepted to be an example of something other than evidence of decline, decay, and death (2). The evolution toward this way of thinking can culminate with Generation Y, which is metaphorized by Jeremy's coming to understand a new model of reality.

But as Rushkoff discusses, to everyone else older than Generation Y, coming to this new model of reality is difficult when we have been so thoroughly socialized to believe in beginnings, middles, and ends (11). Rushkoff relates, "One of the most common questions I'm asked about computer culture and the increasing complexity of our media is, 'Where will it end?' I can only think to respond, 'Why does it have to?'" (12). To re-see the world in this way is an often-uncomfortable revision. The way screenagers, Generation Y, can embrace this new way of knowing is rough to watch, and indeed we are always watching it. On film, in commercials, on TV, screenagerness is not just a stage, but it is on stage for the rest of the world to look at and, as Rushkoff would hope, learn from.

Be More Chill is constructed as a performance in itself. In an effort to be cool, Jeremy performs cool, in costumes and settings, and with characters and lines

that the squip, often misidentified throughout the novel as a "script," told him to use. Throughout the novel, Jeremy is performing the squip for an unsuspecting audience of his peers. Add to this another layer: at the end, readers come to understand that the novel was written to Christine to explain why Jeremy acted the way he did. The physical novel was the result of a brain dump after the computer started to malfunction but before Jeremy dissolved it for good. Jeremy had a choice of formats and decided a novel rather than a movie was best. Jeremy says, "'Write her a book. Write it from my head. Make sure everything's in there. She likes text. Letters from her dad'" (281). The last chapter reads, "So here you go, Christine. It's not a letter; it's a whole book. I hope you like it" (287). Thus, the self-referentiality of the novel as a novel serves to reinforce the real readers' awareness of it as such.

Furthermore, running parallel to Jeremy's personal story in *Be More Chill* is the progress of a school play, a production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* a traditional text, a typical high school performance, but one that equally expresses madness and mayhem, due to "magic"—juice or computer—unpredictability. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is also a play in which there is a play. The novel itself as well as the play within the novel are all aware of an audience, which seems characteristic of Generation Y sensibilities in general. This response of the real audience who is reading this novel is of course impossible to gauge during the writing process. However, as a novel that metaphorizes a journey from logic to chaos, and the ultimate acceptance of chaos, the reaction of the audience to the performance of Generation Y is addressed in one particular scene in the novel as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is being performed.

In this remarkable scene, the scene that ultimately results in the squip's demise, the very fragmented response of the world watching Generation Y is exemplified. In this novel, Jeremy has planned to break character, and the fourth wall, to appeal directly to the audience and announce his love for Christine. In the scene where Lysander (played by Jeremy) is supposed to be asleep while Puck mischievously places the love juice in his eyes instead of Demetrius' eyes, Jeremy instead stands up and addresses the audience. He says:

> Ah, 'scuse me . . . Sorry to interrupt and all . . . But my name is Jeremy Heere and I'm an actor in this play and . . . One of the many things that has really inspired me to be my best in this play is the work of the very, uh, lovely Christine Caniglia, who's playing Puck . . . I've really liked Christine for a long time, but you know, never really been able to do something about it . . . So, Christine, I'm asking you here and now: would you like to, uh, go out with me? (266)

Throughout Jeremy's ill-timed speech, reactions are scattered. At first he has the audience's rapt attention. Many even smile thinking that it is a planned aside, then only scattered applause, exclamations of confusion ("What are you *doing*, Jeremy? [267]), and soon Jeremy realizes that Christine and everyone else is angry. When he continues with the scene after being rejected (though Christine attempts to make it all seem to be a part of the play) Jeremy hears programs shuffling as people try to figure out who the "skinny weirdo is who almost ruined the play," gossipy whispers, and cell phone buzzers as people start calling each other to discuss what just happened (270). Jeremy quickly realizes that doing what isn't on the script—or even being aware of it as such—can easily distress the audience who has come to expect a certain type of performance from young people.

Exposing the text, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as a text by breaking character and audience expectations could be seen as a metaphor for who Generation Y is and what Generation Y texts can do for the field of young adult literature. Rushkoff argues, "It is our children who are most actively looking for ways to cope with the "increasing complexity, discontinuity, and parentlessness [post-Oedipalization] of the modern experience" (255). As their audience, we watch with mixed reaction to their exploits, understandings, and brutal awareness of the spectacle and their boldness to manipulate it. Furthermore, for Vizzini to create a novel so sophisticated in nature, to constantly work to defamiliarize the reader from the very text that s/he is reading, attests to Generation Y's perceived comfort with chaos and disorderliness, and asks readers of YA texts to resist the invisible interpellative qualities of YA literature, especially. It is not to say that non-Generation Y adults shouldn't or can't write good YA texts; rather, all writers need to be attuned to the paradigmatic shifts of ontology and epistemology that Generation Y represents and not try to hide it or visually commodify it, but work to both

understand it and be aware of their own relationship to the nature of it, even if the true nature is one of undefinability.

In my third and final example of fiction by a Generation Y writer, *Never Mind the Goldbergs* by Matthue Roth, literal and metaphoric performance is once again at the foundation of the narrative. In this story, 17-year-old Hava Aaronson is an Orthodox Jew from New York who is hired to play an Orthodox teen on a family sitcom called *The Goldbergs*. She is whisked away to LA to live a teenager's fairy tale: a limo is waiting for her at the airport, an apartment is furnished for her, and her new "family" is a collection of popular movie and TV stars. However, Hava quickly realizes that she is the only one of her TV family who has no acting experience—except for an experimental off-Broadway play—and that she is the only Jew. It is also difficult for her to respect Shabbos, stay Kosher, and remain true to the Orthodox no-touching rules (negiah), especially when the script calls for her to hug her TV father and also as a veritable parade of interesting men cross her path. From her private Orthodox high school and neighborhood in New York City to LA where all sects of Jews are lumped together, the most famous Jewish deli isn't Kosher, and people in the business tend to keep quiet about their Jewishness, Hava's story is about being independent and Orthodox and for the first time having to work at both.

Hava, a true Generation Y at heart, is comfortable seeing the surface, the spectacle, and understanding that that isn't necessarily the real.

Once again, with *Never Mind the Goldbergs* we find a novel that is very much aware of the audience. In fact, the last chapter of the book is called "Cast & Crew"; after acknowledging a large number of individuals, this chapter lists the director (editor David Levithan), director of photography (Harbeer Sandhu, author photo), producer, grip, wardrobe, etc., as if the novel were more a TV show, a visual production rather than a traditional novel where the material conditions of its existence stay rather inconspicuous. Roth's novel connects with the trend of the other books mentioned, a trend that I believe to be indicative of Generation Y in general.

The novel *Never Mind the Goldbergs*, then, is a performance in and of itself. Roth offers the story to an audience and anticipates the audience's response. The awareness of the audience as such is also addressed through the trope of a play-within-a-play. In this case, the internal play is both a TV sitcom, in which our protagonist is starring, as well as a real time movie Hava's friend Moish is making throughout the novel. In both cases, what is real, and what isn't, what mundane events become fascinating through mediation, and how mediation affects the very way we know the world and ourselves, are all fundamental concerns of the novel.

On the first page Hava states:

> I'd spent my whole life watching people through a screen, an invisible cellophane coating on the world. Talking to my friends was like reading from a script. I always knew what they were about to say, what tone of voice they would use, and how they wanted me to react. (1)

Of course, in the one line of the novel that precedes this sentiment, Hava has already admitted, "The last day of school was when I really lost it" (1), and immediately following her insight, Hava admits, "Of course, if you'd asked my friends, they wouldn't have known what you were talking about. They would've told you I wasn't capable of holding *any*thing in" (1). Her narrative unreliability is immediately established, and we start to realize how it is through mediation that Hava knows the world, a performance in which she is a player. She claims she doesn't believe in people, only G-d (2), so she takes on her duties as a performer with gusto, even before she is put onto a literal stage.

Hava is a self-proclaimed punk Orthodox. Although she stays Orthodox in one way by wearing long, modest skirts, they are ripped and denim. Her hair is striped and her shirts are vintage Death Metal Ts (2). She has a nose ring, loves punk music, gets kicked out of stores, drinks, and throws herself into mosh pits, but she stays Kosher and never misses prayers or Shabbos. She performs "punk rebel" and seems to visibly mock the modesty of Orthodoxy, but that is her performance only. Her faith is authentic. She outwardly represents a rule breaker, but internally she abides by the most important rules, her religion.

Hava, a true Generation Y at heart, is comfortable seeing the surface, the spectacle, and understanding that that isn't necessarily the real. Of her off-Broadway gig she says, "The show was professional and all, but when you got down to basics, it was one big joke. Who knows what John Cage's life was like, anyway? Not the scriptwriter, that's for sure. And not the West African dancers. I learned just how far you could go by faking it" (31). While it may seem hypocritical, "faking it" is her entry into the spectacle that she understands will go on with or without her performance. In the absence of a literal audience, Hava performs for her community, an audience just the same.

By the time Hava is hired to be a professional actress, without any formal training, she has a strong grasp of what audiences will respond to and effortlessly holds her own among the professional actors in her TV family. In fact, a veteran actor, who plays her father on the sitcom, tells her that she is "The New," which Hava only partly understands. Her friend Moish explains,

> Hollywood's changing, Hava . . . Everything's commodifying. You can't just be a star anymore. You always have to be mysterious and evasive. Once the public has labeled and pinned you down, your career's got a shelf life. You're like the next phase of that, though. So different that no one can touch you. Unlabelable. (151)

Some contemporary discourse about the general nature of Generation Y makes similar points. Neil Howe and William Strauss, authors of *Millennials Rising*, report that a 1997 *World News Tonight* online poll suggests that the name most of the generation I call Generation Y would prefer to be called, if they have to be called something, is Millennials. However, coming in a close second was "Don't Label Us," reflecting a generation of Havas, at all times aware of and performing with the spectacle but cynical of it just the same. The knowledge of performance as a game is not the same as performing unconsciously.

Moish's real-time video also reflects a very Generation Y sensibility, the belief that real life can be as interesting as fiction. In the novel, Moish records himself for three months—except during Shabbos when electricity is not allowed—and finds a distributor who will project the movie in its entirety, selling tickets to people so that they can drop in and see the movie as it plays anytime during its three-month run. The very unpredictable nature of members of Generation Y makes even their ordinariness entertainment, as it seems they are always performing. Furthermore, Hava, as do many Generation Y-ers, maintains a weblog or online journal where her fingers can get "kinetic, spilling my secrets in a haze of fake names and places" (241). Although it is a very small part of the novel, Hava's journal has significance if one considers that her whole existence is on stage, watched as a punk Orthodox, watched as a celebrity, and watched on TV. Now, even her secrets are made public in a weblog. When she feels particularly out of control, Hava's fingers twitch, and she longs to find "the nearest all-night Internet café, and write the longest f[**]king journal ever" (312). In her online journal, even her secrets can be made public. As her own narrative, she has control over the script, what people will know, and who they will believe. In the end, that is what screenagers know how to do best: manipulate the spectacle.

Neil Howe and William Strauss, authors of *Millennials Rising*, report that a 1997 *World News Tonight* online poll suggests that the name most of the generation I call Generation Y would prefer to be called, if they have to be called something, is Millennials. However, coming in a close second was "Don't Label Us."

Psychologist jan jagodzinski reminds us that "youth has its own differentiations and struggles for recognition. It is a complex phenomenon, and for us to pretend that we have somehow 'captured' it is the worst kind of arrogance" (1). Thus, it seems important not only to notice the narratives others tell about Generation Y but also to pay attention to the stories Generation Yers tell about themselves, especially in regard to their relationship to technology, the media, and the spectacle. To better understand the irony embedded within even the most contemporary adult-authored pieces of the YA genre means to see the ways Generation Yers represent themselves interacting with the media with which they are most commonly associated.

Examination of texts written by Generation Y authors for a Generation Y audience suggests that Generation Y should be appealed to not just in format or copying the format of a computer screen, but at a fundamental level of understanding that begins to get at the nuanced ways of seeing and knowing the world that Generation Y, a mediated metaculture, performs. Instead of making it invisible, these texts make apparent the appeal process and work toward including young people in their own ideologies and critique of their place in the world instead of telling it to them. The technological sensibility of Generation Y becomes clear as something more than simply their explicit use of technology and more about the distinct convergence of their selves and technology as a combined, inextricable thing. How Generation Y uses technology is interesting, but noticing how Generation Y-ers often see themselves as a part of technology, a mediated entity, is how more significant study and understanding can occur.

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Russell **Greinke**

"Art Is Not a Mirror to Reflect Reality, but a Hammer to Shape It":

How the *Changing Lives through Literature* Program for Juvenile Offenders Uses Young Adult Novels to Guide Troubled Teens

HECTOR: *The best moments in reading are when you come across something—a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things—which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours.*

—from Alan Bennett's play, *The History Boys*

"Art is not a mirror to reflect reality, but a hammer with which to shape it."

—Bertolt Brecht

"I used to have a conscience, but I killed it." This troubling statement, proffered by a teenage offender confined to the Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) in a county located in the suburbs of a large Midwestern city, was prompted by a discussion of Paul Volponi's novel, *Black and White*. At one point in the story, the bus driver Sidney Parker is mugged by two teens—Marcus and Eddie. Parker recalls that up until that point, he had "never been afraid of young people" (109).

In a discussion of that passage with a group of juvenile offenders, the juveniles were asked to consider who had been affected by their crimes. As a probation officer from the county's Department of Corrections later told me, 90% of the time (by her estimation), when juvenile defendants respond to that question, they don't mention their victims. This lack of empathy not only explains the quote that begins the previous paragraph, and the actions of the characters Marcus and Eddie, but also highlights the need for a program that addresses the questionable thought processes that can be the precursor to juvenile crime.

Because of security concerns, the juveniles in detention are not allowed to have pens or pencils, but they are allowed to read books. The library district in the county where the previously mentioned JDC is found shepherds a program, *Changing Lives through Literature* (CLTL), that is designed to immerse the defendants in an intensive reading program centered on young adult (YA) novels, specifically the genre Donelson and Nilsen label "problem novels" (115). In this article I summarize the findings of an IRB-approved study I conducted over the program and suggest ways the findings can impact how YA literature is approached in the language arts classroom.

The theory is that identification with characters in YA literature can serve as a springboard for these juveniles to discuss issues relevant to their own lives and offer a non-threatening environment (CLTL meets at a public library, in contrast to the harsh conditions

found at JDC) for them to critically examine the choices, oftentimes poor choices, made by both the characters in fiction and the juvenile offenders, themselves. The residual payoff may be that this critical inquiry might impact the decision-making processes of the juvenile offenders in real life and help them steer clear of the criminal justice system.

The juveniles, many of whom are under house arrest or have been incarcerated, can be a tough audience. Oftentimes they have not succeeded in a traditional school environment, and many of them start out the program by proclaiming that they "hate reading." If the *Changing Lives* program can get through to these hard-to-reach teens, then secondary English teachers may benefit from CLTL's hard-won insights, for risky behavior, unfortunately, is alarmingly common in the world of adolescents. A recent article on the "teenage brain" begins with these ominous statistics: "In the time it takes you to eat dinner tonight, two adolescents somewhere in the United States will contract HIV. Over the next month, nearly half of all high-school students will sneak a drink of alcohol. And sometime over the course of 2007, one in 12 high schoolers will try to kill themselves" (Monastersky A14).

The second problem CLTL speaks to is the steep decline in literary reading in this country, a decline that, according to *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*, released by the National Endowment of the Arts in June of 2004, is most pronounced among young adults (xi).

The Problem

I will let you down.
I will make you hurt.
—lyrics to *Hurt*, a song one juvenile offender told me he likes because it is "so real"

CLTL is the brainchild of two people: Robert Waxler, a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth (who lost a son to heroin addiction—*Losing Jonathan*, Spinner Publications, 2003), and Judge Robert Kane, a Massachusetts District Court justice. Created in 1991, CLTL is an alternative sentencing program (I am focusing on the juvenile program, although it was originally created for adults) that addresses two problems simultaneously. One is our country's fervent belief in the need to punish. The United States "has a greater rate of incarceration (737 per 100,000 people—or 2.2 million) than any other nation" (Wallechinsky 5). The statistics suggest that this approach is not achieving its desired effect of making us safer. Consider the parallels to education. According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Education, "more than 3 million students were suspended and another 89,000 were expelled during the 2002-2003 school year," yet "there is little scientific evidence showing that suspension and expulsion are effective in reducing school violence or increasing school safety" (*Suspension* 2).

Bucking this national trend is the recent example of New York State, where Corrections Commissioner Martin Horn pondered New York's "now-legendary 70 percent drop in homicides" even though they incarcerated far fewer prisoners (qtd. in Powell A2). According to Horn, "What we've seen in New York is the fastest drop in crime in the nation, and we did it while locking up a lot less people." Or as former commissioner Michael Jacobson illuminates the cause/effect relationship, "If you want to drive down crime, the experience of New York shows that it's ridiculous to spend your first dollar building more prison cells" (qtd. in Powell A2). CLTL believes that, rather than warehousing juvenile offenders, it might make more sense, in some cases, to offer a program that deals with the root causes of juvenile delinquency.

The second problem CLTL speaks to is the steep decline in literary reading in this country, a decline that, according to *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*, released by the National Endowment of the Arts in June of 2004, is most pronounced among young adults (xi). CLTL may have insights to offer language arts teachers in terms of convincing teens that literature still matters, that it remains relevant. As Wendell Berry once argued, it may be time we learn *from* literature and not just *about* it. This would be an important step away from what one psychologist suggests is the traditional approach in education: that literature only serves as a "collection

of study-objects largely unrelated to the reader, a kind of language museum of interesting relics" (Gold and Gloade 239).

When a judge feels it will be helpful, he or she can refer a juvenile to a 7-week CLTL session. It then becomes part of the juvenile's probation requirements. Besides the juvenile offenders, the meeting is attended by a judge, a probation officer, and a facilitator. In the CLTL program I observed, the facilitator was the Youth Outreach Librarian for the county's public library district, but other programs often use an English teacher. At the first meeting, the group reads a short story out loud together and discusses it; thereafter, a YA novel is assigned to be read prior to each meeting. Following is a typical reading list for a group of male (CLTL sessions are gender-segregated) juvenile offenders:

**Greasy Lake*, by T. Coraghessan Boyle
**Black and White*, by Paul Volponi
**Breathing Underwater*, by Alexandra Flinn
**The Giver*, by Lois Lowry
**Whale Talk*, by Chris Crutcher
**Fallen Angels*, by Walter Dean Myers
**Hole In My Life*, by Jack Gantos

The Theory

It [poetry] *is meant to poke you, get you to buck up, pay attention, rise and shine, look alive, get a grip, get the picture, pull up your socks, wake up and die right.*
—Garrison Keillor

Theoretical constructs from a number of fields inform this study. Reader response, where the reader takes an active role and the reading process is seen as a transaction between reader and text, defines the dynamic on which CLTL sessions are grounded. The organizers of CLTL try to model the program after book clubs, where multiple interpretations are encouraged, and all the participants are given a voice.

Other theorists have emphasized the *power* of stories. Joseph Campbell notes that when humans attempt to express the seemingly inexpressible, they turn to stories. Bruno Bettelheim argues that fairy tales play a crucial role in offering guidance and instruction to very young children. Robert Coles, in such works as *The Call of Stories*, describes the therapeutic link between fictional narratives and our lives. Our lives are themselves a text.

Since CLTL appeals to the juveniles' decision-making processes, critical thinking theorists hold sway here. Self-improvement can be fostered by having the juveniles rethink how they respond to the stimuli in their environment. Bloom's taxonomy offers a visual representation of the need to move beyond approaches that appeal to mere knowledge acquisition, to higher levels such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Those are the levels where cognitive skills are developed. Kohlberg's research on moral development finds that the lower stages of value formation are based on self-gratification. The next stage is engaging in behavior because it is regarded as socially acceptable. The highest stage is acting on universal moral principles. The juvenile offenders in CLTL seem to often be stuck in the self-gratification stage, which is why the program's book discussions often cover the topic of the formation of their beliefs and value systems.

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The Findings

"A book should serve as the ax for the frozen sea within us."
—Franz Kafka

Perhaps the most obvious question is whether or not the program works. The Corrections people in the county who are skeptical of the program call it "Books for Crooks," dismissing it as a feel-good time-waster and arguing that if the threat of jail time isn't going to keep these defendants from committing crimes, what is reading novels going to do? I found that CLTL works for some juveniles, but it is not a cure-all, a finding supported by both anecdotal evidence and quantitative measurements of the recidivism rate. The quantitative evidence from one study of CLTL found a 19% recidivism rate for CLTL graduates versus 45% for a group that did not utilize a comparable reading

The quantitative evidence from one study of CLTL found a 19% recidivism rate for CLTL graduates versus 45% for a group that did not utilize a comparable reading therapy program (Trounstine and Waxler 4).

therapy program (Trounstine and Waxler 4).

First of all, the juvenile must be ready to make a change. The ones who are ready seem to embrace the program, whereas the ones who have put up a wall are less likely to be impacted. CLTL is very much like education in the sense that "When the student is ready, the teacher appears." Another similarity to education is the need to be satisfied with small victories. Or as one judge involved in the program explains, "If you keep one person from hurting somebody else, how valuable is that? Especially if it could be you."

CLTL offers English teachers many suggestions regarding effective ways to present YA literature in a school setting. The following list presents some possibilities:

1. Model literary discussions after book clubs. Arrange the seating so that all the participants/students can see each other. Give everyone a chance to talk and encourage multiple points of view.
2. If any students are uncomfortable offering personal revelations, allow them to hide behind the characters in fiction and talk about issues in the context of the novel.
3. Creating a safe, non-threatening classroom environment does not preclude challenging the students' preconceived notions. If the work being discussed makes a provocative point, follow up. If the students are not challenged, the reading material will simply reinforce the views they already hold. Stories can change readers, but only if the readers are prodded to examine their beliefs. Probing questions I heard asked at CLTL meetings in relation to stories they were reading included:
   - What is the difference between respect and fear? Whom do you respect? Who respects you? Do you respect yourself? What qualities earn respect? Do you exhibit the qualities you say you respect in others?
   - Who was your favorite character in the book? Why?
   - What do the characters in the book want? How do they attempt to get what they want? Are they successful? Why or why not?
   - Did this character think before acting? If the character had thought first, would his or her behavior have been different? What were the possible choices? What is the first mistake this character made?
   - How does one recognize high-risk situations and avoid them? Would events have turned out differently if this character had not been with these friends? How carefully do you choose your playground and your playmates?
   - What is the pay-off for acting this way? What is reinforcing this behavior? What does the future hold for this character if he or she continues to act in this way? How is the character changed as a result of these events?
   - Does this character have a conscience? Do you listen to your conscience? Is using alcohol and/or drugs, or being diagnosed with ADHD, or a rough home environment a valid excuse for criminal behavior? How does this character rationalize his or her behavior? At what point should a person be held responsible for doing what is right?
   - Do groups take bigger risks than individuals? How important is it to "fit in"? Would classmates/friends see this kind of destructive behavior as "cool"?
   - What sort of support system did this character have? Who can you turn to for support?
   - Are your parents disappointed in your behavior? What do your parents want for you? How have they been affected by this? How can you make things right by them? If you were a parent and this character were your child, how would you handle him or her? Have you ever talked to your parents about what they were thinking and feeling when they were your age?
   - Have any of you been the victim of a crime? How did that make you feel?
   - What communities (e.g., sports, school, church, neighborhood) are you a part of? What responsibilities do you have as a member of that community? Do you give back to your community? Are there any communities you have been excluded from?

- Why do societies have rules?
- What triggers your anger? How do you express your anger?
- What is the author trying to say?

4. Show the students you're human and not just an authority figure. CLTL participants view judges as less threatening when they see them sitting at the same table in jeans and telling their most embarrassing moment.
5. Take gender into consideration when compiling reading lists. The male teens' favorite YA novel was the Vietnam story, *Fallen Angels*, by Walter Dean Myers. Consult Smith and Wilhelm's *Reading Don't Fix No Chevys: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men*.
6. Avoid texts that are overly didactic. CLTL also has sessions for adult males, and I observed several of them as a point of comparison. When the adult males were assigned to read John McCain's *Character Is Destiny*, it didn't work because it was too much like a Sunday school lesson. It lacked any subtlety. Recall the lines from Emily Dickinson: "Tell all the truth but tell it slant— / . . . / The Truth must dazzle gradually."
7. Another word of caution is to work within what Vygotsky calls the "zone of proximal development." When an adult session was assigned to read a collection of sophisticated, modernist poetry, the participants resisted because they didn't understand it. Or as one offender memorably put it, "What in the hell is this guy talking about?"
8. Utilize any resources your school district offers to students who are struggling readers. There is a strong correlation between literacy difficulties and incarceration.
9. Make it clear that you care. One juvenile offender I interviewed gave me his evaluation of CLTL: "I just think it's a great program, really. It shows kids that people do care. And it's not just someone's job to care."
10. Be clear that reading with comprehension does not require some "magic computer chip in the brain" that only English teachers and librarians are born with.
11. Students will grasp the book club concept if they have regular exposure to it. Here, for example, is a snippet of the discussion when Chris Crutcher's *Whale Talk* was the assigned reading. This was the fifth meeting and already they flowed easily from talking about the novel, to using the novel to help understand current events, to applying the novel to their own lives. The comments that refer to *Whale Talk* directly are in italics. To keep track of the speakers, I have identified them by their role:

    JO-1 = Juvenile offender #1
    JO-2 = Juvenile offender #2
    F = Facilitator of the meeting
    PO = Probation officer
    JDG = Judge

JO-1: *You want to make a difference. And I think that's why T.J.* [character from the novel] *went out and picked the team that he did.*

F: *In that place?*

JO-2: *He wanted to make their lives better.*

JO-1: *With Chris* [character from the novel] *and the kid with one leg.*

PO: *Kind of had a crusade, didn't he?*

F: *Yeah. And this makes me think so much of the things that are in the news now and have been since Columbine.*

JO-2: *The Amish school.* [Eleven Amish school girls had been shot the day before, five of them fatally, in a one-room schoolhouse in the town of Paradise, Pennsylvania.] *Why would you shoot an Amish person?*

JO-1: *I saw that on the news. Did you see that on the news?*

PO: *That was an adult.*

JO-1: *I heard the guy took out a grudge from, like, 20 years ago. And, like, tied up girls and shot them in an Amish school.*

JO-2: *He went into a classroom, cleared it out, took the girls, lined them up execution-style, tied them up, and shot them one-by-one. And he didn't care!*

F: *And it's becoming more and more of an issue.*

PO: *There have been three in the last week.*

JO-1: *Shootings?*

PO: *'Cause T.J., in some respects, has got some of the characteristics of the kids who shoot.*

JDG: *He's got a lot of anger issues.*

PO: *He does.*

JO-1: *Another reason he* [Chris from the novel] *probably chose those kids is, along the lines of, like, down in the future, when the future comes and you're an adult, if you have problems, you could call on one of them.*

PO: *Was he thinking that far ahead?*

JO-1: *I'm saying it's a possibility.*

PO: *It's a bonus to being good to them.*

JO-1: *It is.*

PO: *With his anger, though, he didn't come in and start shooting people.*

F: *Right.*

JO-2: *He vented it.*

JO-1: *I think he vented it through swimming.*

F: [to JO-2] *I was just going to ask, I'll bet you get angry.*

JO-2: *Oh yeah.*

F: *What do you do?*

JO-2: *I take my anger out on this little, like, tae kwan do dummy I have.*

Note the shock expressed by the juvenile offenders at the callous way the shooter in the news had disregarded his victims. In just a few weeks' time, the juveniles have turned from having to be prodded to consider who was affected by their crimes, to feeling dismay that a perpetrator seemingly "didn't care" that people were hurt by his actions. My sense is that as the *Changing Lives* sessions progressed, the juveniles' moral compasses became more active and were more finely calibrated.

There is one incident that I would offer as the penultimate CLTL story. A CLTL juvenile session was assigned to read the YA novel *Breathing Underwater*, about an abusive relationship. One juvenile showed up late and didn't have the book. When queried, he explained that he recognized his own relationship in the book and gave it to his girlfriend to read. (Their relationship did not survive.) That is an example of "changing lives through literature."

On a final note, English teachers can take the lead in creating CLTL reading programs in their own counties. A perusal of the website at http://cltl.umassd.edu/home-flash.cfm is a good starting point.

The shortest distance between truth and a human being is a story.

—Jesuit priest Anthony de Mello

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Allison L. **Baer**

Constructing Meaning through Visual Spatial Activities:

An ALAN Grant Research Project

Shamatee stood in front of the class, cardboard box in hand, explaining how her model was related to the book, *Mick Harte Was Here* (Barbara Park, Random House, 1996). It was a re-creation of the scene when Phoebe, Mick's sister, was speaking at his funeral. This was the culminating project of a six-week unit using literature circles. The project was minimal with little detail. In fact, if Shamatee had not explained that it was a model of the church, there would have been no way of identifying it. Her accompanying writing, however, told a different story. In it she explained how the book, and this scene in particular, had reminded her of her own brother who died in a motorcycle accident. Shamatee empathized with Phoebe and could feel her sadness and fear as she spoke at her own brother's funeral. The black, dark walls spoke to her intense emotions when she recalled this event because of reading the book. Shamatee understood Phoebe's pain and loss. Her connections to the book were real; her model was, in fact, a three-dimensional object showing in-depth meaning-making from this book. In general, Shamatee did not have a great track record of completing written assignments as they were usually minimal with little evidence of understanding or depth. But here was a piece of writing, almost two pages in length, discussing why she chose to create this scene and what it meant to her. The model was a bridge between her reading of the book and her writing about the book.

This experience made me wonder about how students construct meaning from a book. In particular, how do students construct meaning through visual spatial activities such as models and other art forms? This article describes a study in which I sought to answer that question by working with ten sixth-grade struggling readers responding to short stories using visual spatial activities. Research shows that alternate ways of constructing meaning are infrequently used in reading classrooms (Smagorinsky; Smagorinsky & Coppock 1994). The norm in most reading and language arts classes is to encourage students to use the mode of writing to show what they know. However, according to Armstrong, "linguistic intelligence is not the only building block for reading competence" (79). I cannot help but wonder what amazing examples of constructing meaning we are missing in our classrooms when we limit our students' mode of communication to writing. Let me state that there is nothing wrong with using written expression in the reading classroom; the problem arises when that mode is the only option available.

Reader Response Theory

This study is built upon Rosenblatt's (1978) Reader Response Theory in which she speaks of reading as a transaction, a type of living through text with two different ways of transacting with text—aesthetic and efferent. "Sensing, feeling, imagining, thinking, synthesizing the states of mind, the reader who adopts the aesthetic attitude feels no compulsion other than to apprehend what goes on during this

process" of reading (26). Contrary to transmission beliefs, which "emphasize understanding the author's intended meaning" (Schraw 96), transactional theory connotes the activation of the text by the reader. Differing from the efferent stance in which the reader "disengages his attention as much as possible from the personal and qualitative elements in his response" (Rosenblatt 27, 1978), an aesthetic response demands that the reader actively involve all five senses as well as invest her/his emotions in the act of reading. In effect, the reader is bringing life to the text through this investment. According to Rosenblatt (1978), "the text is merely an object of paper and ink until some reader responds to the marks on the page as verbal symbols" (23). The reader is an active participant in the creation of meaning as reading is seen as "an event in time" (12) in which the reader and the text come together suspending reality thus allowing the reader to enter the world of the text. Seen as a continuum of what the reader does while reading (See Figure 1), at the farthest efferent end, the reader is totally disengaged in the reading seeking only information that can be used after reading. At the aesthetic end of the continuum, the reader is actively involved in the text having her/his purpose fulfilled during the reading. The reader chooses which stance is needed at a particular time reading a particular text.

Rosenblatt (1978) defines imagination as "the capacity of the human being to evoke images of things or events not present, and even never experienced, or which may never have existed" (32).

I was concerned particularly with the students' aesthetic reading of a text, which requires a spirit of exploration, an active imagination, and a willingness to experience a relationship with the text. "The word exploration is designed to suggest primarily that the experience of literature, far from being for the reader a passive process of absorption, is a form of intense personal activity" (Rosenblatt v, 1976). Exploration speaks of the reader's active involvement in the construction of meaning. Just as explorers do not just sit and wonder about the world beyond their walls, the reader cannot just sit and decode each letter and word. Both the explorer and the reader must get involved in their respective worlds. According to Rosenblatt (1976), a piece of literature does not stand by itself. The reader counts as much as the text as s/he responds to the literature through exploring both the text and her/his personal response to the text. "The finding of meanings involves both the author's text and what the reader brings to it" (Rosenblatt 14, 1978). This investment of self brings about an aesthetic experience in which the reader brings individual meaning to the text. Furthermore, the topic to explore can change over time. As people change, their interests change as well. "The relation between reader and text is not linear. It is a situation, an event at a particular time and place in which each element conditions the other" (16). The transaction between text and reader depends both upon the text read and the particular situation in which the reader finds him or herself.

A second component to an aesthetic reading experience is an active imagination. Rosenblatt (1978) defines imagination as "the capacity of the human being to evoke images of things or events not present, and even never experienced, or which may never have existed" (32). She goes on to explain that imagination is the "essence of language" in that it enables the reader to see and deal with things that are not real. Here too, imagination requires the active participation of the reader as s/he is invited to involve all five senses—sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste—in the very real creation of the world within the text. Imagination is what allows the reader to know the characters in a book so well that s/he could recognize them should they meet on a street corner. When a reader is

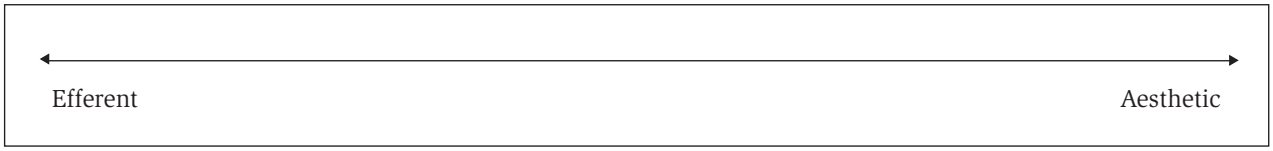

Figure 1. Rosenblatt's (1978) Theory of Reader Response Efferent/Aesthetic Reading Continuum

so immersed in a text that s/he becomes virtually hypnotized, "anything else that might enter into awareness—a physical sensation, a noise, will be shut out, as he attends only to what the symbols before him bring into consciousness" (Rosenblatt 53, 1978). As one's senses are involved in the text, they are no longer attuned to the surrounding world; the reader is immersed in an in-depth aesthetic reading experience.

The third element of aesthetic reading is the willingness to experience relationship with the text. The reader's attention to the text activates certain elements in her/his past experience—external reference, internal response—that have become linked with the verbal symbols. Meaning will emerge from a network of relationships among the things symbolized as he senses them (Rosenblatt 11, 1978). In creating meaning from a text, the reader brings all of her/his background experience; every book read; every event, person, place, or thing to the reading. This generates myriad connections between text and reader, thus building a strong relationship. Again, the text does not stand alone, as "built into the raw material of the literary process itself is the particular world of the reader" (11). Furthermore, Rosenblatt explains that the text may change the reader as it leads him or her to reevaluate assumptions and prior associations. As has been seen, aesthetic reading requires the reader to make connections with the text. The reader then takes responsibility for choosing the appropriate response to those connections knowing that s/he may choose to reject or accept each one. Just as we decide which personal relationships in which to be involved, the reader does the same in building a relationship with the text.

How My Students Constructed Meaning through Visual Spatial Activities

This study took place in a middle school located in a small, urban center in northeast Ohio. The school has approximately 600 students of which 32% are African American, 2% are multi racial, and 65% are White. In addition, 57% of the students in this school are classified as economically disadvantaged, and 19% are students with disabilities. The class had ten students, five African American and five White, seven male and three female. Their fifth-grade teachers identified these students, now in sixth grade, as struggling readers. The Dean of Students for the school indicated that the fifth-grade teachers had been asked to recommend no more than 20 students, based on reading ability, for a class that would receive extensive remediation in the hopes that their scores on state-mandated tests would improve.

In an effort to become part of the everyday classroom experience of the students, I began working with the class on the first day of school. By immersing myself in the culture of the classroom early on, I believe I obtained the trust of the students gaining the advantages as delineated by Patton (1990). The students came to see me as a visiting teacher within the classroom. In this capacity, I taught lessons on a weekly basis many times co-teaching with the classroom teacher.

The entire study involved the students reading and responding to a series of four short stories, "Eleven" (Cisneros, 1992), "The Use of Force" (Williams, 1938), "All Summer in a Day" (Bradbury), and "Chanclas" (Cisneros, 1984), each story taking approximately two days spread out over four weeks. The lessons were framed by the Structured Reading Lesson (Glasgow) including before, during, and after reading activities. This provided a "continuity of various instructional activities" as well as insured that the students were actively involved in "reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing" thus promoting a transactional approach to reading instruction (Rosenblatt 9, 1983).

On the first day of teaching the stories, students were instructed in frontloading activities (Glasgow). The purpose of frontloading (pre-reading) strategies is to actively engage the student "in understanding the purpose for reading a text" (10). As a frontloading activity, students first engaged in an activity called Brainstorm and Categorize, a derivation of List-Group-Label (Taba), in which they were given a word central to the meaning of the story and asked to brainstorm as many words as they could about this term. They then created categories for the words. These lists were put on chart paper and posted on a wall as a reminder. This activity tapped into their prior knowledge as well as set them up for a major theme in the story. Next, students were asked to create a Symbolic Reading Representation (SRR) (Edmiston) about a time when they experienced this same concept or theme from the story. As this strategy previously proved effective in

As an after-reading strategy and in response to the text read, students were given free choice as to how they represented what they learned from the story. They were instructed to "create something that represents what the story means to you" in any way they wished.

tapping into emotions when reading a work of fiction (Baer), it proved to be as effective when recreating a personal memory. Students were given construction paper and glue and instructed to think about a time when something similar happened to them. They also created a small graphic of themselves and placed it in the picture representing where they were as they thought about this event. As a group, we discussed the images created. Students were encouraged to share their pictures, talk about the memory they recreated, and discuss where they had placed themselves in the pictures. In addition, students shared their feelings about their pictures and the recreated memories.

On the second day of reading each story we reviewed the categories of words students created as well as had further discussion about the images created during the SRR (Edmiston) activity. The purpose of doing this was to review the previous day's activities thus bringing to mind the feelings attached to their images. Students were asked to write about another significant moment in their lives that corresponded to another theme or concept from the story. I chose the themes and/or concepts for discussion according to the content of the given short story. Time was given for sharing their writing. Students were then given a copy of each story on which to follow along as I read aloud. Listening-while-reading both improves reading fluency and helps maintain student interest, especially for struggling readers (Carbo; Rasinski).

During-reading activities "help the students read constructively, use a range of transactions appropriate to the task, and capture personal responses to the text" (Glasgow 11). As a during-reading activity, students were involved in creating a Speaking Tableaux (Enciso, Edmiston, & Colabucci). I stopped reading at a critical moment in the action in order to create the Speaking Tableaux. Students chose a character to represent and, after assuming a pose from the moment chosen, verbalized what they saw and heard from the perspective of the character. Either the teacher or I recorded what the students said and read this back to them after completing the activity.

As an after-reading strategy and in response to the text read, students were given free choice as to how they represented what they learned from the story. They were instructed to "create something that represents what the story means to you" in any way they wished. Their choices were unlimited for, as I learned from the above-mentioned pilot studies, students can create meaning in multiple forms, and I didn't want to limit their choices. For example, they could create a model, a three-dimensional picture, draw a sketch, or use any other means to show what the story meant to them. Various art supplies including markers, crayons, colored pencils, a variety of papers, and two different types of clay were supplied for their use. Students were allowed at least 30 minutes to complete their representations. After completing their projects, students were instructed to write about what they had created. Students answered two questions: 1) What did you create? 2) Why did you create this? This writing served two purposes. First, it helped them remember what they created and, second, it was used as a talking point in the ensuing interviews.

Having completed their projects, all students present were interviewed using the questions contained in Table 1. The interviews were fluid in nature as individual follow-up questions were frequently asked depending on the responses of the students. Time was spent viewing the videotapes (see below), and students were asked questions about what they were doing at that particular time.

Data collection included videotaping the students during the entire process. This was done through setting up a video recorder on a tripod in a front corner of the classroom. As this was a small class containing only ten students, this provided an image of the entire class. The videotapes of the second day in which they created their projects were used to interview the students. Interviews were done through the use of "stimulated recall" (Smagorinsky & Coppock) in which I watched the videotape with

Table 1. Interview Questions

1. Explain what you created.
2. What matters most in your creation?
3. What are you doing here? (Asked while viewing videotape.)
4. What was going through your mind as you were creating your project? (Asked while viewing videotape.)
5. What parts of the story were you thinking about?
6. Talk about . . . . (Depended on what was happening in the videotape.)
7. Did this story remind you of anything?
8. Could you hear, see, feel, smell, taste anything from the story while you were creating the project and thinking about the story?

individual students, simultaneously interviewing them through discussion of why the student chose to do what h/she created and the thinking processes involved. The purpose of stimulated recall is to allow the student "to explore the range or processes recalled" (292). In the process of interviewing the students, they were also asked to tell me what mattered most in their projects. This question served as an effective tool to encourage deeper thinking as well as prolonged discussion. The focus of the interviews was on the students' process of creating their chosen projects as well as the finished products.

This study also made use of a constant-comparative methodology (Glaser & Strauss) as data were analyzed in order to search for emerging patterns and themes in the student interviews, projects, and writing. In the constant-comparative approach "the researcher attempts to saturate the categories—to look for instances that represent the category and to continue looking and interviewing until the new information obtained does not further provide insight into the category" (Cresswell 151, 1998). I began with the stages as defined in A Taxonomy of Aesthetic Response (Sebesta, Monson, & Doces Senn) and then modified these stages into categories as the data required. Table 2 defines these categories and gives samples of student responses from "Eleven" (Cisneros, 1992).

Findings from the Study

- *Students constructed meaning through visual spatial activities by making sense of the stories read.*

Throughout this study, students consistently recalled the events, character(s), or plots of the short stories. Burke (2001) refers to these as story elements and speaks to their importance in building understanding of a text. All of the students began a discussion of their projects by first talking about the story and how their model or drawing represented some aspect of the text. Students also used their projects to help them sequence the events of the story. Williams (2002) supports the importance of sequencing when she asserts, "knowledge of text structure helps students discover what is likely to be most relevant for understanding the story" (126). Students also based all of their responses solidly within the texts. This confirmed Rosenblatt's (1978) contention that while the reader's response to a text is personal, it is ultimately based in the text. It was also obvious throughout this study that these students understood the texts read. In an age of standardized tests, educators often put aside more aesthetic responses to literature, as the pressure to recognize and memorize story elements is paramount. This study shows, however, that educators can encourage student choice and more visual spatial responses to literature and the students can still learn those very same things so important to passing state mandated tests. In addition, all of the students first constructed meaning through recollecting the text in order to then construct meaning in a more abstract form moving beyond the text to either their own lives or to the world-at-large.

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Table 2. *Adaptation of a Taxonomy of Aesthetic Response with Student Examples*

	Student Example from "Eleven"
Category 1: Recollections (Evocation, recreation, or elaboration of emotions, attitudes and/or events) 1. Students construct meaning through a transaction with the text that evokes a recollection, response, and/or reaction to some aspect of the text. 2. Students construct meaning through a transaction with the text that evokes an imaginative elaboration of characters, events, and/or objects.	1. Nick: The main thing I was thinking of was that she said that inside the sweater sleeves smelled like cottage cheese and it was all sweaty and germy. That's gross. 2. Nick: From the story, she doesn't sound very stubborn. At first I thought she was stubborn but then she didn't sound stubborn. I don't know. I think she was afraid of the teacher and that's why she put the sweater on.
Category 2: Associations (Alternatives such as comparing, contrasting the original evocation) 3. Students construct meaning through a transaction with the text by associating some aspect of the story to their own lives. 4. Students construct meaning through a transaction with the text by associating some aspect of the story to other texts or media.	3. Mike: Like I've been accused of something before and it really was somebody else's and she was like, like in the situation that she was in, too. 4. Sierra: It kind of reminded me of April Mendez (a character in another story). Because she lived somewhere she didn't want to be. And I like that there picture. And I liked how she kind of stuck up for herself but at the end she went through, she got everything, right? Because, remember in the story she said, well 'I can't wait until lunch because I can just take it off and throw it over the fence or throw it away in the trash can.' That's what kind of what April wanted to do but instead she just stepped up and she knew what she had to deal with it. She probably got a new air freshener or something, but she lived with it.
Category 3: Generalizations (Reflective thinking that results in hypothesizing, synthesizing, evaluating, and/or theorizing)	Nick: Ohhhhhh, ugh. I thought to myself that if I was in that picture I would have probably threw it. If my teacher said, put it on, I'd be like, getting away from it. Wouldn't you?

- *Students constructed meaning through visual spatial activities by making connections between the text and their own lives or some other media.*

Many of these students made strong personal connections with either a character or an event in one or many of the stories. Keene and Zimmerman (1999) refer to these as text-to-self and text-to-text connections as the reader either finds him/herself within the text or some similarity between texts. The authors state that good readers "independently and purposefully recall information and experiences relevant to what they are reading" (55). Making connections requires the reader to be actively involved with the text in that they are connecting something from the story to something from their own life experiences. Pressley (2002) states, "having knowledge is one thing, using it is another (271). These students took their knowledge of their own lives or another text and made connections with the texts read for this study. While educators have learned to use pre-reading

activities to build prior knowledge thus enhancing these kinds of connections, this study showed yet another way to do this through an after reading strategy, responding to literature through visual spatial activities.

- *Students constructed meaning through visual spatial activities by elaborating on the story.*

When encountering something that made no sense to them, the students in this study would add some defining details from their own lives to help explain what was happening. Elaboration has to do with embellishing the text by bringing new information to the text thereby giving it a fuller dimension to enhance understanding (Wilhelm, 1997). In this study the students elaborated on objects, characters, or events from the texts. While staying within the text the students used their background knowledge to bring new information to the text to help them better understand it. Elaboration can also enhance comprehension of a text. Enciso (2004), discussing the link between drama and visualization, spoke of this kind of elaboration as an enhancement of comprehension. Although she referred to this as accompanying visualization and drama, this study shows that this can also happen when visualizing through creating visual spatial projects.

- *Students constructed meaning through visual spatial activities by using mental imagery to create some aspect of the text thereby making generalizations beyond the text and themselves to the world-at-large.*

When discussing their projects, students would at times make generalizations based on the text and their projects. These generalizations would move beyond the text and their own connections with the text to some kind of statement related to a greater understanding that could be applied to the world at large. Their project took on an abstract quality in that it represented some emotion or greater understanding that could apply to others. In effect, the students first made a mental image of some emotion or understanding of the text then translated that into a concrete model or image. In discussion they would then verbalize this more abstract understanding. According to Gambrell and Bales (1986), using mental imagery when reading provides a framework upon which readers can organize and remember text and helps readers to integrate information across text. In this study students took those abstract mental images, created concrete models or pictures, and used these to build further understanding of the story from which they made generalizations.

- *Students constructed meaning through showing empathy with a character or situation in a story by sharing and/or understanding the feelings or physical sensations depicted.*

Students would frequently show empathy with a character through their discussions about their visual spatial projects. This might be done through paying particular attention to the facial expressions on a model or drawing of a character. Eisner (1990) asserts that "art informs us about things that we didn't have the opportunity to experience directly" (34). By using visual spatial projects, these students were able to share the experiences of the characters within the stories. Expressions of understanding a character's feelings would often be expressed in the interviews or their writings. Rosenblatt (2005) states that "we participate in the story, we identify with the characters, we share their conflicts and their feelings" (75). As a student expressed empathy with a character from a story, s/he was, in effect, identifying with the feelings expressed by the character in response to the situation in the text. The difference in this case is that the visual spatial projects acted as a catalyst to this kind of response.

These generalizations would move beyond the text and their own connections with the text to some kind of statement related to a greater understanding that could be applied to the world at large.

- *Visual spatial activities helped these students explain how they constructed meaning.*

In the interviews, the students would often hold or refer to their models as they spoke. The models became a connection between the texts read and the meaning they made from the text. Eisner (1990) speaks of the power of art in helping build understanding. This study not only confirms his beliefs but adds the power of the visual spatial project in supporting the language of the student as they discuss the project and how it relates to the text.

Implications for the Language Arts Classroom

Educators may use this research to support other kinds of responses to text rather than the more usual writing and tests taken after reading. This study suggests that sixth-grade struggling readers constructed meaning from a text in some very personally meaningful ways that will most likely not be revealed on a question-answer test format. The fact that they all recalled the events, character(s), and/or plot summaries of these stories suggests that their involvement in visual spatial activities did not hinder their recollection of the stories and it also gave them a basis for further meaning as they elaborated, made associations, and/or generalizations. Many people think that this kind of response can lead to the reader making unsubstantiated conclusions from text, but this study showed that meaning was solidly based in the text. This study also showed that sixth-grade struggling readers are capable of constructing meaning in more in-depth ways than may be revealed through strict pencil and paper responses. While beginning by recalling plot details, many of them also made associations and generalizations beyond the texts. Restricting response to one acceptable way could limit the imagination and creativity of the students. Allowing students to choose how they will respond may well open up avenues of meaning that are far more interesting and validating for the student.

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Language arts teachers could expand their understanding of the link between language and the arts. As was done throughout this study, students were encouraged to respond to literature through various art forms. This allowed these students to be more creative and utilize their imaginations in their response than if they were limited to writing. Most middle schools are structured in multiple period days with students changing classes every 40 to 50 minutes and there is little connection between classes and teachers. I believe, however, that there is a strong connection between literature and the arts and that the language arts and art teachers should work together thereby encouraging students to respond to texts in artistic forms and also respond to art in a more eloquent verbal form as they are both expressive forms of communication.

Teachers should allow students some choice in texts and response to texts within their classrooms. For the purposes of this study, all of the students read the same stories at the same time. Ideally, they would have each chosen a story to read. They did, however, have a choice as to how they would respond to the texts read. I believe it is vitally important to allow and encourage student choice in all classrooms. The fact that they each chose a medium to use to respond to a text did allow them to exercise their own individuality. Narrowing response to one particular mode can stifle creativity and imagination as well as limit response (Eisner, 1990). Students consistently expressed how much they enjoyed and valued the ability to choose how they responded to the stories. Part of teaching, with careful and sensitive guidance, is allowing students to explore and discover on their own. If, as Rosenblatt (1978) believes, literature is read and experienced differently for each person, then we need to allow students some choice in what they read and how they will respond to that which was read.

Conclusion

The students' ability to construct meaning from these short stories through visual spatial activities showed a real depth and breadth of understanding. These struggling readers learned that they have insights into texts that include recalling story elements, making associations to themselves and to other texts, and making generalizations beyond the texts. They learned that they could enjoy reading when given a choice as to how they will respond to what they read. They were excited about discussing their projects and how they understood the stories. Much like Shamatee, their projects were bridges of meaning between the text and their discussions. As they held their models in their hands, they expressed a depth of meaning that thrilled both the students and me. It is my hope that this study will support and encourage

other educators to take this same leap and allow their students the chance to show them what they know through similar experiences.

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Kristen **Nichols**

Facts and Fictions:

Teen Pregnancy in Young Adult Literature

> "It is a story social workers have heard all too often in the past—and are almost certain to hear hundreds of thousands of times in months and years to come. It is the story of a teenage girl who finds herself pregnant and, for all intents and purposes, alone."
>
> —Stewart, *Teen Mothers* 6

> "When I finished feeding Amy and was just about to put her down . . . Mum came over and took her from me. She just kissed her, the way she does, and then she walked back across the room and put her in Nan's arms."
>
> —Doherty, *Dear Nobody* 232

Almost one million teenagers in the United States become pregnant each year ("Facts in Brief"), and these same teens' ideas about sex and related matters are strongly influenced by the media. Young adult novels about teen pregnancy can speak to teens who "want to read about things that are interesting and true" (Donelson and Nilsen 87). These same teens also read young adult literature to "find out about themselves" (Donelson and Nilsen 42). For a teen who is dating, is considering dating, is pregnant, or whose friend is pregnant, young adult literature can be a method of receiving information and connecting with the experience. But can the way these experiences are being portrayed help teens form an accurate picture from them? Can teens, in fact, "find out about themselves" in the portrayal of teen pregnancy and parenthood in young adult novels?

Previous Research in Teen Pregnancy/ Parenthood Novels

Little research has focused on the issue of teen pregnancy in young adult novels. My search for material turned up only five studies addressing teen pregnancy and/or parenthood in this literature. These studies primarily examine the messages portrayed in the literature, focusing on stereotypes and the lack of information regarding details of teen pregnancy and parenthood.

One 2002 study examined six young adult novels, three featuring teen mothers and three focusing on pregnant teens. Author Cynthia Coffel was looking for stereotypes, identifying the intended audience, and critiquing the message. In the *ALAN Review* article, "Strong Portraits and Stereotypes: Pregnant and Mothering Teens in YA Fiction," she contends that pregnant and mothering teens can benefit from reading "old and new young adult literature about young women in situations similar to theirs," and she encourages them to do so "with a feminist and culturally critical critique" (15). Coffel intends students and teachers to use these novels to discuss sexuality, gender stereotypes, and teen pregnancy (19).

In their 2001 study covering fifteen pieces of literature (thirteen novels, one short story, and one creative non-fiction), Joy Davis and Laurie

McGillavray also examine messages regarding teen sex and pregnancy. Their article in the *English Journal*, "Books about Teen Parents: Messages and Omissions," outlines eight primary messages:

> Don't have unprotected sex even once.
> Most mothers keep their babies.
> Having a baby may put your education on hold, but you can still achieve your goals.
> When you are pregnant, you are on your own.
> For guys, sex is about fun. For girls, sex is about . . . [a variety of complicated reasons].
> Young women have to live with consequences, young men don't.
> Teen pregnancies do not mandate marriage.
> Teens from "troubled homes," or their partners, are more likely to become pregnant. (90–95)

As for "omissions," Davis and McGillivray identify three concerns: the lack of discussions of race and class, a limited number of references to prenatal care, and little, if any, discussion of how to prevent pregnancy (96).

In their *Knowledge Quest* article, "Teenage Pregnancy as Moral Panic: Reflections on the Marginalization of Girls' Feelings," Lynn Cockett and Sarah Knetzer conclude that, in the four novels they examine, the "problem belongs to the girls" (53), which they see as literary perpetuation of a myth. The authors argue that teenagers should be educated to be "critical consumers of information" so that they can see through this myth perpetuated in young adult literature (53).

Rather than looking at stereotypes or messages, Caroline McKinney examines young adult novels in which the female protagonists exhibit strength of character. Of the fifteen novels she discusses in her *ALAN Review* article "Finding the Words that Fit: The Second Story for Females in Young Adult Literature," two of the novels are about a teen who becomes pregnant. July (*Mr and Mrs Bo Jo Jones*) and Helen (*Dear Nobody*) both "create a stronger self" as they make decisions regarding their pregnancies (McKinney 3). McKinney believes that these novels' portrayal of strong female characters provides "illumination and discovery" for the adolescents who read them (6).

While the previous four articles examine stereotypes, messages, and character strength in young adult literature about teen pregnancy, an *ALAN Review* article by Denise Banker, "Too Real for Fiction: Abortion Themes in YA Literature," focuses solely on examining books which in some way address the abortion issue. Banker analyzes eleven young adult novels written between 1972 and 1991. Disappointed in what is available in young adult fiction on the issue of abortion (6), Banker believes more young adult literature should focus on abortion "to educate the students . . . [and] to allow them to expand their attitudes and to help them develop a sense of empathy and tolerance toward others" (2).

These five studies examine a variety of novels to discuss the stereotypes, social messages, strength of character, and choices represented in young adult literature. But these articles present only parts of the picture. While they do examine stereotypes related to teen pregnancy and/or parenthood presented in selected literature, and while they do mention information missing in the literature they have analyzed, the authors do not provide a comprehensive look at the portrayal of teen pregnancy and/or parenting compared to this reality in the United States today.

Novel Selection

After reading more than forty young adult novels that portray teen pregnancy, I narrowed the selections by focusing on three criteria: the copyright date (novels published since 1990), the perspective from which the story was told (pregnant and/or parenting teen only), and the level of reader engagement the story encouraged. I chose novels published in the last fifteen years to view the recent depiction of the topic. I limited the novels to those from the perspective of the pregnant and/or parenting teen rather than the story of the friend, parent, relative, or sibling to assure that the issue of teen pregnancy would be a primary focus of the novel rather than a subplot. Finally, I ruled out any novel that met the other two qualifications but was not likely to gain the reader's interest, because of implausible characters, an undeveloped or unrealistic plot, and/or a didactic or moralistic tone. After eliminating the novels that did not meet these qualifications, I compiled a list of twenty novels (see bibliography).

Choices

Though many different areas of teenaged pregnancy in young adult literature can be analyzed, I

narrowed my focus to the choices of abortion, adoption, or parenting by the protagonists. Of the novels in the study, some begin and end with the pregnant teen, some start with the pregnant teen and conclude with the birth of the infant, and some begin with the teen already parenting. The teens' experiences vary in terms of the decision made, the reasons, and the realism of the situation, given nonfiction accounts and statistics of pregnant and parenting teens (see Table 1).

Abortion

While forty percent of pregnant teens have abortions ("Facts in Brief"; Luker 155), young adult novels written from the perspective of the pregnant teen do not focus on this issue. Of the twenty novels included in this analysis, only two novels' (*Like Sisters on the Homefront* by Rita Williams-Garcia and *Borrowed Light* by Anna Fienberg) protagonists have abortions (ten percent).

While forty percent of pregnant teens have abortions ("Facts in Brief"; Luker 155), young adult novels written from the perspective of the pregnant teen do not focus on this issue.

The protagonist in *Like Sisters on the Homefront*, Gayle, is a fourteen-year-old mother forced by her mother to have an abortion during her second pregnancy: "'S'pose I want to keep it. It's mines,'" [said Gayle]. 'As long as you fourteen and in *my* house, you mines,' Mama said" (Williams-Garcia 4). In seven pages, the author describes Gayle as waiting in a room at the clinic, experiencing the procedure for the abortion, and meeting with a counselor after the abortion (Williams-Garcia 3-9). Though Gayle's experience with abortion is discussed in only one chapter of *Like Sisters on the Homefront*, the information presented reveals Gayle's situation to be unusual. While teens who seek abortions "tend to be affluent and white, [and] to have more ambitious educational and career goals" (Luker 114), Gayle is an African American from the projects who does not seem to be interested in school. As the dialogue suggests, it is not likely that Gayle would choose to have this abortion, and she does not. Gayle's mother "'gave [her] one mistake [her son]'" and does not want to support another, and so she decides Gayle will have the abortion (Williams-Garcia 3). Although this situation appears unlikely, as the author does not explain why Gayle's mother would allow her to have the first baby but not the second, the author does present a protagonist having an abortion, however short the focus.

While Gayle's abortion and subsequent response is discussed for only a chapter in *Like Sisters on the Homefront*, Callisto's abortion in *Borrowed Light* is a significant part of the story. When Callisto, or Cally, gets pregnant, she decides on her own to have an abortion. Fienberg anticipates readers who may not agree with the protagonist's decision, so, in a conversational tone, Cally justifies her choice: "Still, I'd made a decision—all on my own . . . It was just something I had to do. And I was doing the best I could. You might think it's pathetic, a girl sitting there in that clinic, congratulating herself in a situation like that. But I'm telling the truth, once you make a decision, you feel better" (244). After the abortion, Cally experiences both physical and emotional pain but does not regret her decision.

More commonly in the novels, the pregnant protagonist decides against abortion. Helen, the protagonist in *Dear Nobody* by Berlie Doherty, walks out of the hospital instead of staying for her scheduled abortion (107). While lying on the bed in the hospital room, she feels "as if [she] ha[s] become two people" and cannot go through with the procedure (Doherty 107). A similar situation is presented in *Perfect Family* by Jerrie Oughton. Welcome's sister takes her to have

Table 1. Nonfiction Statistics Compared to Representations in the Novels

	Abortion	Adoption	Parenting
Reality	40% ("Facts in Brief"; Luker 155)	3% (Stewart, *Teen Parenting* 8)	57%
Novels (20 in this study)	10%*	35%	60%*

*One teen protagonist (Gayle from *Like Sisters on the Homefront*) is already a parent when she has an abortion.

an abortion, but Welcome, the protagonist, decides she cannot lose the "promise" she feels growing inside of her (Oughton 102). In *Detour for Emmy* by Marilyn Reynolds, Emmy thinks about getting an abortion, but she tells her brother she "waited too long" because she has "already felt those little butterfly moves inside [her]" (90). Likewise, the protagonist in *Annie's Baby: The Diary of Anonymous, A Pregnant Teenager*, edited by Beatrice Sparks, briefly considers having an abortion. However, she is concerned about the religious implications of the procedure.

Though in reality almost half of all pregnant teens choose abortion ("Facts in Brief"; Luker 155), this decision is not proportionally represented in young adult literature. The reasons in the novels for not having an abortion are true to actual teen experiences, since some teens decide against abortion for religious or emotional reasons and others have "every intention of having an abortion, but back out at the last minute because the idea makes them uncomfortable" (Stewart, *Teen Parenting* 34). However, the overarching message sent to teens through this literature is that most teens choose not to have abortions. Some young adult novels portray incidental characters as having abortions, but the issue is not given extended treatment, with the exception of Fienberg's *Borrowed Light*. Continuing scarcity of novels about abortion written from the perspective of the pregnant teen reinforces Banker's observations. The theme has not received any greater representation in the last decade, leaving teens who have abortions or are considering abortion without much literature to help them grapple with the issue.

Adoption

While only about three percent of pregnant teens choose adoptive parents for their children (Stewart, *Teen Parenting* 8), this is a popular resolution in young adult fiction centering on teen pregnancy. In fact, seven of the twenty plots (thirty-five percent) considered in this study end in adoption. Authors describe the story of the teen that decides to give the baby up for adoption in one of three ways: making the decision at the beginning of the pregnancy, near the end of the pregnancy, or after a short term of parenting.

Two novels in which the pregnant teen decides early in the pregnancy that she will give the baby up for adoption are *Don't Think Twice* by Ruth Pennebaker and *Someone Else's Baby* by Geraldine Kaye. Although *Don't Think Twice* is set in 1967, critics Cockett and Knetzer refer to the book's theme as "timeless" (52). When Anne's parents find out about her pregnancy, they send her to an unwed mother's home so no one will know she is pregnant. Anne knows that she will have to give the baby up for adoption, and so she thinks of the fetus as "a growth inside [her]" that will be gone in a few months (Pennebaker 25). The further she progresses in her pregnancy, however, the more she thinks of the fetus as her child. She signs the adoption papers because she must, but after her experience, Anne believes that "being pregnant and giving up your baby . . . isn't normal" (Pennebaker 254). However, the 1960s social stigma of being an unwed mother is more than she and her family want to overcome. Her experience is similar to Terry's in *Someone Else's Baby* even though the latter is set in the 1990s. Terry also feels from early in her pregnancy that she must give her baby up for adoption because her parents will not support her child, and she does not know how she could support a baby on her own. Terry also regrets giving up her baby, but she sees no other options, given her family's position.

The theme has not received any greater representation in the last decade, leaving teens who have abortions or are considering abortion without much literature to help them grapple with the issue.

While Anne and Terry decide on adoption early in their pregnancies, Val (*What Kind of Love? The Diary of a Pregnant Teenager*, by Sheila Cole) and Welcome (*Perfect Family*, by Jerrie Oughton) believe throughout most of their pregnancies that they will keep their babies, before deciding to place them through adoption agencies.

In *What Kind of Love*? Val is confident she will be able to keep her baby because her boyfriend, Peter, proposes to her. However, their parents believe they are too young to be married, and Val's family will not support her if she chooses to keep her baby. At the

end of the novel, Val has an appointment with an adoption agency that she "would cancel in a second if [she] thought [she] could make it on [her] own" (Cole 192).

Like Val, Welcome in *Perfect Family* does not know if she can raise a child on her own. The difficulty of her decision is exacerbated by the fact that she lives in the 1950s, when social pressures dictate that she give her child up for adoption. That does not prevent her, however, from considering keeping her baby. When her family finds out about her pregnancy, Welcome is sent to live with her aunt and uncle. She considers staying with them after the birth of Adam, because she knows she cannot bring him back home with her. However, she decides Adam needs more than she can give him, so she leaves him with her childless aunt and uncle to raise as their son.

In reality, teens who choose adoption are often "more affluent, have higher aspirations for themselves, and are performing better in school" than teens who choose to parent their children (Luker 162).

Two other novels in this study feature teens that choose parenting before making the decision to place their children for adoption. In *Annie's Baby: The Diary of Anonymous, A Pregnant Teenager*, a fictionalized representation of an actual diary edited by Beatrice Sparks, fourteen-year-old Annie discovers she is pregnant. After briefly considering abortion, Annie decides she will keep the baby and is initially excited. However, when Mary Ann arrives, Annie admits, "Having *her* isn't anything like I thought it would be. I honestly did think I was prepared for a baby, but I'm not" (Sparks 163). As a fourteen-year-old, Annie feels too young to raise a child and cannot provide the kind of life she believes Mary Ann deserves. After much deliberation and about four months of being Mary Ann's mother, Annie decides to give her baby to a "real" family.

Sam, the protagonist in *Hanging on to Max* by Margaret Bechard, is another teen parent who eventually chooses adoption. When Sam's girlfriend gets pregnant and decides to give the baby up for adoption, Sam steps in to raise the baby. Sam has complete parenting responsibility for Max while Sam's father supports them financially so that Sam can finish high school. With this arrangement, Sam will be unable to afford college. However, Sam wants to go to college, and he misses playing basketball and hanging out with his friends. He also cannot imagine doing all of the things for Max that he needs, and he wants Max to have a mom, so when Max is almost a year old, Sam places him through an adoption agency.

Although there is variation in when the teens decide to give their babies up for adoption, all the teens who make this decision near the end of the pregnancy and after the birth of the baby want to give their babies better lives and want to pursue their own lives. The message of these novels seems to be that adoption can be the better choice for both the teen and the baby because life changes drastically when one becomes a parent. These novels show that many teens are not prepared to take on the responsibilities of parenting.

These six teens who give their babies up for adoption are Caucasian, middle or upper- middle class teens who have goals for their futures and parents who reinforce a middle class value system and middle class ambitions. However, in a seventh novel, *The White Horse* by Cynthia Grant, Raina is a homeless girl who decides to give her baby up for adoption. Raina wants to support herself and her baby, but after living in a homeless shelter indefinitely, she decides her baby deserves a better life. In reality, teens who choose adoption are often "more affluent, have higher aspirations for themselves, and are performing better in school" than teens who choose to parent their children (Luker 162). Also, statistically, these teens are predominately white (Bachrach, Stolley, and London 29; Stolley 32). Generally, then, the young adult novels about teen pregnancy in which the teen protagonist decides to give the baby up for adoption are true to life in terms of class, race, and situation. Unfortunately, though, non-Caucasian readers are less likely to see themselves in the literature in this situation.

Adoption in young adult novels is generally portrayed as a positive solution for those who believe they are too young to parent and who have goals of education or careers that they believe would be difficult to achieve while parenting. With the exception of Raina in *The White Horse*, the protagonists who

give their babies up for adoption match the description of the majority of teens in real life who make this decision. However, in reality, fewer teens decide to place their children with adoptive parents than young adult literature suggests.

Parenting

While adoption is generally portrayed in young adult literature as a positive option for pregnant teens, parenting is a more common decision both in real life and for the teen protagonists. Twelve of the twenty novels (sixty percent) included in this study portray a teen choosing to keep the child, and the authors present this in three ways: some novels focus on the pregnancy and conclude either before the birth of the baby or soon after, others include both the pregnancy and the first few months or years of parenting, and some of the novels begin with the teen already parenting.

In three of the novels included in this study, the story ends either before or soon after the birth of the baby, allowing the authors to focus on aspects of the pregnancy. *Triangle* by Jon Ripslinger is told from the father's perspective, and he and his girlfriend make plans to keep the baby even though the story ends before the birth. The reader is encouraged to believe that everything will work out for Jeremy and Joy when their baby arrives, but it is unclear how this will be achieved since Joy wishes to attend college and Jeremy plans to leave soon for the Navy. For these reasons, Diane Pozar's review in *Book Report* indicates that the "story is realistic" and the "characters' reactions are sincere," but the ending is "unrealistic" (49).

In a second example, *Waiting for June* by Joyce Sweeney, Sophie is in her third trimester when the story begins, and she has already decided to keep her baby. When June is born, Sophie has a large support network in place to help her raise her daughter.

Finally, in Berlie Doherty's *Dear Nobody*, the author shows what both Helen and Chris experience as they decide what to do about the pregnancy. Chris focuses on maintaining his relationship with Helen, while Helen tries to think practically about what life will be like with a child. As mentioned earlier, Helen initially plans on having an abortion, but she changes her mind. Her parents clearly want her to give the baby up for adoption, but she chooses to keep the baby after she feels the unborn baby move for the first time. Chris supports her decision, though he does not have any plans for their future. Doherty portrays how both teens interact with their families as they prepare to become parents, and she describes the physical and emotional changes Helen experiences during her pregnancy. In the end, Helen lives at home with her family and her baby, and Chris leaves for college.

Novels that narrate both the pregnancy and a few months of parenting include *Detour for Emmy* and *Too Soon for Jeff,* by Marilyn Reynolds; *The First Part Last,* by Angela Johnson; and *One Night,* by Margaret Wild. *Detour for Emmy* and *Too Soon for Jeff* present similar stories, but the reader receives a female's perspective from Emmy and a male's perspective from Jeff. The novels also differ in that Jeff shares custody of his son with the baby's mother, while Emmy raises her daughter on her own. After Rosie is born, Emmy discovers the difficulties of caring for an infant. However, with the assistance of her mother, her brother, and Rosie's father's family, Emmy is able to finish high school and go to college.

Like *Too Soon for Jeff*, *The First Part Last* presents a teen father's perspective. Though the story begins with Bobby taking care of his daughter Feather, Johnson includes Bobby and Nia's relationship, Nia's pregnancy, and Bobby's decision to parent Feather with chapters labeled "then" and "now," contrasting Bobby's life before and after he becomes a father. Bobby's life as a parent revolves around Feather to the point that he gets very little sleep, does not have time for his friends, and sometimes misses his former self. The *Horn Book Magazine* book review of this novel pinpoints its impact: "What resonates are the sacrifices Bobby makes for Feather's sake" (Beram 459). Though it is not clear how Bobby will raise Feather on his own, he believes he has made the right decision in choosing to parent.

One Night also portrays the teen experiences of both pregnancy and parenting. The novel is similar to *Dear Nobody* in that it includes both the teen mother's and the teen father's perspectives, and it is similar to *Too Soon for Jeff* since both teens share responsibility for their baby. Wild's approach differs from the other authors in that she uses free-verse poems to capture the emotional experiences of Helen and Gabe as they choose to share the responsibility of parenting their

son. Other novels portray teens that have already made the decision to keep their babies and are in the process of raising them. Three of the five novels in this study with this perspective include African American protagonists: *Spellbound,* by Janet McDonald; *Imani All Mine,* by Connie Porter; and *Like Sisters on the Homefront,* by Rita Williams-Garcia.

The young adult novels may end on a hopeful note for the parenting teens, but the reality of teen parenting is less positive.

Their different stories share certain characteristics. Raven (the protagonist of *Spellbound*), Tasha (*Imani All Mine*), and Gayle (*Like Sisters on the Homefront*) are all young (early high school) teen mothers from poverty-stricken families with absent fathers. While all three authors illustrate the experience of being a young mother of a baby, Porter's work, *Imani All Mine*, concentrates on parenting more than the other two.

As the sole parent of Imani, Tasha attempts to be a good mother. She takes her parenting class seriously, learning from her errors. When Mrs. Poole, the teacher of the parenting class, talks about Shaken Baby Syndrome, Tasha confesses to her, "I shook Imani. I ain't never done it again . . . I ain't know you shouldn't do it" (Porter 70). Tasha wants to be a good mother to Imani. She depends on the parenting class to learn what she needs to know since her mother does not help her, and she receives positive feedback from Mrs. Poole about her abilities as a single parent. The reader experiences, through Tasha, both difficult and joyous moments of parenting, from the frustration that leads Tasha to shake Imani when she is an infant to the first steps Imani takes before her first birthday. Though Tasha has a difficult life as a teen parent, her experiences as Imani's mother lead her to want to keep her second baby.

Two other examples of teen mothering use a visual format. *The Amazing "True" Story of a Teenage Single Mom* by Katherine Arnoldi is a graphic novel (which reads like a comic book) that illustrates the difficulties one teen mother faces as she attempts to provide the best possible life for her daughter and herself. The protagonist encounters many difficulties, but in the end she applies for financial aid and finds day care for her daughter so she can go to college. *Doll Baby*, written by Eve Bunting and illustrated by Catherine Stock, is in picture book format. Though reviews in *Horn Book Magazine* and *School Library Journal* are somewhat negative, finding the content inappropriate for a picture book audience, the author succinctly presents the message that caring for an infant can be a challenging task for a teen parent (Adams 564; McGinty 112).

The teen parents in these novels are satisfied with their decisions even though life becomes significantly more difficult when they have children. The difficulties are not always presented, but many of the authors portray how life changes for the teens. For instance, in *The First Part Last*, Bobby leaves to play basketball with his friends, but when he gets to the corner of his block, he realizes that he cannot leave because he is responsible for the baby he left alone in the house (Johnson 23). Also, many of the teens, like Helen in *Dear Nobody*, put their schooling on hold or change their plans so they can provide for their children. However, the overriding message in the novels is that though things change and life is difficult when one chooses to be a teen parent, it is still possible to be successful in life.

The young adult novels may end on a hopeful note for the parenting teens, but the reality of teen parenting is less positive. Since "more than 80 percent of teenage mothers were living in poverty or near-poverty long before they became pregnant," these teens do not have the resources that many of the teens in the novels have available to them (Luker 107). Parenting teens face other burdens than financial difficulties and lack of a social life. In *Teen Parenting*, Stewart writes, "Experts say that one of the most serious challenges facing teen parents is the potential for abusing children" (49). Teenagers often lack the maturity to restrain themselves and may shake or hit their children out of frustration (Stewart 49). Besides the possibility of physically abusing his or her child, a teen parent may neglect his or her child, either physically or emotionally. Some teens do not realize how much care and interaction a small child requires, and others may not have the desire to provide the necessary time and attention.

Overall, then, the picture of teen parenting presented in the novels is more positive than the

reality of being a teen parent. The authors of the novels do illustrate some of the difficulties teen parents face, but they focus on changes in social life and sleep patterns more than anything else. While, in reality, parenting teens are in danger of abusing their children, Tasha (*Imani All Mine*) is the only teen protagonist in this study who takes her frustrations out on her child. Since many of the teen protagonists in these novels are from middle class families, and since many of the families agree to help support the teens and their children, most of the teen protagonists do not have the financial concerns that many teen parents actually face. Some of the novels do mention financial concerns, such as in *Detour for Emmy*, in which Emmy complains that she cannot buy what she wants because of Rosie's needs. However, Emmy is not worried about money for food, rent, and other living expenses. Even novels that unfold in less privileged situations gloss over the financial difficulties of many teen parents. For example, Helen (*One Night*) is not allowed to stay at home, so she drops out of school to get a job to support herself and the baby. While Helen worries about how she will afford a baby on her own, her landlady helps her by halving her rent and by offering to baby-sit for free, both kind but unrealistic gestures.

Conclusion

Overall, this study suggests that the reality and fiction of the options surrounding teen pregnancy do not match. While forty percent of pregnant teens choose abortion ("Facts in Brief"; Luker 155), this option is rarely chosen by protagonists in young adult literature, conveying an impression that abortion is not commonly chosen. By contrast to abortion, adoption is well represented as an option. Only three percent of pregnant teens choose adoption (Stewart, *Teen Parenting* 8), but the authors favor this choice for their protagonists. With regard to parenting, the primary discrepancy between reality and fiction is the overwhelming financial and familial support the parenting teens in the novels receive. In reality many teens do not receive much support from their families (Aitkens 13; Stewart, *Teen Mothers* 17). Young adult novels often end optimistically, so if authors decide that their protagonists will keep the children, giving the protagonists financial and familial support allows for the "happily ever after" ending. Whatever the reasons behind authors' representations of character choices, the misrepresentations could mislead their readers.

Teen pregnancy remains a serious issue since almost one million teenagers become pregnant each year ("Facts in Brief"). It also comprises a popular topic in young adult literature. Unfortunately, however, many young adult novels featuring teen pregnancy or parenthood are truly fictional and do not adequately reflect the realities of the situation. In addition, unless the reader is Caucasian and middle-class, he or she has few protagonists with which to identify. Though the authors included in this study do portray some of the realities of teen pregnancy and parenthood, the entire story remains inadequately told. Future novels on teen pregnancy and parenthood should consider a greater variety of the realities of the situation confronting teens, their families, and their friends.

Teen pregnancy remains a serious issue since almost one million teenagers become pregnant each year ("Facts in Brief").

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Sharon **Pajka-West**

Perceptions of Deaf Characters in Adolescent Literature

Carla, one of my former students, sent me an email requesting summer reading recommendations. Her only stipulation was that she wanted to read about characters similar to herself. As teachers, we often try to hook our students on reading by presenting books with characters with whom they can relate. Such books can help increase their overall knowledge of the world, open their minds to multiple realities and variations of the human experience and provide scenarios in which they can live vicariously.

Carla's request is more complicated than one might presume. She is a deaf student who attends a residential school for the deaf and views herself as a member of a linguistic cultural minority, not a member of a disabled group. Historically, authors have used deafness as a literary device to relay various messages about the struggles of humankind and elicit sympathy from readers (Batson & Bergman, 1985; Bergman, 1987; Burns, 1950; Krentz, 2002; Panara, 1972; Taylor, 1974, 1976a, 1976b, Schwartz, 1980; Wilding-Diaz, 1993). I knew that Carla did not want to read novels that pitied her or her peers. She wanted to read about characters who use American Sign Language and participate as members within the "Deaf"[1] community. She does not want to read didactic books about deafness, but instead wants books with unpredictable plots and believable characters.

As an educator, I have sought and read numerous books about deafness. While memoirs and biographical selections have been relatively easy to acquire, finding fictional books for adolescents including deaf characters has been more challenging.

In recent decades, however, the general public's awareness of and perhaps interest in deaf people has risen along with that of our increasingly multicultural world. Educational legislation has increased awareness of the deaf as has news coverage of Gallaudet University protests. In addition, Deaf people have benefited from advances in communicative technology, such as Video Relay (VRS) and instant messaging pagers, more coordinated interpreting services and an increase in awareness of American Sign Language. Authors are incorporating more deaf characters than they did in the past. However, this increase does not necessarily translate to an increase in understanding of the deaf, nor does it translate to the most accurate, respectably, well-rounded characterization of the deaf. This dilemma, along with Carla's request, provided me with an interesting topic for study.

Problem and Purpose

Acquiring fictional books that include deaf characters can be time-consuming and challenging for teachers and librarians. The research examining deaf characters in fiction is extremely limited (Burns, 1950; Guella, 1983; Krentz, 2002; Wilding-Diaz, 1993). The most recent articles predominately focus on children's

1 I refer to "Deaf' as representing individuals who identify in a linguistic, cultural minority group. The term 'deaf' is used as a more generic term given to individuals with some degree of hearing loss. In other articles, 'deaf' has been used pejoratively or in connection to a view by those who believe one without the sense of hearing is inferior or lacking. I do not believe or wish to imply that.

literature—specifically picture books (Bailes, 2002; Brittain, 2004). Despite decades of research affirming culturally authentic children's literature and the merits of multicultural literature, a coexisting body of research reveals the lack of culturally authentic texts (Applebee, 1992; Campbell & Wirtenberg, 1980; Ernest, 1995; Larrick, 1965; Sherriff, 2005; Taxel, 1986). Moreover, children's books with deaf characters are used as informational depictions of deaf individuals (Bockmiller, 1980). Readers of such resource books, typically parents, teachers and their students, gain information about deafness and individuals with "disabilities" (Bockmiller, 1980; Civiletto & Schirmer, 2000). If an important purpose for deaf characters in fiction is educational and informational, then I suggest that there is a need for the characters to be presented as realistic models of deaf people. If not, the readers of such fiction gain inaccurate information about deafness including reinforced negative stereotypes, as can occur in any other literature portraying cultural minorities.

As an educator, I want all of my students to have unlimited opportunities for the future without facing the disadvantages wrought by stereotyping.

Similar to authors' informational depictions, writers also reveal societal understanding of groups of people through their fiction (Banfield & Wilson, 1985; Panara, 1972; Rudman, 1984). Literature has often stigmatized minority culture individuals based upon race, ethnicity, disability, gender and/or sexual orientation. While readers might recognize the negative depictions and dismiss them as harmless stereotypes, these portrayals could become a part of the unconscious of members of our society. If books continually reinforce stereotypical depictions of deaf people, individuals belonging to the group might be typecast and discouraged into a limited way of being. As an educator, I want all of my students to have unlimited opportunities for the future without facing the disadvantages wrought by stereotyping.

The Study

For the purposes of this study, I examined six contemporary adolescent literature books with deaf characters, including: *Nick's Secret*, by C. Blatchford; *A Maiden's Grave*, by J. Deaver; *Of Sound Mind*, by J. Ferris; *Deaf Child Crossing*, by M. Matlin; *Apple is My Sign*, by M. Riskind; and *Finding Abby*, by V. Scott. These were written by three deaf authors and by three hearing authors. My research was based upon the perceptions of adult readers who each read two of the before-mentioned books. I selected the participants from a criterion sampling and divided them into three groups: 1. Adults who had attended either a special program for the deaf or a residential school for the deaf, used American Sign Language, and identified themselves as deaf were considered for the *deaf* category of the study; 2. Adults who were friends, family members, co-workers or professionals in fields connected with individuals who identify themselves as deaf were considered for the *familiar* category of the study; and, 3. hearing adults who were not aware of the everyday experiences of deaf people and who had not taken a sign language class or worked with or lived with a deaf person were considered for the *unfamiliar* category of the study. Nine participants were selected for each group, totaling 27 participants.

To elicit the perspectives of my participants, I developed a Reader Response survey which was modeled after Schwartz's (1980) "Criteria for Analyzing Books about Deafness."

The Participant-Readers' Perceptions

Participants commented on fourteen main and secondary characters. Their perceptions of these characters fall into six categories: the "normal" curious kid such as the characters Harry *(Apple is My Sign)*, Jeremy *(Of Sound Mind)* and Jared *(Finding Abby)*; the egocentric spoiled brat such as Palma *(Of Sound Mind)* and Megan *(Deaf Child Crossing)*; the advocate such as Harry's mother *(Apple is My Sign)* and Susan *(A Maiden's Grave)*; those dependent upon the majority culture such as Palma *(Of Sound Mind)* and Lizzie *(Deaf Child Crossing)*; those isolated such as Melissa *(Finding Abby)*, Ben *(Of Sound Mind)*, Nick *(Nick's Secret)* and Thomas *(Of Sound Mind)*; and, those searching for their identities such as Melanie *(A Maiden's Grave)* and Abby *(Finding Abby)*.

Overall, participants commented more frequently about the deaf characters in the books by the hearing authors *(A Maiden's Grave*; *Of Sound Mind; Apple is*

My Sign) and made more positive comments about the culturally Deaf male characters, particularly Ben Roper, Jeremy and Thomas of *Of Sound Mind*, and Harry of *Apple is My Sign*.

The Characters

Ben Roper (*Of Sound Mind*)

Regardless of Dr. Roper's minor-character status, he was liked by all three participant-groups; however, they noted that he was often isolated from other deaf people which seemed unusual for a culturally Deaf person whose first language is American Sign Language. Readers cannot be certain whether his isolation is due to his recent move, by choice, or because of his type of employment.

One deaf participant explained, "He's a computer engineer working on a project at Penn State . . . . Ivy (his daughter) mentions in passing how her father communicates—using technology like a lot of deaf folks do . . . .Dr. Roper seems to have a peaceful, satisfactory relationship with his daughter, Ivy. He welcomes Jeremy and Thomas into his workshop and involves them in his model-making . . . .Dr. Roper might epitomize that deaf people can be successful in their field" (6d).

Another deaf participant described him as, "[t]he educated, professional college graduate who doesn't socialize much with other deaf. I have met and known a lot of deaf people that fit the descriptions like Dr. Roper, highly educated, capable deaf professionals in good jobs, and somewhat isolated"(9d).

As a successful, educated professional, Dr. Roper serves as an exceptional model for young readers who can admire his intelligence, creativity, and his success as a single parent.

Harry (*Apple Is My Sign*)

Also known by his sign name, Apple, Harry attends a school for the deaf in Pennsylvania. This is a major change for him after growing up on a farm. Harry meets new deaf friends and learns from teachers through sign language. Harry is portrayed as a curious "normal" kid.

Overall, participants considered Harry to be a well-liked character. The familiar participants viewed Harry as a learner who becomes thrilled with new circumstances and situations. In one instance, Harry understands that using sign language publicly embarrasses his friend, Agnes, but remembers how his mother taught him to never be ashamed of being himself. When he forgets his hat on a train, he goes back to retrieve it. Instead of quickly and quietly leaving the train he stomps his foot to gain everyone's attention and signs "I'm going home for Christmas vacation. Merry Christmas." He waves to the passengers. Many of the hearing people wave back to him (Riskind, 75-80). One familiar participant responded to that scene with Agnes. She wrote, "When she got off and joined her family, Apple noticed no one signed to her. I see that often where the parents never learn to communicate with their Deaf child"(4f).

"The book portrayed the children as ordinary children, which makes it easily identifiable to anyone who reads this book. It sends a message to children who can hear that deaf children truly aren't any different from themselves."

The unfamiliar participants explained that although he is different from those in the majority culture, he is an "ordinary" child. An unfamiliar participant explained, "The book portrayed the children as ordinary children, which makes it easily identifiable to anyone who reads this book. It sends a message to children who can hear that deaf children truly aren't any different from themselves"(7u). Certainly for those who are unaware of deaf people and wish to gain further insight, this book encourages readers to approach diversity and difference as an engaging challenge, not something to fear.

Jeremy (*Of Sound Mind*)

Eleven-year-old Jeremy attends "special classes" for the deaf in a local public school as a fifth-grader. He is highly pressured to be successful being the only deaf son of two deaf parents. He works hard to do his best so that he is not a "freak or a failure" (Ferris, 4). Although a minor character who appears in few scenes and does not say much, Jeremy received a significant amount of attention from the participants. Overall, he was well-liked by them. One participant

wrote, "I think Jeremy is the best role model for deaf children/teens. He is a typical deaf child, struggling in school, needing help with homework from his hearing brother and seems to be reasonably well-adjusted in most areas . . . the normal deaf child of deaf parents"(9d).

Similar to the character, Harry, Jeremy is self-confident. He volunteers to help deliver food to his elderly neighbors, enjoys hanging out with his school peers, and participates in sports.

Thomas (*Of Sound Mind*)

Thomas, father and carpenter, is one of the main characters in *Of Sound Mind*. His character was adored by the participants but some wonder why he did not try to communicate better with the hearing characters. One deaf participant wrote, "Thomas, the father, comes across as the 'happy in his lot' but we can never be sure if this is so because his wife dominates him. Thomas does show mistrust of hearing doctors, however, but we do not know if this is because he doesn't understand them . . . . I keep asking myself, why doesn't the man write more? Again, we really don't know if he struggles with English as Theo claims Palma (Thomas's wife) does"(6d).

Participants commented more frequently about the culturally Deaf male characters. Although the participants were divided in their responses to the various female characters, all of the female characters were criticized except for one minor character, Susan.

A familiar participant wrote, "Thomas grew up not knowing how to sign until he attended Gallaudet. He was not born deaf but was deafened at the young age of eight from meningitis after he had learned to read and write. The above scenario is quite realistic. The fact that both Palma and Thomas were artists in their own right was also believable"(6f). An unfamiliar participant focused on Thomas's independence. She was impressed how Thomas "learned how to deal" with his deafness. The participant wondered "how he feels about different aspects of being deaf" and noted that "Thomas and Jeremy are accepting of their deafness and do, or at least try, not to limit themselves" (6u).

Once more, participants commented more frequently about the culturally Deaf male characters. Although the participants were divided in their responses to the various female characters, all of the female characters were criticized except for one minor character, Susan.

Susan (*A Maiden's Grave*)

Seventeen-year-old Susan is a high school honors student who had received early acceptance to Gallaudet University on a full scholarship for the following semester. Susan's parents were deaf which the other characters consider the "highest in the hierarchy of the world of the Deaf" prelingually deaf, born to deaf parents (Deaver, 86). Susan is "unyielding about the use of ASL . . . . militantly rejecting oralism- the practice of forcing the deaf to try to speak" (Deaver, 87).

Susan is frequently yet briefly mentioned in the participants' comments mostly because she is a minor character who appears only in the beginning of the book and is shot and killed as an example of the kidnappers' intolerance of difference. Nevertheless, readers enjoyed her resilience and leadership abilities in the face of danger. One deaf participant pondered over the character in connection to her own identity and wished she was able to ask the character specific questions.

While Susan is a character I believe my former student would appreciate reading about in a novel, the other female deaf characters did not receive such high praise from participants. The major criticism was that these female characters remained weak and, at times, pathetic.

Melanie (*A Maiden's Grave*)

Melanie is an eighteen-year-old junior teacher at the Laurent Clerc School, where she had previously attended as a student. Melanie lost her hearing postlingually at eight years old and "was a better lip reader than most"(Deaver, 9).

Many of the participants viewed Melanie as someone who relies solely on her "other" senses to

cope and as one who longs to regain her hearing. One familiar participant explained, "[Her] personality seemed to be totally built on the strength of her 'other senses' since she was Deaf"(8f). These other senses include Melanie's ability to "smell the river" (Deaver, 176) and her phenomenal clairvoyance.

Lizzie (*Deaf Child Crossing*)

Lizzie is a minor character who uses only sign language and doesn't speak; she attends the Illinois School for the Deaf; and, she does not use hearing aids because her parents say she does not need them (Matlin, 126). When readers first meet Lizzie, she has just arrived at camp believing that she is the only deaf camper. She is quickly befriended by another deaf camper and the two communicate through sign language. Lizzie leads camp cheers and teaches informal sign language classes.

The participants mentioned Lizzie only because her behavior was so unrealistic and unlikely to occur. Throughout the story, she is independent and sociable; yet, one significant discrepancy is after the main character, Megan, runs away and is rescued. Lizzie tells Megan "we" shouldn't go off alone since "we" are deaf. This infuriates Megan, who longs for the independence other girls at the camp have (Matlin, 177). My participants sarcastically pondered whether all children shouldn't run away or just deaf children. Regardless, Lizzie's response differed from her previous 'deaf people can do anything but hear'[2] behaviors.

Palma (*Of Sound Mind*)

Palma, the mother and artist, is one of the main characters in *Of Sound Mind*. Palma is a Deaf person from a Deaf family who attended Gallaudet University. Although she is highly successful with her art, Palma is not easy to like. The deaf participants focused on her personality and explained why they believed she was or was not realistic as a character. One participant explained, "Palma—talented but dependent, not trusting the 'hearing world' but has to be part of it in order to profit from her work. She is self-conscious about her English and her hearing son sees her as selfish and demanding" (6d).

Another deaf participant selected Palma "as being the most unlike a deaf person." The participant felt that because of her Deaf family Palma should have been more independent. The participant wrote, "She is too overly dependent on her hearing son, too helpless, too afraid, too high strung and too much the Prima Donna to be 'real' "(9d).

One familiar participant wrote, "The mother was withdrawn from the hearing world. She was afraid to try to communicate with hearing people. The mother called her hearing son 'just you' not necessarily approving of his hearing"(3f).

While Susan is a character I believe my former student would appreciate reading about in a novel, the other female deaf characters did not receive such high praise from participants. The major criticism was that these female characters remained weak and, at times, pathetic.

Both Lizzie and Palma could be seen as positive role models for their numerous successes; yet, their behavior appears as outliers and makes them unrealistic and unbelievable.

Conclusions

Participants across all three groups mentioned their preference for a spectrum of deaf characters. The books used in this study that were written by hearing authors included a variety of characters. For example, Riskind's *Apple Is My Sign* includes numerous deaf students at a school for the deaf and the main character living within a deaf family; Deaver's *A Maiden's Grave* includes more deaf characters from a variety of backgrounds and a few hearing characters; and Ferris' *Of Sound Mind* includes two deaf families again with more deaf characters than hearing characters.

The books written by the deaf authors in this study include only a few deaf characters. For example, Matlin's *Deaf Child Crossing* includes two deaf girls; Scott's *Finding Abby* includes more minor deaf characters but readers learn about these characters from the hearing characters' perspectives. For instance, the character Jared uses sign language and

2 Former Gallaudent University President I. King Jordan's statement.

attends a residential school for the deaf, but readers learn this information from his hearing mother talking about him, not from the character's words. Readers know that he communicates because we are told that he does; however, the only communication readers are shown is a wave from the child. With the fewer deaf characters, it is nearly impossible for the various ways of being deaf to be included in the book. Thus, the preference for the books by the hearing authors may be connected to the preference for a variety of deaf people represented.

Examples to demonstrate the isolation some of the deaf characters experience include Nick of *Nick's Secret* being the only deaf character in his story and Ben Roper of *Of Sound Mind* being the only deaf employee in his workplace. While these can certainly be read as negative situations the characters experience, isolation may be a reality that resonates in some deaf people's experiences.

Themes such as the characters being dependent and isolated from others did arise. For example, Palma in *Of Sound Mind* insists that her hearing son act as her personal interpreter so that she can avoid other hearing people. Examples to demonstrate the isolation some of the deaf characters experience include Nick of *Nick's Secret* being the only deaf character in his story and Ben Roper of *Of Sound Mind* being the only deaf employee in his workplace. While these can certainly be read as negative situations the characters experience, isolation may be a reality that resonates in some deaf people's experiences. With communicative technology and more individuals fluent in American Sign Language, some deaf individuals may decide to associate more with individuals in the larger culture. One must interpret purposeful isolation such as Ben Roper's (*Of Sound Mind*) case, working in a location that provides him with the best employment opportunities, differently than Melissa Black's *Finding Abby* isolating feelings of being left out of family dinner discussions.

Similarly, variations in characterization including the egocentric, spoiled brat and those searching for their identities are common themes in adolescent literature with or without deaf characters being included. Positive examples of deaf characters including the roles of the advocate such as Susan (*A Maiden's Grave)* and Harry's mother (*Apple is My Sign)*, along with descriptions of regular everyday deaf kids increases the varieties of deaf characters.

Consider again my student Carla and her longing to read about deaf characters. I hope my research assists teachers in recommending books with characters to which our students can relate and in recommending books with multiple realities of the deaf human experience. When presented accurately, readers learn about a reality often quite different from their own experiences. The portrayal of realistic deaf characters benefits adolescent readers. Deaf characters in fiction act as role models for young adults. A positive portrayal of deaf characters benefits deaf adolescents whether or not they see themselves as biologically deaf or culturally deaf. Just like my student Carla, deaf adolescents wish to find themselves and their peers in the novel.

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Adolescent Fiction Books Reviewed

Blatchford, Claire. *Nick's Secret*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Company, 2000.
Deaver, Jeffrey. *A Maiden's Grave*. New York: A Signet Book, 1995.
Ferris, Jean. *Of Sound Mind*. New York: A Sunburst Book, 2001.
Matlin, Marlee. *Deaf Child Crossing*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2002.
Riskind, Mary. *Apple is My Sign*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981.
Scott, Virginia M. (2000). *Finding Abby.* Hillsboro, OR: Butte Publications, Inc., 2000.

Anything But Ordinary by Valerie Hobbs — Romance/College/Peer Pressure
Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2007, 168 pp., $16.00 — ISBN-13: 978-0-374-30374-7

Winifred and Bernie have always been social outcasts, so it's natural when they find each other in eighth grade that they would become close friends and then sweethearts. But then the unthinkable happens—Bernie's mother dies, and he spirals into depression. Their plans to attend college together fall apart, and Winifred sets out on her own, only to discover she's far more susceptible to the pressure to conform than she realized. Soon, Wini is sexy and popular, though her grades are tumbling and she doesn't really know who she is anymore. When Bernie comes to his senses and travels across the country to find her, he is in for a shock. This rich, multilayered story has a compelling plot and a strong sense of place. Hobbs excels at creating dynamic characters and intriguing relationships, and this novel is among her very best.

Melissa Moore
Jackson, TN

The Baptism by Sheila P. Moses — Slavery/Identity/Religion
Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2007, 130 pp., $15.99 — ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-0671-1

Moses (*The Legend of Buddy Bush*) returns to Occoneechee Neck, N.C., to explore the remnants of slavery and its impact on personal identity in the life of twin brothers Luke and Leon Curry.

The twins' mother has given the 12-year-olds one week to get their act together so that they can be baptized on Sunday, but it's hard when sinnin' is so much fun. The authentic voices of well-rounded characters, and the sobering events in their lives, are balanced with humor and good fun in this lighter, yet still meaningful, story.

Melissa Moore
Jackson, TN

Being by Kevin Brooks — Human Identity/Science Fiction
Scholastic, 2007, 323 pp., $16.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-439-89973-4

This gripping novel is epic in nature as it begins in the middle of a frightening operation where the patient is conscious but unable to move. Robert's odyssey continues as he travels across Europe to escape his inhumane would-be captors. It is reminiscent of John Le Carre or Ian Fleming as the international intrigue unfolds. The irony is that Robert, whose humanness is in question, is far more humane than the supposedly human hunters who chase him. The artful use of language draws the reader into this tale of self-discovery and delusion. There are many scenes of exciting action, as well as tender moments between characters. Both antagonist and protagonist are fully rounded since the author uses a first-person narrator who is both cynical and observant. Anglophiles will certainly be attracted to this story, as its settings paint a vivid picture of United Kingdom countrysides and villas. This novel is for older students, as it contains some suggestive material.

Kenan Metzger
Muncie, IN

The Black Sheep by Yvonne Collins and Sandy Rideout — Fiction/Identity
Hyperion Books for Children, 2007, 348 pp., $15.99 — ISBN-13: 978-1-4231-0156-7

Reality television has made it to young adult literature.

The Black Sheep chronicles the life of Kendra, a teen who no longer wants to live with her parents and is transported from New York City to Monterey, Calif., in reality television's latest hit show.

Kendra dislikes her overscheduled life and thinks she needs a break from her parents, who show affection by buying Kendra lessons and classes instead of giving hugs and kisses. A letter depicting her "horrible" life enables her to win the pivotal spot on TV and the trip to California to stay with a liberal ("hippie") family for a month while *their* daughter takes Kendra's place in New York City.

Teens will dive into this reality world as the plot—and cameras—follow Kendra through her adventures. She finds a humanitarian cause to be passionate about and also discovers her first love. The journey, however, isn't an easy one, as the cold realization of reality show manipulation causes the reader to wonder if Kendra will fight as hard for her family as she does for the sea otter.

Jill Adams,
Denver, CO

Breaking Up by Aimee Friedman — Graphic Novel/Popularity/Romance
Scholastic, 2007, 191 pp., $8.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-439-74867-4

Chloe begins her junior year with her three best friends, expecting a year similar to previous ones. However, the girls' friendship drastically changes when one seeks extreme popularity, another wrestles a boyfriend's unwanted intimacy demands, and one battles overprotective parents. Chloe falls for the school nerd who is talented, intelligent, and kind, but hides their relationship for fear of ostracism.

Naturally, these situations become increasingly complicated and divisive, leading to the girls' friendship implosion and Chloe's realization that maturity brings many changes. While all resolve their problems, the girls realize their friendship is changed and it, too, must evolve to remain intact.

This graphic novel, drawn and narrated by Chloe, nails high school experiences through its expressive, dynamic illustrations with characters' secret thoughts and imagined scenarios being appropriately hilarious or poignant. Although the plot is familiar with events foreseen, the graphic format makes it engrossing and highlights its valuable messages.

Lisa A. Hazlett
Vermillion, SD

Captives by Tom Pow — Family/Survival
Roaring Brook Press, 2007, 185 pp., $17.95 — ISBN-13: 978-1-59643-201-7

Tom Pow's book, *Captives,* throws us in a world of exotic jungles as we follow the reflective narratives of two tourists, a son and father, who were captured by rebels. The depiction of the rebels, who hope to change the government's influence on the economic destruction caused by big companies, becomes an intimate experience for both the characters and the reader.

Pow's two-part story—one from the father's perspective and the second from the son—allow for all of the gaps to be filled in. *Captives* challenge the ideas of a family and how, through tough situations, it is family who sticks next to you. Despite knowing the climactic end to the story from the prologue, *Captives* offers a page-turning experience wondering what will happen to the captured hostages as they venture through the jungle.

Adam Hofer
Brookville, IN

Dairy Queen by Catherine Gilbert Murdock — Family/Romance
Houghton Mifflin, 2006, 275 pp., $16.00 — ISBN-13: 978-0-618-68307-9

D.J. Schwenk has always done as she's told. When her older brothers left home after a family fight, she let it happen. When her father had surgery, she took over the family farm. And when Brian Nelson, quarterback of Red Bend's rival football team, begins working at her farm . . . she falls in love.

When Brian first shows up at Schwenk Farm, D.J. is disgusted, but as the two work together, they confide in each other. Soon, they become much more than friends; however, D.J. strains her new relationship with Brian, and with her family, when she makes the Red Bend football team.

Readers will fall in love with D.J.'s humor and will relate well to her emotional epiphanies. While initially slow-paced, the story becomes quite interesting as it progresses. For those who think that small-town life is dull, *Dairy Queen* will offer a new perspective.

Megan Callahan
Bartlett, IL

Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney — Loyalty/Family/Humor
Abrams/Amulet Books, 2007, 224 pp., $14.95 — ISBN-13: 978-0-8109-9313-6

Diary of a Wimpy Kid is immediately described as a "novel in cartoons," and that it is. Jeff Kinney transforms his popular web comic of the same name, into a great young adult novel.

Greg Heffley, the wimpy kid, begins by telling us that by no means is what we are about to read a diary; it is a journal. He gives us insight into an entire year of his life including everything from wrestling class to trick or treating with his little brother, and of course hilarity ensues. This book is definitely meant to tickle the funny bones inside all of us. Themes include friendship, loyalty, and family, which are all relevant young adult topics. This book is great because it takes these themes and gives them a twist of humor that any young reader is sure to enjoy.

Matt Oldenburg
Muncie, IN

Echo by Kate Morgenroth — Death/Mystery
Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2007, 137 pp., $15.99 — ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-1438-9

Justin Thomas' world was turned upside down the day his younger brother, Mark, died in a terrible accident. In the past year Justin has been fighting for things to go back to normal, but no matter what he does, he cannot stop reliving the day of the accident. On the anniversary of his brother's death, Justin starts hearing a voice in his head, making the "normal" day even more thrilling with unexpected twists. As the story goes on, Justin learns that not all things are what they seem, and there is not always a clear line defining reality vs. illusion. Morgenroth explores the mind of a troubled adolescent discovering the truth about the life around him. Some of the descriptions (including Mark's death) are a bit graphic at times, but nothing too extravagant for a teenage reader. Readers will get trapped in the life of Justin Thomas, figuring out where the line between reality and illusion should be drawn…or if there even *is* a line for Justin.

Lauren Grogan
Fishers, IN

The Edification of Sonya Crane — Biracial/Death/Drugs/Abuse
Kimani Press, 2007, 248 pp., $9.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-373-83077-0

Sonya Crane is a teenager who has experienced some atrocities in her life. Her mother, Doris, a real estate agent with a drug addiction, forces Sonya to move from a middle-class neighborhood in Atlanta to a predominantly black neighborhood in East Atlanta and live with Madison, a drug dealer who supplies Doris with her fix in exchange for sexual favors from Doris and Sonya.

Despite her problems, Sonya looks forward to attending high school. On her first day, she meets Tandy. Sonya also develops feelings for Tandy's brother, Kush, who leads a civil rights group. Meanwhile, Sonya's mother goes into rehab, leaving Sonya with Madison's friend, Law, an ex-convict who is mentally challenged. He tries to force himself on her, and Sonya ends up stabbing him to death. As Sonya deals with the consequences of committing a murder and the reality of carrying Kush's unborn child, Tandy begins to figure out Sonya's true identity.

Adolescent readers will become enthralled with plot twists in this novel, part of a new series of African-American young adult fiction. This book is suitable for 11th-12th graders due to a few sexually explicit scenes.

Anjeanette C. Alexander-Smith
Jacksonville, FL

Evolution, Me & Other Freaks of Nature by Robin Brande — Contemporary Fiction
Random House, 2007, 272 pp., $18.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-375-94349-2

How would you like to begin your first year in high school with the whole world hating you? That is how it is for Mena. Because she wrote a letter of support to a boy who was harassed because he was thought to be gay, she lost all her church friends. She is grounded from everything except school, and her parents will hardly look at her, much less talk to her.

Mena looks forward to science. Ms. Shepherd is teaching evolution, which causes quite a stir with members of Mena's church. The controversy over evolution and the alienation Mena faces because of her actions are compounded when Ms. Shepherd pairs her with Casey for their science project. Casey has a sister who loves conflict, particularly one involving evolution. When she realizes Mena's old friends are part of the push for Intelligent Design, she involves Mena in a blog from her web site. Mena's belief in God and the support from Casey and Ms. Shepherd carry her through all the controversies.

Barbara Ray
Tulsa, OK

Feathers by Jacqueline Woodson — Bullying/Racism
G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2007, 118 pp., $15.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-399-23989-2

"Hope is the thing with feathers." Frannie's teacher had read Emily Dickinson's poem to her class, and she'd been pondering its meaning ever since. Then the new kid arrives that everyone calls "Jesus Boy." He is the only fair-skinned kid in the class, and no one can figure out why he's come to their school on "this side of the highway." While Frannie tries to both understand *and* ignore him, she also deals with her brother's deafness, her best friend's holiness, and the coming of a new baby to her family. Meanwhile, Frannie keeps thinking about her desire for "the thing with feathers."

Set in the 1970s, this is a story of a young girl's search for hope. She discovers that, while it is painful to look beneath the surface of a person's emotions, joy can be found. As the characters face the racial tensions of the era, friendship brings out the basic goodness in each of them. Middle school students who have ever felt like the "odd kid out" will find characters they can relate to in Woodson's latest novel for young adults.

Vicki Sherbert
Wakefield, KS

Fragments by Jeffery W. Johnston — Suicide/Social Issues/Sexual Abuse
Simon Pulse, 2007, 204 pp., $6.99 — ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-2486-9

Chase is the only survivor of a terrible accident. He has partial amnesia of the incident, but it comes to him in fragments. After grueling and stressful days at school, he sees a psychiatrist to help him cope and remember.

Before the accident, he tried to commit suicide because he was told to "do it" by a mysterious voice. Memories about his brother, Ben, haunt him while remembering bits and pieces of the accident. Ben appears in and out of his life, as if he were just having memory flashbacks. As Chase remembers more and more, he uncovers a horrible memory that will haunt him forever.

Fragments is a captivating story of a teenager who goes through social issues in school, suicide, death of people close to him, and sexual abuse. Johnston keeps you glued to your seat with this unforgettable page-turner.

Sarah A. Gale
Muncie, IN

A Friendship for Today by Patricia C. McKissack — Friendship/Tolerance
Scholastic, 2007, 176 pp., $16.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-439-66098-3

Rosemary Patterson is the fictionalized version of the author; she is one of two black children routed to a previously white elementary school for sixth grade when integration is ordered by the Supreme Court in 1954. The other is her best friend, J. J. Stenson, so Rosemary is confident she is ready for what's ahead. However, J. J. contracts polio over the summer and cannot be there as her supporter.

Rosemary is spunky, proud, and unafraid of anything, except the separation of her parents as her father leaves home for another woman. Mama, however, possesses the common sense, courage, and inner strength to keep Rosemary's life in as much balance as possible.

McKissack has written an uplifting story she fictionalized in every way, except for the cat Rags, who had been left abandoned in the street after being hit. Rosemary insists the badly injured cat will live, and with the strength and will to survive that both have, they inevitably do.

Judith Hayn
Little Rock, AR

Games: A Tale of Two Bullies by Carol Gorman — Bullying
Harper Collins Publishers, 2007, 279 pp., $16.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-06-057027-9

Mick Sullivan and Boot Quinn, 8th-grade rivals, know just which taunts to fling to provoke each other. After two fights in the first week of school, a yearlong battle was set to begin. But neither boy counted on new principal, Mr. Maddox. He "sentences" the boys to spend one and a half hours each day playing games together, unsupervised, in his office. With each boy determined to win, the conflicts move beyond the game table and into the world outside of school. But somewhere along the way, they get to know each other's deepest fears. Unintentionally, they become rescuers for each other.

Gorman addresses bullying by giving us a glimpse of both characters' inner struggles. As we get to know Mick and Boot, the boys also get to know themselves. Once this self-revelation is under way, each boy discovers the personal conflicts at the root of their behaviors. This book is a wonderful springboard for discussion with adolescents.

Vicki Sherbert
Wakefield, KS

Harlem Summer by Walter Dean Myers — Harlem Renaissance
Scholastic, 2007, 176 pp., $15.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-439-36843-8

Harlem Summer is the raucous story of 16-year-old Mark Purvis; the year is 1925, and he has the summer to fill with adventure. Mark's brother, Matt, is heading off to college; Daddy works as a handyman, while Mama tries to corral her three men into good behavior.

Mark goes to work at *The Crisis*, published by the man who believes in the concept of the New Negro, William E. B. DuBois. Mark makes friends with the literary editor, Jessie Fauset, and Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Alfred Knopf and more—many of the contributors to the Harlem Renaissance. At the same time, he becomes involved with running illegal whiskey. His dream to be a jazz musician has led him to an unhealthy relationship with Fats Waller, the famous blues pianist.

Mark learns, like all of us, that making choices has consequences. This book is a page-turner, rich in historical detail.

Judith A. Hayn
Little Rock, AR

HEAR US OUT! Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present by Nancy Garden
GLBT/Short Stories
ISBN-13: 978-0-374-31759-1
Farrar Straus Giroux, 2007, 230 pp., $18.00

This collection of short stories, all written by Garden, portray gay and lesbian teens from the 1950s to 2000 and beyond. The book is sectioned by decades, each featuring an historical account of the era as applicable to the homosexual community, followed by two short stories featuring gay and lesbian teens during that time.

The historical accounts are richly detailed and full of lesser-known facts, with Garden's personal commentary interspersed throughout. The stories are of quality but contain little topical information, making many difficult to date, if read separately. Such details would have provided a stronger sense of each era and issues faced by respective characters.

Still, earlier stories are marked through social acceptance, and later by HIV-AIDS, PFLAG groups, or gay marriage, ending with a futuristic view of gays and lesbians enjoying full social acceptance. This is a must-read for its historical sections alone, and Garden's newest stories fail to disappoint.

Lisa A. Hazlett
Vermillion, SD

How to Steal a Dog by Barbara O'Connor
Homelessness/Family Problems
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007, 176 pp., $16.00
ISBN-13: 978-0-374-33497-0

Barbara O'Connor's book is an intriguing read that delves into the helplessness felt by many struggling families. This book is from an interesting perspective, which will definitely appeal to adolescent readers.

Georgina, the main character, is fed up with her family's situation and decides to take matters into her own hands. The reader is taken on a journey of right vs. wrong, and how that line can sometimes blur when survival (or fitting in) is at stake. This book also possesses the ability to make the reader question whether Georgina is actually doing anything wrong. It creates a situation in which maybe, just maybe, it is OK to choose the lesser of two evils, in this case, stealing.

Darcy Pearson
Muncie, IN

Homeboyz by Alan Lawrence Sitomer
Gangs/Family
Jump at the Sun, 2007, 224 pp, $16.99
ISBN-13: 978-1-4231-0030-0

Teddy "T-Bear" Anderson is a computer genius caught up in gangsta drama when his sister is shot because she was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Teddy is not involved in gang activity, but he definitely wants to avenge his sister's death.

He sets out to make the gang pay. His plan would've worked, too, but a store owner draws a gun on Teddy. His life continues to unravel as he awaits his preliminary hearing on a slew of serious charges. Teddy eventually gets placed on probation, where he is introduced to an officer who wants to help young wannabe gangsters leave gangs.

Homeboyz is the successful conclusion of Sitomer's Anderson family trilogy featuring *Hoopster* and *Hip-Hop High School*. This book is fast-paced, and it highlights a very intelligent African-American male character in Teddy. Sitomer expertly weaves a plot that lets the reader see who Teddy Anderson really is, while suffering with him as he is labeled a gangster.

Tate Thompson
Junction City, KS

In Their Shoes: Extraordinary Women Describe Their Amazing Careers by Deborah Reber
Non-fiction/Careers
Simon Pulse, 2007, 411 pp., $12.99
ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-2578-3

In Their Shoes offers middle school and high school girls an opportunity to explore an astonishingly wide variety of career paths. With entries for such diverse career paths as accountants, animators, and yoga instructors, each entry provides a detailed personal portrait of one individual working in that career. Typical entries include not only the nuts and bolts issues of qualifications, salary, dress code, and stress levels for the career, but readers are also offered a look behind the curtain at the individuals' typical day, journal entries, and so on.

While the collection includes entries on a few individuals with some name recognition (e.g., Senator Barbara Boxer), all of the entries detail the lives of individuals to serve as positive role models.

In Their Shoes will be an important addition to school and public libraries. Just as importantly, teachers and guidance counselors will find the book a valuable resource for units of study regarding career and life choices.

F. Todd Goodson
Manhattan, KS

Lost It by Kristen Tracy — Sex/Identity/Family
Simon Pulse, 2007, 276 pp., $6.99 — ISBN-13: 978-1-4169-3475-2

Lost It will have readers falling in love with the captivating and seemingly real-life story of the main character, Tess, who has her first sexual experiences with her older boyfriend, loses her best friend to her therapist aunt due to a poodle explosion incident, and is dealing with her parents suddenly leaving for a wilderness survival camp in the middle of a Utah dessert. While Tess often finds herself in questionable scenarios that are a bit out of control or out of her hands altogether, she also learns to let go of her fears and allows herself to grow in her mistakes, leading her into the right direction of becoming a young woman. Kristen Tracy has a very successful way of getting inside the head of a teenage girl, and she has the reader feeling as if he or she is right there with Tess, experiencing everything with her.

Karena Nedza
Medaryville, IN

The Rise of the Black Wolf: Grey Griffins Book 2 — Fantasy/Supernatural
by Derek Benz and J. S. Lewis
Orchard Books, 2007, 320 pp., $12.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-439-83774-3

The Grey Griffins (Max, Harley, Ernie and Natalia) are invited to spend Christmas break with Max's dad in Scotland, where they experience more dangerous encounters with the Black Witch (Morgan LeFay) and her minion, led by the Lord of the Black Wolves. According to legend, whoever possesses the Spear of Ragnarok will control the world and wreak havoc from the underworld. The Grey Griffins must locate the spear and offer it as payment for Max's dad, who has been kidnapped. The Griffins are pursued across Scotland through portals that transport them to Germany, Iceland, and several hinterland environments. Max puts his life and the lives of his pals on the line to save his dad, only to discover that things are not as they should be.

Young readers who enjoy the supernatural will encounter goblins, wolf-like soldiers, werewolves, Vlad Dracular, Morgan LeFay, deceitful adults once trusted by the Griffins, and a myriad of environments from mud-sucking bogs, portals, ice cities, and a virtual library.

Linda Broughton
Kennesaw, GA

The Secrets of Peaches by Jodi Lynn Anderson — Friendship
Harper Collins, 2007, 297 pp., $16.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-06-073308-7

Darlington Peach Orchard, inauguration grounds for a tenacious friendship between a trio of girls who spent a summer pulling peaches from the branches of its trees. This book picks up where the girls ended their summer in the prequel *Peaches*.

As Murphey, Leeda, and Birdee approach graduation, they realize the next step of their lives may not be as easily implemented as the formation of their friendship in the orchard. Murphey faces her dream of moving to New York, Leeda faces the obstinacy of her sick mother, and Birdie faces the idea of finding herself alone on the orchard. While the girls confront the issue of what exactly the "next step" means for them, they tackle the true meaning of relationships, friendships, and moving on.

This story is an inspiring read, with well-developed characters and a plot that may send you walking down memory lane, or perhaps cause you to think that some endings are merely just new beginnings.

Lindsey Deweese
Muncie, IN

Shark Girl by Kelly Bingham — Physical Loss/Courage
Candlewick, 2007, 288 pp., $16.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-7636-3207-6

Jane Arrowood loses more than her arm in a shark attack—she loses her spirit. Once a 15-year-old aspiring artist who looked forward to driving and dating, she now struggles to define herself by what is left, rather than by what is missing. Each phantom pain of her right arm, however, is a harrowing reminder that things will never be the same. Jane has never seen the attack that was captured on video and sensationalized in the media, but memory of its preceding events haunt her every attempt to draw, cook, clean, and socialize again. It's the infectious strength of a wheelchair-bound ten-year-old that finally helps Jane find hope in surprising places.

Jane's young life—scattered and scarred—is pieced back together through Kelly Bingham's poignant collection of poetry, letters, conversations, and newspaper articles. The story is in the same breath, simple and profound. Anyone who has ever experienced the stunning sorrow of unexpected loss will relate to Jane's slow and, at times, surly path to healing.

Jennifer Funk
Manhattan, KS

Sophisticated Ladies: The Great Women of Jazz Biography/Jazz
by Leslie Gourse
Dutton Children's Books, 2007, 64 pp., $19.99 ISBN-13: 978-0-525-47198-1

Whether readers have an ear for jazz or not, they will find *Sophisticated Ladies* an entertaining compilation of the stories of fourteen female jazz musicians—each story as colorful as the pages that tell it. Strikingly similar tales of misery in impoverished childhoods, failed marriages, and substance abuse, give rise to the unique, soulful rhythms of greats like Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Peggy Lee. Each profile, less than three pages long, introduces readers to the life, music and legacy of a different woman who helped define an entire genre of music.

At times Gourse's language is itself lyrical, while French's pictures are loud and dynamic, much like the performers they depict. A mix of memorable anecdotes and musical-technique explanations make this book creatively educational. Paired with a music anthology, the stories of these women would easily burst off the pages and into the ears of young readers.

Jennifer Funk
Manhattan, KS

Soul Eater by Michelle Paver Adventure
Katherine Tegen Books (Imprint of HarperCollins), ISBN-13: 978-0-06-072831-1
2007, 323 pp., $16.99

As the third installment in *The Chronicles of Ancient Darkness*, *Soul Eater* invites readers to journey into the prehistoric Far North on a quest to save Wolf, Torak's pack brother. Infused throughout with a sense of mysticism and danger, this story allows the harsh landscape as well as creatures to function as interesting and vital characters, alongside Torak and his friend Renn. Readers will appreciate the chance to explore an unfamiliar, ancient world and, at the same time, explore perennial, contemporary issues such as the nature of friendship and the importance of loyalty. The book's title anticipates the pervasive sense of darkness that hangs over much of this novel—a feeling of impending doom that Torak and Renn overcome only by displaying great courage and resourcefulness in the face of evil. This novel challenges readers with an interesting narrative structure which invites readers to consider the story from multiple perspectives beyond that of the determined 13-year-old protagonist.

Kevin Kienholz
Emporia, KS

Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood War/Survival
by Ibtisam Barakat
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007, 192 pp., $16.00 ISBN-13: 978-0-374-35733-7

Ibtisam Barakat writes an inspiring story of how life must go on even in a country where the threat of war is about them every day. The story begins with Ibtisam and her family fleeing their home in Ramallah when 3-year-old Ibtisam becomes separated from her family. They are later reunited in the caves the family flees to. It is the beginning of the many separations the family must undergo before returning to their home. When they return, they cope with Israeli soldiers practicing literally in their back yard.

She writes about how a father goes out of his way to protect his family from these dangers and a mother's way of coping with day-to-day fear for herself and her children. This story also tells of how children are the same, no matter where they are, when curiosity outweighs their fear.

Teresa Wells
Wamego, KS

Titans of Chaos by John C. Wright Alternate History/Mythology
Tor, 2007, 319 pp., $25.95 ISBN-13: 978-0-7653-1648-6

John C. Wright's *Titans of Chaos* rounds out his *Chronicles of Chaos* trilogy in spectacular fashion. Amelia, a fourth-dimensional being; Vanity, a lost Phoenician princess; Victor, a synthetic man; Colin, a psychic; and Quentin, a warlock, all discover even more powers as they seek to find out who they are and establish their freedom while the Olympian gods pursue them at every turn. This book manages to blend just about every form of fantasy fiction into one fast-paced read. With mythologies ranging from ancient Greek to those of Jules Vern and scientific philosophies spanning from Aristotelian to Newtonian, Wright presents some heady concepts in a way that is not only understandable, but enjoyable as well.

Bret Booher
Muncie, IN

21 Proms, David Levithan and Daniel Ehrenhaft, eds. Poetry/Short Stories/Play
Scholastic Point, 2007, 289 pp., $8.99 ISBN-13: 978-0-439-89029-8

This is a collection that includes one poem, one play, and nineteen short stories about one of the most anticipated, or dreaded, events in the life of a high school student. The stories range from the true to life to the outright fantasy, from heartbreaking to hilarious, and they are told from every conceivable point of view, girls, boys, and parents. There are stories about courage, embarrassment, new found love, old friendships renewed, and father's anxiety. This collection crosses the boundaries of race, social class, age, and sexual orientation.

Many of the stories could be used on their own as supplemental material in various units. I would caution that sex, drugs, and course language are often part of the story, but do not seem contrived in their usage.

At first glance, and by reading the title, I would say this book would appeal to teenage girls, but having read the stories, many would also appeal to the boys.

Rhonda Bowser
Matthews, IN

Walking on Glass by Alma Fullerton Death/Suicide/Depression
HarperTempest, 2007, 131 pp., $15.99 ISBN-13: 978-0-0607-7851-4

This is a free-verse novel that tells the story of a teenage boy's loss of his mother. The book is written as the boy's journal as he is living through his mother's suicide attempt. She is living in the hospital, but on life support, and he is facing a very tough decision. Would it be murder to shut off the machines that are keeping his mother alive? His father is suffering from terrible depression and cannot make the decision himself. His best friend, Jack, is turning into a juvenile delinquent, and he cannot stand to be around Jack anymore. He dates a girl at his school, but she can't help him, either. This book deals with some very tough issues that soon teens have to face. It has some questionable language and subject matter for use in a classroom setting.

Mary Cohoat
Muncie, IN

Way Down Deep by Ruth White Mystery
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007, 208 pp., $16.00 ISBN-13: 978-0-374-38251-3

Abandoned as a little girl in 1944 in the Appalachian town of Way Down Deep, West Virginia, Ruby June finds love and acceptance among the townsfolk. However, she remains haunted by the fact that her own origins remain a mystery. The pace of this often funny story quickens when she finds out that the truth behind her family history will soon be revealed. And although she must taste some "bitter berries" along the way, she eventually comes to an understanding of who she *was* before arriving in Way Down Deep and who she is *becoming*, all just in time for her thirteenth birthday.

Readers will enjoy making the acquaintance of the kindly, somewhat eccentric citizens of Way Down (as the locals call it), while the story of Ruby June prompts them to consider issues such as kindness, belonging, and the meaning of family.

Kevin Kienholz
Emporia, KS

Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to:

Lori Goodson
409 Cherry Circle
Manhattan, KS 66503

To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Lori Goodson at lagoodson@cox.net

Eva **Gold,** Ruth **Caillouet,** and Tom **Fick**

Teaching (W)holes:

Wordplay and Reversals in Louis Sachar's *Holes*

> Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst. What is their right use? What is the one end, which all means go to effect? They are for nothing but to inspire.
>
> —Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar" (57)

> What pretty oracles nature yields us on this text [self-reliance] in the face and behavior of children, babes, and even brutes! That divided and rebel mind, that distrust of a sentiment because our arithmetic has computed the strength and means opposed to our purpose, these have not. Their mind being whole, their eye is as yet unconquered, and when we look in their faces, we are disconcerted.
>
> —Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance" (260)

Emerson, like many Romantic writers on both sides of the Atlantic, is the champion of childhood and youth, and like every teacher, he knows that children not only read texts, they are themselves texts who have lessons to teach adults. Louis Sachar's classic novel, *Holes,* might be read as a gloss on Emerson, and particularly on two of his most influential essays, "Self-Reliance" and "The American Scholar." The hero of this novel, Stanley Yelnats, is a boy who, like characters in so much young adult fiction (and in real life as well), must find themselves and learn to recover that wholeness which Emerson sees as the natural condition of childhood and the goal of the healthy adult. In fact, the title of the novel is a play on words that points us towards its message. *Holes*, we believe, is an implicit pun on "wholes," and in the course of the novel Stanley moves from the divided and rebel mind Emerson mentions toward self-reliance and integrity, until—to adapt Emerson once again—his mind being whole, his eye ("I") is as yet unconquered.

Holes, therefore, is a novel about the opening of minds: the creating of wholes out of holes, of an unconquered "I" out of proper seeing. If Emerson is right that books are for nothing but to inspire, then *Holes* is an extraordinarily useful book, because it contains so many elements that can be used to spark students' interests. One of the most significant is implicit both in Emerson's comments and in our own introduction to this essay: wordplay. Even if students are not as immediately taken with the pleasures of the text as their teachers are, we all know that playing with words is a part of young adult culture—from rap lyrics to "playing the dozens" or "signifyin'"—and tapping into this interest in wordplay can make reading a mind-opening and inspiring activity. Wordplay initiates and structures the novel's themes of identity, justice, and fortune, and further allows teachers to introduce students to a complex sense of literary structure and characterization while engaging their imagination and sense of play. As teachers in different areas—British Literature, American Literature, and English Education—we have found that this novel helps students find a sense of play in classic

literature through the study of an adolescent text. In short, it can serve what Emerson, in "The American Scholar" sees as the one true use of books: to inspire. What follows are some of the approaches that we have found useful for opening young readers' minds—the kinds of discoveries that students can be prodded to find themselves and those more literary ones that they will need a teacher to help them find.

Wordplay in Holes

Holes, Louis Sachar's acclaimed young adult novel, is based in wordplay. Its title, as we have indicated, is an implicit pun on "wholes." The holes of the novel are, of course, the holes that Stanley and the other boys of Camp Green Lake must dig, ostensibly to effect their rehabilitation but actually to search for the fortune buried by Kate Barlow. Holes may connote emptiness and nothingness, yet in the course of the novel, Stanley becomes "whole." The secondary character Zero, the symbol for whose name links him with holes (0) and who is described as having a head with "nothing" in it (19), also becomes whole. Indeed, all the apparently disconnected plot elements from past and present are revealed, by the end, to form a "whole" as Stanley undoes the curse laid on his great-great-grandfather when he carries Madame Zeroni's great-grandson Zero up the mountain and sings him a song. Even the main character's name is a play on words. Early on, we are told that Stanley Yelnats' name is the same backwards and forwards: it can be read both from left to right and in reverse (9). While amusing in itself, this bit of wordplay is key to the structure and thematic development of the novel. Everything in the book works one way and in reverse: the plot goes back and forth between the past and the present—from Latvia where the curse begins, to Sam and Kate in the town of Green Lake of the late nineteenth century and forward to the present life of Stanley and the other characters.

The two bits of wordplay work through opposites. Everything in the book turns out to be its own opposite: What is lost is found, what is bad luck becomes good luck, injustice becomes justice. The pedantic counselor Mr. Pendanski utters a sentence that both articulates the clichés of reformation and encapsulates the structure of the book: "I'm going to help turn your life around" (17). Stanley's mother (who believes Camp Green Lake is a camp complete with activities on the lake and not an abusive reform school) says in a letter, "Maybe something good will come of this" (75); this is yet another cliché, albeit sincerely meant (unlike Mr. Pendanski's) and one that proves to be true. Life for Stanley and Zero is "turned around," and, in spite of the evil intentions of the Warden and her subordinates at Camp Green Lake, in spite of the injustice that characterizes Stanley's conviction for stealing the sneakers, justice is at the end restored.

There are other significant reversals in the novel as well. The experience at Camp Green Lake does turn Stanley's life around. Green Lake is not a lake; it is a wasteland (as declared on the first page), that at the end will once more become a lake. Camp Green Lake is not a camp, but rather a place of cruelty and injustice; as the boys are repeatedly told "This isn't a Girl Scout camp" (14). Yet at the end, the land is sold and "will become a Girl Scout camp" (229). Elya Yelnats goes away from Madame Zeroni, yet their descendants are brought together at Camp Green Lake to effect the undoing of Madame Zeroni's curse.

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The most important reversal has to do with Stanley, consigned to an institution presided over by abusive authority figures. Stanley, though innocent of the crime of stealing the sneakers donated by a sports celebrity to a charity auction, is in need of reform, though not of the sort offered by Camp Green Lake. Stanley begins as an unhappy character—overweight, bullied, and friendless. He must undergo a reversal, a change for the better in this book. Although this scenario will probably be familiar to young readers, who will have found versions of it in so much adolescent literature, the idea of transformation is also central to many of the most famous quest narratives of the western tradition—Homer's Odyssey, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress. Holes,* accessible as it is to students,

can thus be used to introduce the genre of quest narrative, which in many of its classic examples can seem to students remote from their own experience. In these works, as in *Holes,* the hero must undergo a transforming quest that involves both the recovery and discovery of identity in a plot that involves a reversal.

Camp Green Lake, of course, is not really set up for reformation: The Warden, Ms. Walker, a descendant of the evil Trout Walker, is in search of the treasure buried in the desert by the outlaw Kate Barlow. But, in another reversal, digging the holes makes Stanley stronger physically, strong enough to carry Zero up the mountain and hence to complete the task left undone by his great-great-grandfather Elya Yelnats. When Stanley follows Zero in his escape into the desert, the characters reach a low point, thereby participating in a movement familiar within quest narratives—reformation involving reversal, and characters reaching a nadir, a spiritual low point, before they can go up. Stanley and Zero's climb up the mountain can be linked to the reversals experienced by such heroes as Odysseus, who journeys to the Underworld, Dante, who journeys through Hell, and, in a modern rendition, Malcolm X, whose ascent comes after his imprisonment. Stanley and Zero's return to camp is also marked by a series of reversals. The plot concocted by the Warden to protect the camp from an inquiry about Zero works in reverse. The Warden, assuming Zero will die in the desert after he runs away, orders Mr. Pendanski to destroy Zero's records, which has the effect of making them a "hole in cyberspace" (222). This effort to make Zero nothing, a person with no identity and no record, enables Stanley's lawyer simply to take Zero out of the camp. Even the concept of the law undergoes a reversal as Stanley and Zero are rescued by a lawyer and the Attorney General of Texas, representatives of the institution that unjustly sent the boys to the camp in the first place.

With its connections to traditional quest narratives, the novel can introduce students to the ways literary texts can allude to and speak to other texts. *Holes* provides a very specific example of literary allusion.

With its connections to traditional quest narratives, the novel can introduce students to the ways literary texts can allude to and speak to other texts. *Holes* provides a very specific example of literary allusion. On the very first page of the book, we are told that Camp Green Lake has no lake; it is a "wasteland." Later, we find out that rain stopped falling on the town after the Sheriff and Trout Walker and other townspeople killed Sam, the black Onion Man, for the "crime" of kissing the white Kate Barlow. With the term "wasteland" comes an allusion to T.S. Eliot's classic and complex poem *The Waste Land*, which can be read as a quest romance. Eliot's poem presents a dreary and fragmented landscape, where the desire for rain signals a desire for growth and rebirth, themes we see also in *Holes*. Indeed, the plot of *Holes* follows that of *The Waste Land*. Eliot writes of his wasteland, "Here is no water but only rock/ Rock and no water" (lines 334-5; 1303), yet in the last section, "What the Thunder Said," there is at least the promise of rain, just as toward the end of *Holes* there is thunder (127). When Zero and Stanley are wandering in the desert they find water beneath God's Thumb, the "giant rock" (171) that dominates the landscape, just as barren rock dominates Eliot's poem. And, finally, though there is no rain at the end of Eliot's poem, a drop of rain falls on Camp Green Lake (225), signaling redemption not only for Stanley and Zero, but also for the town of Green Lake, which, in another reversal, will once again be a place of growth. With this promise, language is redeemed as well. Green Lake no longer means "wasteland": it will mean Green Lake, a tautology rather than an opposite.

Through all the reversals of this book, beginning with simple wordplay and extending to plot, structure, and character, in the end *Holes* celebrates wholeness of character and family with a sense of justice restored. Stanley's completion of his quest leads to recovery and good fortune in many senses. Stanley recovers his identity; Zero (the only "camper" who has no name) gets both his name and his mother back. In another piece of wordplay, the novel also ends with recovery of fortune. All the bad fortune of the Yelnats family turns to good fortune, as the family recovers the "fortune" made by the first Stanley Yelnats in the stock market; the treasure stolen by Kate Barlow, searched for by the Warden, is in a suitcase labeled Stanley Yelnats. Stanley's father, an inventor

plagued by bad luck, becomes "lucky" as he discovers the "cure" for foot odor (no doubt a favorite detail for adolescent readers). This discovery helps Clyde Livingston, the celebrity donor of the stolen sneakers, with his foot odor problem. Thus the smelly sneakers that sent Stanley to Camp Green Lake for stealing and were actually "stolen" by Zero, who was in need of shoes, lead to the integration of Clyde, famous for "stolen bases," (22) into the Yelnats-Zeroni community at the end of the novel. Zero is revealed not as absence but as a circle, what Emerson, in his essay "Circles" calls "The highest emblem in the cipher of the world" (403), and which stands for the transformed (w)holes of the camp. As Emerson writes, "Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth, that around every circle another can be drawn; that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning; that there is always another dawn risen on mid-noon . . ." (403).

Classroom Activities

While teachers can find numerous classroom ideas for enriching the study of *Holes*, we have chosen activities that center our discussions on identity, wholeness, and opening minds. Through three areas of study—the concept of naming, the venture toward a quest, and the issue of fortune—students develop journals and projects that allow them to explore individuality, identity, and independence while also opening their minds to new possibilities.

What's In a Name?

What exactly *is* in a name? Why would a name make any difference in a life? Early in Stanley's stay at Camp Green Lake, the boys introduce themselves with their chosen/given names and present Stanley with his new identity, Caveman. To the boys at Camp Green Lake, the choosing of a name for each new member may seem like a teenage trifle, but in truth the ritual is an act of rebellion for adolescents who have very few freedoms in life. Mr. Pendanski refuses to use their nicknames, saying "I prefer to use the names their parents gave them—the names that society will recognize them by when they return to become useful and hardworking members" (18-19). His statement denies the society that the boys have created for themselves as well as their present usefulness. The giving of names like X-ray, Zero, Barf Bag, Zigzag, and Caveman is a process by which these young men stake a claim in self, but it is also a time-honored tradition in young adult fiction as well as classic literature.

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Books such as Karen Cushman's *Catherine, Called Birdy* and Christopher Paul Curtis's *Bud, Not Buddy* highlight the importance of a precise name in a young person's identity while Lois Lowry's *The Giver* presents the ceremony of names in which children are given a name unique within the community but not unique in identity. In Cushman's *The Midwife's Apprentice,* when the young girl who has been labeled Beetle decides to name herself Alice, she begins to find an identity and a place in the world. Esperanza of Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street* wants to change her name to Zeze the X, while Jerry Spinelli's *Stargirl* protagonist, Susan, names herself Stargirl and then back to Susan, taking on a different personality with each name. Joe, from James Howe's *The Misfits*, experiments with names like JoeDan and Scorpio as he explores his own individuality, while the larger issue of name calling as society's habit of using labels to brand individuals is central to the novel. In classic literature, the question of what's in a name has plagued adolescents from Shakespeare's Juliet to Carson McCullers' Frankie to Toni Morrison's Milkman Dead and Alice Walker's Dee Wangero. Over and over, names have been an adolescent's connection with identity, self worth, culture, and independence.

To help students see this importance of names in connection to identity we have used a variety of journal prompts and activities. Giving students the chance to write about their own names is, of course, a good place to start. Students tell the story of their names by answering a series of questions designed to lead them through the connection between a name and one's identity. We begin with some investigation into personal history with the following questions. "Why were your names chosen? What does the name

mean? Is there a family heritage or cultural symbol in the name?" Students can also write about the choosing of a name for a pet or younger sibling. We pull in the many name books that are on the market so that students can look for roots and meanings. We ask them to think of names which, like Stanley Yelnats, are palindromes. They also write about nicknames, their own or those they have heard in the community. The newspaper obituary is a great resource to pull into the classroom for discussing nicknames. We talk and write about the nicknames we endured as children and the stories behind those names. And then they are asked to rename themselves like the characters in *Holes*. "What name would you choose if you wanted to change your personality? What name would you give yourself if you were to become a superhero?" Of course, not all of the names given to us are positive and not all of them are chosen by us, so it is important to discuss the negative connotations of name-calling too.

And then they are asked to rename themselves like the characters in *Holes*. "What name would you choose if you wanted to change your personality?

The naming discussions lead into the next activity from *Holes*, digging into family history. Woven into the story of Stanley Yelnats is the tale of Stanley's "no-good- dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather" and the family heritage and theft that influences Stanley's life. We all have colorful ancestry and family stories, so this gives students the chance to do some of their own digging. Although encouraging students to research their own families is the goal, we have learned to be flexible in allowing those who are uncomfortable within their own family stories to choose someone else's family or even tap into community agencies and retirement centers. The project begins with further research in names as students attempt to understand more about their own ethnicity and culture. Students use the internet and family histories to examine the roots of their ancestry. They also interview the oldest willing member of the family and gather stories. The interviews are always fascinating with stories of World War II paratroopers or mistresses of the first schools in the community one-room school houses, and a wealth of history. We also talk about Stanley's luck and pose questions about the unluckiest member of the family. Students gather pictures and artifacts to present to the class as they share the stories and complete the research. These projects are not only fascinating histories, but they also serve to connect students with their own family stories, many that they have never heard, and better understand another bit of their own identity.

What Is Your Quest?

The family history projects are also a nice lead into discussions of the mythic hero, since Stanley Yelnats, an ordinary boy from an ordinary family, finds himself in the unlikely position of hero in his escape from Camp Green Lake and rescue of Zero. Students find his move toward the self reliance and integrity of Emerson inspirational and are eager to discuss his connection to other heroes. In the continued effort to link *Holes* with other classic literature, we discuss Stanley as he relates to characteristics of the mythic hero. One common factor in the life of the hero, especially the adolescent hero, is some mystery surrounding the hero's ancestry. From the ancient tales of King Arthur and Robin Hood to the popular culture stories of Batman, Spiderman, and Elektra, the young hero is often raised by a foster family and many times becomes a hero at a young age in order to revenge the death of one or both parents. Adolescent fiction is filled with adventure stories of young people who are removed from the supervision of one or both parents. Both of Harry Potter's parents are dead, so he is raised by his aunt and uncle, as is Dorothy. Scout and Jem have the freedom and pain of a deceased mother, while the children of Narnia are sent away to the country during wartime, away from both parents. Whether the hero's parents are dead or simply missing, the adolescent hero must complete his quest away from adult supervision. While Stanley's parents are both alive and well, his adventure begins when he is sent to Camp Green Lake, away from their protective environment, and his true quest starts as he sets off on his own to find Zero and reach God's Thumb. As in the case of much adolescent fiction, Stanley's individuality and self-discovery comes from independence and missing parents. Although Stanley is not avenging his parents' deaths, the reason he finds himself in trouble is because he wanted to take the

sneakers home in his desire to help his father find luck. He also refuses to leave Zero behind when his lawyer comes to the rescue, and it is this act that leads to the discovery of Zero's mother and the end of her mysterious disappearance.

Another common factor in stories of mythic heroes is the sidekick or companion. The sidekick helps in battle, supports the hero at all times, and very often is the witness to the hero's death in the end. Robin Hood has Little John, Arthur has his knights of the round table, and even Beowulf has Wiglaf in the end. In modern popular culture, students are quite familiar with the sidekick through characters like Batman's Robin and Xena's Gabrielle. Because of these relationships, the hero often learns lessons of compassion, sacrifice, and character. Stanley completes the sacrifice of carrying Zero up the mountain and learns about his own strengths—strengths that might even be considered super human.

Writing about heroes and their mythic qualities gives students the chance to connect Stanley's stories with other great legends of film, television, and fiction. It also serves as a way to get students thinking about their own character traits. We begin this discussion by brainstorming a list of heroes with students and try to list all of the television and film superheroes that they can remember from the Ninja Turtles to Spiderman to Xena to Buffy. Then we list the literary heroes such as Arthur, Odysseus, Robin Hood, Britomart, Beowulf, the Redcrosse Knight, and others. From there we begin to look for similar characteristics and common storylines. Students write about childhood heroes and explain the difference between a hero and a role model. Then we discuss Stanley and his qualities to see whether he fits the definition of mythic hero. Students are asked to write about sacrifice, those made by legendary heroes but also their own personal sacrifices. We also ask them to think about strengths and, like Stanley, to look within themselves for their own strengths. The journal prompt is a simple question, "What is your greatest strength?" Stanley is sent to Camp Green Lake to build character, so it is only fitting to use his story to help our students with this same lesson.

We also discuss the importance of the quest in heroic tradition and how the journey of the quest is the real story, not the completion of the mission. I turn this into a reflective writing prompt with the question, "What is your quest?" To get them thinking about their own desires, we use the poem by Langston Hughes called "Harlem" so that they too can think about the damage of dreams that are not fulfilled. To tie in other disciplines of study, students can also use Zero's spatial drawings to understand geometry and map skills. Students are asked to draw a map to their home and then write the directions as a way to show that connection between words and pictures. Using a map quest might be another way to demonstrate the power of the journey. This would also be a fun time to talk about compasses and survival skills and bring in speakers to give students tips.

Is It Fortune, Justice, or Luck?

The story of *Holes* is filled with coincidences and luck. Stanley blames his fate on his "no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather" and claims that the family was cursed with bad luck because of those mistakes. The list of coincidences is quite long. Stanley is sent to Camp Green Lake, the same place where his great-great-grandfather met with Kate Barlow and the same place where Zero, the descendent of the gypsy who cursed his great-great-grandfather, was sent. Stanley is sent there for the crime of stealing the shoes taken by Zero. Zero survives by taking refuge under the boat built by Sam and eating the peaches jarred by Kate. The questions to pose to students about these coincidences are designed to help students think through their own beliefs. The journal prompts include, "Do you believe in luck or fate?" "Do the boys find success because of fortune, justice, or luck?" "Is justice served, and is that due to the legal system or good luck?" These are questions that can lead to a variety of projects. Students can perform mock trials or visit a court room or investigate the juvenile legal system of their area. This is also a good time to discuss ancient systems of justice and talk

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about the belief of right versus might in the legends of King Arthur. A good question for this discussion is, "Is Stanley's father's successful invention due to hard work or luck?" We discuss his invention strategies and the results.

These questions lead into the invention project. Students investigate inventions which came about due to mistakes. They research everything from chocolate chip cookies to catapults to post-it notes, and we discuss the concept of luck and coincidence in many great discoveries. Students then get a chance to design their own inventions. They first write about something that they wished existed and then work in teams to design drawings, packaging, and a sales pitch for their new product. The inventions are then presented to the class, and students vote on the best of the bunch. The project allows for creativity, as well as a host of learning styles, and is always great fun. These projects lead students to understand that what some perceive as luck might really just be hard work and ingenuity and the ability to keep an open mind about possibilities.

If Only, If Only

Our study of *Holes*, like the novel, comes full circle. At the end of the book, the characters are all "whole." Zero has regained his identity and his mother, the Yelnats family has achieved good fortune, and even Clyde Livingston has found a cure (thanks to Stanley's father) for his smelly feet. Our discussions come back to our opening lessons on Emerson's self-reliance. Each of the characters finds the integrity and wholeness that Emerson suggests as central to the discovery of identity, but each also must keep an open mind to accepting help from another in order to find wholeness. Through this discussion students understand the significance of helping one another on the journey to self-reliance.

One of the best metaphors for this discussion is the lullaby that threads its way through the story. Students enjoy comparing the different versions of the lullaby, but they also enjoy sharing their own childhood songs and explaining the importance of music and memory. The many voices of the novel add variations on the old song beginning on the bus trip to Camp Green Lake with Stanley's memory of his father's gruff voice and passing back in time to the wife of the pig stealer who was the first to translate the song into English. It is Stanley who completes his great-great-grandfather's broken promise by carrying Zero up the mountain and singing the lullaby once again. The book ends with a new variation of the "If Only" lullaby, this time sung by Zero's mother. The song comes full circle as each of its singers provides comfort for loved ones through the magic of its words. Like the descendants of Elya Yelnats and Madame Zeroni, the original lullaby, as passed through the families, took two paths and ended up transformed through translation into two versions, related but different. The final verse sung by Zero's mother, "Fly high my baby bird, My angel, my only," echoes the strength and independence of Emerson's self-reliance. At the end, Zero and Stanley are transformed, yet together and looking back to their common origin. At the end, *Holes*, like the name of its main character, connects endings to beginnings.

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Jeffrey S. **Kaplan**

Recent Research in Young Adult Literature:

Three Predominant Strands of Study

For this research column, three recent journal articles caught my attention. They represent, in my estimation, three predominant strands in the study of young adult literature. *The first strand is the preponderance of the use of young adult literature to inspire, and perhaps, change the lives of young people*. Often, teachers, parents, social workers and youth leaders will use young adult literature to hold up a mirror to young adults to see something that they might not ordinarily recognize in themselves. In Sue Jacobs's article on the reaction of imprisoned youth to the reading and discussing of young adult literature, we see just that.

The second strand of study is the power of young adult literature to reveal the hidden and often confusing lives of young adults, particularly in today's world for those whose sexual orientation differs from the acceptable norm. In Emily Meixner's good work on the lives of young adult children who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer, we get a first-hand glimpse of what it means to read (or maybe, not read) about yourself when your self-identity is not considered the norm.

And the third strand is the changing face of young adult literature and how its reflective nature mirrors societal norms and expectations. Diane Emge's article on how young adult novels reflect the societal expectations of young girls who find themselves pregnant and the resultant choices they make provides a vivid example of how literature mirrors life, and sometimes, the reverse.

All three articles are a startling glimpse at the revealing and evolving face of young adult literature and add considerably to our understanding of ourselves and the role of young adult literature to reflect the changing perceptions of our world.

Incarcerated Youth and Young Adult-Literature

In "Listening, Writing, Drawing: The Artistic Response of Incarcerated Youth to Young-Adult Literature,' (*Educational Horizons* 84 No2 112–20 Winter 2006), researcher Sue Jacobs garners data obtained from incarcerated male youths to examine these youths' artistic responses to, and interpretations of, young adult literature. Using young adult participants aged between 13 and 17 years of age, Jacobs's research results reveal that the incarcerated male youth's artistic responses, coupled with interviews, provide a forum for youths to understand young adult literature while enjoying an aesthetic activity. Jacobs' research is significant in that it brings depth and context to an often overlooked and under-researched area of young adult literature, the reaction of troubled and even incarcerated youth to a body of literature that is often most relevant to their immediate circumstances and needs.

As Jacobs states, often adolescent males are academically and emotionally detached from the classroom setting (Brozo, 2002). Jacobs writes that early reading and learning failures are precursors to unemployment, crime, drug addiction, homelessness, and prison sentences. Also, as she evidences, boys are three to five

times more likely than girls to undergo learning or reading disabilities placement in schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000), 50 percent more likely to be retained a grade than girls (Kleinfield, 1999) and of the estimated 500,000 to 1 million students who annually drop out of high schools in the United States, more than 55 percent are boys (National Center for Education Statistics 1998).

Jacobs believes that one remedy for these depressing numbers is to help adolescent boys become more engaged in reading and listening. Developing readers at a young age, she asserts, helps them become lifelong learners (Young and Brozo 2001). Moreover, she proposes that if young males are to be engaged in their reading, then the objective of traditional reading instruction must be dramatically changed.

In many traditional middle-level language arts classrooms, students must respond to assigned literature either orally, or more typically, in writing. Students are asked to explain or discuss their answers to the selected reading. The teacher decides whether the students are answering the questions "correctly"—usually how the teacher believes they should be answered. Such traditional approaches often slight the affective area of literature by regarding meaning as residing in the text.

In contrast, as Jacobs writes, Rosenblatt indicates in 1978 that an aesthetic response to literature can help the reader participate in a lived-through experience, thus creating a higher level of engagement and interaction. Thus, the reader is more likely to become engaged if the affective areas of engagement and checking for understanding are addressed. Nonetheless, acquiring technical knowledge, rather than concentrating on the initial affective aesthetic response and finding enjoyment in the literature, has too often been traditional instruction's major concern (Chasser 1977).

Armed with this belief, Jacobs undertook a study to examine the types of artistic responses and personal interpretations that incarcerated male youths make as they listened and responded to selected pieces of young-adult literature. Often, because of the extreme situations such youths have experienced—abuse, school difficulties, and frequent involvement with the criminal justice system—they operate at an intense emotional level that may endanger themselves and others. Thus, Jacobs believes that their prior experiences would add a unique perspective to their story interpretations.

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Jacobs' study utilizes qualitative and quantitative methodology to gather information about incarcerated youth and their responses to young adult literature. The information gathered is reported as individual case studies. The population under study is incarcerated male youths ranging in age from thirteen to seventeen. Many have lengthy criminal histories of absconding from home or placements, school truancy, and deviant behavior such as assault, theft, and the use of drugs and alcohol.

These youths chose novels from a list provided; the researcher conducted a "book talk" on each; and the youths then voted on the top three they wanted read to them. The favorites were *Moon over Tennessee* (Crist-Evans, 1999), *Tenderness* (Cormier, 1997), and *Surviving the Applewhites* (Tolan, 2002).

During each session the researcher read for forty-five minutes, and afterward the youths responded using a choice of art medium. Then each youth, interviewed individually, responded to oral prompts about his art piece. Each one explained his picture, how it related to his personal life, and whether it brought forth any memories of people, places, or situations.

To determine attitudes toward reading, the youths were given pre- and post-tests modified from the Denver Reading Attitude Survey (Rhodes, 1992). They were also given an Interest Inventory (Hill and Ruptic, 1994), modified to help establish common ground between the individuals and the researcher. The interviews with the incarcerated male youths were transcribed and included in the text.

Using Squire's *Classification Methods for Response to Literature* (Squire, 1964), each drawing was documented under literary judgments, interpretational responses, narrational responses, associational responses, self-involvement, prescriptive judgments, and miscellaneous. The responses were examined in their entirety. An analysis of the data reveals thirty-seven responses placed in Squire's Framework (1964). None fell into the literary-judgment category, thirteen into interpretational, and eight into narrational response. Of the remaining, six responses deal with associational responses, eight with self-involvement, and one each with prescriptive judgments and miscellaneous.

Initially, the youths seemed to rely on safe responses, but as they were encouraged, they began to take risks with their artistic responses. They started to make judgments and applications, such as living in foster homes, dealing with drugs, and gang violence, to their lives.

The results of this study indicate that artistic responses are another vehicle incarcerated male youth may use when responding to young adult literature. The findings did show that artistic responses coupled with interviews provide a forum for youths to understand young adult literature while they enjoy an aesthetic activity. The youths also learn about themselves, including concerns and attitudes surrounding their situations. Jacobs concludes that educators can accomplish that by understanding the response process, which can incorporate literature that reflects the world around us.

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Sexual Orientation and Young Adult Literature

In "Teacher Agency and Access to LGBTQ Young Adult Literature," (*Radical Teacher*, 76, (2006): 13-19), researcher and teacher educator Emily Meixner conducted an action research project with undergraduate students at the College of New Jersey to introduce student teachers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer young adult literature and to motivate them to conduct their own action research projects on the availability of such literature in school and local library collections.

Meixner is drawn to a study of young adult literature about issues of sexual orientation for three reasons. First, she was curious about the power of stories to elicit empathy. She wants to know if stories about homosexual and transgender behavior could provide students with an opportunity to experience (albeit vicariously) what their future Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Queer (LGBTQ) middle and high school students might be going through—their feelings, their struggles and successes, and the experiences through which they were and were not marginalized.

The second reason is curricular. Not only did Meixner want her students to become aware of their LGBTQ students' experiences, she also wants them to be able to share, recommend, and read these texts in their classrooms. The more familiar they are with these texts, she believes, the more likely they would be to use them in their secondary English classes and the more they do, the more opportunities they will have to combat heterosexism and homophobia and stem the tide of violence currently perpetrated on LGBTQ students in schools.

Finally, the third reason is the ever-present need for students to think beyond specific school or classroom instances of violence and examine the effects of the heterosexism and homophobia

Students also need to read their own life stories, casting a critical eye on their own ideologies and how their lives in schools, churches, and families, as well as their encounters with the media and other public and private institutions, shaped who they are and what they hoped to accomplish as teachers.

present in our own lives and the institutions with which we are associated. In addition to studying the experiences of the adolescents in the literature they are reading, Meixner insists, students also need to read their own life stories, casting a critical eye on their own ideologies and how their lives in schools, churches, and families, as well as their encounters with the media and other public and private institutions, shaped who they are and what they hoped to accomplish as teachers.

Meixner's reasons for her study about her students' access to LGBTQ young adult literature manifest itself into surprising forms. First, she provides the opportunity for her students to open up about their own feelings about sexual orientation behavior and express their reaction to young adult literature that dealt with such themes. And second, her students—independent of Meixner—met, discussed, and designed an action research project in which they would investigate adolescents' access to books such as those they had been reading in class.

Together, Meixner's education students created an interview protocol for investigating the use of gender-related books in school and local public libraries. Then, each of the students decided they would visit and conduct interviews with librarians at four libraries including two county/public libraries, one high school library, and one middle school library.

In the protocol, they requested information about the number of volumes in the libraries' adolescent collections, as well as the percentage or number of those texts that dealt specifically with issues pertaining to adolescent gender and sexuality. They also asked a series of questions about the process through which books were added to the collection, challenges to books currently available at the library, the librarians' familiarity with books on, by, or about LGBTQ youth, academic and public requests for these books, and the availability of (library-based) outreach programs specifically targeted toward LGBTQ adolescents. Once all of the interviews had been completed, they compiled and analyzed their findings.

As the students conduct their interviews, they are met with both enthusiasm and resistance from the librarians with whom they spoke. Although several librarians respond suspiciously to the students' inquiries, most are helpful and genuinely excited to have an opportunity to talk about their collections. Fourteen of the twenty librarians state that they are familiar with at least several LGBTQ young adult titles. And, even if they did not have wide-ranging knowledge of the genre or the subject matter, they (along with the other six librarians who had not read any LGBTQ young adult literature) feel confident that they can make informed recommendations when and if they were asked.

What the students discover, however, is that rarely had the librarians been asked. Very few could recall being approached by students, parents, or other patrons looking for young adult books about adolescent sexuality or with gay and lesbian characters or themes. Librarians at the public libraries cite very few inquiries from teachers. The situation at school libraries differs only slightly. There, librarians feel that their collections enhanced classroom instruction, but they acknowledge that they rarely receive requests from teachers for book talks on or texts about LGBTQ adolescents or adolescent sexuality. In most cases, they asserted, students were simply not *researching* these topics in class. Only in one high school library—a school with a very active Gay-Straight Alliance—did a librarian recollect teachers regularly seeking out books on adolescent gender and sexuality.

And, to her students' surprise, most of the LGBTQ literature they encounter in school collections are non-fiction rather than fiction.

Rarely did any of the libraries provide LGBTQ outreach. None of the public libraries provide book

talks, discussion groups, speakers, or programmatic opportunities specifically targeted toward LBGTQ adolescents and their families. (Of course, "one would be held if people showed enough interest," said one librarian.) At the middle schools, outreach is not quite so infrequent because of their affiliations with high schools. For example, many of the middle school librarians cite support such as a gay-straight read-in, a student/community forum on LGBTQ concerns, and the existence of Gay-Straight Alliances and Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) at their associated high schools. Of the high school librarians to whom the students spoke, only one of the five express serious reservations about providing LGBTQ outreach through the library. Outreach is the responsibility of guidance, Meixner states, and LGBTQ support organizations "would lead to ridicule and controversy in the district." In contrast, the other four librarians were much more open to and familiar with the aforementioned outreach opportunities.

Thus, while Meixner believes the course did provide her students with an experience that will make them better advocates for their LGBTQ students, and while she contends that engaging in this action *research* project is crucial to their developing social consciousness and political agency, how both of these events ultimately affect their teaching remains to be seen. As her students graduate and begin teaching, Meixner hopes that her students will remember and hold onto their experiences—that they will continue to challenge inequitable institutions—and that increased institutional awareness will inform the way in which they work to counteract violence and height for truly safe schools.

Sex, Pregnancy, and Young Adult Literature

In Diane Emge's "I'm Pregnant!: Fear and Conception in Four Decades of *Young Adult* Literature," *Young Adult Library Services* (2006, Vol. 4, issue 2, pp. 22-27), the author, a librarian, discusses the predominant themes of the portrayal of teenage sexual behavior and consequences in four decades of American young adult fiction (1960-1990). Specifically, the author focuses on the topics of birth control, teenage pregnancy, teenage marriage, abortion, single mothers, and single fathers. As the author argues, these fictitious depictions of adolescent experiences have a powerful effect on teenage readers. For many, the strong sense of identification with fictitious characters involved in similar experiences and circumstances provides young adults with a ready and easy companion in times of great uncertainty and turmoil. The author also argues that changes in American society regarding teenage sexuality and behavior since the 1960s have been partially, if not directly, a result of its explicit and reflective depiction in the four decades publication of young adult fiction.

Thus, while Meixner believes the course did provide her students with an experience that will make them better advocates for their LGBTQ students, and while she contends that engaging in this action *research* project is crucial to their developing social consciousness and political agency, how both of these events ultimately affect their teaching remains to be seen.

"In 1968," the author writes, "most teenage girls understood birth control to mean keeping their legs crossed" (22). "Good girls," as the euphemism was called, did not have sexual urges, and their primary challenge was to keep "bad boys" away from them. Naturally, as the author remarks, only "bad girls" in this era of quiet conformity allowed their passion to overcome their common sense and permit young men to violate their privates.

In the 1960s and '70s, teenage pregnancy was very upsetting to gentle society. In the seminal young adult novel, *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones*, two young adults are shown wreathing in agony at even the thought of the girl becoming pregnant. July, the teenage girl in the 'throes of a heated affair' with another teenager, Bo, writhes in complete agony until her next period arrives. In this early and

groundbreaking work, July does try to get birth control pills, but to no avail. Through a complicated process involving a buying a fake wedding ring and taking a bus fifty miles to another town, July seeks in vain as the doctor she visits sends her home with no pills and an admonition to speak to her parents.

Speaking to her parents, though, turns out to be the least of her problems. Soon, July learns that she is pregnant, and after breaking the news to her boyfriend, Bo, they decide together to do the only imaginable thing possible in "the then world of young adult novels,"—three days later, they decide to get married.

Since 1968 and the premier of *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones,* times and circumstances have changed considerably. For one thing, as the author concedes, birth control measures are readily available to young people. Condoms are readily available at nearly every store possible, and birth control pills no longer require a secretive mission to obtain. Medical doctors are trained to ask young girls about their own sexual behavior and readily recommend precautions. Laws governing abortion, contraception and adoption have changed and today, it is more acceptable to become a single parent.

Knowing this, the question the author poses is "does teenage pregnancy still ruin lives?" (22). The author believes that by examining the mirror world of young adult literature, we can derive a sense of the teen pregnancy experience. "Despite the fact it is a step removed from actual experience," Emge writes, "the fictitious experiences portrayed in novels are powerful influences on teen readers" (22). This is particularly true in the delicate issue of teen pregnancy, Emge believes, because much of the agonizing and decision-making occurs before the girl has revealed her condition to anyone else. Often, the author writes, the fictitious characters in novels may be the only understanding companion they have in the earliest and crucial days of their pregnancy.

With this in mind, the author examines the various aspects of teen pregnancy as it has been depicted in the novels of the past forty years (1960-2000) and determines if differences in societal norms have made teen pregnancy a different experiences than it was for the young teenager, July, in *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones*.

What the researcher finds is that although the talk of teenage sex and its inherent sexual consequences are more open and accepting in today's young adult novels, the pain, hurt, confusion and despair associated with young love, passion, and heartbreak have not changed. In today's novels, teens just have more options to reconcile their emotional and behavioral choices and consequences.

For example, Emge writes, birth control pills have been around a long time, but not for unmarried teenagers and not for unmarried teenagers in young adult novels. In 1973, Winifred Madison's young adult novel *Growing Up in a Hurry* (New York, Little, Brown), Karen finds her older sister's pills hidden in her room and reacts with horror. "I was so shocked my hand trembled. It never occurred to me that Pam would be using pills, doing *that,* or that it could upset me so much to find out about it" (40). Whereas in a contemporary novel, such as Jesse McGuire's 1991 young adult novel *Over the Edge* (New York, Butterfield Press), the lead character, a pregnant young mother-to-be named Caroline muses that she can "*almost taste the irony. After all these years of taking precautions, I finally get caught*. Funny, it had never occurred to her that she'd end up on the wrong side of the birth rate method safety-rate statistics," (40-1). Mentioning birth control statistics is not something a teenager would have done in the 1960s and '70s.

Similarly, in early young adult novels, teenage pregnancy would be dutifully followed by teenage marriage. In Ann Head's *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones* (1968), Paul Zindel's *My Darling, My Hamburger* (1969), Richard Peck's *Don't Look and It Won't Hurt* (1972), and Paul Kropp's *Baby, Baby* (1984), marriage is considered the right option by young teens confronted with an unwanted pregnancy. But by 1998, in *Annie's Baby: The Diary of Anonymous, a Pregnant Teenager,* fourteen-year-old Annie makes the tentative suggestion of getting married to her boyfriend Danny, only to be cruelly rejected. "I'm sixteen years-old, duh-head. You think I am going to stifle my life for you and your slimy bastard?" (110).

As Emge notes, the concept of abortion and its viability to end unwanted teenage pregnancies has only been an option in young adult novels. Even before being nationally legalized in 1972, abortion in young adult novels has been seen

by teenagers and parents as the method to keep "their secret and shame" hidden and buried forever. In Zindel's *My Darling, My Hamburger* (1969), young pregnant Liz is at first delighted that her boyfriend has offered to marry her, but she is soon left by him with a quick apology and two hundred dollars to "take care of things." The result is that her badly performed abortion leaves her gravely ill and unable to graduate from high school. The opposite though, occurs in Norma Klein's early and influential work, *It's Not What You Expect*, where a friend of young Carla, Sara Lee, has an abortion and Carla marvels at how easy it all seems for her. And of course, even though contemporary novels feature teenage girls who opt for an abortion—Calley in Feinberg's *Borrowed Light* (2000), and Cyd Charrisse in Cohn's *Gingerbread*, (2002)—and those who almost, but at the last minute, decide against,—Claudia in Holland's *The Search* (1991) and Helen in Wild's *One Night* (2003), - the act itself leaves the young protagonists feeling confused, guilty and depressed.

In young adult novels, there was a time when adoption was considered the only viable option. There is young Koral in Evelyn White Minshull's *But I Thought You Really Loved Me* (1977) and fifteen-year-old Sue Ann in Joanna Lee's *I Want to Keep My Baby* (1977) where adoption is seen as the only viable option. Even in Ruth Pennebaker's *Don't Think Twice* (1996), it is 1967 and young pregnant Anne is sent to a home for unwed mothers where she realizes through heartache and despair that life will be better for her newly born child in the hands of loving and supportive parents.

Novels set in a contemporary setting, though, often view adoption as out of the question. Sophie, in Joyce Sweeny's poignant young adult novel *Waiting for June* (2003), will not even consider giving her baby away, telling her mother emphatically, "Women have to know how to take care of themselves. That's the best thing you ever gave to me. Don't try to take it away from me," (141). Or take Ben, the agonizing teenage protagonist and young father in Joanne Horniman's *Mahalia* (2001) who pleads with the biological mother of his child to not take away his daughter after having abandoned her shortly after her birth. "I *am* sorry that you went through a hard time after she was born. But I was the one who looked after her when you went away and I did a good job of it. I'm *good* at looking after her. It is the only thing I do really well. I won't let you take her away from me" (177).

As Emge concludes, times have changed, but not emotions. Today, young people are more educated—by progressive parents, teachers, doctors, celebrities, and the like—than ever before about the whys and wherefores of sexual behavior, but no less immune to its consequences. Physically and emotionally, psychologically and intellectually, young people must struggle with the same desires, obsessions and longings that young people have known since time immemorial. Thankfully, we have, as Emge concludes, young adult literature to document our changing times and eternal truths.

As Emge concludes, times have changed, but not emotions. Today, young people are more educated—by progressive parents, teachers, doctors, celebrities, and the like—than ever before about the whys and wherefores of sexual behavior, but no less immune to its consequences.

Conclusion

These three studies of young adult literature—though by no means conclusive and/or inclusive of all the issues relevant to today's young adult literature—do underline three predominant strands in the world of young adult fiction. They represent the ability to inspire, challenge, and reflect the social customs and mores of our changing world. Through the eyes of gifted writers and researchers, we learn a little bit about ourselves and much about the potential of young adult fiction to shape and influences the lives of young adults—and ourselves, as well.

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Kenan **Metzger** and Jill **Adams**

Opening Dialogue amidst Conflict:

Utilizing Young Adult Literature in the Classroom to Combat Bullying

He stepped so close that Darrell could smell his breath, a sickening mixture of onions and cigarette smoke. "What's your name, kid?" he asked.

"I'm Darrell . . . Mercer."

"Darrell . . . Mercer," the boy repeated with a chuckle.

Darrell's name struck them all as funny. They kept saying it over and over in a mocking way. Darrell looked for a way to get away from them, but he was surrounded. Finally, the big kid asked, "You got any money on you, Darrell Mercer?"

"For what?" Darrell asked.

"We thought you'd make us a loan, so we don't put your scrawny butt in that trash dumpster over there," the big one said. His friends started laughing out loud. One kid in an oversized Lakers shirt doubled over, unable to control his laughter.

"He looks like he's going to wet his pants," the kid in the Lakers shirt said, struggling to catch his breath amidst his laughter.

Darrell gave them $3.25, all he had. His hands were trembling when he turned over the money.

"Three bucks? That all you got?" The muscular kid demanded. Darrell stared at him in open-mouthed terror. Then, without a word, Darrell tried to walk down the sidewalk past them, but they all moved into his path, blocking him. The large kid raised his finger and poked Darrell's chest, "I'm Tyray Hobbs. I'm a freshman at Bluford, and I run things around here. Hear what I'm sayin'?"

"Yeah," Darrell said, nodding his head. He wanted to go home, not to Uncle Jason's, but back to Philadelphia. Once again, he tried to move down the sidewalk. This time, the boys stepped aside. But as he hurried to get past them, Tyray stuck his foot out. Unable to step over Tyray's Nikes, Darrell tripped and fell into the gutter. His teeth jammed into his lip when he hit the ground. He could taste the salty blood oozing into his mouth. (Langan 24–26).

This fictional scene from *The Bully* (Townsend Press, 2001), is actually representative of the real-life experiences of many adolescents. Even with the prevalence of these experiences and numerous reports in the media, adolescents do not often take bullying seriously. However, some striking facts indicate that bullying is definitely a serious matter. According to the United States Health Resources and Services Administration:

- Between 15-25% of U.S. students are bullied (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton, & Scheidt, 2001).
- Between 15-20% of U.S. students report they bully others (Nansel, et al., 2001).
- Young people who bully are more likely to be truant or drop out of school (Olweus, 1993).
- Young people who bully are more likely to smoke, drink alcohol, and get into fights (Olweus, 1993).

Many schools across the nation are working hard to introduce anti-bullying programs as a way to combat the problems these figures represent. In the wake of the recent wave of horrific school shootings, school officials have come to realize the full impact bullying can have. It has been estimated that two-thirds of students who were involved in school shootings have reported feeling bullied before their

attacks ("Designing a Safe School" 1). As a reaction to this, almost every state has passed laws requiring schools to develop programs to combat the problem. Colorado, for example, requires districts to have anti-bullying programs, while Delaware has given teachers more power to discipline students, and Arkansas and Michigan have conflict resolution programs ("Designing a Safe School" 1). These programs work to some extent to address bullying, but they have a limited impact on adolescents' lives.

Significantly, the programs that emphasized improved interpersonal relationships, as opposed to punitive measures, were the most successful. Shockingly, the results seem to suggest that while the programs may have reduced the incidence of bullying, they did not decrease the numbers of those engaged in bullying.

According to Dr. Dan Olweus, some programs have reduced referrals for bullying incidents by 50%. Many times, these programs involve a prescribed sequence of topics or activities for students. All teachers have to do is follow the order of the program. A post-doctoral student at Melbourne University, Australia, Michelle Andrews found that the incidence of verbal insults decreased by 20 percent at a local secondary school due to the introduction of an anti-bullying program. However, Ms. Andrews said, "I found that only half the students had sufficient knowledge of the school's anti-bullying program" ("School Bullying Reduced" 1). Ken Rigby, a researcher at the University of South Australia, reported similar results. In a survey of various anti-bullying programs, he found that the largest average reduction in bullying was 50%, while most reductions were closer to 17%.

Significantly, the programs that emphasized improved interpersonal relationships, as opposed to punitive measures, were the most successful. Shockingly, the results seem to suggest that while the programs may have reduced the incidence of bullying, they did not decrease the numbers of those engaged in bullying. The Safe Schools Initiative presented some of the most important findings. One key finding was that "[M]any attackers [involved in recent school violence] felt bullied, persecuted, or injured by others prior to the attack" (Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzeleski 38). This suggests that anti-bullying efforts have far-reaching implications beyond just preventing bullying. Anti-bullying programs that truly involve a teacher-student dialogue can work to prevent not only bullying, but also more widespread violence such as shootings. One of the suggestions made by the initiative was that "Educators can play a part in prevention by creating an environment where students feel comfortable telling an adult . . . about someone who is considering doing harm to another person, or . . . themselves" (Vossekuil et al., 42). This means that individual teachers can begin to implement measures in the classroom to help prevent bullying. Using young adult literature that students can relate to will go a long way in fostering a comfortable environment to discuss bullying.

Dealing with Bullying in the Context of the Classroom

Although many anti-bullying programs are effective to a certain degree (17-50%) (Vossekuil et al., "School Bullying Reduced;" Rigby, Olweus, "Designing a Safe School"), they could be even more powerful if fully integrated into the curriculum. In addition, an approach that focuses on interpersonal/intrapersonal relationships would be the most effective. As Stan Davis, author of *Schools Where Everyone Belongs: Practical Strategies to Reduce Bullying*, noted, some key components of successful programs dealing with character issues with adolescents are:

1. **Respect young peoples' autonomy.** We cannot make them change, but we can follow through with consistent consequences. Build supportive relationships so they want to be contributing members of the school; then help the students make the best choices.
2. **Maintain young peoples' sense of belonging.** Build mentoring relationships and maintain a positive tone in consequences of poor behavior. Students are more likely to take responsibility for negative behaviors, and then change.
3. **Teach cause-and-effect thinking and promote conscience development.** Help students see

connections between what they do and what happens to them. Help students discover positive and negative effects of their choices through reflection. Additionally, using questions instead of statements may help students think about their own actions, as opposed to thinking the topic doesn't relate to them (*Stop Bullying Now*).

An effective and efficient way to cover these three recommendations is to address the issues through open dialogue in the context of the English/Language Arts classroom. In particular, teachers can use young adult literature to engender high interest and increase the participation in class discussions.

Classroom Conversations

A number of effective ideas and activities can help bring about dialogue focusing on bullying. For example, the teacher should begin by dividing the young adult literature selections into themes related to bullying issues, and then divide the class into literature circle groups to discuss each theme. As part of a unit, teachers should develop lessons that focus on crucial issues. One lesson should focus on emotional reactions students have to the literature in order to help them begin to empathize with both the ones being bullied and the ones doing the bullying. The next lesson should focus on characterization, with the goal of helping students understand what personality traits are prevalent among those being bullied and those doing the bullying. Then teachers should develop a lesson focusing on settings, with objectives related to creating environments more conducive to collaboration. The more students work with each other and see each other as individuals, the less likely it is that bullying will occur. Finally, an important lesson to develop should deal with the specific themes students found in the literature, with the goal of becoming more conscious of the overall cause and effect relationships inherent in bullying situations. Students need to focus on bullying, not on bullies. They need to understand what causes bullying so they can work to prevent it.

A crucial first step to beginning a dialogue is to introduce students to the topic of bullying. Students can take a quiz in order to discover their experiences with bullying. One such example is through the Education World web site. This site includes lessons specifically on bullying that teachers created after the harassment of Muslim and Arab American students following 9/11. The site is "Kids Bullying Kids" at <http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/00-2/lp2055.shtml>. The survey about bullying has been adapted specifically for middle school students and covers students' own experiences. After completing the survey, students then discuss it and explore solutions to the problems. Another survey option aims at both middle and high school students. The Bullying Reality Quiz is also through Education World and is at http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/00-2/lp2064.shtml. Designed for both middle level and high school students, this online quiz questions students about school violence and has students create their own quiz on bullying.

Teachers should develop a lesson focusing on settings, with objectives related to creating environments more conducive to collaboration. The more students work with each other and see each other as individuals, the less likely it is that bullying will occur.

After teachers introduce the topic of bullying, it is important that students formulate their own ideas concerning the topic. Using either a semantic word map or a visual representation to explore the term bullying (or perhaps different kinds of bullying) is a way for students to internalize their perceptions of the meanings, implications, and consequences of bullying. The following web sites aid students in generating their own definitions of bullying, understanding what they might do to combat bullying, and discussing the existence of bullying in their own lives:

- www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov. Maintained by the United States Health Resources and Services Administration, this site covers the topic of bullying, what students can do about it, and interactive quizzes, games, and cartoons for youth.
- www.safeyouth.org. Sponsored by the National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, this site is a valuable resource for parents, educators, and youth working together to prevent violence against young people.

- www.no-bully.com. This site is part of the Colorado Anti-Bullying Project and includes information for teachers, parents, and kids. This site provides links to media, a quiz, stories, and other resources.
- www.cyberbully.org. This site digs into a new type of bullying—electronic. This site aims toward educators, parents, and others to deal with this new issue. Sponsored by the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use, the group provides resources for professional development, news links, a monthly forum, and a parent's guide to the topic.

Opening the Dialogue through Young Adult Literature

Once teachers introduce the topic of bullying, it is imperative to give students situations that relate to their lives and hook their interest, allowing them to be engaged in the discussion. Teachers can achieve these goals by having students read young adult literature, which will, in turn, open up the conversations within the context of the English/language arts classroom and its curriculum. To achieve this goal, it is important to note the plethora of young adult books dealing with tough topics, including bullying. The following list of books all deal with some aspect of bullying:

Middle School/Junior High School

Friends and Family
Drowning Anna, by Sue Mayfield (upper middle)
The Skin I'm In, by Sharon Flake
The Girls, by Amy Goldman Koss
The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963, by Christopher Paul Curtis
School
Crash, by Jerry Spinelli
Macaroni Boy, by Katherine Ayres
Hoot, by Carl Hiaasen
Identity
The Misfits, by James Howe
Stargirl, by Jerry Spinelli

High School

Date Violence and Sexual Harassment
Speak, by Laurie Halse Anderson
Breathing Underwater, by Alex Flinn
The Battle of Jericho, by Sharon Draper
Out of Control, by Paula Fox Mazer
School Harassment
The Chocolate War, by Robert Cormier
Whale Talk, by Chris Crutcher
Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes, by Chris Crutcher
Breaking Point, by Alex Flinn
Inventing Elliott, by Graham Gardner
Endgame, by Nancy Garden
Alt Ed, by Katherine Atkins
Friends
Godless, by Pete Hautman
Drowning Anna, by Sue Mayfield
Shattering Glass, by Gail Giles
What Happened to Lani Garver, by Carol Plum-Ucci
The Body of Christopher Creed, by Carol Plum-Ucci
Jake Riley: Irreparably Damaged, by Rebecca Fjelland Davis

It is important to address various issues with the students as they read the texts. Pulling in news articles concerning current events related to the themes outlined above will facilitate open discussion and dialogue in the classroom. In addition, having students write and share responses to what they are reading is a strong addition to classroom conversations. For example, it is valuable to begin on the emotional level with questions such as:

1. What is your first reaction to the work?
2. What feelings and/or emotions does the work evoke in you?
3. What character(s) do you particularly like or dislike?
4. Do any of the characters remind you of people you know?
5. What memory does the work help you recall?
6. Have you been in a similar situation (Bushman, 129)?

Next, the teacher moves to the intellectual level with questions like:

1. Would you change the ending of the work? Why or why not? If so, how?
2. What fears and/or concerns do you have for the characters?
3. What is the major point of the work?
4. What is your final reaction to the work (Bushman, 130)?

Wrapping Up the Unit

Within this unit, it is important to include situations where students react to conflict. Education World offers a link to scenarios, allowing middle school students to discuss various ways to react to conflict effectively at http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/00-2/lp2059.shtml. Although this activity is for younger adolescents, teachers can transfer situations to the high school level or adapt the activities to meet the needs of students in their school. A strong culminating activity for such a unit would be to have the students write. After opening up the dialogue on this topic, allowing students to dig further into the issue would allow them to demonstrate what they have learned through the unit. The teacher can use the following prompts to foster critical thinking:

1. In a short story, examine one of the issues discussed in relationship to the literature we read in class. You might use a similar scenario or story line as was presented in the work(s) you read. Be sure to use your imagination and create a situation as you would like to see it, or from a different point of view. Include the five elements of setup, conflict, struggle, outcome, and meaning.
2. In a poem, express some of the feelings you have toward the literature you read or issues presented in the literature. Use your five senses and imagery to express the feelings. Something like "a tear fell down my cheek" would be better than "I felt sad."
3. In a newspaper article, discuss one of the issues that came up in your literature circle. Use this forum to express your opinions about what happened in the book you read, as well as reporting the facts. You may use one of the articles we read in class as a model.
4. Create a PowerPoint, webpage or poster outlining the important issues we discussed in class to show what people can do to deal with these issues. Be sure to include background information your audience might need, the issues raised by the readings and discussions, and your plan of action to deal with these issues.

Conclusions

Certainly, bullying is a significant problem in schools in this country and around the world. As many as 25% of students are bullied on a daily basis, mostly verbally and emotionally. In addition, bullying can lead to other problems such as drug abuse, poor school performance, and violence such as school shootings. This being the case, many school officials have responded with anti-bullying programs. These programs have been marginally successful. Not surprisingly, teachers are not always included as much as they could be, which no doubt leads to this marginal success. In addition, the programs in place do not necessarily affect the students who are engaged in bullying in a positive way. This points to the fact that all students involved in bullying incidents, including the bullies, need to be involved in a dialogue about how to prevent bullying.

If the most successful programs are only 50% effective, then what can teachers and administrators do about the other 50% of students they are not reaching? An integrated program of study can reach all of the students in a class. Teachers can use young adult literature, with its high interest and high relevance levels, to open up an ongoing dialogue among students and teachers concerning the real issues behind bullying. It is not enough to punish the "bullies," because this action does not fully address the problem. People bully others for a reason. Conversely, there may be reasons people feel powerless in the face of bullying. If teachers and administrators bring these kinds of issues into the open, then schools can come closer to significantly reducing the occurrences of bullying, and in turn, make our schools a better place to learn and grow.

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Cicely Denean **Cobb**

The Day That Daddy's Baby Girl Is Forced to Grow Up:

The Development of Adolescent Female Subjectivity in Mildred D. Taylor's *The Gold Cadillac*

> I have many good memories of those years, including the year my father brought home a brand-new Cadillac. I also have memories of those years that long troubled me.
>
> —*Mildred D. Taylor*

M'ildred Taylor's 1987 novella *The Gold Cadillac* has received scant attention in studies of her fiction. Yet, the text plays a crucial role in the larger body of her work as a manifestation of her vision of the individual subject's relation to a larger community. More specifically, *The Gold Cadillac* presents a protagonist—'lois—and a series of events modeled in part on Taylor's own life experiences that invite her readers to consider how subjectivity (both hers as well as their own) is influenced by forces such as communal ties and kinship and how both individual subject and community are shaped by pressures and contingencies of time and place that result in potentially problematic constructions of race and gender.

In *The Gold Cadillac*, Taylor examines the emotional and psychological tensions resulting from life in the segregated South of the 1950s by constructing a narrative style that relies on both a single voice—that of 'lois—and that of community of listeners and speakers. Taylor employs a complex mix of private and public speech to reflect and, at times, challenge the ways in which issues of race become embedded in the consciousness of her African American characters. Moreover, she uses private and public speech to tell a story designed to reach multiple audiences: black as well as white, children as well as adolescents and adults.

Before turning to the novella itself, I want to elaborate on my use of the concept of public and private speech and its relation to Taylor's larger project in *The Gold Cadillac*. In her article, "Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics, and the Black Woman Writer's Literary Tradition," Mae Gwendolyn Henderson argues that African American women writers' works should be examined for their commentaries on the interrelationship between race and gender. She claims that black women's texts speak from a "multiple and complex social, historical and cultural perspective" which, in effect, constitutes black female subjectivity and that analysis of this multivalent subjectivity must take into account both a dialogic of differences and a dialectic of identity (344). Building on the works of Mikhail Bahktin, Barbara Christian, and Hans-George Gadamer, Henderson asserts that the writings of black women are expressive of four key levels of discourse involving the relation of an individual self to a generalized "other" imagined to exist both outside and within the self. These four levels are: the self in competition with the

external other; the self in accord with the external other; the self in competition with an internal other; and the self in accord with an internal other. For Henderson, then, the dialogic of difference would include those moments wherein the self is in conflict with the other—external or internal—in a relation that highlights differences while the dialectic of identity emphasizes those moments wherein the relation of the self and the other—external or internal—is characterized by sharing, unity, and a sense of commonality (345).

The Gold Cadillac's emphasis on storytelling and the usage of various modes of speech—private, interior reflection, and public dialogue—provide the foundation for Taylor's constructions of the individual's relation to family, community, and the broader social world.

Henderson links the notions of dialogics of difference and dialectics of identity to issues of speech: both private individual monologues and more public, multi-voiced discourse. She goes on to contend that minority female authors, especially African Americans, rely on both types of discourse—in her words, they must "speak in tongues"—in order to successfully reflect the complexities of racial and gender stereotyping and to manage the often competing perceptions and expectations of multiple discourse(346-347).[3]

In this essay, I will show how private individual speech, often in the form of interior monologue, combines with public dialogue and storytelling among members of various communities in *The Gold Cadillac* to construct a particular kind of discursive diversity designed to appeal to multiple audiences: blacks, whites, females, males, children, young adults, and mature adults. I argue that examining this diversity—what I refer to as Taylor's own version of "speaking in tongues"—is crucial to understanding both the unique characteristics and goals of her narrative style. In each of her texts, Taylor's characters, especially her protagonists, speak in tongues to various audiences in an attempt to teach a series of lessons about the ways in which the problems of place and time —the South under Jim Crow—shape both individual and communal perceptions of race and gender.

The Gold Cadillac's emphasis on storytelling and the usage of various modes of speech—private, interior reflection, and public dialogue—provide the foundation for Taylor's constructions of the individual's relation to family, community, and the broader social world. In other words, as I will show, Taylor's style is inextricably bound up with her thematic emphasis on social realism; she consistently seeks to connect her fiction to the most pressing cultural and political problems of the time and place in which the stories are set.

To better illustrate the links between Taylor's narrative style and her investment in social realism, I provide below an analysis of some of the historical tensions and events that influenced the lives of Taylor, her family, and other African Americans during the early decades of the twentieth century—tensions and events that are crucial to the plot and context of *The Gold Cadillac*. Wilbert Taylor, like a significant number of southern African American men and women, fled the South in an attempt for a better existence. During the first half of the twentieth century, black Mississippians still lived under the harsh laws of Jim Crow. Although African American men had fought in both World Wars, white men still saw the need to "tighten" the "noose" (McMillen 14). As Neil R. McMillen notes in *Dark Journey*, these laws enforced exclusion, not merely separation (10). Within the "heartland of American apartheid," a significant number of African Americans did not own their homes, lacked an education, and were denied gainful employment and the right to a fair trial.

3 See also Roberta Seelinger Trites' *Disturbing the Universe*. Trites has written extensively about identity politics and subjectivity and how these concepts relate to adolescent literature, especially in novels with black female heroines. Trites makes effective use of Henderson's concepts of dialogics of difference and dialectics of identity to show how access to power is granted (or not) to adolescent characters within a narrative. In a particularly revealing analysis of Mildred D. Taylor's entwicklungsroman *The Road to Memphis*, Trites elucidates the interplay of internal and communal dialogue in the novel to show how the main character, Cassie Logan, defines her selfhood in "terms of the institutions of race, class and gender" (48).

During the years of Jim Crow, there was no hope for Mississippi's "meek" to "inherit the Earth" that they tilled (112). As McMillen states, over 50% of all Mississippi farms were worked by African Americans; however, blacks did not own the land that they plowed (112). These sharecroppers found themselves under a new form of servitude. Forty years after Emancipation, "the southern planter [remained] lord of all" (123). The "new order" still resembled its predecessor (124). Josephine Beard, a former tenant farmer's personal narrative supports this theory. In the following passage, she describes the fear that she had toward her former "riding boss":

> It could have been slavery time . . . the way they act, scared of him . . . You see our parents wuz scared of white folks (125).

Tenant farming required the assistance of the entire family. Plantation "women often worked even harder than their men" (129). As stated by Martha Robb Montgomery, a former sharecropper, women had to "do double duty" (129). Most women, who lived on rural farms, were familiar with plowing tools. It is also important to note that a large number of farms lacked a male presence. By 1940, African American women "operated nearly 10% of all the [B]lack farms in Mississippi" (130).

By World War I, rural black farmers "responded to the lure of [urban Mississippi cities] (155). They abandoned farm life in search of better opportunities in cities such as Jackson and Yazoo City. McMillen states that between the years 1890-1940, the African American urban population (in Mississippi) increased from 34,200—178,000 (155). The only occupations that were available for blacks were domestic and manual labor. The general sentiments were that the decent jobs were reserved for Caucasians (156). Thus, uneducated and unskilled blacks worked as domestics, caregivers, cooks, porters and janitors (156). Wage discrimination did occur within these occupations. The U.S. Census bureau did not configure income statistics (based on race) until 1940; however, it was widely known that white unskilled laborers earned more than their black co-workers (157-158).

Lynching was another problem that black Mississippians were forced to encounter. The fear of "lynching was one of the major fears in the life of any Negro" (227). For, as McMillen states in his analysis of race relations in Mississippi, "the threat of lynching is likely to be in the mind of the Negro child from the earliest days" (120). The years 1889–1945 were commonly known as the Mississippi lynching era (229). According to McMillen, 13% of the U.S.'s lynchings were held in Mississippi. Mississippi "ranked first in most lynching categories." These included: "the most total lynchings, the most multiple lynchings, the most per capita, the most female victims, the most victims taken from police custody, the most lynching without arrest or conviction of mob leaders, the most public support for vigilantism" (229-230). Thus, Mississippi was deemed as a "hopeless state" by poor, southern blacks and educated, southern and northern African Americans (230). Taylor's own father fled the South for a better life in the North. Upon Wilbert's move to Toledo, he became accustomed to a better lifestyle—new car, decent housing, and integrated facilities. There, he was respected as a man.

As Taylor has 'lois describe, it was easy for men like her father to forget the hardships that they once endured. This is illustrated when Wilbert informs his male friends and relatives that he is driving his Cadillac to Mississippi. For, if Wilbert had recently relocated to the North, he would be conscious of the fact that it was dangerous for blacks to own cars, especially luxury vehicles. This act alone could lead to lynching. According to McMillen, these events prompted southern blacks to migrate north in search of a better existence. From 1920–1950, 500,000 blacks fled; 100,000 of them were Mississippi residents (262). The primary force that caused African Americans to flee was the "hunger push" (263). One migrant claimed that the "wages [in Mississippi] [were] so low [that blacks] c[ould] scarcely live (263). The "land of starvation" was not just a physical hunger (263). Most blacks left because of the emotional starvation that they experienced—inadequate schools, legal woes, lynching, and poor housing (263). Although the North did not completely allow migrants to forget the sorrows that are associated with racism, it was "freer of rac[ial] tension than the South" (Sochen 51). Upon arriving in the North, thousands of African Americans became displaced. Blacks' lives became filled with despair (McMillen 53). Cities such as Harlem and Chicago became urban slums.

Despite the hardships that prevented many blacks

from acquiring jobs, most African American migrants were still able to gain a better financial existence in the North than in rural and urban Mississippi. From these migrants emerged the brown middle class. States such as Illinois and Ohio became the locations where blacks were attaining the "American Dream." After arriving to the Midwest, couples like Wilbert and Deletha Taylor attempted to establish a middle class existence for their young children. Parents worked hard in order to purchase homes in decent neighborhoods.

In addition to recognizing the material advances the Taylors made—decent jobs, a large home in a middle-class neighborhood—readers should also pay close attention to the society that the Taylor family attempted to emulate. In *The Negro Family*, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier discusses how the black middle class's views toward careers and wealth stemmed from their admiration of the African American upper class. Frazier states that the black middle class's traditions are characteristic of the African American elite. For instance, one's residence marked his wealth. Homeownership was a "major aspect of middle class standards" (322). These homes were "show places" that were previously owned by wealthy whites (322). The more expensive a person's home, the more successful he was. Regardless of the debts that accrued from material goods that were beyond their financial means, at all times, an "appearance of wealth" had to be maintained (322).

In scenes that depict 'lois's interactions with her family, the family's striving for middle-class status, and their encounters with racism, Taylor reveals the complex set of tensions within individuals, families, communities that shape U.S. history.

Taylor's text serves as a commentary about the socio-historical and cultural events that were occurring in America during the first half of the twentieth century. Even in the 1950s, the South remained segregated whereas the North was primarily integrated. In order to both recreate and critique the racism and social inequalities that characterized life for African Americans in this time and place, Taylor uses a mix of public and private discourse; her characters publicly encounter and acknowledge problems of race relations and then reflecting on their implications at a personal level. In scenes that depict 'lois's interactions with her family, the family's striving for middle-class status, and their encounters with racism, Taylor reveals the complex set of tensions within individuals, families, and communities that shape U.S. history. Such tension first becomes apparent when 'lois' father Wilbert purchases a new gold Cadillac. When he arrives home with the car, 'lois runs to share the news with her mother, Dee. Taylor's protagonist soon realizes that her mother is dismayed about the new vehicle; she strongly believes that the purchase is frivolous and that the money should have been used for a down payment on their dream home:

Dee: You didn't buy this car, did you, Wilbert?

Wilbert: Gotta admit I did. Couldn't resist it.

Dee: But. . . but what about our Mercury? It was perfectly good!

Wilbert: Don't you like the Cadillac, Dee?

Dee: That Mercury wasn't even a year old!

Wilbert: And I'm sure whoever buys it is going to get themselves a good car. But we've got ourselves a better one. Now stop frowning, honey, and let's take ourselves a ride in our brand-new Cadillac! (13)

Wilbert's and Dee's conversation is a dialogical moment in which family ties are complicated by gender and racial tension. Wilbert has purchased the Cadillac and he has let her know that his decision is final. His wife, however, refuses to ride in the vehicle, not only because she believes the money would have been better spent on a house, but also because she recognizes the potential problems that can and will result if the family takes the car to the South. Indeed, she tells Wilbert that since he purchased the Cadillac without her consent, he could "just ride in it alone":

I didn't understand either why she did not like that fine

> Cadillac and thought she was being terribly disagreeable with my father. (18)

At this moment, 'lois opts to become the nurturer and cast her mother into the role of disobedient child. Taylor marks the difference and tension between 'lois and her mother:

> **Dee:** Is this your business? She asked.
>
> **'lois:** Well, I just think you ought to be nice to Daddy. I think you ought to ride in that car with him! It'd sure make him happy.
>
> **Dee:** I think you ought to go to sleep [. . .] (18)

Yet Dee eventually does accept her husband's decision because, while she is dismayed by Wilbert's actions, she understands that his sense of self-worth—both in terms of race and manhood—is bound up with the purchase of the car. When Wilbert lived in the South, he was denied the privilege of socio-economic equality—a privilege he enjoys after migrating to the North. Wilbert's actions reflect a key moment in the development of an African American middle class in the North. For the first time, blacks, like their white contemporaries, were able to strive for the "American Dream." 'lois' father already owns his home; now, with the purchase of the gold Cadillac, he appears to have proven to both racial communities that he is capable of maintaining a middle-class existence. Wilbert, like any white man, freely goes out and purchases a luxury car. The southern migrant has "arrived," and to him, the best way to celebrate is by purchasing a Cadillac. Wilbert reinforces the importance of displaying his social status by boldly displaying the vehicle amongst his friends and relatives: "Just off the showroom floor! [. . .] I just couldn't resist it" (12).

That the African American community recognizes Wilbert's status is evidenced when both Wilma and 'lois, as well as their uncles, aunt and Mr. Pondexter, a neighbor, take a ride in the gold Cadillac. Yet this recognition is not complete, and tension manifests itself upon their return when Dee expresses her frustration over their tardiness—frustration driven by the fact that Wilbert has purchased the car without her consent.

At this point, still early in the novella, 'lois' relationship with the black community and extended family remains characterized by a sense of comfort and security For instance, when Wilbert arrives home with the gold Cadillac, Wilma and 'lois run to tell their relatives and acquaintances about the new vehicle:

> And then we took off again, up the back stairs to the second floor of the duplex. Running down the hall, we banged on all the apartment doors. My uncles and their wives stepped to the doors. It was good it was a Saturday morning. Everybody was home. (11)

'lois' community and its inhabitants are important to her emotional equilibrium. Her neighborhood is safe and prosperous. Her family frequents the fish market, grocery store, the Dixie Theater, a drugstore and local restaurant (22). After informing her aunts, uncles, and cousins about the gold Cadillac, 'lois runs to inform Mr. Pondexter "from next door" and Mr. Courtland and Mr. LeRoy "from down the street" (11). 'lois's reference to these men reflects a form of salutation by which children enjoin the elder's title with his/her first name as a sign of both respect and familiarity. It is clear from 'lois's use of this style that she sees herself strongly and comfortably connected to a broad social network. Both 'lois and her parents view their neighbors as extended members of the family rather than merely inhabitants of the community. This is reflected as the men admire Wilbert's car. Through private monologue, 'lois describes the men's reaction to the vehicle: "Mr. Pondexter was still there. Mr. LeRoy and Mr. Courtland from down the street were there too and all were admiring the Cadillac as my father stood proudly by, point out the various features" (12). To Wilbert, the men's admiration is a confirmation that he has achieved what most of his contemporaries only dream about owning.

Wilbert's actions reflect a key moment in the development of an African American middle class in the North. For the first time, blacks, like their white contemporaries, were able to strive for the "American Dream."

'lois' sense of security is further affirmed by the apparent lack of interracial friction in her world. On

her "very busy block," there appears to be a minimal amount of tension between black and white residents (11). While 'lois recounts the fond memories of the times that she spends with her family, there is no mention of her relatives being harassed by whites. Taylor suggests that blacks in the North, circa early 1950s, have many of the same liberties as Caucasians. Wilbert had given his children a far better existence than they would have received in Mississippi. African Americans are welcome to shop in the non-segregated grocery store, cleaners, gas station and the Dixie Theater. African Americans could visit banks and acquire loans for new homes. In addition, blacks are able to travel to other Midwestern cities without being harassed by white policemen. For instance, 'lois's family would take trips to Chicago, Peoria, Detroit and Cleveland, where they would visit relatives. A sense of equality also allowed 'lois's family to feel comfortable driving their vehicles to the park and beach, where their children could "run and play," their wives could "spread a picnic" and the men could polish their cars.

While 'lois recounts the fond memories of the times that she spends with her family, there is no mention of her relatives being harassed by whites. Taylor suggests that blacks in the North, circa early 1950s, have many of the same liberties as Caucasians.

'lois's harmonious relationship with family, race, place, and time is disrupted when her uncles and male neighbors warn Wilbert about traveling to the South in a brand-new Cadillac. In *The Gold Cadillac*, this is the first moment that Taylor directly discusses racism and its significance to black–white relations, circa early 1950s. Within this text, Taylor illustrates that racism (both physical and emotional) and socioeconomic factors that plague the Logans in Mississippi, circa 1920s, continue to affect blacks living in the South during the 1950s. Most importantly, Taylor examines how some northern black children are naïve about matters concerning racial turmoil; for many, their northern upbringing has resulted in a sheltered existence. Taylor explores this in her depiction of 'lois's reaction to the warnings of her uncle and neighbors. Here, for the first time, she learns that her father, her uncles, and other black men, who fought in World War II and saved the lives of white American soldiers, felt betrayed upon their return to the American South, where they encountered not only segregation but also outright violence in the form of lynchings:

> "Not much those folks hate more'n to see a northern Negro coming down there in a fine car," said Mr. Pondexter. "They see those Ohio license plates, they'll figure you coming down uppity, trying to lord your fine car over them!" "Listen to Pondexter, Wilbert!" cried another uncle. "We might've fought a war to free people overseas, but we're not free here! Man, those white folks down south'll lynch you soon's look at you. You know that!" (24)

While the men are shown engaging in public discourse about segregation and murders, 'lois's response is presented to us through private, inner thoughts about her neighborhood: "the smell of charcoal and of barbeque drifting up the block," the "sound of laughter and music and talk" that occurs amongst friends. The conversation shifts when Wilbert mentions taking the car to Mississippi. Taylor relies on DuBois's view of double-consciousness to illustrate how the men are aware of their dual existence. It is at this point in the novella that 'lois begins to experience the full magnitude of racial double-consciousness that W.E.B. DuBois discusses in *The Souls of Black Folk*. DuBois' book is primarily concerned with social history and psychological experiences of African Americans, from slavery to the turn of the twentieth century. As stated earlier, DuBois argues that African Americans, who are denied their right to ever possess a "true self-consciousness," can only perceive themselves as whites view them:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, -an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (5)

When the men attempt to convince Wilbert not to take his car to Mississippi, lois's discourse becomes closed and private.

> I listened, but I didn't understand. I didn't understand why they didn't want my father to drive that car south. It was his. (24)

This scene highlights the fact that, as a child, she is still relatively sheltered from the social tension of her time and place and how, for her, growing up is directly linked to gaining knowledge about race relations. She has heard wonderful tales about her heritage, but not about the "dark" side of black southern life.

After hearing these horror stories regarding "strange fruit" that hung on trees in southern rural towns, 'lois learns for the first time about the differences between the ways white people perceive blacks and the way blacks see themselves. 'lois is now aware of racism, segregation and poverty. For the first time, 'lois begins to become more aware of double-consciousness. She realizes her duality—two souls within the same body. For Taylor, this problem of double-consciousness is a key element of her overall mode of social realism. In other words, Taylor, in each of her novels, attempts not only to connect her stories to particular historical events and tensions but also to show how those tensions influence the psyches of African Americans.

The lesson 'lois receives is meant to serve as one for Taylor's readers as well. For children and young adults, the public speech of the men provides a powerful illustration and commentary on the status of race relations in post-war U.S. culture. For many white readers and for young and older black readers who, like 'lois, have grown up in the North, the scene reveals potentially new information not only about life in the segregated South but also about an older generation's emotional response to the hypocrisy of a nation that would ask them to fight abroad for democracy but continue to deny them civic equality at home.

The fear that threatens 'lois's sense of tranquility subsides when her aunts and mother prepare for the family's journey to Mississippi. Taylor's protagonist's concerns are replaced with elation as reflected in her narration of the preparations for their journey:

> All the next day my aunts and my mother cooked and the house was filled with delicious smells. They fried chicken and baked hams and cakes and sweet potato pies and mixed potato salad. They filled jugs with water and punch and coffee. Then they packed everything in huge picnic baskets along with bread and boiled eggs, oranges, and apples, plates and napkins, spoons and forks and cups. They placed all that food on the back seats of the cars. It was like a grand, grand picnic we were going on, and Wilma and I were mighty excited. We could hardly wait to start. (27)

'lois is at ease not only because of the preparations but also because she believes that, as long as Wilbert is present to serve as the family's protector, she need not concern herself with the issues raised by the public speech of the men.

Yet 'lois's positive relation to family, community, and the broader social world of 1950s Toledo slowly deteriorates as the family leaves their home and crosses the Ohio River into Kentucky. At this point in the story, Taylor begins to contrast the pastoral Midwestern countryside with the harsh realities that 'lois and her family will encounter as they travel into the Deep South. 'lois's sense of inner emotional comfort begins to deteriorates once the family reaches the other side of the Ohio River—the boundary that separates Ohio from Kentucky. Upon their arrival, he lectures his children on the need to change their attitudes and behaviors in response to the social demands of the new place. In particular, he requires them to remain silent when the family encounters whites:

Taylor, in each of her novels, attempts not only to connect her stories to particular historical events and tensions but also to show how those tensions influence the psyches of African Americans.

> Now from here on, whenever we stop and there're white people around, I don't want either one of you to say a word. *Not one word!* Your mother and I'll do all the talking. That understood? (29)

Wilbert's command marks the moment in which 'lois realizes fully the importance of her uncles' and neighbors' concerns. His speech conveys a distinct friction—both with regard to the relations among family members and the relation of the family to the segregated South. At this moment, 'lois begins to learn that, in the South, she must deal with the effects of racial double-consciousness: the awareness that whites see her differently than she sees herself. At this moment, as the family moves from one region and racial context to another, the very act of speaking takes on a new risk. The realities of segregation compel Wilbert to warn his children not to continue thinking and speaking as though they exist in har-

mony or unity with the world around them. This is something new to the girls. Through silence, they become aware of the reality of the South's social system and the double-consciousness it produces.

'lois's emotional stability—her sense of unity with the external world— gives way to a sense of fragmentation as she sees signs that read: "WHITE ONLY, COLORED NOT ALLOWED." In the North, she is permitted to use public facilities, whereas in segregated states such as Tennessee, blacks are barred from hotels, restaurants, and the restrooms in filling stations. As her feelings shift, 'lois begins to question the rationale for segregation. The "Whites Only" signs prompt her to engage in dialogue with her father. Wilbert relies on his rich storytelling abilities to explain to his daughters the difference between living in Toledo and the rural South, circa early 1950s:

> I asked my father what the signs meant. He said they meant we couldn't drink from the water fountains. He said they meant we couldn't stop to sleep in the motels. He said they meant we couldn't stop to eat in the restaurants. (30)

'lois is informed that she cannot use facilities designated for whites. The question-and-answer session that takes place between 'lois and Wilbert serves at one level to explain segregation in the South in the 1950s both to 'lois and to younger readers who might be unaware of the realities of that particular place and time. For a mature audience, their discourse also serves as a marker of the consolidation of 'lois's and her father's shared identity—both in terms of family and as members of an oppressed racial group. Their dialogue consolidates their identity as father-daughter and as blacks who are living in the segregated South. It also helps them understand that they are both in the same situation.

These harsh realities force 'lois to view their vacation not as a "grand picnic," but as a traumatic experience—one characterized by far more pain than joy. When the family reaches Memphis, traffic separates them from their relatives. Thus, they are forced to travel to Mississippi alone. It is when they reach the Mississippi state line that 'lois is reminded of Wilbert's speech regarding the differences between northern and southern relations. Shortly after crossing the state border, 'lois witnesses racism first-hand. Two white policemen stop Wilbert and interrogate him regarding the ownership of the gold Cadillac:

> **White Policemen:** "Whose car is this boy?" They asked.
>
> **Wilbert:** "It's mine," he said.
>
> **White Policemen:** "You're a liar," said one of the policemen. "You stole this car. Turn around, put your hands on top of that car and spread eagle," said the other white policeman. My father did as he was told. (30)

The scene once again underscores the significance of place: in Toledo, Wilbert might not have been stopped and interrogated for driving a brand-new Cadillac. In fact, one can assume that a white sales associate may have sold Wilbert his car in the first place. But in the South, he is an immediate suspect and target.

Wilbert illustrates to his children the behavior that he expects them to follow when dealing with southern whites. He does exactly what the white officers demand of him, regardless of the fact that their treatment is unjustified. This scene also teaches 'lois how white males, regardless of their socioeconomic background, are viewed as men where as black males are merely "boys." Wilbert's arrest teaches 'lois about the social realities of Mississippi; it is not a place where black men can proudly wax their vehicles at local parks, nor is it a state that permits African American families to picnic in its parks. Instead, Mississippi is a place where the white man's word is law, and blacks must adhere to it.

After Wilbert is released from jail, he drives his family to a secluded area so that they can rest. In this scene, Taylor demonstrates 'lois's growing apprehension, which results from the lessons that she has learned about the realities of race relations in this place and time. The ''lois of Toledo—a young girl who enjoys going to the local movie theater—becomes 'lois, the nigger child, whose innocence is shattered by racism. Dee tells 'lois—her "baby"—to go to sleep; however, her daughter is no longer the baby of the family (35). Instead, she is an African American young woman now fully cognizant of all the tensions to which she was previously unaware. At this point in the novella, Taylor provides a dramatic example of racial double-consciousness—one constructed specifically to resonate with younger readers. In sum, she is building on and further illustrating DuBois's concept

by showing how it is experienced by children as well as adults. 'lois's realization that whites see her and her family differently than they see themselves has terrified her and transformed her from an emotionally stable young girl to a tense and potentially violent attacker:

> Ready to strike, I sat there in the back of the car, eyes wide, searching the blackness outside the Cadillac. Wilma, for a while, searched the night too, then she fell asleep. (35)

Like 'lois's earlier conversation with her father about segregation, this scene also holds the potential to speak to multiple audiences. The feelings of fear and powerlessness are again meant to illustrate for younger readers the realities of a segregated society of which they may know very little. For older readers, 'lois's private speech shows how her relation to the external world has been reshaped by Wilbert's experience with the white policemen. 'lois is no longer excited in a positive way about the family's trip; instead, she has become terrified.

The family returns to Memphis where they exchange cars with Cousin Halton. They proceed to Mississippi; it is there that the family is reunited with their other relatives. While at the family homestead, Wilbert relies on his storytelling skills in order to explain blacks' inferior status in a manner which 'lois can understand; he emphasizes that he shares her feelings, and he urges his daughter to channel her animosity toward whites into something positive:

> My father looked at me and said it all was a difficult thing to understand and he didn't really understand it himself. He said it all had to do with the fact that black people had once been forced to be slaves. He said it had to do with our skins being colored. He said it had to do with stupidity and ignorance. He said it had to do with the law that said we could be treated like this here in the South. And for that matter, he added, any other place in these United Sates where folks thought the same as many folks did here in the South. (37)

Wilbert speaks in such a way as to provide 'lois—and Taylor's audience with a feeling of hope and optimism. His focus is less on difference and tension and more on commonality and unity, and he eschews the fragmenting theme and tone he employed in his lecture to the girls as they entered the segregated South:

> I'm hoping one day though we can drive that long road down here and there won't be any signs. I'm hoping one day the police won't stop us just because of the color of our skins and we're riding in a gold Cadillac with northern plates. (37)

He encourages 'lois to believe that her relationship to the racist elements of 1950s society will improve and that she should concentrate her thoughts and speech on the potential for unity and harmony with the world around her—despite the fact that the world, as she now realizes, treats her as a second-class citizen. Upon returning to Toledo, Wilbert affirms his message to 'lois by selling the gold Cadillac. By getting rid of the car, the family reminds itself of what is important—solidarity—for ownership of the Cadillac had threatened to break their circle. After learning that her father has sold the car, 'lois reflects privately upon the importance of family and being African American:

> As fine as the Cadillac had been, [. . .], it had pulled us apart for awhile. Now, as ragged and noisy as that old Ford was, we all rode in it together and we were a family again. (43)

Yet Taylor is careful to point out that selling the car is not the right thing in an ideal sense, but rather a pragmatic response to an inherently unfair social situation. The fact that Wilbert must get rid of the car to protect his family underscores the depth of inequality they face and the loss of subjectivity that accompanies it. Although family unity is reaffirmed in the face of segregation, the act of selling the Cadillac serves as a telling marker of the difficulty—perhaps impossibility—of broader racial unity. It is a marker of a sacrifice that 'lois—and Taylor's readers—are meant never to forget:

Taylor is careful to point out that selling the car is not the right thing in an ideal sense, but rather a pragmatic response to an inherently unfair social situation.

> We had the Cadillac only a little more than a month, but I wouldn't soon forget its splendor or how I'd felt riding around inside it. I wouldn't soon forget either the ride we had taken south in it. I wouldn't soon forget the signs, the policemen, or my fear. I would remember that ride and the gold Cadillac all my life. (43)

Through 'lois, Taylor suggests that the American Dream can be obtained, but at a cost. She implies that

Wilbert realizes that he no longer needs to prove himself through material goods. For it is family, not luxury items, that is important. Most importantly, this text exemplifies the significance of Taylor's use of different modes of speech—private and public—to "speak in tongues" to multiple audiences about the social realities of race relations and to offer models for how to respond (pragmatic and ideal).

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M. Jerry **Weiss**

Important Resources!

Nancie Atwell in *In the Zone* (Scholastic) states: "The teachers at our school are committed to helping every boy and girl establish the habits of a reader and a lifelong love of books." (130). This is what *ALAN* is all about. Atwell details in this excellent book the importance of having classroom time every day for students to choose books they want to read and to have time for reading in class and at home. She and I agree there is a false notion that there is a period for "supplemental reading." What is supplemental reading? Any book a student reads is a primary learning experience. When you went to party last night and had a great time, because you enjoyed yourself, was that supplementary? When one reads *Side Effects* by Amy Goldman Koss (Roaring Brook) and learns the painful experiences that Izzy has when she learns she has cancer and has to have the necessary treatments for containing it, there is hardly a person who won't feel the suffering and appreciate the "humor" that makes this novel so memorable. Joan Kaywell's *Dear Author: Letters of Hope* (Philomel) contains responses to young people's letters to authors expressing their reactions to books they have read. For example, Chad states in his letter to Marion Dane Bauer:

> When I first got *On My Honor*, I thought, "It's probably just another boring book, because I don't like reading most books. I liked this one because it made me let out feelings inside me. . . ." (32)

This is what reading is all about. No matter what one reads, that touching of the heart, that compelling the reader to think about himself/herself is the ultimate literary experience. Following Chad's letter is a response by Bauer explaining how and why she wrote the book.

Kaywell has reached out to many authors to share the letters they have received and for copies of their responses. Included are Laurie Halse Anderson, T. A. Barron, Chris Crutcher, Lois Duncan, Alex Flinn, Adrian Fogelin, John H. Ritter, Jerry Spinelli, Ellen Wittlinger, and many others. This is an important book, and the book is fittingly dedicated "In Memory of Ted Hipple, 1935-Thanksgiving Day 2004, ALAN and the Authors Wish You Well Eternally."

What is supplemental reading? Any book a student reads is a primary learning experience.

James Blasingame's new book, *Books That Don't Bore 'Em,* (Scholastic) states that "Good young adult literature is powerful. It grabs kids' interest and speaks to them in language they can understand about the very issues they worry about on a daily basis. . . ." (7). He goes on to credit John (Jack) Bushman and Aileen Pace Nilsen as his tutors in his sojourn to the remarkable journey of young adult literature. The book goes into great depth explaining what young adult literature is and why it is important to adolescents. He provides bibliographies of good books for the young adult reader, and there is an exceptional section on brief interviews he has conducted with many such authors. He notes that teens want "authenticity in their reading." Any teacher can vouch for this. Blasingame's excellent text offers guidance for educators who are looking for good

Trelease points out that one doesn't have to use just books; magazine and newspaper articles are good also. It is important "to make positive connections between the child and the reading experience." But he relishes the days when a student says, "Do you know of anymore books like that one?"

resources to bring readers and books together in meaningful ways. There is no shilly-shallying here. Blasingame and the authors present the case for using books that will develop lifetime readers.

Jim Trelease's *The Read-Aloud Handbook: 2006-2007 Edition* (Penguin) reaffirms why reading aloud is important for any age. This dynamic educator has been doing presentations all over the world, sharing his insights and ideas for developing readers by having good books available in the home as well as in the classroom. Parents and teachers are partners. He even cites how he got his own twelve-year-old to sit still for a story. (72-73). Trelease points out that one doesn't have to use just books; magazine and newspaper articles are good also. It is important "to make positive connections between the child and the reading experience." But he relishes the days when a student says, "Do you know of any more books like that one?" He cites Avi's *Wolf Rider* as a real grabber for most reluctant readers. Of course, parents, teachers, and librarians will appreciate the briefly annotated lists of books he provides for those in search of titles.

Roxanne Coady and Joy Johannessen have edited a most interesting book, *The Book That Changed My Life* (Gotham Books). This is an adult book for adults, but could serve as an excellent model for a school project in which students could develop their own anthology. Seventy-one authors responded to the request "to write about a book that changed their lives, not only to enjoy their stories, but as a reminder and a provocation that books indeed change lives . . . ." (xxi).

Billy Collins, Poet Laureate of the United States (2001-2003), lists two books, *The Yearling* and *Lolita*. He states:

> What more deeply connects the two books—one written for children, the other about a seducer of children—is their capacity to expand the natural sympathies of the reader.... If reading enlarges our sympathy for others, strangers mostly—here a boy and a man whose loves are doomed by their desire-then these two books, alien to each other, widened my world and awakened empathies I had never felt before. (61).

Jack Prelutsky chose *A Child's Garden of Verses, Alice in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass,* and *Wild Animals I Have Known*.

Hardly an author was able to list just one book. But each described the emotional impression the books made. Regardless of the genre or the topic, something struck home, deep inside. There is a lasting effect when one recalls the titles and authors who made such an impression and caused the reader to value the literary experience. This reminds me of a book I co-edited in 1980 for Avon Books, *Books I Read When I Was Young*. We asked famous people to cite three books they read as children or young adults which made a lasting impression upon them.

Different Places, Different Times

Philip Wooderson's *The Plague* (Kingfisher) is an interesting dual book that describes the effects of the plague in London in 1665 as told first by Rachel and then by Robert. This is a grim recounting of one of the deadliest epidemics to strike, and the author describes the horrible conditions, the bodies being carted away, the fears, and the desperate feelings people have over something none seems to understand:

> Joe was in the large room at the back, fingers pegged to his nostrils. The stench was nauseating. He said the door had been closed, but he'd smelled something bad from the passage. Nothing could have prepared him-or me-for what we beheld in that room.
>
> The air was soon seething with flies, woken up by the light of our candles. And in the bed, Widow Blunket lay propped up with bolsters, as if she'd been waiting to greet us.
>
> Her face was like leathery parchment. It was gnawed away on one side, exposing chalky white bones and a grin made of crooked brown teeth. . .(81)

Arturo Martinez's *Pedrito's World* (University of Texas Press) is the story of a Mexican American family living as tenants on a farm

in South Texas in 1941 and celebrates the gifts of life as the world gradually drifts into World War II. The main character, Pedrito, is six years old, and the descriptions of him going to school, learning English, and coming home to interested parents who want to know all that he has learned, show a love and devotion to learning with the hope that he and other Mexican American children will have a better life. This is a novel filled with love and is an important contribution by an author who is writing from his experiences as well as from his heart.

The Garden by Carol Matas (Aladdin) is an engrossing story of the birth of Israel and the conflicts not only with Arab neighbors, but also the British who were "protectors" at the time. Anyone who follows current events in the Israeli-Palestine conflicts will find this historical novel riveting. Young people, both Israeli and Arab, are thrown into confrontations for self-survival. It would seem that both sides would want peace. Ruth, Nate, Zvi, and Fanny know they have to do special tasks, smuggling arms into Israel, in order to protect their kibbutz as well as safeguard the newly formed state of Israel. Even then suicide bombers attack public transportation. But not all Arabs are in favor of such hostilities. Fast reading. (A good novel for parallel reading is *Habibi* by Naomi Shihab Nye (Simon Pulse).

At the Sign of the Star by Katherine Sturtevant (Sunburst), set in eighteenth century London, is the story of young Meg Moore who discovers her father plans to marry again. She is not happy because she thought she would inherit her father's book store and then would be financially independent to live her life as she wants. Books give her the inspiration and courage to be independent and to dream of a future she really desires. What happens if her stepmother gives birth to a son? Who will inherit the store then? An interesting tale that brings forth honest thoughts for its time.

Stolen by the Sea by Anna Myers (Walker) is the gripping tale of the effects of the Galveston, Texas, hurricane which occurred in 1900. Maggie McKenna lived in a big house with many luxuries. Felipe Ortega was an orphan who worked on the lawn and did odd jobs around the McKenna home. When the storm hit, both young people struggled to escape the damaging storm that ruined Galveston and killed many people in the sweeping waters. This is a great novel, based on historic facts, to help people understand the Katrina.

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Of Lives and War

Stolen Voices: Young People's War Diaries From World War I to Iraq edited by Zlata Filipovic and Melanie Challenger, brings into focus the impact of war upon the lives of youth. Many students have read *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank (Doubleday). Now they can continue to see how diaries reveal the fears, suffering, pains that wars throughout the century have inflicted on families. The entries include victims of WWI, WWII, including the Holocaust, Vietnam, the Balkans War, the Second Intifada between Israel and Palestine, and Iraq. The diary entries should make readers wonder how many understand the impact of war upon individuals as well as communities. Zlata Filipovic, who records her experiences in the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1991-1993) sums it up: June 29, 1992:

> Dear Mimmy.
>
> BOREDOM!!! SHOOTING!!! SHELLING!!! PEOPLE BEING KILLED!!! DESPAIR!!! HUNGER!!! MISERY!!! FEAR!!! (214)

London Calling by Edward Bloor (Knopf) is an engrossing novel of how a radio transfers Martin back to the London blitz during WWII. The radio makes it possible for Jimmy, a boy in London during the war, to make contact with Martin and to bring him over to see war in all of its realities. How can Martin convince people of his experiences? Outstanding.

Tomorrow When the War Began by John Marsden (Scholastic) has been reissued and is the story of some friends who go away on a camping trip and return to find that their country has been invaded and everyone is gone. This is the first in a series of books that could be used in social studies as well as English classes to show struggles for survival when the unexpected happens.

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by John Boyne (David Fickling) is another WWII novel that tells the story of a German boy and his family who have to leave their Berlin home to move to a special house way out of town. The boy, Bruno, can't understand what is happening and why his father's job forces the family to move. As he looks out of the window of his house, he sees in the distance a fenced-in area. What is this place called Out-With? Where are the children to play with? As Bruno looks out of his window, he sees people beyond and wonders who they are and what they are doing. He decides he ought to go exploring:

> And, as often as he had watched the people, all the different kinds of people in their striped pajamas, it had never really occurred to him to wonder what it was all about. . . . And who decided which people wore the striped pajamas and which people wore the uniforms? The one thing Bruno tried not to think about was that he had been told on countless occasions by Mother and Father that he was not allowed to walk in this direction, that he was not allowed to walk anywhere near the fence or the camp, and, most particularly that exploration was banned at Out-With. With No Exceptions. (100-102)

The entries include victims of WWI, WWII, including the Holocaust, Vietnam, the Balkans War, the Second Intifada between Israel and Palestine, and Iraq. The diary entries should make readers wonder how many understand the impact of war upon individuals as well as communities.

My final recommendation is *I Was a Child of Holocaust Survivors* by Bernice Eisenstein (Roaring Brook), another look at the Holocaust and its effects on people. This book is quite different. The illustrations lighten the tone, and the writing is really beautiful. Yes, a child can raise many questions about what has happened, and she doesn't always find easy answers.