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THE ALAN REVIEW

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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.

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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.

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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**
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SUMMER ISSUE Deadline:	**JANUARY 15**

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

From the Editors

There's a buzz in the air. You get wind of it in the department store aisles filled with book bags, binders, glue sticks and rulers. It's fall, and another school year is cranking up.

As students head back to school, this issue of *The ALAN Review* provides an extensive look at a variety of authors, genres, and contemporary issues in young adult literature.

We kick off this issue with an article by Susan L. Groenke and Joellen Maples on "Critical Literacy in Cyberspace? A Case Study Analysis of One Preservice Teacher's Attempts at Critical Talk about *Monster* in Online Chats with Adolescents." Their study of a Web Pen Pal program shows that adolescents can successfully discuss literary topics on their own, with teachers providing some follow-up support for quality critical discussions.

James Bucky Carter takes another stab at trying to kill the idea of genre related to graphic novels in his article, "Die a Graphic Death: Revisiting the Death of Genre with Graphic Novels Or 'Why won't you just die already?': Graphic Novels and the Slow Death of Genre." He argues that many individuals continue to refer to such sequential art narration as a genre rather than a form or format, which he believes is a more accurate classification.

Walter Dean Myers, whose award-winning young adult literature is a mainstay of libraries across the nation, takes time out from writing to visit with *ALAN Review* co-editor Lori Atkins Goodson about his amazing career and his dedication to young adolescents in "Walter Dean Myers: A *Monster* of a Voice for Young Adults." He gives credit to a special teacher and to other authors in the field for inspiring him and helping him develop as a writer. Middle school language arts teacher Jennifer Funk joins in with a review of *Sunrise over Fallujah*, one of Myers's recent releases.

In "Hearing Nancy Garden Out," Barbara Ward visits with the author regarding *Endgame* (2006) and *Hear Us Out: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope from the 1950s to the Present* (2007) and her decades of speaking out for young adults.

For his Research Connection, Jeffrey Kaplan discusses "Perception and Reality: Examining the Representations of Adolescents in Young Adult Fiction." He examines three studies that show young adult fiction continues to provide a vital reflection of the image of adolescents—and possibly offers some keys for educators regarding how those adolescents learn.

Author Chris Crowe provides a creative, futuristic look at literacy . . . and the National Council of Teachers of Everything in "Fahrenheit 113: A Story."

"Comparing Middle Grade Teachers' and Middle Grade Students' Reader Responses to Newbery Award Winners: A True Teachers' Lounge Story and the Question it Raised" by Marshall George takes a closer look at how adults and young adolescents respond to the same books.

Judith Hayn and Lisa Hazlett, as co-authors of "Connecting LGBTQ to Others through Problem Novels: When A LGBTQ is NOT the Main Character," suggest that some recent texts can be used more broadly in the classroom to help all students develop a greater understanding for students with different sexual orientations.

Three notable authors—Joan Bauer, Chris Crutcher, and Gary Paulsen—share a tribute to the 2007 ALAN Award winner Teri Lesesne, followed by a tribute to the 2007 Ted Hipple Award winner Patricia P. Kelly from Robert Small and Kathryn Kelly, past ALAN presidents, and Pam Cole, Associate Dean in the College of Education at Kennesaw State University and former doctoral student of Pat's.

Diane P. Tuccillo visits with Victoria Hanley in "Reading, Writing, and Victoria Hanley," as Hanley shares her ideas on helping students create the valuable link between reading and writing.

April Brannon tackles the use of literature to teach about genocide—past and present—in "Teaching *They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky*: An Opportunity for Educating about Displacement and Genocide."

To wrap up this issue, C.J. Bott interviews Ellen Wittlinger and Toby Davis in "*Parrotfish*: A Parrot, a Fish or Something in Between?" We've paired that interview with Elizabeth McNeil's analysis of *Parrotfish*.

But don't overlook our regular features—the Clip and File section features 31 reviews of the latest releases in young adult literature. And consider submitting an article for possible publication in the 2009 summer issue, themed "A Different Way: Innovative Approaches to the Writing and/or Teaching of Young Adult Literature," with a submission deadline of Jan. 15, 2009. See complete details in the Call for Manuscripts in this issue.

With this issue's quality collection of articles, we think everyone will find something of interest. And, while the kids at the school bus stop are showcasing their new book bags and notebooks, you can relax, knowing you have a new issue of *The ALAN Review* to thumb through over and over again.

Enjoy!

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**.

Call for Manuscripts

2009 Winter Theme: Negotiations and Love Songs: The Literature of Young Adults

This theme is intended to solicit articles about young adult literature, authors, and instructional approaches that deal with the relationships that develop among young people, the things they love and how they navigate and negotiate the way to their heart's desires in the world. This theme is meant to be open to interpretation and support a broad range of subtopics. General submissions are welcome, as well. **October 15 submission deadline.**

2009 Summer Theme: A Different Way: Innovative Approaches to the Writing and/or Teaching of Young Adult Literature

This theme is intended to solicit articles about young adult literature, authors, and instructional approaches that attempt to take the genre in new directions. This might include, but not be limited to, connections to new literacies, subject matter that has previously been absent or scarce in YAL, or formats/subgenres that are expanding the YAL genre. This theme is meant to be open to interpretation and support a broad range of subtopics. General submissions are welcome, as well. **January 15 submission deadline.**

2009 Fall Theme: Growing Up: Young Adult Literature Gaining Stature at the High School Level

This theme is intended to solicit articles about young adult literature, authors, and instructional approaches that illustrate the value of using young adult literature in the high school setting. This might include, but not be limited to, the exploration of specific titles and themes linked to areas of the high school curriculum, the examination of successful implementation of YA into current classes, the value of YA literature in Advanced Placement coursework and as a bridge to college literature studies. 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.**

Susan L. **Groenke** and Joellen **Maples**

Critical Literacy in Cyberspace?

A Case Study Analysis of One Preservice Teacher's Attempts at Critical Talk about *Monster* in Online Chats with Adolescents

Despite the ubiquity of research that suggests discussion about literature helps to increase student engagement with literary texts and is an integral part of developing a working knowledge of stories (Brevig 522), little discussion occurs in language arts and English classrooms. In 1997, Nystrand and his colleagues reported that whole-class discussion averaged a scant 15 seconds a day in the hundreds of 9th-grade classes they observed (42). These results were largely replicated by subsequent research reported in 2003 by Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran in a one-year study of 974 students in 64 middle and high school English classrooms in 19 schools in five states.

As former English teachers and current teacher educators who have used and continue to use discussion as a predominant teaching mode, we know discussion affords students opportunities to hear diverse viewpoints and perspectives; engage in "exploratory" rather than "presentational" talk (Henson 45); and modify their original understandings. When this discussion occurs around young adult novels that highlight critical literacy topics (e.g., the relationship between power and language), opportunities also arise for students to go beyond the level of the book—or their own personal experiences—to a consideration of larger sociopolitical systems at work in society.

But facilitating discussion well—especially discussion of potentially volatile topics—is no easy task. As McCann et al. suggest, "Facilitating discussion may appear easy, but it involves skills that require development over time" (xiii). Yet, specific work in the craft of managing discussions is rarely a part of methods education.

Critical literacy is not encouraged in increasingly prevalent scripted reading programs that can silence students' voices and marginalize non-White students (cf. Jordan), or by school administrators who fire and suspend teachers for encouraging the expression of controversial ideas (ex. Meyer; O'Quinn).

When preservice English teachers take Susan Groenke's young adult literature course, they have not yet begun their extended fieldwork in local middle and high school English classrooms. As their field placement coordinator, Dr. Groenke knows few opportunities exist for them to practice facilitating discussion about literature.

Fewer opportunities exist for them to practice taking a critical stance toward literature instruction. Critical literacy is not encouraged in increasingly prevalent scripted reading programs that can silence students' voices and marginalize non-White students (cf. Jordan), or by school administrators who fire and

suspend teachers for encouraging the expression of controversial ideas (ex. Meyer; O'Quinn). This lack of opportunity holds implications: as Beck suggests, an "absence" of models "for bringing critical literacy to the classroom" may cause beginning teachers to adopt less-critical teaching methods (394). If we want beginning teachers to feel confident in adopting critical teaching methods, we must provide them opportunities to see what critical literacy can look like in classrooms.

Thus, in spring 2005, we implemented the Web Pen Pals project, a university-secondary partnership that pairs preservice English teachers in online chat rooms with local middle school students to talk about young adult literature (for project description and context, see Groenke & Paulus, 2007). One goal of our teacher preparation program is to encourage beginning teachers to use technology effectively in their future teaching. A particular goal of the Web Pen Pals project is for beginning English teachers to use computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools to practice taking a critical literacy stance in discussion of young adult literature (see Groenke, 2007–2008, and Groenke, Maples, & Dunlap, 2005, for rationale for use of CMC in facilitating discussion).

In this article we provide theoretical underpinnings of the project and report findings from a case analysis of one preservice teacher, Amanda (pseudonyms used throughout), who participated in the Web Pen Pals project. Specifically, the analysis focused on the discourse moves Amanda used to facilitate critical talk in the online chats. Findings suggest adolescents can and will raise critical literacy topics on their own, without the aid of teacher prompting, and teachers' follow-up strategies can encourage the potential for collaborative development of critical talk. But beginning teachers may need more guidance in facilitating substantive, fully developed critical talk. We end with pedagogical implications.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Taking a critical stance in discussion of young adult literature requires a critical perspective of reading instruction. This perspective differs from modernist and transactional perspectives of reading instruction. Serafini explains a modernist perspective of reading instruction can be seen in basalized and direct instruction reading programs that assume a unique, single meaning of a text resides solely in the text (which the teacher knows and the reader must "find") (par 14).

A transactional perspective, as predominantly exemplified in reader-response practices and literature-based instruction (e.g., Rosenblatt; Wilhelm) assumes meaning of a text occurs through a transaction between a reader's life experiences and the text; the prior experiences, values, and beliefs a reader brings to a text will influence how the reader interprets the text. Thus, the focus of such a perspective often stays on the life of the reader through personal response (Lewis).

Critical literacy theorists and researchers (e.g., Comber & Simpson; Muspratt, Luke, and Freebody; Davens and Bean; Van Sluys, Lewison, and Flint) believe both the processes of reading and the texts being interpreted are power-laden. Thus, a critical perspective understands a reader's experience *and* the language and structure of a text—authorial choices—combine to influence the multiple meanings a text can hold. A critical reader, then, as Shor explains ". . . does not stay at the empirical level of memorizing data, or at the impressionistic level of opinion, or at the level of dominant myths in society, but goes beneath the surface to understand the origin, structure, and consequences of any body of knowledge, technical structure, or object under study" (24).

Advocates of young adult literature see its potential for helping adolescents "go beneath the surface" of facts and personal opinion to a deeper understanding of one's own reading processes and the sociopolitical systems we belong to.

Advocates of young adult literature see its potential for helping adolescents "go beneath the surface" of facts and personal opinion to a deeper understanding of one's own reading processes and the sociopolitical systems we belong to. Edelsky believes young adult literature may help students "notice . . . 'systems of domination' and 'systems of privilege'" (12). Glasgow explains young adult literature can provide "a context for students to become conscious of

their operating world view and to examine critically alternative ways of understanding the world and social relations" (54).

In the Web Pen Pals project, one of the focus texts we used was Walter Dean Myers's young adult novel *Monster*, which tells the story of 16-year-old Steve Harmon, who has been accused of serving as a lookout for a robbery of a Harlem drugstore. The owner was shot and killed, and Steve is in prison, awaiting trial. Throughout the novel, Steve struggles to prove to himself that he is not the "monster" the prosecutor, the jury, and society believes him to be. We had previously taught *Monster* to urban ninth grade students and middle schoolers who considered it a "favorite," and we felt the book lent itself to critical literacy discussions and instruction.

To help the preservice teachers in the young adult literature course understand how *Monster* could be considered from a critical stance, we introduced them to Lewison's, Flint's and Van Sluys' "Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy" (383-384) (see Figure 1). The "Four Dimensions" represent a synthesis of critical literacy definitions as they have appeared in the literature over the last 30 years. The dimensional perspective is not necessarily linear or best demonstrated in a developmental move across dimensions. Rather, developing critical literacy is an interrelated process. Lewison et al. explain the last dimension—taking action—is "*the* goal of critical literacy," but it cannot be attained without "expanded understandings and perspectives gained from the other three dimensions" (384, italics in original).

In the young adult literature class, we discussed the dimensions as they might apply to Myers's novel; brainstormed questions/topics we might ask/raise to help our pals engage each dimension (see Figure 1); and then used these questions/topics to guide our own in-class discussion of *Monster* before beginning the Web Pen Pals project.

Researching the Web Pen Pals Project

This article reports research from a larger qualitative case study of three preservice teachers who participated in the Web Pen Pals project. In the larger study, the preservice teachers chatted online about two novels: Avi's *Nothing but the Truth*, and Myers's *Monster.* To limit the scope of this article, we focus on the talk that occurred about *Monster,* and we focus on the case of one preservice teacher, Amanda, and her middle school pals because the case was unique (Yin); of the three preservice teachers who participated in the larger study, Amanda's chat transcripts revealed a significantly higher number of "critical talk" episodes, and Amanda and her pals came closest to achieving engaged, substantive critical talk. Amanda's middle school pals included two females—Sarah and Kendra—and one male, Dave. The group participated in three one-hour chat sessions about *Monster*. Amanda was instructed to serve as a "reading buddy" to her middle school pals.

Methodology

Data Collection

The central question guiding this analysis was: *How does Amanda facilitate critical talk about young adult literature in online discussions with adolescents?* The transcripts of each of Amanda's one-hour chat sessions served as the primary data source. They were downloaded into word processing documents at the end of the semester. Analysis of the chat transcripts occurred on several levels to answer the research questions. Secondary data sources included Amanda's written reflections, which were collected after the semester was completed, and the transcript from one 1-hour interview, conducted with Amanda at the end of the semester.

Data Analysis

Relevant topic segments. First, because we were interested in understanding how critical talk occurred about *Monste*r, we focused on the conversational turns which were on the topic of "book talk," that is, *Monster.* When a comment seemed to introduce a "book talk" topic, comments responding to it were coded (Dodson).

Critical talk topics. The next analysis involved using the "book talk" topical episodes to locate "critical talk" episodes in the discussions for microanalysis. We used Lewison et al.'s four dimensions of critical literacy as criterion to determine critical talk. As a result of this analysis, we located five total "critical talk" episodes in Amanda's *Monster* chat sessions.

Types of discourse moves. To understand what discourse moves Amanda used to facilitate critical talk in the critical talk episodes, we implemented

Four Dimensions of Critical Literacy	Characteristics	Topics/Questions as related to *Monster*
1. Disrupting the Commonplace	• Problematizing all subjects of study (including adolescence, learning), and understanding existing knowledge as a historical product • Interrogating texts: "How is this text trying to position me?" • Including popular culture and media as a regular part of the curriculum • Studying language to analyze how it shapes identity, constructs cultural discourses, and supports or disrupts the status quo	Re-thinking traditional notions of masculinity/toughness (watch Media Education Foundation video, *Tough Guise*). What are alternative ways to be masculine? What determines one's identity? Why is this text written in this multi-genre style? How does it affect the reader's experience of reading the novel? Why might Myers put the reader in the position to judge Steve's character? Representations of African-American males as "gangster,""thug" exist in the novel. Who benefits from these kinds of representations? Are they accurate? What would different representations look like? Steve's lawyer tells him: "You're young, you're Black, and you're a male. You're already guilty in the jury's eyes." What does this quote mean?
2. Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints	• Reflecting on multiple and contradictory perspectives • Asking: "Whose voices are heard and whose are missing?" • Paying attention to and seeking out the voices of those who have been silenced or marginalized • Making difference visible	What if Steve were White? What if the lawyers and judge were Black? Why does Steve's mother wonder if they should get a Black lawyer? The multi-genre novel forces the reader into this dimension—is Steve telling the truth? Who *is* Steve? The reader gets some information through his journal entries, but the information differs from what he writes in his screenplay. Flashback scenes cast doubt on Steve's innocence. Steve is called a "monster," and his lawyer and dad seem to doubt his innocence, but his teacher supports him and he is a loving brother. He seems like a "good guy."
3. Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues	• Going beyond the personal and attempting to understand the sociopolitical systems to which we belong • Challenging unquestioned legitimacy of unequal power relationships • Redefining literacy as a form of cultural citizenship and politics that increases opportunities for subordinate groups to participate in society and as an ongoing act of consciousness and resistance	Consider reasons once-thriving urban centers have become economically disadvantaged and look at links between this and masculinity for young African-American males Who is to blame for youth violence? Why might joining a gang be something a person would do? Percentage of young Black males in prison vs. other populations Research shows Black males are incarcerated at higher rates than other non-Black males
4. Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice	• Engaging in praxis—reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it • Using language to exercise power to enhance everyday life and to question practices of privilege and injustices • Analyzing how language is used to maintain domination, how nondominant groups can gain access to dominant forms of language and culture, how diverse forms of language can be used as cultural resources, and how social action can change existing discourses	Local community action to raise awareness about youth violence and consider ways to prevent it Youth take action in school to encourage alternative views of masculinity

Figure 1. Adapted from Lewison, Mitzi et al. "Taking On Critical Literacy: The Journey of Newcomers and Novices." *Language Arts* 79 (2002): 382-392

Spradley's strict inclusion semantic relationship and his means-end semantic relationships. We coded Amanda's and her pals' turns within each critical talk episode line by line under the semantic domains of "X is a kind of Y" (strict inclusion) and "X is a way to do Y" (means-end). Next, we identified salient domains and looked for domains supported by the data. Then we developed subcategories within the domains to show what was happening within the data. We continually refined these categories.

The final analytic step was a detailed analysis of specific threads and how Amanda's discourse moves impacted the critical talk episodes. This phase of the analysis involved examining Amanda's discourse moves in the context of the discussions.

Findings and Discussion

This analysis explored the discourse moves a preservice teacher, Amanda, used to facilitate online discussions about literature with middle school students in a synchronous CMC environment, and the impact of these moves on the development of critical talk about the young adult novel, *Monster*.

Amanda used a variety of discourse moves to facilitate discussion about *Monster*. Most salient in the analysis, however, was her use of *uptake, sharing her personal opinions, and soliciting authentic student opinion*s (see Table 1):

Table 1. Amanda's Main Discourse Moves in the Critical Talk Episodes

Discourse Moves	Description	Frequency
Uptake	To inquire into something a student contributes to the discussion	11
	To share comments or information to extend student's contribution	6
Share Opinion	To share one's personal belief or attitude about a topic	14
Request for Opinion	Request reader's general attitude toward the written text, author, etc.	12
Challenge	Elicit a defense or line of argument	7
Praise	To appreciate or recognize a person or idea	6
Give Directive	To instruct or guide	5
Agree	To support another's position or belief	5
Request for Elaboration	Elicit more information about a student response to teacher-posed question	5
Acknowledge	To provide affirmation or confirmation of a comment	4
Provide Example	To give an idea to represent or clarify a concept	3
Investigate	Request for students to look deeper into a certain topic; probe	2

Nystrand defines *uptake* as a teacher discourse strategy that "validates . . . students' ideas" (6). That Amanda used this strategy is significant for several reasons. First, it signifies that the students were participating in the discussion—posing questions and initiating topics on their own. Second, Amanda's use of *uptake* positioned students' contributions as the focus of discussion. Many of the students posed critically-minded questions; thus, Amanda's use of the *uptake* strategy positioned the student-initiated critical talk questions/topics as the focus of discussion. This discourse move—paired with Amanda *sharing her own opinions* and *requesting student opinions*—also seemed to encourage the collaborative development of critical talk.

In the excerpts which follow, we present examples from Amanda's first chat illustrating the various discourse moves she used to facilitate critical talk throughout the chats. In the first excerpt (see Figure 2), it is Amanda's *uptake* of her pal, Kendra's, question, which ultimately seems to create the opportunity for a collaborative critical discussion to emerge.

In Amanda's discussions her pals often initiated topics for discussion and frequently asked questions of the group. It is a question posed by Kendra—"do you think the color of Steve has anything to do with it?"—that prompts the discussion which occurs in the above excerpt—a question which inspired the emergence of critical talk through examining race as an issue within the text.

In response, Dave and Sarah shared opposing perspectives (lines 102, 103). Amanda followed up Kendra's question with an *uptake* discourse move (line 105), which positioned Kendra's question as the focus of discussion and encouraged the students to elaborate on their viewpoints. Typical to Amanda's discussion style, Amanda seemed to act as a co-participant with her pals, and often *shared her opinion* to the students' questions, as she does to Kendra's question, "I think it does have something to do w/ things" (line 106). In line 107, Kendra extended her

Line #	Speaker	Turn	*Discourse move*
101.	Kendra	do you think the color of Steve has anything to do with it ?	Student initiation
102.	Dave	not at all	
103.	Sarah	i do	
105.	Amanda	everyone please explain why they think what they think about the color question	Uptake
106.	Amanda	i think it does have something to do w/things	Share opinion
107.	Kendra	if he was white would he have a different outcome ?	
108.	Amanda	i think his color plays a part	Share opinion

Figure 2. Excerpt 1 from Chat 1. *Note:* Conversations overlap in synchronous chat rooms. Thus the missing line numbers indicate chat turns that were part of a different conversation than what is being analyzed here. With the exception of adding pseudonyms, all examples are presented verbatim.

Line #	Speaker	Turn	Discourse Move
118.	Amanda	we read an article that said whites were arrested just as much and more sometimes than blacks,	Uptake (extend)
119.	Amanda	but blacks r more likely to be convicted and have a harsher punishment. Why do you think that is?	Uptake continued/ Request for opinion
123.	Kendra	from movies we have a certain outlook	
127.	Dave	people don't stop to realize things about them	
124.	Sarah	i think it is b/c they have a bad reputation	
131.	Sarah	its like they were talking bout [another local high school] it has a bad reputation even though the school isnt bad i think the black ppl have a bad reputation but some of them arent bad	Extend

Figure 3. Excerpt 2 from Chat 1

initial question, which seemed to problematize the issue of race and provided another perspective for her pals to consider. In line 108, Amanda again *shared her opinion*: "i think his color plays a part."

As the discussion continued (see excerpt in Figure 3), Amanda presented information from an article she had read in the young adult literature course concerning race and arrests of juvenile male offenders to perhaps further or deepen the topic. Here, by sharing the information about the article, Amanda did several things to encourage the continuation of the talk. First, she collaboratively developed a critical talk topic with Kendra and Sarah by *uptaking* their questions and adding information to help further extend the discussion. She also presented information that might have countered some of her pals' assumptions, which may have encouraged critical talk ("whites were arrested just as much and more sometimes than black"). Perhaps to generate more discussion about the information she shared, Amanda asked an *opinion* question, "why do u think that is" (line 119).

All of the students responded, implying they were engaged in the conversation. Kendra provided a possible justification (line 123), connecting the media's influence to how people look at African-Americans. This seemed to show she understood a connection existed between the representation of a group by the media and the discriminatory actions carried out against particular groups. Sarah contributed her own perspective to the question and said, "i think it is b/c they have a bad reputation" (line 124). Dave responded, "people don't stop to realize things about them" (line 127).

In line 131, Sarah elaborated on her earlier response (line 124) to Amanda's *opinion* question about why black male offenders may be convicted at higher rates than white male offenders. Here, Sarah brought up a local high school in the area and made a local, real-world connection to extend the idea of how stereotypes and misrepresentations can be inaccurate. The potential for the talk to become critical is present—as the students and Amanda consider how perceptions of others are formed—and Amanda and her pals seem willing to delve beneath the surface of facts to generate possible explanations for why race might play a role in how the character of Steve is treated and judged in *Monster*. But ultimately, the discussion ended as Amanda changed the topic (see Figure 4).

Line #	Speaker	Turn	Discourse Move
132.	Dave	blacks are more of my friends than most white people	
133.	Amanda	awesome Dave that means you r more open minded then some other people	Individual Praise
135.	Amanda	we need guys like u in the world to help stop the craziness	Individual Praise
142.	Kendra	ppl are afraid of things they cant explain or understand	
144.	Amanda	great job Kendra	Individual Praise
155.	Sarah	ppl judge ppl by what color they r even if they dont try 2 they still do it	
156.	Sarah	its hard not to	
157.	Amanda	and that is why we need to recognize this and affect the world what do u think?	Acknowledge Request for Opinion
158.	Kendra	ppl go by what statistics say	
160.	Amanda	Can you explain to me why you chose the line from the book you did?	Initiates new topic

Figure 4. Excerpt 3 from Chat 1

Throughout the discussion, Dave seemed to take the topic of race personally and seemed to feel the need to present himself as an ally to African-Americans: "blacks are more of my friends than most white people" (line 132). In line 142, Kendra continued to generate possible reasons for racism and said, "ppl are afraid of things they cant explain or understand." Amanda praised her for her comments (line 144). Sarah pointed out that, "ppl judge ppl by what color they r even if they don't try 2 they still do it its hard not to" (lines 155 & 156). Amanda responds that this is why people need to "recognize and affect the world" (line 157).

But before ideas about how to actually "affect the world" could be shared, Amanda posed a question which initiated a new and unrelated topic, "Can you explain to me why you chose the lines from the book you did?" (line 160), referring to a previous conversation where Amanda has asked her pals to share lines they felt important to the text.

Pedagogical Implications

As Simpson explains, critical discussions of literature often result not from teachers' carefully crafted questions, but from the students' own questions and curiosities that emerge through discussion (124). In Amanda's case, it was often her pals' questions and comments which fostered the potential for critical talk to occur.

The development of critical talk may depend on a collaborative exchange, then, where teachers act as co-participants—sharing their own opinions, "thinking out loud" with students about issues—rather than as sole facilitators or discussion managers. Amanda seemed to play the role of co-participant successfully most of the time, and thus critical talk seemed to occur, or have the potential to occur. However, sometimes the critical talk episodes ended as a result of Amanda posing a new question that didn't build on or extend the critical talk that had developed. Thus, Amanda and her pals did not reach the fourth dimension of critical literacy, "taking action."

Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys posit that newcomers to critical literacy rarely get beyond the second dimension of "Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints" to the fourth dimension of "Taking Action," which they describe as the goal of critical literacy (384). Amanda and her pals did seem to get beyond this second dimension, as the talk in the first chat moved from questions about the role Steve's race played in how he would be judged, to how the media's representations of African-American males may influence negative stereotypes that people perceive to be accurate.

But just as the talk may have developed into considering ways to take action locally—or even to reconsider one's own beliefs and perceptions of African-Americans, and what makes racism difficult to combat—Amanda initiated a new question and topic, and thus shut down the opportunity for the critical talk to continue and possibly reach the fourth dimension of critical literacy.

This implies Amanda may not have been committed to the task of developing or encouraging a critical stance, and may have had other expectations or understandings of the discussion task. The post-project interview data may shed some light on Amanda's expectations for the discussion. Amanda explained she saw her role in the discussions to be "to

keep [students] on topic, to keep them moving . . ." (Interview transcript, December 8, 2005). When we asked why she felt she needed to do this, Amanda responded, ". . . [so] you can get everything covered" (Interview transcript, December 8, 2005). Ultimately it seems Amanda viewed one of her roles in facilitating the chat dialogue as covering an agenda. That Amanda came to the computer lab for each chat session with a prepared list of questions (Fieldnotes, February 15, 2005) seems to reinforce this interpretation.

What may be needed in the young adult literature course, then, is the opportunity for beginning teachers to examine their own histories of schooling and how their orientations toward reading and reading instruction—as well as the expectations they hold for teachers' and students' roles in discussion—come to be what they are.

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Of course, Amanda may not have known how to take her students to another level of talk, and more preparation for beginning teachers to take on critical literacy topics in the classroom may be required in teacher preparation coursework if substantive, well-developed critical talk is the goal.

We have begun to think that effective critical talk about literature may require an anthropological or "ecological" approach (Hillocks xi). Such an approach in the young adult literature course may involve preservice teachers developing larger curricular structures (e.g., units and yearlong programs) that engage them in long-term critical inquiry. As example, for *Monster,* preservice teachers might be given more time to thoroughly research juvenile incarceration rates by ethnicity and gender; explore depictions of masculinity in the media; and consider economic changes (e.g., effects of neoliberalism) on urban areas before engaging in (and during) discussions of the literature itself. In their future teaching, they might also encourage their students to engage in similar research.

Finally, we know it is important to remember, as McLaughlin and DeVoogd suggest, that teachers cannot just "become critical," that it is a "process that involves learning, understanding, and changing over time" (55). We believe providing opportunities for beginning teachers to see alternatives to the current, modernist-driven reading instruction in the young adult literature course is a crucial part of this process.

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James Bucky **Carter**

Die a Graphic Death: Revisiting the Death of Genre with Graphic Novels, or "Why won't you just die already?"

Graphic Novels and the Slow Death of Genre

In "The Death of Genre: Why the Best YA fiction Often Defies Classification" (*The ALAN Review*, 35.1: 43-50), Scot Smith speaks of having to constantly reclassify and reshuffle texts as he and his students consider the books on the genre lists used in his classes. Knowing that "Young adult literature has a long tradition of authors whose works defy genre classification" (43), he mulls over the idea of creating a genre-busters category for "novels which do not easily fit into a single category" (43). He concludes his article by stating, "By denouncing genre, we may perhaps begin to expand the horizons of our adolescents" (49). As someone who travels the country speaking to pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, English professors and Education professors, about graphic novels, I sympathize with Scot as he grapples with the issue of genre, a term which he feels may need to be retired.

What I have found repeatedly is that, regardless of the conscientious scholars and creators who have written on the graphic novel as being a form beyond genre, many students, teachers, and professors continue to refer to sequential art narration (comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels) as a genre rather than, as I think is more accurate, a form or format. This haunts me. Class after class, event after event, I find myself feeling like the arch-nemesis who thought he had finally conquered an old foe once and for all, only to curse the heavens when the apparently super-powered terminology resurfaces: "Why won't you just die, already!?!?" I extort. Or, in my more reflective moments, I may quip, "Haven't I killed you already?" But no; I haven't.

This article is an extension of my continued efforts to rid the world of the notion that the graphic novel is best thought of as a genre. Herein, I will offer alternative classifications, stating that *we might best see the graphic novel as a form that supports multiple genres*; attempt to explain why genre is a reductivist term when it applies to sequential art narratives; and offer visual examples and ready-to-use activities to help illustrate my points.

Part I: Terminology with a Possibly Unpleasant Kick

To be fair, I admit that I was once guilty of the sin of which I write. In my earliest days of researching comics and pedagogy, I too called graphic novels a genre, and I was far from alone. Then I read Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* and Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* and *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*, all texts from authors who actually create sequential art and teach it to others. McCloud refers to comics as an "artform—the medium—known as comics is like a vessel which can hold any number of ideas and images" (6). He uses *form* and *medium* interchangeably. For McCloud,

comics consist of writers, artists, trends, genres, styles, subject matter, and themes (6). In this vessel, which McCloud visually portrays as a pitcher (see Figure 1), it is clear that genre is "subsumed" within the larger form.

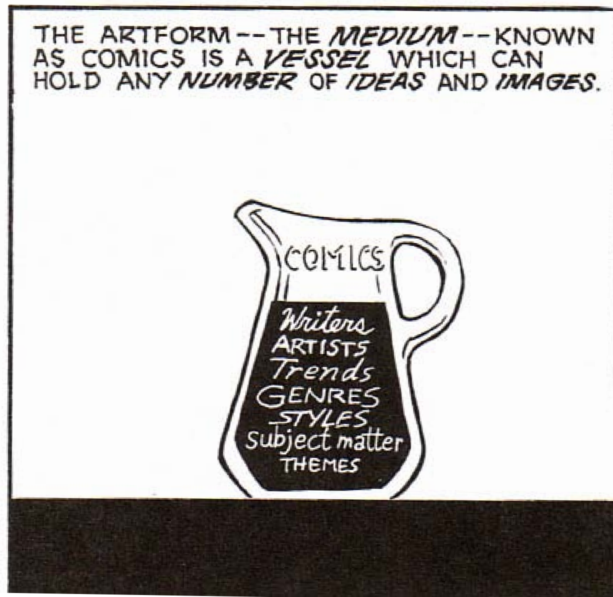

Figure 1. McCloud's Pitcher from page 6 of *Understanding Comics*

This idea of form subsuming genre seems to run counter to how many literary-minded folks consider genre. For instance, in the classic *A Reader's Guide to Literary Terms*, Karl Beckson and Arthur Ganz state that genre is:

> A literary type or class. Works are sometimes classified by subject—thus *carpe diem* poems *(q.v.)* may be said to constitute a genre—but the more usual classification is by form and treatment. Some recognized genres are epic, tragedy, comedy, lyric, etc. From the Renaissance through the eighteenth century, the various genres were governed by sets of rules which a writer was expected to follow. Recently, however, criticism has become less directly prescriptive and less concerned with distinctions among genres, though they are still considered useful (67-68).

Beckson and Ganz appear to define genre and form as synonymous. But, as I look at their examples of recognized genres, I see that the epic is a type of oral narrative poem; tragedy and comedy are types of drama; and the lyric is a type of poem. For each genre listed, there is a larger form to which it belongs.

In the very-recent *Genre Theory: Teaching, Writing, and Being*, Deborah Dean illustrates how genre continues to trump form in some intellectual circles. Dean states that "Genres are more than forms," furthering this claim herewith:

> Although, as Anthony Pare and Graham Smart acknowledge, 'repeated patterns in the structure, rhetorical moves, and style of texts are the most readily observable aspects of genre' (147), these observable features do not, by themselves, constitute a genre. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway explain that regularities in form come from the situation, instead of existing without reason: 'Genres have come to be seen as typical ways of engaging rhetorically with recurring situations. The similarities in textual form and substance are seen as deriving from the similarity in the social action undertaken' ("Introduction" 2). Bazerman extends the explanation, showing that forms not only come from situations but also guide us through situations: 'Genres are not just forms. Genres are forms of life . . . Genres are the familiar places we can go to create intelligible communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar' ("Life 19). And Marilyn L. Chapman affirms the others' assertions about form's relation to genre: 'Rather than rules to be followed . . . or models to be imitated . . ., genres are now being thought of as cultural resources on which writers draw in the process of writing for particular purposes and in specific situations' (469). So, although form is an aspect of genre, form does not define a genre. (Dean 9)

Less directly prescriptive, indeed. Each of the experts Dean quotes defines genre liberally, but each also extends the literary-minded ideal of form as part of genre, whereas the visual artists/theorists I've mentioned and I, too, would say, instead, "although genre is an aspect of form, genre does not define a form." I will expound on this point shortly, but let us consider how the genre vs. form dilemma is playing out in recent publications on YA literature:

Perhaps it is thinking similar to Beckson and Ganz's, and Dean's and her admittedly impressive sources, or maybe it is the "newness" of the form—or the newness of considering the form as viable—that is contributing to the conundrum of exactly what and how to consider graphic novels. For example, in an early discussion of them in *Young Adult Literature: Exploration, Evaluation, and Appreciation*, Katherine Bucher and M. Lee Manning use both *genre* and *format* to describe comic books, graphic novels, and magazines. They state, "These formats differ dramatically from the genres that educators have traditionally

encouraged adolescents to read" and "For many young adults, these three genres represent a welcome move away from what they consider traditional 'school' reading" (4). The chapter dealing with comics and graphic novels explicitly in their textbook is entitled "Exploring Other Formats" but refers to graphic novels as a "visual genre" (278). Bucher and Manning break down some popular comic book series under the headings *super-heroes, humor, fantasy/science fiction,* and *manga*. Despite the possible error of considering manga a genre instead of a form, as well, they touch on the fact that they are essentially offering their readers different genres of things that they themselves have described as genres.

This begs the question: If something can be subdivided into parts that are each extremely distinct, can we call that thing a genre? Surely there are subgenres, but if something can be a fantasy story, a romance, historical fiction, nonfiction, journalism, mythology, or a war story using the same format, can we truly call that form a genre? The term "sub-genre" suggests to me very fine degrees of separation from overarching themes, not formal elements of display or vast differences in themes and outlooks.

Again, though, I must not be too quick to judge folks for possible missteps. One of my most vivid memories of editing *Building Literacy Connections with Graphic Novels: Page by Page, Panel by Panel* involves a frantic e-mail and phone call to the editor once the book was about to go in the final stages of production. I realized that in my introduction, I had referred to the graphic novel as a genre rather than a format fourteen times. We caught what was, for me, and for the most part still is considered an error, but only at the last minute.

It is important to emphasize that the graphic novel is not solely situated in a print-based literary tradition, but in a fine arts-styled visual tradition, as well. Will Eisner, is considered an American master of the graphic novel, a term that he helped popularize by placing it on the cover of the paperback edition of his critically acclaimed *A Contract With God and Other Stories* (published in 1978) and legitimize by discussing it as a term that separated "literary" comics from the super-hero tales most often associated with the format. Eisner says in *Comics and Sequential Art* (first published in 1985), "The format of the comic book presents a montage of both word and image, and the reader is thus required to exercise both visual and verbal interpretive skills" (8). He quotes a Tom Wolf piece from 1977's Harvard Educational Review that discusses how reading and literacy are terms that themselves are coming "under closer scrutiny . . . . Indeed, reading—in the most general sense—can be thought of as a form of perceptual activity. The reading of words is one manifestation of this activity; but there are many others—the reading of pictures, maps, circuit diagrams, musical notes . . ." (Eisner 8). Eisner is inspired by these lines to suggest, "In its most economical state, comics employ a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols. When they are used again and again to convey similar ideas, they become a language—a literary form, if you will. And it is this disciplined application that creates the 'grammar' of Sequential Art" (8).

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Therein I feel that Eisner may inadvertently articulate not only why we should see comics and graphic novels as forms rather than genres, but also why some may feel strongly about using the term *genre* over *form* or *format*. While Eisner's words appeared a good fifteen years before The New London Group and Bill Copes and Mary Kalantzis were bringing the idea of visual and multimodal literacies to the English teacher's consciousness, Eisner and others actually involved in the creation of visual texts were making strong intellectual arguments that were only being heard by those already interested in their chosen form of expression.

In *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*, Eisner joins McCloud in calling comics both an art form and a medium. On the term *graphic novel*, he says, "This last permutation [of the comic art form]

It does seem to me that English teachers have had and often still do have a tendency to exalt the written word as best text, regardless of the fact that words are simply a string of letters, and that letters are simply pictographic images or graphemes that have developed a privi-leged signification over time.

has placed more demand for literary sophistication on the artist and writer than ever before" (Eisner 3). In saying the form was moving toward the more literary, Eisner is clearly implying that sequential art narration had once been squarely situated in the realm of the visual arts. The relatively recent phenomenon of teachers even considering graphic novels in their English language arts classes may further support his notion. I sometimes want to ask folks, "Do you remember when we used to value the visual arts so much in our schools that we actually had teachers who taught them in their own classes?" but, knowing that speaking it is one way by which we acknowledge the reality of it, that irks and depresses me for other reasons, so I let the question pass.

It does seem to me that English teachers have had and often still do have a tendency to exalt the written word as best text, regardless of the fact that words are simply a string of letters, and that letters are simply pictographic images or graphemes that have developed a privileged signification over time. Though accepting these premises lets us see that all reading is visual reading, that all literacy has some element of visual literacy (for those of us who are sighted, of course), many are still quick to separate and qualify works that have no visual arts-related texts to be read and interpreted from those that do have additional visual demands. Based on definitions of classification of genre, form, and medium from the likes of Beckson and Ganz, Dean, McCloud, and Eisner, and my experience as a teacher and teacher educator, my basic hypothesis is that educators with a literary background discover the graphic novel or comics and, like Eisner, see a consistency of formal elements from page to page or from one book to the next but take the Beckson and Ganz or Dean approach, mistaking the formal style of representation as elements of genre, not as elements of a larger form, or of a grammar or language as Eisner suggests. After all, when reading traditional literature, continued references to certain images or themes help define genre. But a particular brushstroke could be used in any number of varied-genre paintings.

When we talk of the actual language used in traditional print texts, we do not identify the language itself as a genre. The words might help us consider the genre of the overall form in which they appear. For example, the highly stylized language and themes of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* suggests that it is gothic in tone and theme. The overall formal layout of the letters and words lets us know the work is epistolary in form, and we know by considering the form as a whole that it is a novel. We know that it is a fiction novel because no one has ever been bitten by a bat and transformed into a vampire. In works that are even more visual in nature than those that use signified pictographs or graphemes, we can not confuse formal elements in repetition for indicators of genre—though, just to add to the mystification of the matter at hand, I should point out that Beckson and Ganz say of the epistolary novel, "The artificiality of the method . . . soon led to the devise of the genre as a popular form" (54). Instead, the formal elements, the panels, balloons, and borders, define the format. As Kenneth L. Doneslon and Alleen Pace Nilsen state in *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, when it comes to works of sequential art narrative, "the term *format* is more accurate than *genre* because the stories range from science fiction and fantasy to mysteries, historical fiction, love stories, and whatever else a creative person might think of" (315), like, say, epics, comedies, tragedies, or lyrical poems. McCloud, Eisner, Donelson and Nilsen and others have helped me come to the conclusion that it is most accurate to consider comics book and graphic novels as forms of sequential art narrative, as formats or mediums, that support multiple genres. Consider Figure 2, which contains five comic books and one graphic novel, all works of sequential art narrative.

Each of the cover images were obtained from The Grand Comic Book Database, available at http://www.comics.org. They represent a western, a ro-mance, a war comic, a slice-of-life comic, mythology/

Figure 2. Multiple Genres Supported by the Sequential Art Form
Titles top-to-bottom, left-to right: 1. *All Star Western* #58. DC Comics, 1951; 2. *Romance Stories of True Love* #56; Publisher unknown, 1957; 3. *Sgt. Rock* # 302. DC Comics, 1977; 4. *American Splendor* #1 by Harvey Pekar and various artists. Vertigo, 2006; 5. *The Living Bible* #1. The Living Bible Corporation, c. 1945; 6. *Safe Area Gorazde* by Joe Sacco. Tandem, 2001.

historical fiction/historical nonfiction (depending on one's belief system), and comics journalism. I could have easily found images for the super-hero, high fantasy, science fiction, fairy tale, horror, true crime, and mystery genres, as well. That much variety in supported genres surely illustrates that even the sub-genre argument is a weak one when it comes to sequential art narratives. And reading these works would only reveal serendipitous similarities in themes and issues at best. What they share in common are formal elements, not genre elements.

Other prominent scholars have made the overt realization that form or format is a better term than genre when describing the graphic novel, as well. Teri Lesense has recently written that "graphic novels represent a completely new format in YA books" (67) and asserts, "The new YA literature differs in both form and substance. Graphic novels, for instance, combine text and illustration in new ways and are, therefore, a logical extension of the picture storybooks enjoyed by students in elementary schools" (63). While we have already herein considered the accuracy of the term "new" and Eisner and I would argue that the pictoral elements of graphic novels are not illustrative but as essentially textual as the print, and that the totality of the pictures and words form what I have elsewhere called conglomerate layers of text, Lesesne continues, "Stories that combine distinct genres in a seamless blend move beyond the confines of each genre to extend stories in new directions" (63). Lesesne seems cognizant that the graphic novel is something beyond genre and uses the term "format" explicitly. She also seems to understand that there are various genres of manga and refers to it as "a form of graphic novel" (64).

Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey prime their readers in the introduction to the collection *Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons and more to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills* by asking, "Do comic books and graphic novels constitute an appropriate genre for classroom instruction?" (2) in order for contributors to focus on the terms' finer distinctions. Contributor Jacquelyn McTaggart informs, for example, that "Manga . . . is an art form" (Fisher & Frey 30) where students read stories "from back to front, but this format does not seem to confuse kids" and that

> Today the term 'comic book' describes any *format* [her italics] that uses a combination of frames, words, and pictures to convey meaning and tell a story. Perhaps it will help us understand the distinction between the two if we remember that *all graphic novels are comic books, but not all comic books are graphic novels* [again, her italics]. Every publica-

tion that uses the format of frames surrounding text and graphics is considered a comic or comic book. The lengthy ones, referred to as graphic novels, are also comics (31).

It is a play on words to say that all graphic novels are comic books, a play that Eisner might not have approved, but it is accurate in so much as graphic novels are "books full of comic art." In the same collection, I refer to "sequential art forms" to describe comics and graphic novels (47) and explicitly speak of "the comic book format" (49). Also in the same collection, Rocci Versaci agrees with McCloud and calls comics "a visual medium" (96). McTaggart, Versaci, and I have all previously and separately published on comics in the classroom, and Verscaci and I have each actually taught classes on comics as literature (I have even taught a class on graphic novels as YA literature). This illustrates that when someone asks a scholar-teacher knowledgeable of sequential art if comics are a genre, they respond with talk of formats and mediums. Of course, I have found that there is still some resistance to considering someone who studies sequential art a true scholar, and perhaps this also contributes to teachers favoring traditional literary thoughts on genre, reincarnating the beast even as well-informed others have sought to slay it.

Of course, I have found that there is still some resistance to considering someone who studies sequential art a true scholar, and perhaps this also contributes to teachers favoring traditional literary thoughts on genre, reincarnating the beast even as well-informed others have sought to slay it.

Peter Smagorinski seems to acknowledge the semantic soup we dip our spoons into when dealing with comics, genre, and format in *Teaching English By Design*. He states, "A genre refers to works that share codes: western, heroic journeys, detective stories, comedies of manner, and so one. These genres are often produced through a variety of media: short story, drama, novel, film, graphic novel, and so on, which themselves are referred to as genre" (120). He doesn't

Counterpoint

Doug Fisher & Nancy Frey

Though they let their contributors take center stage in *Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills* (2008), Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey know a little something about graphic novels and pedagogy themselves. They consistently use sequential art narration and techniques to teach their Hoover High School (San Diego, CA) students multiple literacy skills; they frequently present their work at national conferences, and they've published extensively on the intersections of sequential art and literacy. Indeed, their article "Using Graphic Novels, Anime, And The Internet In An Urban High School" won NCTE's Kate and Paul Farmer award for outstanding essay in 2004.

I asked them why they sometimes use the term "genre" over "format." The answer reveals that when it comes to defining terms, often the act of classification must match the given exigency:

"The word genre comes from the French (and originally Latin) word for 'kind' or 'class'. There are no "rigid rules of inclusion and exclusion" (Gledhill1985, p. 60). 'Genres . . . are not discrete systems, consisting of a fixed number of listable items' (p. 64). As such, the term gets used at a more macro level (e.g., nonfiction) and then again at a more micro level (e.g., biography, memoir, science fiction). It also seems reasonable to consider graphic novels a genre as there are some very specific characteristics of graphic novels that differ from comics or anime, a la genre. But at the end of the day, our work focuses on encouraging teachers to use sequential art in their classrooms and if the familiar term 'genre' encourages secondary school English teachers to use these texts, then we'll say it over and over again. "

Gledhill, C. (1985). Genre. In P. Cook (Ed.), The cinema book. London: British Film Institute.

expand this last bit of sentence to say whether he thinks that referencing is acceptable or not, but he does say "By genre, I do *not* [his italics] mean strictly form-oriented groupings of literature—poetry, drama, the novel, and other structures; these make a diffuse and unproductive means of organizing a curriculum" (120), sounding very much like me when a teacher asks what she should include in her thematic unit on graphic novels. I will usually offer suggestions but also urge the teacher to consider looking at the thematic units she is already doing and find graphic novels that might fit into them.

As Smagorinski says, he finds the short story to be an odd way to group literature for studying because of its diverse forms and themes, so too do I see a unit on the graphic novel as odd because of the vitality and diversity of the genres the form supports. Smagorinski clarifies, "I use genre to refer to texts that employ a predictable, consistent set of codes" (120). As mentioned earlier, the predictable, consistent codes on graphic novels are format, not genre-based, so we must not consider one as the other. Yes, most comics and graphic novels will have panels on pages with word balloons and narration in each panel, the panels placed in sequence, and the expectation of readers that they know to follow the balloons and panels left to right, top to bottom (unless it is an unflipped manga, of course). But the codes of the characters and plots and visual elements found within each piece of sequential art narration will make the genre, not the shared form that supports those genres.

Smagorinski is fine with units of genre study, supports them, even, and I, too, find myself thinking it is acceptable to integrate graphic novels into such units when the study is overtly focused on genre itself. Surely, there are some excellent romance comics that could help illustrate the themes, trends, and tropes in romantic novels. Surely there are some horror comics that—if one can find panels acceptable to bring into school setting—can help illustrate red herrings, suspense techniques, and uncertainty. Dick Tracy and Batman could easily accompany works from Edgar Allan Poe and Gaston Leroux in considerations of mystery or detective fiction. However, as Smagorinski suggests, we want to make sure that units arranged by genre have the proper types of codes in common.

Part II: From Terms to Texts

Now, there is more to the death of genre as it relates to graphic novels, of course. Smith's article is not about distinctions among terms so much as it is about distinctions among texts. His troubles with genre stem from the fact that so many great young adult novels are jumping genres. This is true for graphic novels, or more appropriately used in this case, sequential art narration, and for other less traditionally print-text works, as well. Consider Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, a story that combines traditional novel narration with storybook and wordless graphic novel (novels *can* be graphic novels without the letters) and draws its inspiration largely from film. Walter Dean Meyers has often integrated visuals into his novels. *Monster* is a prime example, and *The Autobiography of My Dead Brother* uses sequential art narrative not just to illustrate but to tell and reinforce the importance of its plot elements. Though not using sequential art per se, the reliance on visual images as text in novels like Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and Lauren Myracle's IM-inspired novels like *l8r g8r* and *ttfn* is so great that the book would not be the same, could not tell the same story, without them. Jerry Spinelli even reminded us of the power of the visual as text by using pictographic icons instead of iconically pictographic words on the cover of his book *Star Girl*. In mainstream publishing, as well, sequential art is being integrated into novels and shelf space more and more. Consider Jodi Picoult, who recently wrote a story arc for the comic book series *Wonder Woman* and who has a character share his Inferno-inspired comics in her novel *The Tenth Circle* (2004). Even when novelists do not use sequential art or

Consider Brian Selznick's *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, a story that combines traditional novel narration with storybook and wordless graphic novel (novels *can* be graphic novels without the letters) and draws its inspiration largely from film.

comics in their novels as means of expression, more and more of them are writing about or using themes associated with particular genres of sequential art, especially the super-hero genre. Michael Chabon's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, Austin Grossman's *Soon I Will Be Invincible,* and Jenifer Estep's *Karma Girl* are mainstream novels that pull from super-hero mythos, as do young adult novels *Hero* by Perry Moore and TK, and Barry Lyga's *The Astonishing Adventures of Fanboy and Goth Girl*.

Further, there are comics and graphic novels that act as exemplars of their particular genres. *Runaways* is a an excellent series of comics and graphic novels that rival *The Outsiders* and *Catcher in the Rye* for its ability to capture teen angst, frustration, and confusion in contemporary society, *more so*, even, for being set in the 21st century. Craig Thompson's main character in *Blankets* might as well be a contemporary counterpart to Salinger's Holden Caulfield. Bryan Talbot's *The Tale of One Bad Rat*, J.P. Stassen's *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda*, and Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese* examine local and global socio-political and socio-cultural issues and their effects on young adults, and Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* is finally gaining some of the mainstream recognition it deserves because of the film adaptation. Brian K.Vaughn and Niko Henrichon's *Pride of Baghdad* makes as clear a statement via its use of animal characters as anything Orwell wrote.

Young adult literature is rife with exceptional examples of texts that defy genre; many graphic novels are excellent young adult literature, too, of course; therefore, we should not be surprised that the graphic novel is part of the death of genre discussion. But its unique form is what defines it, not its themes. Much of the confusion in calling sequential art narratives a genre rather than a form, format, or medium may be contributed to the novelty the form holds for many or to a lack of background knowledge and/or a lack of respect for those figures within the sequential art communities, via production and/or scholarship, that have taken it seriously for generations and have already established a vocabulary that has yet to meet a larger audience. It seems clear to me that much of the use of genre to describe comics and graphic novels comes from either a lack of understanding or a lack of education, or, at worst, a reluctance to accept new forms and "new" voices into already established notions of the literary. So, though Smith says "By denouncing genre, we may perhaps begin to expand the horizons of our adolescents" (49), when it comes to the graphic novel, by denouncing genre, perhaps we'll move beyond preferences and privileges that, to me, sometimes seem adolescent.

Part III: Illustrative Activity for Teachers

Though I encourage teachers to use the Grand Comic Book Database to look at images of comics and to consider the various genres the form makes available, I am herein including a more hands-on activity that I have shared with teachers and professors alike to illustrate that sequential art is a form that supports multiple genres. We start with one stark comic page (see Figure 3), with two figures separated by an indeterminable type of gulf. Two smaller panels beneath this scene show close-ups of our two characters. By changing the images just a little, we can turn this page into a genre, again and again.

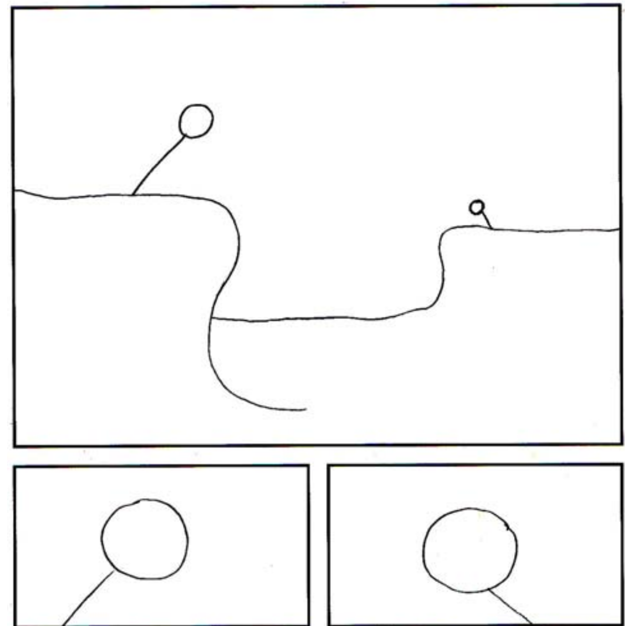

Figure 3. A three-paneled template of Sequential Art Narrative

First, encourage a student to draw a white hat on the near figure, then a black hat on the far figure. Ask the student to draw holsters and guns on each figure and ask them to draw arms ready to grab the gun.

They needn't be elaborate as we began with stick figures initially (see Figure 4). Now ask the student to draw intense expressions on each face. Ask the students to identify the genre; if they still have trouble, add some cacti in the desert gulf or a horse or two. Soon you'll see a western.

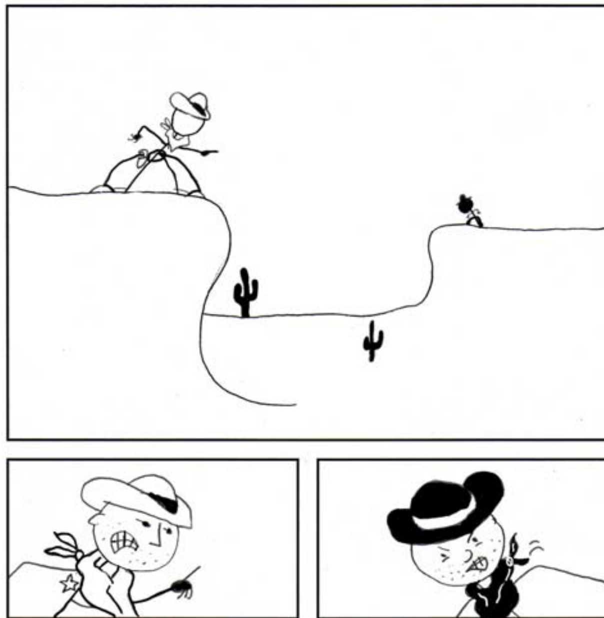

Figure 4. The template keeps its form but supports the western genre.

If you need more illustration, add some dialogue:

Big Panel:

Sheriff: Dirt Dan! This gorge won't keep me from bringing you to justice, cur!

Dan: Ha! Like always yer tew steps behind, Sheriff!

Little Panel 1:

Sheriff: Draw on three. Your count, varmit!

Little Panel 2:

Dan: Wun.....tew......

Second, return to our stark comic page and ask another student to make one character a female in a flowing dress, the other a man in a ripped shirt (see Figure 5). Both the character's arms should be outstretched as if they want to embrace the other. Make sure the female character's hair is flowing and blowing in the wind. In the close-ups, have each character shedding a tear, and make sure to have the arms outstretched all the more.

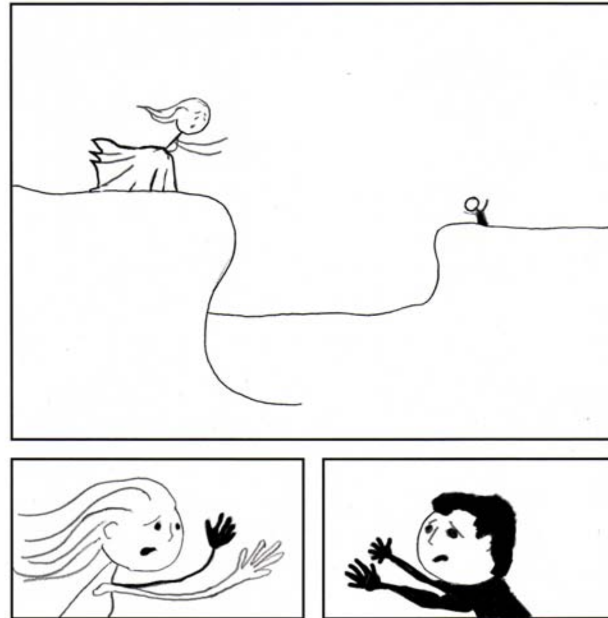

Figure 5. The form stays the same, but now we have a romance.

If students can't identify the comic as a romance, try this dialogue:

Big Panel:

Woman: Oh, Chet! I must see you; I don't care what our parents say!

Chet: Oh, dear, how I long for you!

Little Panel 1:

Woman: My love!

Little Panel 2:

Man: My everything!

You may repeat the process as many times as necessary. I favor a third page where Moses and Pharaoh are yelling at one another from across the Nile (see Figure 6). "You turn the very waters against me!?!" yells Pharaoh. "Not I, but my Lord!" Moses replies. I have found that this activity illustrates for adults and children alike that comics are not a genre but a form by which we may express stories in multiple genres. Feel free to use this activity in your classes, even, if you must, in a unit on genre studies.

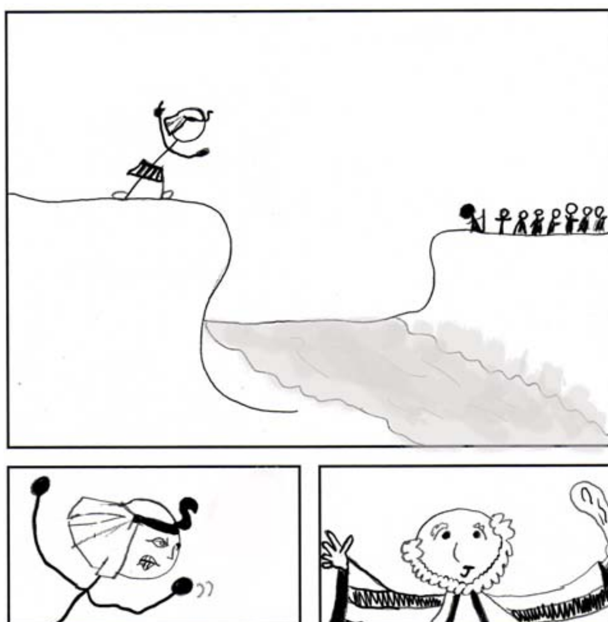

Figure 6. Again there is no formal change, but the format supports yet another genre, this time a Bible story.

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Lori Atkins **Goodson**

Walter Dean Myers:

A *Monster* of a Voice for Young Adults

Walter Dean Myers, award-winning author of young adult literature such as *Monster* and *Fallen Angels*, is well represented in school and public libraries across the nation. His novels have become standard elements as teachers and librarians work to connect students to literature. *The ALAN Review* was fortunate to visit with Myers about his literary career. Lori Atkins Goodson, co-editor of *The ALAN Review*, became hooked on Myers's works several years ago when she read *Glory Field* to her eighth-grade students. She recently conversed with Myers through email—during his stay in London for the theater season, while Jennifer Funk, middle school language arts teacher, reviewed one of his latest works.

We appreciate Mr. Myers taking time from his busy schedule of writing and personal appearances to share his thoughts for this issue.

As a young child, Walter Dean Myers struggled with a speech problem that hindered his ability to share his ideas. Decades (and a growing list of awards) later, teenagers demonstrate his ideas are coming across loud and clear, and in an extremely powerful manner. Through the years, he has become an established, respected voice in young adult literature.

Myers, who has numerous books in various stages today (a minimum of two are scheduled for publication this year alone), credits a fourth-grade teacher with encouraging him to put his thoughts on paper.

"I spent a great many years as a youngster in speech therapy," Myers said. "What was going on in my head was being lost in the translation my mouth produced. This was painful to me, and my reaction was to vent my frustrations on those who couldn't understand me.

"When we were told (in 4th grade) to write a poem, the teacher (Mrs. Parker) noticed that my recitation of the poem was clearer than my normal speech. She also liked the poem. What a surprise that she liked anything I did. With this encouragement I began writing dozens of poems. Since we were reading British poets, my poems were largely odes to anything I saw."

And, from there, Myers found his writing to be a powerful outlet. In his years of writing, he continues to be enthralled with the writing process, something that undoubtedly has propelled him into various genres.

"I find everything about writing fascinating," he said. "The subject matter of a project covers my current interests, but I'm also interested in the different parts of the story. Can I approach this subject in a way that will make it fresh to the reader? Can I find a way to tell it that is particularly challenging to me, or fun? Will I give myself the chance to play with language? With concepts?"

Through the years, his writing has welcomed a much more diverse audience, from rural to urban to suburban.

"Unless a reader identifies himself or herself racially, I no longer assume that they are African American," Myers said. "This, of course, is how it should be. Although it was James Baldwin who gave me the much needed permission to write about my own Harlem community, I grew up loving the writers I

was introduced to in high school—Balzac, Gide, Loti, and Thomas Mann."

Since then, he's found that reading others' works is especially encouraging and educational to him as an author. Specific authors provide specific focus in his development as a writer.

"Avi, for example, is so intellectually nimble that his books challenge us to rethink what we are doing. Sometimes, when I'm alone at my computer, I pretend that I'm in the mind of Cynthia Voight or Sharon Creech. I love what I perceive to be their interior processes and the resulting quiet revelations in their prose. Judy Blume, who I don't see very often these days, dares me to be courageous. Richard Peck's clean, precise lines prevent me from being satisfied with sloppy writing. All of these people, and others (I'm currently reading John Green) set such high standards that I have to really work hard to be anywhere in their company."

Myers said he also must give credit to his publishers, who have provided the support to let him venture into various types of writing.

"Publishers have given me a tremendous amount of freedom to try what I want," he said. "They've also been very supportive of me, promoting my books widely and encouraging their use in different venues. In turn this has allowed me to be more creative in my approach to YA literature and to take chances I couldn't have taken while trying to break down the doors."

He also continues to stay focused on the writing process, creating a routine of writing about five pages a day, five days a week.

"At that pace I don't allow my typing to get ahead of my thinking," he said. "Writing is easier because I know the editors looking over my shoulder are all on my side. It's a bit more challenging because people expect consistent work from me. But isn't that good?

"Unfortunately. I will never live long enough to complete all of my ideas," he continued. "Or maybe fortunately. Or maybe that's an idea for a book – an older writer has his best idea on the way home from the doctor who has just told him he has a terminal illness. Should he write faster to finish the book and perhaps turn out a sloppy and inconsequential work? Should he shelve it and do the easier book he has already started to bring his total volume count to 100? And how about the bright 18-year-old he has just met who is burning with the excitement of literature but whose current idea is another boring biography of a long dead hero? Hmmmm."

Some of his earlier "ideas" have become staples in classrooms throughout the country.

"Of course I'm pleased with the use of my books in the classroom," Myers said. "I've seen the books used as springboards for discussion, many heated, or simply put on a list as possible extra reading. Considering the thousands of letters I receive each year, I'm clearly limited in the amount of time I can give to responding to student letters. I would like to see more use made of teleconferencing, especially when a book is required reading. That would mean to me that I could go to an easily accessible location near my home and spend an hour or two responding to questions."

Myers has also found that, to keep his writing current and believable, he needs to keep an eye and an ear on what young people are doing, thinking, and talking about.

"I pay close attention to what they are listening to in music, what they wear, what devices they buy to get them through the day," Myers said. "I talk to kids in juvenile detention centers, and I get an endless stream of letters in my mailbox. I am not adverse to missing my bus stop to overhear the end of a conversation between a group of teenagers. My own grand-

"The older I get, the more I appreciate my foster parents and, although they have both been dead for years, the more I know about them," Myers said. "Since my foster father was illiterate and my mom read sparingly, at best, I thought I had escaped childhood without an intellectual inheritance. But now I sincerely believe that, through their informal teachings around the dinner table and through my early reading, I had developed both a clear moral sense and a sense of who I was that extended well beyond personal ego needs."

“At first I thought it only natural that the inmates separate themselves from the crimes they had committed,” he said. “No one wanted to be portrayed as ‘evil.’ But as I pored over the trial transcripts and their arrest records, I came to the conclusion that it was their ability to separate themselves from their acts that permitted them to commit those acts in the first place. With this revelation came the idea to write *Monster*.”

children are a bit shocking –how do they know so much?!—and yes, I read their blogs.”

Specific books provide special family connections for the author, as well as for his audience. Among those is *Monster*, featuring illustrations by his son Chris; the book triggers an appreciation by Myers for the upbringing his foster parents provided.

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“As I worked my way through the prison interviews that formed the backdrop of *Monster*, I was shocked to find out how many of the inmates whose stories I was hearing were surprised to find themselves in prison. They all understood the crime that brought them there, but they did not understand that road that led from the innocence of childhood to a life in which crime was clearly permissible. They uniformly thought of themselves as good people who had made some mistake, which had taken them afoul of the law.”

Those prison visits gave Myers insight into his character, Steve Harmon, as well as how individuals can find themselves paying severe consequences for their mistakes.

“It was a common occurrence to find an interviewee speaking of himself (yes, or herself) in the first person when talking about their upbringing, and then switching to third person when speaking of the crime of which they had been convicted,” Myers said. “One inmate, a man whose scheduled execution for killing two guards in a bank robbery had been overturned only by the moratorium on the death penalty, confided in me that he felt a strong kinship to me because of our similar backgrounds. We had both been raised in New York, attended public school there, and even worked as laborers in similar places.

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And it triggered numerous discussions—in school cafeterias, classrooms, and hallways—regarding the innocence . . . or guilt . . . of Harmon. Adults, teenagers, and education majors in university classes have all discussed and debated the character and his situation. Myers weighed in on the discussion, as well.

“Steve Harmon had every right to walk into the store, and every right to walk out again inasmuch as it was a public venue. In this highly technical sense there is no legal guilt involved. In my opinion, and in the opinion of most of the lawyers I consulted, the verdict was supportable. But, mentally by separating himself from the implications of his walk into the store on that day, he was walking the same slippery slope as the above mentioned murderer who claimed that the killings were the fault of the bank guards for their failure to do the logical thing under the circumstances, give up the money in exchange for their safety.

“Steve Harmon (Harmon is the name of the electrician working on my house at the time I was writing the book) exposed himself to the vagaries of the juvenile justice system and,” Myers explained, “more importantly, to the monster that is the human without a moral compass.”

The Glory Field remains a favorite of the author,

although it's not as frequently used in schools as some of his other works.

"After the Civil War many African Americans owned land in the rural south," he said. "The land, like most land in the region, was not particularly valuable. But, as the South became less rural, as developments grew and cities expanded, the land values increased exponentially. Land that was once virtually worthless now was a tempting target to speculators who could use racist laws and shoddy banking to snatch it away. As a child I often heard families talking about owning 'a little piece of land down the way.'

"After the Second World War when industry came to the South and brought with it the wealth that demanded golf courses, resorts, and room for industrial expansion, families began to lose their land. Banks wouldn't lend money to pay taxes, some land was taken under eminent domain rules, some was lost through collateral schemes and some through simple neglect. It's a story that can be touched at any Black family gathering.

"The book is not used as much as others I have written, nor is it as controversial, but it's well loved and for that I have great appreciation," he said.

As his name becomes rooted as one of the mainstays in the genre, Myers keeps an eye on emerging authors in the field of young adult literature. He sees several who continue to become stronger voices for the genre.

"I love Christopher Paul Curtis and feel he has much more to say and the knack for saying it well," he said. "My friend Laurie Anderson continues to be a wonder. John Green is very interesting and will be a major artist. Sharon Flake is a fine writer, and I'm still waiting for Nikki Grimes to break through big time."

But, he said, he's disappointed not to see more young African Americans enter the YA field.

"It's hard to support yourself as an author, even harder than when I was young," he said. "I at least had a number of magazines that accepted short fiction and articles. They're mostly gone now."

And one of those new voices has a connection. Myers said his son, Chris, would watch him write, from the time his son was four years old. The younger Myers first explored artwork connected to his father's writings.

"Since I was writing 'stories' and 'stories' meant picture books to him, he came up with the idea that since my stories didn't have pictures, he would draw them for me," Myers said. "He would listen to my synopsis of a piece, imagine his own characters, then draw and present them. To me they were kid drawings, and I would admire them (he's my kid) and put them aside. His mother evidently saw more than I did and began to save them. By the time Chris was ten, his drawings were quite good and at twelve he was published in *Merlyn's Pen*.

"He was away at Brown when I revisited an earlier story I had written called *Shadow of the Red Moon*," he continued. "I remembered that Chris had done drawings for the story years before and wondered, now that his art was considerably more sophisticated, if he wanted to try to do spot illustrations for the book. There were no promises, of course. He would have to do them on speculation. He did, and they were accepted by Scholastic."

Today, he has watched Chris shift into writing, as well, creating another connection for the father and son.

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"Chris is one of my first readers on everything I write, although he doesn't show me everything he writes," he said. "I love working with him, and we've developed a good professional relationship. Chris was also lucky enough to meet my friends in the business. Tom Feelings, Jerry Pinkney, Ann Grifacolni, and Lawrence Jacobs all encouraged him at an early age. I am unabashedly proud of his work and his character."

But don't expect him to turn over the reins too quickly to the next generation. Myers has a half dozen books in the works, from picture books to a documentary of African Americans to novels. He offered a brief rundown of upcoming projects. His travels have taken him to London recently, where he was finalizing

selections for a documentary history of African Americans, to be published by HarperCollins. But that's only the beginning.

"*Game,* a basketball coming of age story, will be published by HarperCollins in the winter of 2008," Myers said. Summer 2008 saw the publication of *Sunrise Over Fallujah,* a novel about the war in Iraq which involves the nephew of the soldier in *Fallen Angels.*

"It's a Scholastic title, as was *Fallen Angels*," Myers said. "The fall of 2008 will bring another HarperCollins novel with the working title of *Kelly.* I have two picture books in the works, both by HarperCollins. One is a picture biography of Ida Wells.

"After 9-11 there was a flurry of patriotism throughout the country," Myers said. "It seemed to me, however, that 'patriots' were being depicted primarily as white males. My son Chris and I are putting together a book about our love for America which depicts an array of cultures and races."

And so it continues. Myers's strong and eloquent voice draws readers of all ages—but particularly young adolescents—into the pages of his books. He continues to be a powerful literary connection for young adults, maintaining a vital place on bookshelves across the nation.

Lori Atkins Goodson *has taught middle school language arts and high school English and newspaper in Wamego, Kansas. Also an instructor at Kansas State University, Manhattan, she received National Board Certification and a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction. She has received numerous teaching awards, including NCTE's 2007 Hoey Award, a 2008 top 10 finalist for the NEA Excellence in Teaching Award, and the Kansas Master Teacher Award. She is coeditor of* The ALAN Review; *a co-director for the Flint Hills Writing Project, a site of the National Writing Project; and is completing her term as chair of the NCTE middle level nominating committee. Goodson writes a regular column for the ALAN website on using young adult literature in the classroom (bookbusiness.lorigoodson.com). She can be reached at lagoodson@cox.net.*

Sunrise over Fallujah

Reviewed by Jennifer Funk

You would be hard pressed to find a book on the war in Iraq that doesn't have a clear agenda jumping off every page—especially a fictional one with believable characters that is appropriate for kids. What Walter Dean Myers realizes, however, that many seem to forget or dismiss, is that when the war in Iraq ends, it will be those young Americans sitting in our classrooms who will face its certain ramifications. This is why Myers' *Sunrise Over Fallujah*, a novel that fills in this critical missing gap in war literature, should be a welcome addition to middle and high school libraries across the country.

Sunrise proves the power of fiction to sort through the "fog of war" that seems to exist not only on the battlefield but also in the media. National newspapers and cable news programs produce a ceaseless news cycle on the war in Iraq. Books with titles like *So Wrong For So Long* and *Fiasco* line the bookshelves at every Barnes and Noble. The war's many faces — both at home and abroad — are emblazoned in our minds in a chaotic collage of confrontational talking heads, defensive White House news conferences, angry war protesters, and Iraqi civilians cheering one day and crying the next. If this is how many American adults view the war, imagine what goes through the mind of the average American elementary or secondary student. Twenty years after Myers's acclaimed Vietnam War novel *Fallen Angels* was published, his new war novel—despite its different setting, modernized army, new characters and cleaner language—accomplishes the same mission: cutting through the cacophony straight to the core of questions facing both military personnel and civilians during any war, at any time. In the opening page, protagonist Robin Perry, nephew of *Fallen Angels*' Richard Perry, writes to his Vietnam veteran uncle, "I was thinking that maybe your eyes wouldn't recognize today's army but I'll bet your stomach would" (1). Yes, Myers knows that war is war and the best place to begin understanding it is in the field on the frontlines with those who know it best.

In *Sunrise,* recent high-school graduate Robin "Birdy" Perry has been assigned to a Civil Affairs team in charge of the fourth and final phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, building a democracy in Iraq. The novel picks up with Perry's recent arrival in Kuwait just before the war begins. While acclimating to their surroundings, uncertainty and speculation about their purpose in Iraq, the reality of combat, and the ability to identify the enemy, dominate the soldiers' conversations. Myers's main characters make up a youthful and diverse group of troops, which along with Perry

include the "little different" blues man Jonesy, the sharp-tongued and tough Marla and a number of order-barking captains who sometimes open up to add some seasoned introspection on the war.

The heart of the novel lies in the innocence of the soldiers, all of whom, to a certain degree, are searching for meaning in their experiences. Perry's decision to join the army and forgo college put a wedge in his relationship with his father, a consequence he is reminded of with each letter from home. "I felt like crap after 9-11 and I wanted to do something, to stand up for my country," he explains to his uncle (2). Spurred on by equally intense desires to make a difference and to return home quickly, Perry is believable in his "follow orders now, ask questions later" mentality. His unique role in the army to be the "human face" of war by establishing relationships, feeling out acceptance from Iraqi civilians and meeting various needs as they arise, allows readers to be exposed to the less glamorous side of war, diplomacy.

As an educator, I am especially encouraged by Myers's attention to this part of Perry's mission. Perhaps the most controversial tenet of the war in Iraq is its oft-stated purpose to create and establish the American system of democracy in a key Middle Eastern country. While students may be familiar with the images of fighting, based on years of watching action-packed war movies, the likelihood most have thoughtfully considered the aftermath of war is slim. Perry and his comrades are sent on missions without clear expectations; they are sent to bring medical supplies to livestock only to discover the supplies may actually be used for enemy combatants; and they are sent to pay the distraught mothers of children killed in the accidental bombing of a schoolyard. Each mission presents an opportunity for the troops to represent American benevolence or American power depending on the sentiments of Iraqi civilians, and they must be prepared for either at a moment's notice. It is a potential decision that always weighs on the soldiers' minds. Through these situations, engaging students in dialogue, whether in a version of reader's workshop or Socratic seminars, could be easily achieved.

Then there's the setting. My seventh-grade social studies class is studying Southwest Asia. Before beginning a new unit—especially in a subject like social studies where prior knowledge can be a bit scattered—I like to ask the students a few guiding questions to determine what they already know. So, recently I posed the following seemingly simple question: Do you know where Iraq is located? Two hands shot into the air—those of students who have familial ties to the region. Another three raised their hands with obvious uncertainty, prepared to claim "just stretching" lest they be asked to prove their knowledge. For most, Iraq is a country familiar in name only. This is where the use of *Sunrise* in the classroom can be an invaluable resource. Any student can look up Iraq, Kuwait, Baghdad and the Euphrates River in an atlas, but Myers' book brings these distant places to classrooms, living rooms and dining room tables. Instead of tuning out when a conversation is seasoned with talk of the Middle East, kids who read *Sunrise* will be able to share about scorching heat and desert sand storms, but also about how Doha, Kuwait, is "squeaky clean and beautiful," and its Grand Mosque is breathtaking. Myers' awareness of stereotypes about the region is evident in Perry's preconceived notions about Iraq and surrounding Arab countries. "Before arriving at Doha I had imagined being on a desert with camels wandering by and palm trees swaying in the wind" (17), but the reader learns from Perry's experience in Middle Eastern cities. "One of the guys I was with . . . told me that I would never get used to the architecture in the Arab countries," he shares, "'It changes your whole perspective about the people over here'" (17).

Fans of *Fallen Angels* may find *Sunrise Over Fallujah* to be a compelling though less gritty and gruesome war narrative. The consequence of which translates into greater accessibility for teachers and younger students. *Sunrise* should be praised for its clear picture on the realities of war as faced by the men and women fighting it. I might be biased about the potential of novels to supplement teaching, more so than any other medium available today, but that could be because I've witnessed the powerful connection kids make to characters they meet in books. And the character of Robin Perry in *Sunrise Over Fallujah* is no different. "It was as if, little by little, I was bringing the crash of war inside me. As if, little by little, the war was becoming part of me," he says (96). Little by little, Perry's experiences become a part of the reader. That is the true mark of a book worth reading.

Jennifer Funk *teaches at Trailridge Middle School in Shawnee Mission, Kansas. Jennifer's interests in English education include adolescent literacy and technology in the classroom.*

Hearing Nancy Garden Out

Author Nancy Garden looks nothing like the warrior-like image I had conjured of her after reading her books and every article I could find about or by her. She is a small, almost fragile woman with a soft voice and gentle demeanor, but when she speaks or writes about the issues that matter to her, this lamb becomes a lion. Her seemingly fragile exterior belies the tough-as-nails interior that has kept this ground-breaking author writing, speaking, and defending her work for decades. A featured author at many national literacy conferences and a popular speaker at schools and libraries, Garden has received both the 2001 Robert B. Downs Intellectual Freedom Award and the 2003 Margaret A. Edwards Award for her lifetime contribution in writing for young adults. Garden has experienced bullying in her own life as well as having watched others, including neighbor children, bullied, and perhaps that slowly simmering anger prompted her to write the stories that would have gone untold otherwise. Her happily-ever-after story about two high school females who fall in love with each other, *Annie on My Mind* (1982), recently celebrated its twenty-fifth year in print.

Nancy Garden

Barbara Ward

Interested in the impetus for her books, I began a phone and e-mail correspondence with her about her two most recent publications, *Endgame* (2006), which offers insight into what causes a victim to strike back at his tormentors, and her newest book *Hear Us Out: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope from the 1950s to the Present* (2007), a combination of stories and essays about the gay movement across the decades.

Barbara A. Ward: What has given you the courage to continue decade after decade to write books with positive gay characters?

Nancy Garden: That's a very flattering and generous question! But really, I don't see it as a matter of courage. My writing books with positive gay characters has come more out of anger than anything else: anger at not having been able to find honest, accurate books about people like myself as a

teen, books that show we're as diverse as straight people and that we can lead happy, healthy, productive lives just as straight people can. The letters I get today tell me that Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) teens and kids growing up in LGBT families still have a need for books that show them they're not alone and that there's a future for them, books that show them—and straight kids also—that LGBT folks have stories, too, stories about love and hate, joy and sorrow, fear and hope; stories about relationships and work and learning and dreams and courage; stories about universals as well as about being LGBT or having LGBT parents—in short, stories much like those featuring straight people, but experienced from the unique perspective of being LGBT in a predominantly straight world. It's the kids themselves and their need for books like these that keep me going, along with my strong feeling that it's the responsibility of us LGBT adults to do whatever we can to help nurture LGBT kids.

This is an exciting time to be writing LGBT kids' books, for our canon is at last growing rapidly! Sure, our books still come under attack, but that's not going to stop us from writing them. The need for them and the joy in being able to write them freely and have them published overshadows any challenges from the people—the decreasing numbers of people—who still don't understand what we're really all about.

BAW: What prompted you to write *Hear Us Out?*

NG: *Hear Us Out* evolved gradually. When I started out as a writer, I wrote and tried to sell short stories without much success. I also drafted a collection of gay and lesbian stories called *Aspects,* which I worked on for years. Eventually I put both it and other stories I'd written aside; although the story form intrigued me, I felt more drawn to the novel's larger canvas and more leisurely pace. Years went by, during which I published a number of novels—and then children's and YA author Marion Dane Bauer invited me to submit something for a YA collection of gay and lesbian stories she was putting together.

I wrote "Parents Night" (which I later included in *Hear Us Out*), for her, and she accepted it for her wonderful anthology *Am I Blue? Coming Out From the Silence,* published by HarperCollins in 1994. I also submitted two stories, "Dear Angie, Sweet Elizabeth" and "Loving Megan," to editors of non-gay anthologies. "Dear Angie" was rejected, and plans for that anthology later fell through, but "Loving Megan" appeared in *One Hot Second*, edited by Cathy Young and published in 2002 by Knopf. So there I was with three stories about teenage lesbians plus a renewed interest in the short story form, and I began to wonder if I could do a collection of my own. I wrote a couple more stories with that in mind, and *Hear Us Out* began to take shape as a collection of stories about lesbian and gay teens. But as it grew, I realized the book should probably have a broader *raison d'etre*—some kind of glue holding everything together. That thought eventually led me to the collection's division into decades from the 50s to the present. Each decade's section opens with an essay about the LGBT rights movement, and each essay is followed by a couple of stories reflecting the same decade.

The letters I get today tell me that Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) teens and kids growing up in LGBT families still have a need for books that show them they're not alone and that there's a future for them, books that show them—and straight kids also—that LGBT folks have stories, too, stories about love and hate, joy and sorrow, fear and hope.

BAW: Why is it so important that high school libraries add a book such as *Hear Us Out* to their book collection?

NG: I think it's important for high school (and public) libraries to include materials for, by, and about all kinds of people, especially those in minorities. Such materials can introduce kids—and adults, too—to people from groups they might never encounter in

I think LGBT kids can feel empowered by learning something about our heroes, our battles, our progress, the contributions LGBT people have made in various fields, and the contributions they—including *young* LGBT people—have made to our growing acceptance and inclusion in society as a whole.

real life, and show them individuals as interesting and complex as themselves, not stereotypes or people who are disturbingly "other"—strange, inferior, frightening, etc.

As to the inclusion of *Hear Us Out* specifically—well, I think LGBT history has been important to this country's development, as, of course, have been the histories of other minorities. Then, too, I think LGBT kids can feel empowered by learning something about our heroes, our battles, our progress, the contributions LGBT people have made in various fields, and the contributions they—including *young* LGBT people—have made to our growing acceptance and inclusion in society as a whole. And finally, I believe that knowledge of any minority's past can help both outsiders and members of that minority better understand and appreciate its present.

BAW: In your introduction, you say that time is the glue that holds this short story collection together. Were there other ways of organizing the stories that you considered but rejected?

NG: I think the only idea I rejected was my initial idea that the fact all the stories are about lesbian and gay kids would be enough to hold the book together. I think, too, that the fact that "Dear Angie, Sweet Elizabeth," which draws on some of my experiences growing up in the 50s, was considered dated by the editor who rejected it helped give me the idea to include "time" in the form of historical essays as the glue holding the stories together. I tried making "Dear Angie" more contemporary in response to the editor's criticism, but that didn't work, so I put it aside. Then, when I was casting around for something to unify my collection, I thought again of "Dear Angie, Sweet Elizabeth"—and in a roundabout way, that led me to the "glue" of history.

BAW: The book is an unusual mix of fiction and nonfiction. What inspired you to blend both rather than having two separate books?

NG: I don't think it ever crossed my mind to make two separate books. When I got the idea to include essays, it occurred to me that this might attract kids who prefer fiction as well as kids who prefer nonfiction. It's my hope, of course, that most kids will sample both the stories and the essays, but also that others will feel free to concentrate on whichever approach they prefer.

BAW: How did you manage to stay true to each decade as you were writing the stories? It must have been challenging to consider vocabulary, popular culture, and the norms of each one. What artifacts or creative writing techniques did you use to transport yourself from 2007 to 1955? In "Dear Cuz", for instance, you end with Mickey and Sam's suicide. Was that a deliberate nod to the climate of the times or the types of gay stories that were being written at that time?

NG: I graduated from high school in 1956, so I lived in all the decades I covered, and I participated in or heard about some of the events that I described. I didn't need to research things like vocabulary and popular culture very much, although I did, of course, use sources to remind myself of them and to fill in the gaps in my memory and in my actual firsthand knowledge. I have vivid, painful memories of my life as an emerging lesbian in the 50s and a pretty vivid memory of things like cars, artifacts, pop culture, clothes, etc., in that and later eras. Since I'm more familiar with those things and also with actual events in the Northeast than elsewhere in the country, I needed to rely more heavily on my sources for some of that background.

I see Mickey and Sam's suicide as a product of the 70s rather than as a nod to gay stories being written at that time, although it's true that in much

of early gay fiction, the gay characters were in some way "punished" for being gay—"punished" via having fatal accidents, committing suicide, being sent to mental institutions or psychiatrists, etc. It's important to remember that with slight variations in details, like the fact that Jen in "Dear Cuz" couldn't join a gay organization because she was a minor, that Sam's parents decided to ship him off to military school, and that Mickey's parents planned to send him to a mental hospital, two gay boys in love in any of the decades I covered might very well have been made to feel as hopeless as did Mickey and Sam. Unfortunately, similar situations and reactions still occur today in some parts of the country and within some families, although, thank goodness, they're considerably less likely now than in the past.

BAW: What was more work: writing the stories or the essays that introduce each decade?

NG: The essays were harder, but researching and writing them was also exciting and fun, although it was frustrating, as it often is in historical research, when I found differing accounts of individual events. The study and writing of LGBT history, including the history of our civil rights movement, is pretty new, and many details are especially difficult to pin down. Records tend to be spotty in some areas, there's still much information to be unearthed, and there's a certain amount of disagreement about specific recent events among the people who witnessed and participated in them. But it was great fun going back in memory to my activist days and reading about people I knew and events I participated in or knew about firsthand in that exciting and scary time. Writing the last essay was especially challenging, for, of course, much of what I was writing about—especially same-sex marriage—was literally developing as I wrote about it; writing about it was more like writing journalism than history, for I had to keep up with events as they unfolded. Even in November 2006 as the book was in the final stages of being printed, votes on gay marriage were being held in a number of states. I managed to get an extension of the last date on which I could send in changes, but my final negotiated deadline was only a couple of days after Election Day. Many important cases I'd written about were still in progress by then, and Arizona's vote on an anti-same-sex marriage constitutional amendment had still not been made official by the time I had to turn in my final, last-minute updates. Even the status of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts was uncertain and would remain so for around seven more months.

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BAW: Did you have a favorite short story from the twelve in the collection?

NG: Although I do like some stories better than others, I'm not sure I really have a favorite. I've had fun reading "The Tux" out loud, though, and I'm especially fond of "Silent Song"—but I don't think I can really call either of them my favorite.

BAW: Is there a story in which your readers can see the teenage Nancy Garden or a character with whom you identify strongly?

NG: Well, I suppose "Dear Angie, Sweet Elizabeth" is the closest to my experience as a teen. For example, when we were both in high school, Sandy, my partner (and in Massachusetts, my legal spouse)—like Elizabeth in the story—was told she couldn't see me any more. And, in high school also, like Angie, I worked in a summer stock theater as an apprentice. Sandy and I did use a post office box for a while in order to communicate, but I don't think that was while I was in stock, and we didn't use any kind of code. A couple of our friends helped us communicate from time to time, but not in the same way Eddie does in the story.

As far as a character with whom I identify strongly is concerned, that's hard to say, for there are usually bits of me in most of my major characters. I really can't single one out.

BAW: Could you tell the readers a little bit about your own coming out? Was it easy, natural or difficult? How accepting were your parents, friends, and teachers?

NG: My coming out, like most people's, was and is a gradual process—for no matter how "out" one is, there are always situations when one's with people who don't know and one has the choice or, sometimes, the necessity of coming out to them.

I didn't know homosexual people existed until Sandy's mother said she thought I was a lesbian and until I read an article about gay men in the Sunday paper's magazine section; I'm not sure which came first. But I'd always sensed that I was different in some way from other girls, and when I learned about gay people as a young teen, I realized that was probably the difference I sensed. It was a long time, though, before I felt 100% sure of it. When we were kids, Sandy and I spent a lot of time denying what we really felt for each other, and the more we tried to read about homosexuality, the more negative things we learned about people's attitudes toward homosexuals.

My coming out, like most people's, was and is a gradual process—for no matter how "out" one is, there are always situations when one's with people who don't know and one has the choice or, sometimes, the necessity of coming out to them.

I didn't come out to teachers at all, although I did talk to one teacher about the problems Sandy and I had seeing each other. I also had a favorite (and excellent) English teacher who was gay. I suspected she was, but didn't know for sure till long after I'd graduated, and I didn't come out to her till then. I came out to a gay boy my first season in stock, and we became close friends; he served as my cover-up date for a couple of school dances and we had fun pretending to be straight. Luckily, he didn't live terribly far from me, so we were able to see each other occasionally, and our friendship has continued to this day, although we haven't seen each other for years.

My mother died when I was 21, and I never told her I was gay, although I'm sure she would have been okay about it. I told my father when *Annie on My Mind* was published, for I didn't want him to find out secondhand through reading a review. That was very difficult; he cried, said he wondered what he and my mother had done wrong, was upset that he wouldn't have grandchildren, and felt embarrassed and ashamed to have a gay daughter. He was never reconciled to it, poor man, but our relationship continued much as it always had, with my not talking about that very important, fundamental part of my life, and with his making it clear that he didn't want me to. He was very fond of Sandy, which helped, but although he was proud of my books, he didn't display *Annie* along with the others.

As far as friends were concerned, long after graduating from high school, I did come out to a couple of high school friends who'd been close to both me and Sandy. One of them was so upset about it she stopped communicating with me even though her own mother disagreed with her and even though her mother and I continued to keep in touch. The other friend was fine at first when I came out to her. Later she didn't want to have anything to do with me—and later still, she changed her mind again!

BAW: How were you able to see into the hearts of gay males such as Larry and Wave in "Stonewall"?

NG: Can you see the embarrassed smile on my face as I answer this question?

I do think it's a valid question, but part of me wants to say there's not a huge basic difference between a young gay boy and a young lesbian. There are usually differences as far as actual sexual activity is concerned, but not much difference in things like coming out, having crushes on people, and dealing with homophobia, parents, straight friends, school, the future, etc. Part of me, too, wants to say, "Hey, listen, I wanted to be a boy

myself, even into adulthood," and another part of me wants to say I've had very close gay male friends, and still another part wants to protest that I try to write my characters as individuals, not as prototypes of gay males or gay females. And one more part wants to say that I've written quite a few times from the point of view of young boys, both gay and straight, and have always found it comfortable. I'm not at all sure, though, that I could handle the point of view of a straight adult male—although the one time I tried, in an unpublished, multi-viewpoint adult novel, I felt I handled the male characters' viewpoints okay with one exception. That character was a businessman, and I'm not sure if it was his gender or his job that I found difficult.

But the embarrassed smile is because Larry and Wave were originally female! When I changed them to males, I did ask a gay male editor to read the story and let me know if the changes I'd made had worked. As I remember, the only further change he suggested along those lines was that, unlike when both characters were female, Wave should give Larry something other than flowers when he went to see him in his apartment. As you can see from the story, I did take his suggestion!

BAW: As in *Hear Us Out*, many of the characters in your other books are very real. For instance, in *Endgame*, the character of Gray Wilton and his struggles to fit in seem drawn from real life. What was the inspiration for *Endgame* and Gray?

NG: Obviously, *Endgame* grew out of Columbine. When Columbine happened, like everybody else, I was really shocked and moved, and I felt that I wanted to do something. I thought there's got to be a way to prevent this sort of thing from happening, and I didn't really know what I could possibly do, but the main thing I do, the thing I do best, I guess, is writing and so I certainly thought about that, but I didn't think of anything very specific right away. I also was afraid of writing about it because I didn't want to say anything that might inspire a kid to do the same thing. One thing that really struck me in all the publicity about Columbine and the endless analyses afterward was that although it was mentioned that Dylan and Eric had been bullied, that was really something that was usually stuck in at the end of an article, that wasn't given much weight. Then as more school shootings happened, which they did, after Columbine, and as I researched school shootings that had happened before Columbine, I found the same pattern, and that began to seem to me like something that should be worked on. In recent years, bullying has been given a lot more press, and people are beginning now to stop saying, "Well, boys will be boys. It's just something that happens, and you gotta get used to it." Well, I'm sorry. I don't think that's a very good plan. I was bullied when I was a kid, not horribly the way Gray is and the way other people have been bullied, but I was certainly bullied.

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A boy who came from a dysfunctional family who lived up at the other end of our street and his twin sister spent a great deal of time with me and my partner between the time they were 12 years old and the time they left for college. We're still very close to the girl, but not so close to the boy who is out in the Midwest, but we are in touch with him now and then. After Columbine, he wrote, "You know, if it hadn't been for music and for basketball and for people like you to talk to, I might have done the same thing." We knew that he had had a lot of trouble in middle school and high school. We didn't know a lot of his specifics until years later. One specific that we found out was that when he was in high school he was hung by his heels from an upper window in the school. Can you imagine what would have gone through that child's head? You know, I kick myself that we didn't know. I talked to this boy about bullying several times when I was working on

Endgame, but Gray is not really him; nor is his situation the same as this boy's. Still, his experience was certainly something that did inspire me.

BAW: How did he survive?

NG: I don't know how he survived. He must have been pretty strong to survive, and although he didn't seem like a terribly strong kid emotionally, he must have been.

BAW: Any other inspirations for the book?

NG: Not too long after Columbine I visited Chattfield Senior High, the school to which the Columbine kids were sent after the shootings in their school. At Chatfield, I spoke in an English class to a group of kids who were interested in writing. They had a wonderful teacher named Jan McClain, who just happened to be at a dinner given by the newspaper people that night, and we ended up sitting next to each other. As we chatted, I finally decided to tell her that I was thinking about writing a YA novel about a school shooting, but I also told her that I was afraid that it might do more harm than good. She said, "No, you've got to do it. You must write it." I thought of her words many, many times while I was working on *Endgame*, which was not, by the way, called *Endgame* at that point. When I started, it was called *Shooter*. But some place along the way, when it was pretty much, well, certainly not in the final form, but when it was very far along, when I had written the whole story, anyway, although it didn't quite turn out quite the way I had drafted it initially. Walter Dean Myers published a book called *Shooter*, and I thought, "Well, Walter, okay, you beat me to it. You took my title." I had to think of another title. I admire Walter tremendously. I think he's an excellent writer, and he's been an inspiration to me so it was nice that he was doing the same thing—sort of.

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BAW: I was very excited when his book and the Todd Strasser book *Give a Boy a Gun* were published, but yours got closer than any other book I've read in explaining why kids behave this way and what it feels like to be bullied. What happened in *Endgame* reminded me of a chess game. Did the title *Endgame* have anything to do with chess?

NG: It has to do with chess mostly in the sense that that's how I know the word. I'm not a chess player. I tried many years ago to learn how to play chess and I never got very far. I always forget how to move various pieces. I think I remembered how the pawns moved and how the knights moved in that funny little pattern. But then I realized that it sounds right. It sounds like the sort of thing that is happening here. In Gray's life, everything is moving toward this, and there's a point after which, it isn't going to stop and there's no further choice.

BAW: The game of chess features different openings, opening theory, the middle game, and the end game where pieces take on different importance. Players don't use the same strategies in the end game that they did in the first two phases. I found it very interesting that Gray was trying strategies, first just enduring, then becoming more pro-active, finally, becoming confrontational, and his strategies were shifting. I found the idea of chess all the way through.

NG: That's a happy accident.

BAW: In *Endgame*, you also used some interesting phrases, such as Gray's mantra "gonna be better, gonna be better" and then later, "it's gonna be worse, it's gonna be worse." Where did those come from?

NG: I don't really know. I didn't want to make Gray too much of a victim, and that had been a criticism launched against the manuscript in pretty early

stages. The manuscript went through a number of publishers and editors and was rejected a number of times, and one of the early criticisms was "he's too much of a victim; no one's gonna like him." I wanted him to seem less than a victim, to be somebody who, although certainly he is a weak person, at least tried to do something to make things better for himself; maybe that's where "things are gonna be better" came from.

BAW: I loved that phrase "gonna be better" because I've used that myself during tough situations. But when Gray was uttering it, I just thought, "Oh, that is exactly what a kid in his situation, having moved from one school where things weren't going well to another community where he's not sure about what will happen, might say to himself to reassure himself and convince himself that maybe this time it really is going to be better."

NG: He's not so beaten down yet that it's impossible for him to feel that way or to say that, which is something that does happen later, and he has to *reach* that point rather than *start* at that point.

BAW: Nevertheless, the losses pile up throughout the book. The book jacket blurb mentions the loss of Gray's music, the loss of his dog, the loss of his friend.

NG: Yeah, I was sorry they mentioned the dog.

BAW: Was that hard to write?

NG: To some extent, it was. In fact, one of my friends called me up after she'd read the book and said, "Why did you kill the dog?"

BAW: My students always say, "Please don't make us read a book where a dog dies."

NG: You know that if you open a book with a dog in it, the dog's going to get it again.

BAW: What about the use of the prison interviews as a device that helps readers see into Gray's head?

NG: That was a fairly late development in the manuscript. Initially, the manuscript was written from two points of view: Gray's and Lindsay's, and they were alternating sections. Then, an editor suggested that I also write it from Zorro's point of view, so I tried that, and it was written then from three viewpoints. That didn't work for that editor, and after awhile, didn't seem to work for any other editors so I changed the book to its present format including the interviews with the lawyer. The editor who finally edited it—Karen Grove at Harcourt—suggested that the best way to tell Gray's story was to do it from his point of view completely. Using Falco, the lawyer, helped readers see Gray through someone else's eyes during the interviews, and you could see Gray's reactions. There were times when he cried. There were times when he hesitated. There were times when he got angry. That gave a dimension to Gray that it couldn't possibly do if it was just his point of view. Point of view is a very tricky and wonderful thing in writing, you know. It's fascinating to me—it always has been—in that your whole story can change depending on what point of view you choose.

BAW: It's fascinating to hear about the different versions of this book. It's had all sorts of iterations, but the violence perpetrated against Gray comes through in a powerful way in the end.

NG: It certainly has. And that was a big part of the struggle: to find a way to tell the story that would really work.

BAW: Many cities are struggling with violence, and need programs, conversations, and books on the topic of violence.

NG: I agree, and I think there's another thing we need too—and may sound counterproductive—but one of the things that has struck me since Columbine are the number of schools that have very stringent zero-tolerance programs so a kid writes a short story in which there's some degree of violence, and suddenly he's suspended. That creates an "us against them" atmosphere in a school, which is counterproductive, and is going to make kids more resentful and more upset. A little common sense would go a long way in some of these situations.

BAW: Sometimes even the teachers add to it. There are certain terms and labels that we should not tolerate.

NG: Grown-ups have to draw a line somewhere. It has to be a fair and reasonable line, also.

BAW: Are you drawn to controversial books?

NG: I remember saying to a friend not terribly long ago, "I want to write a happy book." Who knows why you get the ideas that you do. You're interested in certain things, and I can get an idea from anything really, but I don't get an idea from everything. Certain ideas go to certain writers, you know, you latch onto something and say, "Oh, yeah, this is what I want to write about." You see a kid walking home from school, and there's something about that kid that suggests a story, and so you have to write it.

BAW: Who are some writers who've influenced you?

NG: Virginia Woolf was probably my favorite grown-up author, and I usually try to reread a book of hers every year. I read so many books when I was a child that I think influenced me: *Rabbit Hill*, the Pooh books, Kipling, even *Dr. Dolittle*. I mean, I was an animal lover as a child, and still am, and so many of the books I loved as a child had to do with animals. *Little Men*, more so than *Little Women*. Oh, there are all kinds of books, but especially *Little Men.*

BAW: What kind of advice would you give to teachers if they wanted to use *Endgame* or *Hear Us Out* in their classrooms about how to teach it or how to use it in the classroom?

NG: I really think that's up to the teacher. I've been a teacher, certainly, but I don't think that's really a writer's place, to say how to teach it. I would be happy to come and talk about it, and I'd be happy to come and talk about the book with a teacher and even to hear how the teacher might want to teach it, but a good teacher has her own—or his own—approach to things. And there's no one approach, certainly, and I mean there are many approaches, many of them very good.

BAW: And teachers know their students.

NG: They know their students and what their students can withstand. I remember back in the days when I was writing vampire/werewolf books, when I went to schools to talk about those books, and kids used to really eat them up, but every once in awhile, there'd be a kid kind of sitting in the back, you know, kind of tuning out and looking not very happy so I started saying to teachers, "You know, if you've got a child in class—and these were third/fourth graders—who might be upset and really disturbed about this kind of thing, maybe he or she should be doing something else this period." I just wanted teachers to be alert to that too. Maybe the kid needs some special support because I really didn't want to give anybody nightmares. And those books could do that to a really, really sensitive child.

BAW: Of course, as a writer, you have an agenda. When you're writing, you seem to keep in mind those who are considered different in some way or are being teased and bullied, and you seem to want those messages to come across or you just trust that teachers will find the right messages and deliver them.

NG: I really do. Sure, there are things that I hope will happen, but I can't dictate that. I really can't.

BAW: Why not?

NG: (Laughing) Because I'm just a writer. One of the vampire books has some photographs in it that are movie stills, and one of the movie stills is that of an elderly woman lying in a coffin with a stake through her heart, and there's blood. It's not in color, but there's clearly blood on her dress. My editor for that book, who is also my best friend, found that photograph, and I said, "Oh, Geez, you know, I'm not sure we ought to put that in. I mean that's really pretty grisly." She said, "Oh, no, no, that's okay." She included it, and when I showed it to a ten-year-old friend of mine, he said, "Oh, gross!" with the happiest look on his face. I thought, "Okay. That puts me in my place."

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Gallo Grants

The Gallo Grants were established in 2003 by former ALAN Award and Hipple Award recipient Don Gallo to encourage educators in their early years of teaching to attend the ALAN Workshop for the first time. The grants provide funding—up to $500 each—for two classroom teachers in middle school or high school each year to attend the ALAN Workshop. (The amount of a grant may be less than $500 if the applicant lives within commuting distance of the convention location where airfare and housing would not be necessary.)

The Workshop is held at the annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English on the Monday and Tuesday prior to Thanksgiving Day. Applicants must be teaching full-time; must have been classroom teachers for less than five years prior to the year in which they are applying; and must not have attended an ALAN Workshop previously. Membership in ALAN is not required for consideration, though applicants are expected to become ALAN members if they receive this grant.

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

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

Jeffrey **Kaplan**

Perception and Reality:

Examining the Representations of Adolescents in Young Adult Fiction

Young adult literature is not yet fifty-years old, and already, it has led to many different permutations and variations in the presentation of reading experiences for young people. From contemporary realistic novels to pure flights of fantasy, young adult fiction has transformed the landscape of what it means to be a teenager, and more importantly, how teenagers are perceived by themselves and the wider public. Particularly, their parents and teachers now view youngsters between the ages of 12 and 18, quite rightly, as adolescents just coming into their own and seeking an identity that speaks beyond their immediate chronological age.

What follows are three studies that demonstrate that the image of adolescents, though ever changing, is most reflective and enduring in the works of young adult fiction. Whether the books in question are depicting female protagonists, classic adolescent stereotypes, or vivid illustrations of adolescent behavior, this still emerging literary genre has much to say about how young people are conceptualized in both fiction and nonfiction, and naturally, as well, in the real world. Thus, in reviewing these three important studies, we can learn much about what good secondary teaching can and should be.

On Representations of Young Adult Female Protagonists

In "Examining Representations of Young Adult Female Protagonists through Critical Race Feminism," 363-374), Eliane Rubinstein-Avila analyzes the ways in which most adolescent literature represents female teenagers. For the most part, the female protagonists are still overwhelmingly "white, middle–class and heterosexual." Yes, although young adult authors, writes Rubinstein-Avila, ascribe to their heroines such strong descriptors as "strong," "gutsy," "feisty," and "independent," the expectations of these female characters are still embedded within the expectations of a socially conservative and sexist patriarchy. More explicitly, the author insists, sexism is discussed only in isolation and not as a factor related to race, class, gender and sexuality. "The broader social structures in which sexism is embedded and reproduced are often ignored," (Rubinstein-Avila, 363).

Young adult literature has evolved considerably since its early

Still, an examination of professional literature about young adult literature, as examined by Rubinstein-Avila, reveals that a majority of female protagonists recommended across the professional literature (literature by scholars, educators, and reviewers) are still white and members of the middle class.

1950s beginnings, distinguishing itself from children's literature with less predictable and more complex plots. Issues such as identity formation, tensions in relationships among youth or between youth and adults, substance use and abuse, love, social justice, and more recently, crime, racism, sexuality, and teen pregnancy abound in young adult novels, lending them a relevancy and immediacy that is seldom seen with such prevalence and urgency in children's literature. Truly, as Rubinstein-Avila asserts, young adult literature, and thus, indirectly, adolescent protagonists have come into their own in recent years and in turn, the examination of their actions and reactions to twists and turns in their daily lives as revealed on the printed page. Still, while "professional literature has continuously explored the role of female protagonists in children's fiction over the years," the author writes, "far less attention has been given to the representation of older adolescent female protagonists," (Rubinstein-Avila, 363).

The expansion of young adult literature, as Rubinstein-Avila writes, has led to the rise of several subgenres—for example, young adult novels about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered protagonists. The result, as the author insists, is the representation of female protagonists in compartmentalized subgenres (Rowbotham, 1989; Hayn & Sherrill, 1996; Johnson et. al., 1999). Unlike the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s, which was dominated by white, middle-class, heterosexual women and largely "ignored the plight of non-mainstream women—that is women of color, poor women, lesbians, bisexual women, and women for whom several of these categories overlap," (Rubinstein-Avila, 365), today, many young adult novels deal with these non-mainstream women directly.

In fact, Rubinstein-Avila underscores how in her research she discovered that publishers are reluctant to publish adolescent novels that deal with multiple, complex, realistic issues such as race relations, prejudice, discrimination, and homophobia, which are deemed of limited marketability (Taxel, 2002, 179).

Still, an examination of professional literature about young adult literature, as examined by Rubinstein-Avila, reveals that a majority of female protagonists recommended across the professional literature (literature by scholars, educators, and reviewers) are still white and members of the middle class. Moreover, Rubinstein-Avila found a lack of intersection between gender, class, race, and sexual identities across all the recommended young adult subgenres. Simply, she writes, the female protagonists are either of color or gay, but seldom both (Rubinstein-Avila, 366).

As Rubinstein-Avila reveals, in a review of young adult literature, Jenkins (1998) found that only about 3% of the thirty-four gay/lesbian novels published between 1993 and 1997 addressed issues of race, ethnicity and class. Novels such as *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* (Woodson, 1995), in which the central plot revolves around the adolescent male protagonist's black mother and her sexual relationship with a white woman, is the rare exception even across the LGBT genre (Jenkins, 1998). In fact, Rubinstein-Avila underscores how in her research she discovered that publishers are reluctant to publish adolescent novels that deal with multiple, complex, realistic issues such as race relations, prejudice, discrimination, and homophobia, which are deemed of limited marketability (Taxel, 2002, 179).

More explicitly, Rubinstein-Avila demonstrates that of the many young adult female protagonists who are "hailed across the professional literature as "strong," "feisty," "hardy," and "risk takers"(Karp, et. al, 1998), few, if any, threaten patriarchy or challenge mainstream societal norms," (Rubinstein- Avila, 367). Moreover, she writes, most of the female protagonists recommended across professional literature "do little to transcend, stretch, or blur acceptable, mainstream gender boundaries and traditional societal expectations," (Rubinstein-Avila, 367). The majority of female characters depicted in young adult

novels, she writes, still "dutifully walk along narrow and restrictive gender boundaries," (Rubinstein-Avila, 367).

As Rubinstein-Avila writes, the definition of femininity as explored in young adult literature has always been a perplexing question. Didactic literature of the late 1880s provided explicit definitions of femininity. Being a woman was a "career" in itself (Rowbotham, 1989, 12). In their analysis of young adult sports fiction published between 1970 and the 1990s, Kriegh and Kane (1997) found that tensions around femininity appeared as a dominant theme. Even with female names shortened to appear as masculine names (Mike for Michelle, Bobby for Barbara), teenage girls in young adult sports fiction were still more likely to worry about being viewed as androgynous—that is, not feminine enough.

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Questioning female protagonists' sexual nature and sexual orientation, insists Rubinstein-Avila, is certainly not new, Citing Kane (1998), she writes that the pressure to affirm young adult female protagonists' heterosexuality is similar to those faced by female athletes in the real world of sports. Initially, she writes, women in sports who were lesbians often protected themselves by feigning amorous relationships with men in order to ward off any "concern"of lesbianism.

Simply, while young adult female protagonists may no longer be depicted as "damsels in distress"(White, 1986), a great many, asserts Rubinstein-Avila, are still portrayed as "selfless beings who conform to expected gender-appropriate roles, even at the expense of their own desires," (Rubinstein-Avila, 368). She points out that Younger (2003) draws a direct correlation between particular types of female bodies and certain personal characteristics as shared by female characters in young adult novels. For example, Younger writes that female protagonists who are thin (i.e. attractive) are more likely to be portrayed as responsible, ethical (i.e. monogamous), powerful and assertive (sexually), while heavier females are more likely to be viewed as promiscuous, sexually passive and powerless (Younger, 2003).

In her examination of scholarly research on young adult literature, Rubinstein-Avila concludes that, with few exceptions, most contributors to the professional literature fail to "talk back" (hooks, 1989) or to question sexism. As she indicates, the model that most academic research highlights is definitely still white, middle-class, and heterosexual and is still expected to demonstrate acceptable behavior for a young woman within a conservative patriarchy. With few exceptions, Rubinstein-Avila concludes, "my analysis reveals that this body of work privileges a traditional version of female subjectivities," (Rubinstein-Avila, 371).

Rubinstein-Avila's findings illustrate that sexism, in both young adult literature and in professional literature, is most often discussed in isolation from racism, classism, homophobia, and gender discrimination. "Sexism across the professional literature is addressed most uncritically—as an individual rather than a structural phenomenon—and thus ignores the institutions through which sexism is reproduced," (Rubinstein-Avila, 372). Few reviewers of young adult fiction, the author concludes, are critical of the large institutional obstacles young female protagonists face, and fewer still highlight in any substantial discussion the cumulative discrimination faced by female protagonists of color, especially those who are poor, working class, and/or queer.

Finally, Rubinstein-Avila insists the task for educators who promote

young adult literature is to recognize that simply reading books that promote diversity is only helpful in exploring ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism when these works are read and discussed within context. “Engaging directly with youth requires that we reflect upon how our backgrounds, beliefs, experiences, funds of knowledge and ideologies shape our social constructions and subjectivities so that we recognize how these factors affect the types of texts we select and recommend, the types of discussions we promote and the research questions we pose,” (Rubinstein-Avila, 372). Certainly, this is a point worth considering.

On Institutionalizing S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*

The Outsiders is often cited with marking the emergence of young adult literature. It was written by Susan Hinton when she was fifteen-years-old and was intended to represent honestly the difficulty faced in many young adult lives. In “Institutionalizing *The Outsiders*: YA Literature, Social Class, and the American Faith in Education” (*Children’s Literature in Education* 38 (2007) 87-101), Eric L. Tribunella argues that despite the novel’s provocative critique of the problems of social class, *The Outsiders* was readily institutionalized as part of school reading lists and educational curricula throughout the United States. Suddenly, the author asserts, the power of “its punch” was muted by its social acceptance.

Tribunella attributes the novel’s universal acquisition into the secondary education curricula because it offers a “palliative to the problems it depicts” (Tribunella, 87). The protagonist, Ponyboy, Tribunella writes, “represents the novel itself as an intervention into those problems, but it works to reaffirm a notion of rugged individualism and a faith in American education,” (Tribunella, 87). These lessons, the author contends, ultimately soften the novel’s class critique and render it safe for educational institutions.

The popularity of *The Outsiders* is firmly realized as one of the best-selling young adult novels of all times. *Publisher’s Weekly* ranks *The Outsiders* second to only E. B. White’s *Charlotte’s Web* in its list of all-time bestselling children’s paperbacks (*Publishers Weekly*, 2007). Its longevity is the result, no doubt, of its frequent inclusion on summer reading lists and its ever-present use in secondary school classrooms. The novel’s accessibility to young adults—its straightforward language and plot and acceptably sanitary references to sex and violence—undoubtedly increased its appeal to secondary teachers. You could teach *The Outsiders* and feel safe that you would not offend.

The novel’s accessibility to young adults—its straightforward language and plot and acceptably sanitary references to sex and violence—undoubtedly increased its appeal to secondary teachers. You could teach *The Outsiders* and feel safe that you would not offend.

Yet, Tribunella argues, *The Outsiders* appeal on school reading lists suggests “something about the blunted edge of its class critique,” (Tribunella, 88). The novel, Tribunella insists, tantalizes audiences with its acknowledgement of social class as a problem, but does little to question the reasons for social class in America. Social ills are seen as teenage problems, not societal problems, and they can be overcome by hard work, gritty determination, and unmitigated compassion.

Tribunella insists that the push to represent the realistic problems of adolescents led to young adult literature that is “caught up in the lure of didacticism,” (Tribunella, 89). Responding to the lack of realism in fiction for adolescents, Hinton and others began writing novels in the 1960s that they thought would embrace the honest difficulties faced by young people. In other words, focusing on social problems and how to deal with them was adopted as a strategy both to appeal to young adults and to distance YA fiction from the romantic and benign writing of the preceding three decades (1940s, 50s, 60s).

Thus, the new realism of young adult literature, Tribunella asserts, also ushered in novels that propose ‘solutions’ to the very social problems they reveal. *The Outsiders* became emblematic of this new

genre. In fact, as the novel ends, we learn that Ponyboy, the novel's brooding and perceptive adolescent protagonist is submitting the story we have just read as make-up work for his English class. Thus, Ponyboy's moral urgency to share the lessons he has learned through his experiences becomes the story of the novel and not the underlying problems of social class and economic injustice that the novel obliquely depicts.

To be sure, Tribunella writes, *The Outsiders* has had a significant impact on adolescent reading and young adult literature. At the time of its release, S. E. Hinton opened social wounds that had rarely been portrayed in fiction geared for adolescent readers. Decades before the rash of school shootings in the late 1990s, Hinton was showing the terror that some children and adolescents were living with because of conflicts between rival cliques and between youths who occupy different class positions.

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Physical and emotional trauma, underscores Tribunella, is coupled by *The Outsiders'* more insidious and overwhelming depiction of the alienation of young people in an age of modernity and capitalism. With their parents dead, the teenagers in this story who are brothers that live together, existing in a constant state of anxiety as they must grapple with adult problems and decisions with little or no emotional and financial support. The circumstances of the family unit (comprised of Darry, Sodapop, and Ponyboy), asserts Tribunella, means that these boys live with the increasingly inescapable force of the law. Still, as Tribunella notes, no representative of the law directly appears in the text, despite the murdering of teenagers in the novel's storyline; rather the law remains a shadowy force that "trails the boys, that pervades the events of the narrative, and that structures the relationships of these young adults," (Tribunella, 92).

Thus, as a result, *The Outsiders* is not, "a terribly threatening novel," (Tribunella, 95). The novel presents a social dilemma, young boys resorting to violence to grapple with their own fear, insecurities, and alienation with modern life and the problems associated with an underprivileged social class, without "raising any serious flags about radical social reform or revolution," (Tribunella, 95). The social cure, as Pomyboy demonstrates, is to return to school and turn his "social nightmare," the death of his parents, friends, and enemies, into an educational assignment, and what he composes turns out to be the novel itself.

The ending becomes, as Tribunella insists, cathartic, but not realistic. After all, as Tribunella writes, "this individual catharsis does not itself address or intervene in the larger social processes at work to produce or sustain the problem of class inequality and alienation," (Tribunella, 96). True, the reader might read the novel and become aware of something to which he or she was previously unaware, but this simple awareness, does not address the real underlying social ills that pervade *The Outsiders*. "The novel at its conclusion elevates the figure of the individual," (Tribunella, 96) within a particular social-economic system that itself is so toxic.

Put simply, Tribunella writes, *The Outsiders* glorifies "getting a good education" as the answer to society's problems without discussing the reasons for such social inequities. *The Outsiders*, as the author insists, has been folded so comfortably into the secondary school curricula because the novel advocates, indirectly, the maintenance and reproduction of the social order (Tribunella, 99). The novel is "an endorsement of American education and that the obfuscations of the novel work to mystify further the problems it seems to expose," (Tribunella, 99). Hinton does not involve the particulars of the boys' social circumstance and/or the legalities of their desperate circumstances, either as past events or as events unfold, but instead, presents the social dilemmas in emotional and real terms with little or no social commentary.

This is not to diminish *The Outsiders* as a powerful read and its rightful place as the progenitor of young adult literature. It will continue to be enjoyed by readers of all ages for many years to come and remain a mainstay of the secondary curricula. Yet, what Tribunella argues, the work must be seen for what it is, a young adult problem novel that addresses a social ill, but does not question the social order. Instead, in its own way, the work asks important questions about the lives of adolescents and how their individual problems magnify the social inequities of our times.

On Analyzing the Relevance of Graphic Novels

With the emergence of technology (from early video games to sophisticated Internet social networking), much has been written about the decline in reading, and naturally, the troubling emergent readers in today's ever pressing "I must have it now" generation. In "Reinventing the Book Club: Graphic Novels as Educational Heavyweights," (*Knowledge Quest* 36.3 (2008): 44-48.), Jonathan Seyfried writes that trying to impart the joy of reading to adolescents feels like "pushing religion onto perfectly content worshippers of American Idol," (Seyfried, 45). Yet, as Seyfried notes, as if responding to a distress call, a new kind of book has emerged on the literary scene: the graphic novel. "This revitalized genre has not only saved the day for recreational reading," proclaims Seyfried, "it has also turned out to be a heavyweight in the teaching of advanced themes in literature and visual literacy," (Seyfried, 45).

With graphic novels sales estimated at $300 million in 2006 (*Publishers Weekly,* 2007), a group of teachers at Brandeis Hillel Day School in San Francisco conducted a case study on the use of graphic novels as an elective curriculum alternative for middle school students. The study depicts in great detail how the author introduced his students to the graphic novel, its relevance to developing reading comprehension skills, and its viability and relevance as a legitimate body of reading material.

At the outset, Seyfried acknowledges that of his middle school students, a few did not know what the term "graphic novel" meant, while the rest were known for spending their weekends hanging out at their local bookstore, devouring the Japanese form of graphic novels best known as *manga.* Manga is the Japanese word for comics and print cartoons. In Japan, manga books are widely read by people of all ages and thus include a broad range of topics, including action-adventure, sexuality, romance, comedy, mystery, sports and games, historical drama, science fiction and fantasy, and of all things, commerce and business. Manga has become increasingly popular worldwide; in the year 2006 alone, the United States manga market earned $175–200 million.

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Knowing its popularity, Seyfried proceeded to select a graphic novel that he felt would be appropriate for his middle school students. As he sorted through recommended lists and talked with the staff at a local comic book store, he found himself in a quandary as to what graphic novel to choose. Most, he learned, were too gruesome and graphic for his younger students. Finally, Seyfried selected *Persepolis*, a popular graphic novel that contains violent imagery, but depicts the violence in a more cartoonish style.

At the outset, Seyfried recognized that his students understood immediately the impact of graphic novels. Using pictures alone, Seyfried's students were able to discern that a comic book's tone is distinct from prose fiction. Unlike prose fiction, comic books show the passage of time visually, as the reader moves from one panel to the

next. As a result, his students constantly amazed him at how quickly they responded to the graphic novel's jokes, innuendoes, and conclusions. To Seyfried, it seemed that the immediacy of the pictures enabled them to connect to the story, more so, than he had ever seen, when his students read text alone.

To supplement his study of the graphic novel, Seyfried continued to use readings, primarily from *Understanding Comics* (McCloud, 1993) and its companion *Making Comics* (McCloud, 2006). In both works, McCloud outlines a theory of comics as an art form and a mode of storytelling while modeling them in compelling drawings. Seyfried had "animated discussions about the cultural and social implications of these texts" (Seyfried, 46). Students were most intrigued with the role of visual storytelling in our visually saturated culture. As they examined the graphic novel *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2003), Seyfried's students discussed how the novel's graphic images contributed to what was being presented to the reader.

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Beyond discussion of *Persepolis*, Seyfried's students studied Gene Yang's National Book Award-nominated graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (FirstSecond, 2006). In this graphic novel, the main character, Jin, is frustrated with being a cultural outsider in suburban-America. Jin begins to see himself as an alter-ego, the blue-eyed, blond-haired, All-American boy, "Danny." In turn, this character is haunted by a character named Chin-Kee, a cousin of his who embodies all the stereotypes of the Chinese people. Seyfried contends that the mere visualization of the characters, Jin and Chin-Kee, through the graphic illustrations impacted how his students felt about how these principle characters are depicted and represented, an important aspect of visual literacy. As Seyfried writes, "I was stunned that my students could learn to deeply question how cultures are shown and seen," (Seyfried, 47).

In addition to being an excellent exercise in the understanding the presentation of race and ethnicity visually, Seyfried writes that his students' reading of *American Born Chinese* enhanced his readers' "observation skills." This graphic novel consists, as Seyfried indicates, of three separate and intertwining narratives which, together, build a complex and extended metaphor, resulting in a poignant and defining ending to this seemingly straightforward read. Seyfried encourages his students to read "graphic novels slowly" so as to read and absorb all the nuances of the text. "Successful readers of graphic novels learn that rereading and slow reading support close observation, a necessary skill of visual literacy," (Seyfried, 47).

Finally, as a culminating activity, Seyfried assigned his middle school students to work on their own individual, forty-panel graphic novels. The intent was to have students apply their understanding of the basic elements of the visual storytelling to their own graphic narrative. Using computer software (Mac OS), they created their visual stories, enriching their experience and consolidating what they had learned as readers.

For these middle school students, graphic novels provided a rich and rewarding literary experience at a time when the duration, vocabulary, and style of prose narratives often cannot. "My students crave stories that they can relate to," writes Seyfried, "written in a language they can understand, with jokes they can get, and metaphors that are clear to them," (Seyfried, 47). As one of his seventh graders marveled, "We didn't just read the story; we read the story behind the story," (Seyfried, 47).

Conclusion

All three studies examine the perceptions of adolescents and adolescent stereotypes through the lens of young adult literature. With care and precision, the researchers demonstrate that what often is perceived to be true, is sometimes quite contradictory, and thus, results in depictions of young adults as we would like them to be, and, not as they really are. Only close examinations of young adult novels, in historical, psychological and social contexts, can begin to

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underscore the power of young adult novels to illustrate both the commonplace and the exception. For this alone, these studies are worth considering.

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Artichoke's Heart by Suzanne Supplee — Weight Issues/Cancer/Southern Lit.
Dutton Books, 2008, 276 pp., $16.99 — ISBN: 0-978-0-525-47902-4

Rosemary Goode grapples with her weight through sarcastic wit, Pounds-Away diet drinks, and constant haranguing from her mother, Aunt Mary, and the spiteful Bluebirds clique in this tale set in Spring Hill, Tennessee.

Her mother purchases a $700 treadmill for her, and her aunt delivers a ticket to a *Healing the Fat Girl Within* conference. Neither one motivates Rosemary to stop overeating. They only make her resent her family. The only gift she treasures is a collection of Emily Dickinson poems.

Through Supplee's Southern style of humor, lyrical language, and gifted storytelling, readers witness the day-to-day problems that Rosemary faces with her obesity. Misty, the head honcho of the Bluebirds, bestows the menacing moniker Artichoke to Rosemary and teases her during every opportunity that she has an audience. Think *Mean Girls* reloaded

The heart of this story is the strained relationship between Rosemary and her mother. When her mother is diagnosed with cancer, Rosemary must make amends before it's too late. Readers will also enjoy Supplee's descript rendering of beauty shop culture.

Anjeanette C. Alexander-Smith
Tallahassee, FLA

The Boy Who Dared by Susan Campbell Bartoletti — Historical Fiction
Scholastic Press, 2008, 202 pp., $16.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-439-68013-4
ISBN-10: 0-439-68013-4

The Boy Who Dared tells the story of Helmuth Hübener, a young man growing up in Nazi Germany. Although he enters the Hitler Youth, and he has family members serving in the German army, Helmuth's conscience will not allow him to be swept up in the nationalistic fervor of the times. Rather, Helmuth begins listening to the BBC with an illegal radio, and he ultimately recruits a couple of like-minded friends to help him circulate a crude newsletter based on the British broadcasts.

Soon they are caught by the authorities, and when Helmuth and his friends are on trial, Helmuth deliberately antagonizes the judge in order to attract attention to himself and lessen the punishment his friends will face.

The novel is told in flashbacks as Helmuth sits in his jail cell awaiting execution for his crimes.

The Boy Who Dared is a compelling, well-told story that will appeal to students interested in historical fiction, World War II, or stories of individuals defying a corrupt government.

F. Todd Goodson
Manhattan, KS

The Brothers Torres by Coert Voorhees — Coming of Age
Hyperion Books for Children, 2008, 316 pp., $16.99 — ISBN: 978-1-423-1034-1

Frankie and Steve Towers are very different brothers. Steve is older, popular, and a jock. Frankie is younger and doesn't have much going on in his life. According to Steve, it is time for Frankie to be a man. But Frankie is not so sure. After all, Frankie feels, Steve is a man, by age, but does he act like one? The boys have always been close growing up, and now that is threatening their relationship. This book is an honest and very realistic look at the Mexican youth culture in Borges, New Mexico, with a good mix of violence and romance that will satisfy both guys and girls.

This is first novel by Coert Voorhees is wonderfully written. It is obvious that he grew up in New Mexico. It deals with a number of gritty subjects dealt with by the youth of today no matter the state or culture.

Teri Walton
Topeka, KS

The Calder Game by Blue Balliett — Mystery
Illustrations by Brett Helquist — ISBN-10: 0-439-85207-2
Scholastic Press, 2008, 379 pp., $17.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-439-85207-4

Calder Pillay and his father are off to England on a business trip. Calder is fascinated because they will be staying near Blenheim Park, home to a famous maze. Calder loves making and figuring out mazes. Calder likes using these to solve puzzles. His friends, Petra and Tommy, each have their own fascinations. Petra is a word whiz, while Tommy was a collector. They kids also love mobiles inspired by Alexander Calder.

In England, Calder disappears the exact same moment that the new town sculpture disappears. Petra and Tommy rush off to help find their friend. Who would want to take an American boy visiting England? Why do the townspeople detest a piece of sculpture that was given out of admiration? Playing with words, shapes, and numbers, the kids just might find their way out of a maze.

Mary Schmutz
Junction City, KS

Conception by Kalisha Buckhanon — True to Life/Teen Pregnancy
St. Martin's Press, 2008, 277 pp., $21.95 — ISBN-13: 978-0-312-33270-9

Conception is the second novel written by Kalisha Buckhanon, a notable young author who has won several distinguished awards. This novel alternates between two narrators, Shivana Montgomery and her unborn child. The unborn child narrates her experiences as an unborn child in different mothers' wombs across different time periods. Each mother loses her, which causes her return to a metaphysical realm where she waits for another. She is really connected to her latest mother-to-be, who happens to be fifteen years old.

Shivana is a product of a cycle of single mothers raising children on their own. Her mother rears her through a type of tough love that displays anger toward Shivana, instead of communicating her fear that she will repeat her path. Shivana searches for love in an older married man and ends up pregnant.

This book is recommended for 11th- and 12th-grade students. There are some instances of profanity and sexual scenes. It would be an excellent selection for independent reading because of its raw portrait of urban life from an urban female adolescent's point-of-view.

Anjeanette C. Alexander-Smith
Tallahassee, FLA

The Dead and the Gone by Susan Beth Pfeffer — Fiction/Apocalyptic/Survival
Harcourt Books, 2008, 336 pp., $17.00 — ISBN: 978-0-15-206311-5

Seventeen-year-old Alex Morales and his family live in New York City. His mom has started a new job at the hospital, his older brother Carlos has gone off to the Marines, and his father is in Puerto Rico for a funeral. Alex and his two younger sisters are alone at home when it happens: the moon is hit by an asteroid, which knocks it out of its normal orbit. The moon rolls closer to Earth, and that is where the story really takes off.

Sure, the moon may not seem very important. At least that's what Alex thinks at first. But when the tsunamis hit and the Statue of Liberty is washed away, readers know things aren't going to get better any time soon. It's one disaster after another, and Alex needs to take care of himself, as well as his sisters. If you liked Pfeffer's *Life As We Knew It*, this book is a companion to it, although not a sequel. Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, food shortages, and epidemics: this book has it all.

Jennifer Lee
Louisville, KY

***The Diamond of Drury** Lane* by Julia Golding — Adventure/Historical Fiction
Roaring Brook Press, 2008, 432 pp., $16.95 — ISBN-13: 978-1-59643-351-9
ISBN-10: 1-59643-351-5

Catherine (Cat) Royal is on the hunt for a diamond hidden somewhere in her home, The Royal Theatre. Cat's guardian has entrusted her with keeping the secret about the jewel of the theater. But can a young, poor orphan be trusted with anything?

This first of the Cat Royal Adventure series takes the reader to the turn of the 19th century London with phrases, maps, and specific settings from that time period. Golding allows her Cat to have many lives by moving her in and out of many societies in London. Golding blends racism, slavery, and the differences between the haves and the have-nots seamlessly, along with a touch of humor. Cat proves to the reader that young people can keep their word and help anyone regardless of sex, race, or class.

This novel was a joy to read just to see what trouble Cat would get into next.

Mary Schmutz
Junction City, KS

Diamond Willow by Helen Frost — Poetry
Frances Foster Books, 2008, 128 pp., $16.00 — ISBN: 978-0-374-31776-8
0-374-31776-3

An interesting combination of poetry and prose, this book tells the story of a Diamond, a 12-year-old girl growing up in central Alaska. Each poem is in the shape of a diamond, and Frost uses bold words in each poem to reveal the hidden feelings of Diamond. The form and depth of each poem is striking and stirring. The prose sections are told from the perspective of Diamond's animal ancestors, who periodically intervene in Diamond's life.

Diamond shares her deepest fears, longings, and adventures with the reader. The greatest of these adventures occurs when Diamond convinces her family to let her mush alone to her grandparents' home. Along the way Diamond has an accident that will eventually lead her on a dangerous adventure.

Frost's book sparkles with the beauty of nature, realization of truth, and surprising twists in both form and plot. *Diamond Willow* is ideal for middle school students and/or as a complement to any poetry unit.

Lauren Marston
Fayetteville, AR

The Disappeared by Gloria Whelan — Civil War/Siblings/Epistolary Novel
Dial, 2008, 137 pp., $16.99 — ISBN: 978-0-8037-3275-9

The military regime of 1970s Argentina comes eerily alive in this new novel by Gloria Whelan (*Homeless Bird*). Eduardo Díaz is arrested for his peaceful demonstrations against the generals' abuse of power, and his younger sister Silvia will stop at nothing to set him free.

The presentation as a series of undelivered letters between siblings quickly immerses the reader in the emotional tension and heartbreak of the "Dirty War." Like ever-widening ripples in a pond, the reader sees the agony of mothers missing their children and the indiscriminate, callous torturing of people from all walks of life. Eduardo and Silvia beautifully portray both the arrogance of youth and its potential for good in a world gone crazy.

Melissa Moore
Jackson, TN

The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks — Friendship/Secret Societies
by E. Lockhart
Hyperion, 2008, 352 pp., $16.99 — ISBN-13: 978-0-7868-3818-9

Frankie Landau-Banks, a sophomore at Alabaster, a prestigious boarding school, is tired of being taken for granted by everyone. Dad calls her "bunny rabbit" and her family and friends don't really think she's capable of much. But she suddenly finds herself the girlfriend of Matthew, one of the hottest seniors on campus.

Frankie finds out that Matthew is a member of the school's secret all-male society, the Loyal Order of the Basset Hounds. Frankie is determined to find out what the Bassets do and how to become a Basset herself, so she follows Matthew and his Basset friends. In her own way, she is able to infiltrate the all-male society and send its members on many errands, setting up schoolwide pranks. The best part is that no one suspects the adorable Frankie as having a hand in it.

A funny book that will leave you cheering for Frankie, you definitely won't want to put this one down before she's through.

Jennifer Lee
Louisville, KY

Feathered by Laura Kasischke — Suspense
Harper Teen (HarperCollins), 2008, 261 pp., $17.89 — ISBN: 978-0-06-081318-5

Terri, Anne, and Michelle, childhood friends and seniors at Glendale High, are off to Cancun for spring break. Armed with sunscreen, bikinis, and their mothers' admonitions in their heads, they plan on having the time of their lives. The only things on their minds are boys, tans, and sky blue drinks. Kasischke places the girls between the raucous beach party of modern Cancun and the deep green jungle where ancient mysteries still live. Like tourists themselves, readers follow the girls as they experience both worlds.

Kasischke writes a story we see too often in the headlines, using characters developed through her artful dialogue and strong imagery. Appropriate for the more mature adolescent literature reader, *Feathered* teaches an important lesson about danger and the disguises it wears.

Jane Kenyon
Manhattan, KS

The House of Djinn by Susan Fisher Staples — Islamic Heritage/Mystical
Frances Foster Books, 2008, 207 pp., $16.95 — ISBN: 0-374-39936-0

A continuation of Susan Fisher Staples's tale first told in her book *Shabanu*, readers are introduced to Mumtaz, Shabanu's daughter, who still does not know that her mother is not really dead. Mumtaz has been living with relatives who treat her poorly, and her only friends are Jameel, her American cousin, and her Baba (grandfather).

When Baba passes away, the family is turned upside down. Together, Jameel, successor of Baba as the local tribe leader, and Mumtaz, Jameel's selected wife, must choose between following their Islamic values and pursuing their own modern views of love. The American/Pakistani identity conflict that Jameel faces and Mumtaz's reunion with her mother are events that teens of varying cultures and backgrounds will be able to identify with.

A glossary is provided to help potential readers, eighth- through 10th-grade students, with unfamiliar terms. I would recommend this book for small group instruction to foster text-to-text and text-to-world connections and as a great addition to a school and classroom library.

Nicole Avery
Hot Springs, AR

In Mozart's Shadow: His Sister's Story by Carolyn Meyer

Historical Fiction/Sibling Rivalry

Harcourt, 2008, 350 pp., $17.00

ISBN: 9778-0-15-205594-3

Carolyn Meyer, acclaimed author of numerous historical novels for young readers, now wonders: What must it have been like to be the sister of the bratty child prodigy Wolfgang Mozart? *In Mozart's Shadow* is her imaginative but research-based response.

A musical genius in her own right, Nannerl Mozart repeatedly finds herself in her brother's shadow as her father insists she subordinate her own career and even her hopes for marriage in order to serve the Family Mozart.

Meyer capably brings eighteenth-century European life into the reach of younger adolescents. Those who enjoy classical music will appreciate an "inside view" of Wolfgang's pranks and escapades. Girls will enjoy the touches of romance in Nannerl's life but perhaps may flinch at the domination females endured during the 1700s.

Judy Beemer
Milford, KS

Juliet's Moon by Ann Rinaldi

Historical Fiction

Harcourt, 2008, 245 pp., $17.00

ISBN: 978-0-15-206170-8

This installment of Ann Rinaldi's *Great Episodes* series tells the story of Juliet Bradshaw, a 12-year-old girl growing up in the midst of the Civil War. Her only living family—her father and brother Seth—wholly support the Confederacy, and Seth leaves the family's Missouri farm to join Quantrill's Raiders. As a result, the Yankees arrive on the farm and shoot Juliet's father and burn her home to the ground.

Soon afterward, Juliet is captured, along with Seth's fiancée Martha and Martha's sisters. Thus begins the girls' long journey home and Juliet's personal quest to reconcile the good side of herself with her newly discovered dark side.

While the prose of *Juliet's Moon* is easily accessible to both low- and high-level readers, some of the content may be too graphic for younger students. It would be best for mature readers in eighth to 10th grade.

Katie Pearson
Junction City, KS

A Little Friendly Advice by Siobhan Vivian

Friendship/Divorce/Romance

Push (Scholastic), 2008, 248 pp., $16.99

ISBN: 978-0-545-00404-6

Ruby's sixteenth birthday celebration with three friends takes an unexpected turn when her dad crashes the party after a ten-year absence. Ruby only wants to play with her vintage Polaroid and maybe experience her first hook-up, but her plans keep getting interrupted by stale memories of her dad and the best intentions of her closest friend, Beth.

This first novel expertly captures the authentic voices of teen girls. Vivian sets up a beautiful contrast between the clean, still moments of life, captured in a white Polaroid frame, and its ongoing complexities and flow. The tension between the girls is tenderly captured, and Ruby's fears of abandonment produce empathy rather than pity. The given reality of teen smoking and drinking might limit the book to a high school audience.

Melissa Moore
Jackson, TN

Lockdown by Diane Tullson

Realistic Fiction/School Shooting

Orca Book Publishers, 2008, 103 pp., $9.95

ISBN: 978-1-55143-916-7

As a former public school educator who has lived through bomb and shooting threats, I was not, at first excited about reading a book about an ostracized boy named Josh who, after experiencing yet *another* humiliating and defeating incident in a classroom, takes matters into his own hands. However, Tullson creates much depth and complexity in Josh's character, so, while readers will wince at his actions, they should also wince at how fellow students treat him.

Readers are also introduced to Adam, a slacker with a heart; his romantic interest, Zoe; and the tennis-shoe wearing, young principal, Mr. Connor. They, along with other intriguing minor characters, find themselves in the middle of a lockdown—trapped in their own school without a clue as to who is shooting and why. Not only will the ending create much discussion, reluctant readers will also appreciate the book size, pacing, and colorful characters.

Jacob Stratman
Siloam Springs, AR

The Lucky Place by Zu Vincent — Family Issues

Front Street, 2008, 232 pp., $17.95 — ISBN: 1-932425-70-5

The reader follows Cassie from two to twelve years old in this tale of how family situations affect children.

Cassie's alcoholic father Sikes leaves her at the horse races at a young age, which prompts her mother to divorce him. Cassie's "New Daddy," Ellis, is much more stable and caring, and eventually Cassie thinks of him as her father, much to the dismay of her brother Jamie. As the new family develops and adjusts to life in their new home for which the book is named, Ellis develops cancer and eventually dies. Cassie's mother falls apart, and the story ends as she pulls her mother together, makes peace with her "Old Daddy," and manages the family as a seventh-grader.

The book is recommended for ages 12 and up, and it could be used in classrooms as a read aloud or just an engaging, personal tale of a dysfunctional functional family.

Christian Goering
Fayetteville, AR

The Night I Freed John Brown by John Michael Cummings — Mystery

Philmore Books, 2008, 251 pp., $17.99 — ISBN: 978-0-399-25054-5

In his first novel, *The Night I Freed John Brown*, John Michael Cummings shares with us the story of Josh, the youngest of three boys growing up in historical Harpers Ferry. With rich detail, Cummings draws on his personal experiences to transport the reader into the historic setting of Harpers Ferry— the tourist destination in West Virginia that celebrates the life of abolitionist John Brown. Unlike his two older brothers, Josh is an artist. He spends many sleepless nights drawing in his sketchbook, dreaming of the day he can leave his creatively oppressive family. Josh is all too often misunderstood by his father and coddled by his mother, and Josh desperately searches for clues that might explain the distance between him and his father.

The Night I Freed John Brown will appeal to a wide range of young adult readers. It is a fast-paced story that addresses themes like familial relationships, identity development and brotherhood.

Matthew Skillen
Manhattan, KS

121 Express by Monique Polak — Realistic Fiction/School Drama

Orca Book Publishers, 2008, 106 pp., $9.95 — ISBN: 978-1-55143-976-1

The novel begins with a letter from the Montreal Transit Corporation to Principal John Mallard stating that the 121 Express will be discontinued if student behavior does not improve. Not only is Lucas Samson the new kid at school, he's also the new kid on the rowdiest bus in the district, the 121 Express. Branded a "braniac" at his previous school, Lucas attempts to become popular by befriending the trouble-makers who sit at the back of the bus: Pierce, Jake, Georgie, Kellie, and Pierre. However, that means he must help the "cool kids" by ridiculing the "nerds" at the front of the bus.

Reluctant readers will enjoy the characters' antics on the bus, the quick-witted dialogue, and the narrative pacing; yet, teachers will appreciate Polak's desire to create characters who must tackle issues like prejudice, respect, acceptance, and integrity on a daily basis.

Jacob Stratman,
Siloam Springs, AR

Paper Towns by John Green — Friendship/Relationships/Self-Discovery

Dutton, 2008, 320 pp., $17.99 — ISBN: 978-0-525-47818-8

Quentin Jacobsen believes everyone gets one miracle in life, and his is living next door to Margo Roth Spiegelman. Margo is the epitome of Quentin's dreams, and he will do anything for her. When she appears in his room in the middle of the night, dressed all in black, and asks him to go on a top secret mission with her, Quentin ignores his better judgment and goes. What follows is a night full of escapades, revenge, dead smelly fish, and the creation of a bind between the two friends. When Margo mysteriously disappears and leaves enigmatic clues for Quentin, he feels he must drop everything and find her.

In his best book date, John Green provides original, quirky dialogue and enough twists, turns, and mystery to keep the reader turning the page. Once again John captures the essence of a geeky high-school boy who is pining for the out-of-reach girl, and fully develops the supporting cast of characters – Quentin's friends and the elusive Margo Roth Spiegelman.

Melanie Koss
Chicago, IL

The Patron Saint of Butterflies by Cecilia Galante — Friendship/Communes/Abuse

Bloomsbury, 2008, 292 pp., $16.99 — ISBN-10: 1-59990-249-4

At fourteen, Agnes and Honey find their lifelong friendship increasingly strained. As Agnes immerses herself in the strictures and ideals of the religious commune where they have grown up, Honey grows more skeptical, questioning the values, norms, and hypocrisy of the only world she's ever known. When Agnes's visiting grandmother glimpses the dangers lurking behind closed doors, she takes both girls and Agnes' younger brother on an unexpected, unforgettable road trip. Along the way, Honey finds home by leaving it, while Agnes reluctantly trades moral certainty for devastating truth.

Galante tells a poignant, compelling, and timely story through the alternating perspectives of Agnes and Honey. Her own childhood experiences of commune life allow her to engage its complexities with authenticity, insight, and sensitivity. Yet the novel remains, above all, a testament to the redemptive power of friendship and an exploration of the universal adolescent search for kinship and belonging.

Helen Bittel
Scranton, PA

Peeled by Joan Bauer — Mysteries/Farm Life/Journalism

Penguin Young Readers Group, 2008, 248 pp., $16.99 — ISBN-10: 0399234756
ISBN-13: 978-0399234750

Hildy Biddle, an aspiring journalist, lives in apple orchard country in upstate New York and writes for her school paper fittingly named *The Core*. When a dead body is found at the old Ludlow House, abandoned property thought to be haunted, apprehension in the sleepy town of Banesville builds. Uneasiness turns to hysteria when Pen Piedmont, editor of the local paper, sensationalizes the death and other mysterious occurrences around the property in an effort to sell more papers and draw more attention to the town's unrest. Determined to challenge Piedmont's scaremongering and unethical tactics, Hildy sets out to uncover the mystery surrounding the dead body and other strange occurrences.

Hildy, aided by her friends and former professional journalist, Baker Polton, uncovers a shady plot to destroy the orchards and turn the town into a tourist trap. Hildy is courageous and relentless. She unpeels the truth about shady political doings and human greed in her small town and, in doing so, finds the core of her own moral fiber.

Pam B. Cole
Kennesaw, GA

The Possibilities of Sainthood by Donna Freitas — Teen Girls/Friendship/Love

Frances Foster Books, 2008, 280 pp., $16.95 — ISBN 13: 978-0-374-36087-0
ISBN 10: 0-374-36087-1

Fifteen-oh-so-close-to-16-year-old Antonia has been patiently praying to the many saints and writing to the Vatican about being named a living saint herself. She wants to be appointed the Patron Saint of Figs and Fig Trees. She also wouldn't mind kissing Andy Rotellini on her way to becoming the first living saint. Antonia writes every day in her Saints Diary, including thoughts and prayers about Andy, her widowed mother, her grandmother dealing with early dementia, and her trials about the famous fig tree that brings in money for her family. Hunky Michael McGinnis tries to show Antonia how she is already a saint in the community.

Freitas' novel showed the many trials that teens go through in finding their own identity. Antonia is a privately strong female character for young girls to live through vicariously. She falls in love every day but still maintains her own reputation like any saint.

Mary Schmutz
Junction City, KS

Side by Side: New Poems Inspired by Art From Around the World Edited by Jan Greenberg — Poetry and Art

Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2008, 88 pp., $19.95 — ISBN: 978-0-8109-9471-3

In her previous anthology, *Heart to Heart*, Jan Greenberg collected American poems inspired by works of art. *Side by Side* continues this tradition from a global perspective. Works of art are reprinted and paired with poetry inspired by the art. The poems are printed both in their original language and in English translation. The poetry and art collected are grouped into chapters: Stories, Voices, Expressions, and Impressions. Additionally, the book contains brief biographies of the artists, authors, and translators, as well as a map of the world identifying the countries reflected in the collection

Side by Side is an excellent addition to any classroom or library. It is useful first as a book of fine poetry but also as a supplement to multicultural studies and as a model for the use of art as a prompt for writing.

F. Todd Goodson
Manhattan, KS

Superior Saturday by Garth Nix — Science Fiction/Fantasy/Dystopia

Scholastic Press, 2008, 278 pp., $17.99 — ISBN: 978-0-439-70089

Sixth in Nix's *The Keys to the Kingdom* series, *Superior Saturday* continues the unlikely heroism of Arthur Penhaligan, formerly an asthmatic boy, now a golden-blooded Denizen. As he struggles to maintain his human compassion in the face of increasing magical powers, he must stop time and find the Sixth Key before his home city is nuked by Nothings.

Superior Saturday will keep young fantasy lovers in constant suspense as Nix combines adventure with a far-reaching imagination. The entire construct of the Upper House built from open cubicles of red iron reaching ever higher as Saturday attempts to break through the floor of the Incomparable Gardens suggests more than just a story. Nix definitely lives up to his reputation as winner of the Aurealis Awards for Best Fantasy Novel, Best Young Adult Novel, and Best Children's Novel.

Judy Beemer
Milford, KS

Three Million Acres of Flame by Valerie Sherrard — Historical Fiction

Dundurn, 2007, 200 pp., $12.99 — ISBN: 978-1-55002-727-3

Skye Haverill is a fairly typical 14 year old in 19th century Newcastle, New Brunswick—gossips with her friends, dislikes her step-mother—when the largest land fire in North American history destroys her house, town, and leaves her family construed about the area. Skye's difficulties are, however, minor, compared to many around her, and she demonstrates courage and compassion in helping those less fortunate. As the community heals and rebuilds, Skye develops respect and fondness for her stepmother and a deep appreciation for the family she has.

This book would be an excellent source for teaching about Canadian history, as it is easily accessible (ages 10-14 recommended) and contains factual details described through the intimacy of the people affected by the fire. I would not hesitate to recommend this book.

Christian Goering
Fayetteville, AR

Up All Night: A Short Story Collection — Relationships/Identity/Mystery

by Abrahams, Bray, Levithan, McCormick, Weeks, and Yang

HarperTeen (HarperCollins), 2008, 228 pp., $16.99 — ISBN: 978-0-06-137076-2

Up All Night is a collection of six short stories that probe readers to find what drives their innermost thoughts, memories, or experiences that keep their minds ticking throughout night.

For more mature readers, author Libba Bray's story, *Not Just for Breakfast Anymore,* portrays the main character struggling to find her family's identity when she is awakened to different perspectives on life after finding out that her father is gay. Author Peter Abrahams writes an emotional memoir-like story, *Phase 2*, of the unexpected loss of a military father and the toll it takes on the family he left behind. Gene Luen Yang's graphic short story, *The Motherless One,* advances the reader through a visual sequence of wanting to know the unknown.

Other award-winning authors' stories included in the collection are David Levithan, Patricia McCormick, and Sarah Weeks. This collection of short stories is directed toward a more mature audience of middle and high school students.

Melissa DeWitt
Manhattan, KS

What I Saw and How I Lied by Judy Blundell — Mystery/Romance/Anti-Semitism

Scholastic Press, 2008, 292 pp., $16.99 — ISBN: 978-0-439-90346-2

Judy Blundell creates a fast-paced, suspenseful look at the after-effects of World War II through the eyes of fifteen-year-old, wanna-be-eighteen, Evie. The war has ended; Evie's stepfather has returned home safely and takes Evie and her mother on an unexpected trip to Palm Beach, Fla. Evie falls in love with movie-star-handsome Peter, only to discover herself caught in a web of lies spun by her family. Suddenly, the protected and innocent teen stands to lose everything she holds dear, and anti-Jewish sentiments of the war become personal issues.

Blundell deftly fashions Evie as an innocent but glamour-struck post-war teen who must almost instantly develop the integrity and self-reliance to make impossibly tough judgments. Evie is fascinatingly multifaceted as she approaches adulthood in ways she—and readers—never anticipated.

Judy Beemer
Milford, KS

When the Black Girl Sings by Bil Wright — Relationships/Identity
Simon and Schuster, 2008, 266 pp., $16.99 — ISBN: 978-1-4169-3995-5

Lahni is adopted. She is black, and her parents are white. They are great parents who have always had a great relationship with her and with each other. She is the only black girl in her private school. None of this has ever been a problem, but now Lahni's life is *full* of problems.

Her parents are divorcing, and it is turning her world upside down. For the first time, kids at school are making an issue of her race, especially one weird guy. All of this leaves Lahni wondering who she really is. When her music teacher enters her in a school talent competition, she has a chance to find out—and make new friends while she does.

Today, there is a real need for books with interracial themes and situations. Bil Wright offers one that addresses the issue from a different angle and is a fun read.

Teri Walton
Topeka, KS

Where People Like Us Live — Friendship/Family Problems/Sexuality
by Patricia Cumbie — ISBN: 978-0-06-137597-2
Laura Geringer Books (Harper Teen), 2008, 210 pp., $16.99

When Libby and her family move for the umpteenth, she's apprehensive about making more new friends before her first year in high school. However, it isn't long before Libby meets Angie, a girl who has all the qualities Libby wishes she had, and they quickly become best friends. As best friends, the two girls share tons—hiding spots, clothes, the love of horses, a taste in music, and unspoken deep secrets.

Although Libby had noticed Angie and her stepfather Kevin had a different relationship than Libby and her father, it took witnessing an act to confirm her suspicions. Now, Libby faces a totally new problem—ruin her only true friendship and tell, or keep the secret she promised never to reveal.

Where People Like Us Live is a story that exposes the harsh reality some teens face in dealing with sexual abuse and the impact it has on others. The story leads into some graphic images and is intended for more mature audiences.

Amanda Graham
Manhattan, KS

Writing Naked by Peter Gould — Identity/Friendship/Environment
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008, 256 pp., $16.95 — ISBN: 978-0-374-38483-8

Victor is a kid who likes to fly under the radar. At sixteen he admits he is still in "my-trying-to-figure-it-all-out phase." When Victor finds an old typewriter at a garage sale, he's sure there is a story in it. Lugging the typewriter to an abandoned cabin in the Vermont woods, Victor begins his journey of self-discovery. With the old Royal acting as friend and talisman, Victor sets out to test the theory that you have to be "naked to write." A curly-haired nature lover, Rose Anna, and her dog Dash surprise Victor one day. He has been detected! Using her grandmother's gold-plated fountain pen, Rose Anna joins Victor in writing their way to a special friendship, determining the meaning of "writing naked," and experiencing the wonder of first love.

Writing Naked is a thoughtful novel exploring the idea of how writing can be self-defining. We hear Victor's voice as he narrates the novel, and we hear Rose Anna's story as she shares her writing with Victor.

Jane Kenyon
Manhattan, 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

Chris **Crowe**

Fahrenheit 113:

A Story

A nasty scratch of static in my ear bud totally breaks my concentration. I mean, I'm listening to a giga-hot story during SSLV in literacy class, and I'm really into it and all—and then out of nowhere comes this static.

Our literacy coach is cutting in on our listening time again. I hate it. I mean, how can she expect us to get anything out of Literacy class if they keep interrupting our Silent Sustained Listening and Viewing with brain-dead announcements? If my parentals find out, they'll freak because they're laying out giga-credit—including a freakin' massive state voucher—for me to attend the best school in the state. Schoogle.com is ultra-tech, and it's funded by MicroIntellSoft, so we totally have the best-of-the-best literacy hardware and software credit can buy.

My friends dog me for being a total nerd, but I don't care anymore. I'm maxed on literacy, and I can't tell you how many great texts I've listened to and viewed since I started at Schoogle last year. We're on the block program, you know, concentrated classes that provide the best learning environment for us students. I get like five hours straight of literacy class once a week. It's totally cool. I mean, I can watch an entire mini-series or two movies in one class period and still have time to put together a totally tech multi-media literacy response project on the texts I viewed.

More static. I roll my eyes, sigh, and look at the giga-tech board that dominates the wall in front of our learning lounge.

I mean, how can she expect us to get anything out of Literacy class if they keep interrupting our Silent Sustained Listening and Viewing with brain-dead announcements? If my parentals find out, they'll freak because they're laying out giga-credit—including a freakin' massive state voucher—for me to attend the best school in the state.

The video's already running, so I hit the switch on my desk console to change my audio input to Schoogle's channel.

It's another inquisition project—Schoogle's big on inquisition, you know—and an ancient old woman's strapped into a recliner in the NCTE's inquiry room. It looks a lot like our learning lounge, you know with video display units, download stations, and those totally-flash literacy posters from the AMA and NCTE:

"Watching is Fundamental."

"Have You Listened to Any Good Texts Today?"

"Viewing Rocks!"

And my favorite poster, the one that shows a buff NCTE policer totally decked out in black body armor and a techno helmet, nabbing some sorry old sucker in a ratty easy chair doing the unsmartest thing you can imagine:

"reading" a dusty old book. The policer has his red laser dot aimed dead center on the outside of that book thing and his fiberoptic noose ready to drop over the neck of the stupid old geezer.

Bright neo-orange letters blaze across the top of the poster, reminding all us kids in Schoogle's literacy classes to "Catch Someone Reading."

We have those same posters in our learning lounge, and I have to admit that those art design dudes from the American Media Association and the National Council of Teachers of Everything really have hot taste. I mean, these posters are so totally wicked that all the kids at Schoogle have them in their bedrooms. Some of our parents even post them in their media rooms.

The audio feed is cool now, so I tune in to the vid running on the giga-tech board.

"We know what you're up to," says the totally hot NCTE policer babe, like literacy's own Lara Croft! I mean, she's wearing tight black spandex with the letters N C T E going down each arm.

The old bag in the inqui-chair looks totally fried. I mean, spaced. Lost. She has not a clue who's even talking. Like she just woke up or something.

Weird thing, though.

Instead of looking totally freaked, I mean, you know, pet–ree–fied like a soon-to-be Freddy Krueger vic, she's what? Not scared. I mean, I'd totally be shaking in my flip-flops. I mean, *everybody* knows those NCTE dudes don't mess around. But instead, this ancient chick is, I can't think of the word . . . Let me Google it: "Stubborn. Obstinate. Defiant." Yeah, one of those.

Anyway, her watery blue eyes blink blink blink and she looks around the room at the NCTE/AMA posters. And she totally shakes her head. I mean right in front of the policer. A complete and total dis.

So the policer babe repeats: "We totally know what you're up to."

"I don't know what you're talking about," the old bag's voice totally doesn't fit her face. I mean, she's so raisined that no amount of Botox or laser could iron out that road map. But her voice, not a wrinkle in it. She sounds like she's the queen boss of the world.

She stares at the Policer. I mean, eye-to-eye, totally in her face! This is getting good, so I minimize my literacy desk screen that's playing today's lessons on Vid Gaming and Texting, and I kill the I-Tune playing in my left ear bud.

This show is something I want to get the full impact of. I'm like so totally concentrated that I even miss a couple of the texts my homies sent me a few seconds ago.

I mean, *everybody* knows those NCTE dudes don't mess around.

The Policer babe again: "Like, we know what you're up to. We have tele-vid evidence from multiple student I-phones. You haven't been too sneaky in your attempts to roll over the NCTE literacy curriculum."

The old woman sighs. "I am a *teacher* of *English*—not literacy."

"That is like so twentieth century," said the Policer. "Why do you resist moving into the present time, you know, the now time?"

English teacher. I think I heard of that before. My grampa—Mom's dad, the one no one hardly talks about—wasn't he an English teacher back at the end of the 20th? I think Mom said something about it once, but she was whispering so I don't know for sure. Well, and my tunes were hopping too, so I wasn't hearing external audio all that great. Funny, but that 2K memory of Grampa never uploaded before. But it doesn't make any sense. I mean, I know nobody in our family is from English or has ever even been to London or anything, so I have no clue how Grampa could've been an English teacher. Or even what that is.

Weird.

I touch the desktop screen and link to Wikipedia Brain of the Universe and text in "English teacher."

Nothing comes up, so I guess I totally misheard Mom way back then. I mean, everybody knows, if it's not in Wikipedia, it's not real.

So I'm zoned back on to the giga-tech board, hoping they're going to release this old English teacher. Releases are always everybody's favorite parts of the inqui-vids. Usually there's all kinds of crying and screaming and stuff, then comes the confession, then, well, the best part—the vivisection, bleeding, burning, and clean up. A total release. It is so cool, I mean so realistic. Unbelieveable graphics, almost as good as a video game.

The policer has a Book in each hand, but it's cool because she's totally wearing the Nike grip gloves to protect herself. She holds the books up and smiles all

mean and hot: "*Warriner's English Grammar and Composition* and *Norton's Anthology of American Literature*. C'mon, Mrs. Montag, you know these relics were replaced decades ago. Yet you held onto 'em anyway, and we've got more than 75 televid-adavits from students' I-phone-cams as evidence. You've not only had these in your learning lounge—taking up space on the shelves where the retro-Book deco antique replicas are supposed to be—but you've also . . ." and now she shudders like a cold wind just blew through her—"*exposed* your literacy students to them!"

"I will not apologize," she says in a voice like that really hard metal stuff, "for having real books—not book spines and plastic imitations—on the shelves in my classroom."

"Oh, come on, Mrs. Montag," the hot policer says. "You're a crook, not a saint. You know you broke the literacy laws." The camera zooms in and we see the policer slip a taser rod from her thigh holster and touch the old woman's chest. A blue bolt jags out of the rod, and the old woman screams and writhes in her chair. If she hadn't been strapped down, no way she'd have stayed in it. Over my ear buds, I hear most of the kids in class laughing too. I mean, she flexed like a frog leg when that jolt ripped into her.

"Charge Two: despite the NCTE's eco-friendly and green policy outlawing possession and use of paper products—books, magazines, newspapers, notebook paper—you repeatedly displayed such banned products in your learning lounge and openly promoted their use to your students.

The policer smiles. "And you thought you were *so* smart, thought nobody would turn you in. Well, guess what?" She shocks her again and more screams and flashing bolts of light. So real, I mean I can almost smell the toasted flesh. "You are totally busted!"

The camera zooms on the old woman's face; she's sweating like a shower head and her hair's all messed up and you can tell she's hurting big time.

Now the policer's on the screen. She's got shiny red lips, her hair's perfect, and she's smiling right into the camera. "I think it's time we speak the charges against her, OK, kids?"

Everybody in my learning lounge is woofing now and hitting the yes spot on their desktop touch pads.

"Looks like it's unanimous!" the policer grins. "OK, then, let's get down to bidness! Mrs. Dora V. Montag, here is Charge One: you used *paper* notes to lecture from on the fall of English departments. How do you plead?"

"Guilty."

The policer looks surprised but continues.

"Charge Two: despite the NCTE's eco-friendly and green policy outlawing possession and use of paper products—books, magazines, newspapers, notebook paper—you repeatedly displayed such banned products in your learning lounge and openly promoted their use to your students. Plead?

The old woman smirks. "Guilty."

"Charge Three," the policer touches her ear bud to make sure she's hearing the prompter correctly, "You promoted really old fashioned and illegal school activities, namely writing, and tried to distribute pencils and pens to your students." The policer grins at the camera again, "And I totally have to say, you must be really stupid to think kids would want to "write" anything. Plead?"

Mrs. Montag nods, too wiped out to say anything.

"I take that for guilty" the policer says. "Charge Four: even though years of research have proven otherwise, you have repeatedly tried to make your students 'read' in open rebellion against the NCTE's literacy standards. As we all know, eyes are for viewing, ears are for hearing, and a true literate is someone who can view with intelligence and text message really fast. How do you plead?"

"Writing is thinking," the old woman whispers between winces of pain. "It's the last vestige of civilization."

"Wrong," shouts the policer, and more shocks and screams follow. "The NCTE and modern technology have freed all of us from the tyranny of typeface conventions! The idiocy of italics, the stress of spelling, the cramps of capitalization, the garbage of grammar. Thanks to wiser minds than yours, today's students in literacy classes are no longer bound by these ancient 'English' chains.

"On to Charge Number Five: you have taught

fiction, poetry, and drama in your literacy classes."

"Guilty, guilty . . ." the old woman says tiredly but with a smile. "Of course I taught those."

"Wrong!" says the policer. "Everyone knows that literacy scores got really good when kids were allowed to choose their own texts—and in the NCTE's literacy curriculum, we expose students to all forms of literature, regardless of format: DVD, Blue-Ray, Digital, even VHS. The multi-modal, multigenre literacy curriculum accepts all texts as texts; there are no genre anymore—only texts."

The old teacher shakes her head. "But it's not literature."

"Exactly," snaps the policer. "Reading was pointless. When we allowed students to choose their own texts, test scores soared. With today's cyber-students in our digital literacy learning lounges, it's the only way to manage students. Plus, that material is high interest!"

The tortured teacher groaned. "You're right, sadly, you are right. No one has read *City of Ember*; *Feed*; *The House of the Scorpion*; *The Last Book in the Universe*; *The Giver*; *Fahrenheit 451*; *Brave New World*; or even Forster's short story, 'The Machine Stops.' If anyone in NCTE had, we wouldn't have gone down the disastrous road to literacy."

The policer whips her shock rod behind her back, makes a groove dance move, and shocks the teacher again. More sparks and screeches of pain. Cool, so cool. I love this show!

"On to the Sixth Charge against you: speaking a story to students during the two-hour SSVL time."

"I didn't *speak* a story to my students," the teacher said, and I was amazed she could even talk; but her voice was rock-hard. "I *read* a book to my students."

"And" shock "for that" shock "you must" shock "pay!"

The teacher's convulsing against the chair restraints, and foam's oozing out of her mouth, dripping down her chin. It's turning pink—that means that the best part is close—blood's almost to the surface. I can't wait for the finale!

The policer babe faces the camera again and tugs at the zipper at the throat of her spandex body suit. A bunch of guys in our learning lounge start cheering. "And now, the moment we've all been waiting for: the Ultimate Charge, the one that puts the last nail in your coffin, Mrs Montag. We have in our possession, a paper manuscript of a memoir you've been writing—and reading to—your students. Your illegal book attacks the NCTE, Schoogle.com, MicroIntelSoft, and every other important literacy agency in our continent today. You have titled this text 'Fahrenheit 113,' and before we stick you with the full smackdown of the National Council of Teachers of Everything for your totally on-purpose rule-breaks of established literacy curriculum, we must know what the title means."

The tortured teacher groaned. "You're right, sadly, you are right. No one has read *City of Ember*; *Feed*; *The House of the Scorpion*; *The Last Book in the Universe*; *The Giver*; *Fahrenheit 451*; *Brave New World*; or even Forster's short story, 'The Machine Stops.' If anyone in NCTE had, we wouldn't have gone down the disastrous road to literacy."

The old woman moans, then whispers something inaudible.

The policer pokes her with the taser but doesn't pull the shock trigger. The teacher flinches, then catches her breath.

"Ironic," the teacher gasps.

That stalls the policer and her smile fades. "Ironic?"

A weak chuckle, a delirious sick kind of weary laugh tumbles from the old woman's lips. She squints and gags, then falls silent.

And I'm mad, all of a sudden, really mad. Cheated. Ripped off. She can't kick off that easy. Where's the show?

But then she shivers and gasps. She's back!

"It is ironic," she says in a voice so low that I have to jack up my pod volume to max, "it is ironic that you don't understand my title. If you or any of your literacy numskulls had read any literature, had learned to read, write, or think, you would know . . ." A fit of coughing racks her body, and the camera zooms in for a close up of her face. A red bubble of blood billows in one nostril. A deep breath, then she says, "you would know that Fahrenheit 113 is the

I watch for a while, but my Schoogle buddies are all texting me and she's stopped moving and screaming, and it's kind of boring now. The action and graphics aren't as realistic as the stuff in our vid-games, so I tap my desktop and go back to my Halo 16 lesson.

temperature at which the brain dies."

The woman tries to smile, but before she can do anything, the policer jumps back and out of the way to let a huge shiny blade drop down from the ceiling and start swinging left to right, each swing cutting deeper into the old woman's body, splattering blood on the walls of the National Council of Teachers of Everything inquisition room, dripping on the posters—and coolest of all, coating the camera lens with the teacher's blood.

I watch for a while, but my Schoogle buddies are all texting me and she's stopped moving and screaming, and it's kind of boring now. The action and graphics aren't as realistic as the stuff in our vid-games, so I tap my desktop and go back to my Halo 16 lesson.

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Marshall **George**

Comparing Middle Grade Teachers' and Middle Grade Students' Reader Responses to Newbery Award Winners:

A True Teacher's Lounge Story and the Question It Raised

I was recently having lunch in a middle school teachers' lounge with an English teacher, and we were talking about our favorite works of children's and adolescent literature. As we discussed a number of wonderful pieces of literature that were published over the last decade for young people, our conversation was punctuated with exclamations such as, "That was such a beautiful story," or "I absolutely loved that book!" A math teacher who happened to be sitting in the room where we were lunching commented that we, adults, certainly seemed to have a passion about books that were written for "teeny-boppers." The tone of her voice (and the use of the word teeny-boppers) indicated that she thought that despite our chronological age, perhaps we had a "childish" taste in books. Another teacher in the room defended us, suggesting that we should be commended for keeping up with the "trash that the kids nowadays like to read," even though "there is no way that adults can relate to the books in the same way that the children do."

My language arts colleague suggested to the teachers in the lounge that they should all read Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, which she stated to be "one of my favorite books of all time, adult or adolescent literature, and one that *all* of my students love." Her statement led me to remember a confidential comment made to me by one of the students in her sixth grade class who was studying *The Giver* at the time, that she "hated" the book and that she wanted to read books that she could relate to.

Later than week, during our monthly faculty-student book club, I paid careful attention to the comments of the participants, comparing those of the adults in the group with those of the young adolescents. It struck me that while the students and the teachers concurred that they did not care for the particular book (*The View from Saturday* by E.L. Konigsburg), there was one point on which they did not agree: the believability of the young adolescent characters in the book. The adults in the group indicated that they felt the author had created characters that were, as one teacher put it, "just like the kids I see every day." The students in the group immediately (and unanimously) objected, asserting that, "They were totally unbelievable. Kids don't act and talk that way, at least none of the ones [we] know." When I reflected on the lunch conversation in the teachers' lounge and on this book club discussion about the believability of the young characters in *The View from Saturday*, I had a question that I could not shake: How do the responses and reactions of young people to adolescent novels compare to those of adults?

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In an attempt to address this question, I decided to revisit (and add to) the vast amount of data I had collected during my four years of researching faculty-student book clubs and classroom discussions of literature in middle schools in New York City. In this article, I will discuss what I found in that data related to this question, triggered by the two incidents described above, and what I think my findings mean for teachers of young adolescents.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky (1978) asserts that children's cultural development occurs on two levels: "First, *between* children (*interpsychological*) and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*)" (p. 57). Thus, it is often through social interactions with others that children learn best. Harste & Short (1986) suggest that, "Talking about a piece of literature with others gives readers time to explore half-formed ideas, to expand their understandings of literature through hearing others' interpretations, and to become readers who think critically and deeply about what they read." (p. 191). In a sociocultural view of learning, there is always a person who is the "more knowledgeable other," who has a better understanding of a concept, task, context, or process. (Brown & Palinscar, 1989; Raphael & Goatley, 1994; Wells, 1990). Adolescent literature has been defined as "books written specifically for and about youth . . . about the lives, experiences, aspirations, and problems of young people" (Brown & Stephens, 1995 p. 6). Therefore, when adolescents and adults discuss adolescent literature, it stands to reason that adolescent students may become the "more knowledgeable," especially when discussing the experiences of the young adult characters in the works that are read.

Virginia Monseau (1992) suggests that teachers should see themselves and their students as a "community of readers," in which teachers refrain from imposing their own ideas and interpretations, as well as those of literary scholars on their students.

Louise Rosenblatt (1995) theorized that reading is a transaction between a reader, an author, and a text. She suggested that readers sometimes take an *efferent* stance, in which they focus on what they can take away from an encounter with text, but may also take an *aesthetic* stance, in which they "live through" and experience the text through images and memories that are evoked and emotional responses that they feel. Probst (1998) states that, "If efferent reading is purposeful and directed, working toward a defined end, then aesthetic reading is exploratory and responsive, alert to unforeseen possibilities, curious about detours and digressions, playful and experimental. Above all it acknowledges the experience of the reader" (p. 128). Probst and Rosenblatt call for teachers to provide students with opportunities to share and develop both aesthetic and efferent responses to what they read. Virginia Monseau (1992) suggests that teachers should see themselves and their students as a "community of readers," in which teachers refrain from imposing their own ideas and interpretations, as well as those of literary scholars on their students. The ideas of these scholars informed the research described below.

Data Sources and Analysis

Over the course of four years, I facilitated faculty-student book clubs in two New York City middle schools as well as served as a literacy coach in a number of English language arts teachers' classrooms. During this time I collected qualitative data, including field notes of classroom observations and audio recordings (which were transcribed) of the faculty-student book club meetings. In order to look for answers to the question, "How do the responses and opinions of young people to adolescent novels compare to those of adults?" I identified seven novels, all Newbery Award winners from 1994 to 2000. Each had been discussed in faculty-student book clubs and/or read and discussed by students and teachers in English language arts classes in the two middle schools. I made and analyzed field notes from eleven classroom literature discussions of the novels as well as transcriptions of the audio recordings made during the student-teacher book club discussions. These served as the major source of data.

Following the data analysis strategies described by qualitative researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Huberman & Miles, 1994) I first engaged in a general review of the classroom field notes and transcriptions

of the book club meetings, making notes in the margins of the transcripts and field notes. I then coded each of the transcripts and field notes. At first, this task proved to be somewhat difficult. Bleich (1980) has suggested that a common problem facing researchers studying literature discussion and reader response has to do with the difficulty of developing and applying specific categories of responses that accurately fit the data collected. Because the literature discussions I was examining focused on Newbery Award winners, I decided to create a coding scheme based on the criteria used by the Newbery Committee in order to determine how the young people and adults in this community responded to the various literary elements of the books.

This coding of the transcripts and field notes of literature discussions enabled me to make generalizations about the way that adults and young people responded to specific aspects of the literature in their discussions, and about their overall evaluations of the books. When the data from student responses were compared to those of adult responses, a number of clear patterns emerged.

Students' and Teachers' Responses and Evaluations

In general, teachers in the study most often engaged in textual analysis in their discussions, evaluating the literary quality of each novel or focused on the themes of the texts; students, on the other hand, consistently sought to make personal connections with the actions of the plot, the characters, and the adolescent issues explored in the literature. For example, teachers were more likely to evaluate character development or textual features in the novel, while students reacted to the authenticity of the characters and the believability of the behaviors of those characters. In a book club discussion of *Holes*, the line of discussion pursued by three teachers for over ten minutes surrounded their admiration for the intricacy of Sachar's interwoven plot lines, and his effective use of symbolism. When the students became involved in the discussion, they centered their comments on the boys at camp and compared them to classmates with similar qualities. They were impressed that, although exotic, the characters in the novel were quite believable, embodying the behaviors and personalities of their own classmates. This dichotomy played out many times, both in classroom discussions and faculty-student book club conversations.

Following is a comparative summary of specific responses that middle school students and teachers had to each of the winners of the Newbery Medal between the years 1994 to 2000. For each book, I include a brief synopsis, followed by examples of typical reader comments about the book, taken directly from the transcripts of the book clubs meetings and field notes from classroom discussions.

Lois Lowry. *The Giver*. Houghton-Mifflin. (1994 Newbery Award)

Set in a futuristic utopian society where sameness is celebrated, in which no one is poor, no one gets sick, and where every family is happy, a 12-year-old boy named Jonas is chosen for the important job of being the "Receiver of Memories." As he suffers with the weight of receiving memories of the past (which his fellow citizens cannot remember) from an old man known as the Giver, Jonas discovers the disturbing truth about his seemingly utopian world and struggles to decide whether he should keep the memories to himself or open them up to his fellow citizens.

Reactions of both students and teachers to this book focused primarily on elements of plot, character, theme and setting. A common plot-related response to this work had to do with the ending of the novel. A number of students responded to the ambiguous ending with frustration. One student railed, "I liked it right up till the end but was so mad at how she ended it. I don't get why she didn't tell what happened." Another commented that, "the end ruined it for me." Several teachers also indicated a dislike for the ambiguous ending to the novel. "It would have been perfect, if I had only understood what happened at the end," one math teacher moaned. However, a couple of teachers suggested that the author's decision to leave questions unanswered at the end of the book is what made it such a strong ending. One teacher stated, "What a great ending—it's made us sit here and debate whether Jonas died or

A number of students responded to the ambiguous ending with frustration.

whether he arrived in a better place. That's what makes [Lowry] a brilliant writer." Her comment certainly caused the group to think more critically about the author's intentions.

While student responses related to setting were mostly general ("I would hate to live in a society like that one."), a number of teachers specifically connected the setting to communist Cold War-era nations. "I couldn't stop thinking about my trip to East Germany back in '86," commented one teacher, to which a Cuban-American teacher responded by sharing her thoughts on Castro's Cuba. This is an example where two readers' knowledge and experience helped to expand the understanding of the book for other readers.

Several students suggested that although they recognized that there was "a lot to the book," they found it "boring." In contrast, the teachers' reactions to the book were overwhelmingly positive.

In their spoken comments and written responses, several students suggested that although they recognized that there was "a lot to the book," they found it "boring." In contrast, the teachers' reactions to the book were overwhelmingly positive, and they went into deep discussions of themes such as utopias, individuality, revisionist history, culture, and the ethics of euthanasia and genetic altering. During these portions of the faculty-student book club meeting, student participants were notably quiet, perhaps suggesting that some of these issues were beyond their realm of knowledge and experience. These topics rarely came up in classroom discussions, unless raised by the teacher.

In general, the data suggest that the adult readers of *The Giver* had a more favorable reaction to this novel and seemed to appreciate the complexities of the multiple themes explored by the author. This would seem to indicate that in these two literary communities, the teachers were the "more knowledgeable others," and had more to bring to their reading of a "beautiful, yet complex book for young people" than did the middle school students who read it.

Sharon Creech. *Walk Two Moons*. Harper-Collins. (1995 Newbery Award)

This is the story of thirteen-year-old Salamanca Hiddle, a young woman searching for answers. To pass the time on a cross-country journey with her zany grandparents, Sal tells the humorous story of her friend Phoebe, whose mother has also disappeared. As Sal shares the outlandish story of her friend's experience, the reader learns about Sal's own life and her struggle to come to terms with the loss of her mother.

Again, student reactions to this book were primarily related to plot and character. The most common response of the students related to the humorous episodes in the book. "I thought the part about Phoebe and the "lunatic was so funny—the best part." In contrast, few of the adults mentioned the humorous aspects of the story. Rather, they focused on the theme of personal loss, with several remembering the feelings they experiences at the deaths of their own parents. While only one teacher commented that she could relate to the characters of the grandparents in the story, a number of students made a connection with them. During one classroom discussion one student commented, "I thought her grandparents were so funny. They totally reminded me of mine." Reacting with surprise, her teacher asked, "Really? I thought they were totally unbelievable—too 'hokey. Very cliché." This sentiment was echoed during book club conversations, with several teachers calling the grandparents "over the top," "just a little *too* cute," and "nothing like my grandparents." Another character-related observation that seemed to show contrasting views between students and teachers was related to the "believability" of the young characters. Three students in the group concurred that both Sal and Phoebe were unbelievable as young adolescents. "Nobody that I know who is my age acts that way, " responded one young girl after an adult at the table suggested that the interactions between the two young girls accurately portrayed "pre-teen behavior." In this instance, it seems to me that the students serve as the "more knowledgeable others" in the group, and their comments during the discussion provided insights to the adults.

A few students suggested that the intricately interwoven subplots in the story "confused" them or

made it "hard to follow." In contrast, several teachers cited the parallel story lines as "the highlight of the book." One teacher stated, "I was blown away at how naturally the plot lines came together in the end." This serves as a reminder that it takes a mature reader to be able to keep intricate plot lines straight, and that many younger readers need for teachers to provide support when reading such works of literature.

When setting came up in classroom discussion, one teacher reminisced about cross-country driving trips her family had made during her youth. She commented, "it makes me want to take my kids out west next summer." However, none of the students referred to the setting during their discussions. Again, given the breadth of life experiences of the adult readers, perhaps they had more insight to offer into the discussion of this aspect of the book. On the other hand, the young people in the group had more insight into an adolescent's view of grandparents, giving them the role of "more knowledgeable other" during that portion of the discussion.

Karen Cushman. *The Midwife's Apprentice*. HarperTrophy. (1996 Newbery Award)

Alyce, a young homeless girl in Medieval England, makes her way from a dung heap to serve as an apprentice to an ornery, mean, snaggle-toothed midwife. When Alyce is not successful as a midwife's apprentice, she gives up and runs away. However, after spending time cleaning the house of a kind woman, Alyce realizes that she wants more independence and decides return to the more rewarding world of midwifery.

This book was the most difficult to gather data on. Few teachers chose to teach it in their classrooms, and response to the book in the faculty-student book clubs was lukewarm. A couple of teachers felt the book was "trite" and "not true to the time period." Students in the group were quiet during the discussion and felt that the book was "just ok." Interestingly, students in one class discussion seemed more interested in the adult character of the midwife than in young Alyce. One student commented that the midwife "seemed so mean to Alyce, but she praises her when she doesn't know that Alyce is listening. I think she is sort of jealous of Alyce but she is also proud of her." This insight into an adult character was unusual among the discussions I recorded. Two teachers, on the other hand, were captivated by Alyce's persistence and insight as she thought about her future. One commented, "It was as if [Alyce] understood that her life as a housewife or cleaning woman would be comfortable, but that she would not have any freedom. Despite her humble beginnings, she had high aspirations for her life. Even after she is immature in running away, she makes a very mature decision to return to the midwife." It was interesting to me that the teachers seemed to be more drawn to the young character, while the students focused more on the adult in the novel.

The Midwife's Apprentice did lead to some animated discussions among students about the treatment of the homeless in today's society.

The Midwife's Apprentice did lead to some animated discussions among students about the treatment of the homeless in today's society. This was a good demonstration of the students' ability to see beyond the plot of a story set in Medieval England and to make connections to the world in which they live. The discussion of homelessness was generated by a student with the comment, "This morning on the way to school I saw a homeless woman and her little girl on the subway asking for money. Because I'm reading [this book] I looked at her different than I usually do when I see [homeless people]. I imagined what it would be like to be homeless. I mean at least that little girl [on the subway] has a mother to take care of her." The teacher was moved by the student's thoughts and suggested that the class consider a fund raiser to provide money or food for a nearby homeless shelter. In this case, the voice of the student motivated the teacher to take action.

E.L. Konigsburg. *The View from Saturday*. Antheneum. (1997 Newbery Award)

This book tells the story of a diverse group of unpopular sixth-graders who are chosen by their teacher to be on the Academic Bowl team. It is filled with surprises as the reader learns about each of them, their families, and their teacher. The excitement builds as the big day of the competition nears, and the

Probably the most common comment from the students was similar to the following, made by Paulette: "I just couldn't identify with the characters. Nobody seemed real to me. Sixth graders don't act and talk like that."

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students face the intimidating seventh- and eighth-grade teams.

Most of the students and the teachers who read this book did not respond favorably to it. The criticisms of both groups are exemplified by the following student comments. "It moved so slowly" and "BORING-nothing ever happened." A number of the students indicated that they did not like the author's writing style, suggesting that "she described everything and everybody to death." The students had a great deal to say about the adolescent characters represented in the book. "Those kids were not at all real. I mean I'm not a nerd, but I KNOW they are not like that in real life!" [Emphasis added.] Probably the most common comment from the students was similar to the following, made by Paulette: "I just couldn't identify with the characters. Nobody seemed real to me. Sixth graders don't act and talk like that."

In contrast, several teachers sited the "believability of the young characters" as a strong point of the book. A good bit of time during one discussion was focused on this issue of the believability of the young characters. One girl (demonstrating her comfort level at discussing the books with adults) suggested, "maybe that is how you would *like* for us to be, but I really do not think many of us are like that." The ensuing conversation indicated that the adults in the group recognized that the young people were the "knowledgeable others" and the teacher who originally made the comment, demurred to the students' point-of-view. One teacher actually said, "I guess you guys know more than we do about how kids act when they are outside of class."

Both students and teachers reacted to the themes of community, friendship, and adolescent angst that form the "center of the book." One student said that even though she did not like most of the book, she "admired the way the kids stuck together. I wish I had a tight group of friends like that." This comment led her teacher to respond, "I guess we have the same issues—it is nice to see a group of peers who work together and stand up for each other. That doesn't matter if you are twelve or thirty years old."

Karen Hesse. *Out of the Dust*. Scholastic. (1998 Newbery Award)

In her journal, using poetic free verse, Billie Jo tells of her life in Oklahoma during the Depression-years Dust Bowl. Her mother dies after a gruesome accident caused by her father's leaving a bucket of kerosene near the stove. Billie Jo, who is partially responsible for the horrible accident, sustains injuries that seem to bring to an end her dreams of playing the piano. Life with her uncommunicative father after her mother's death is not always easy, and she yearns for relief from the memories and from the ever-present dust which oppress her.

When discussing or writing about *Out of the Dust,* students most often focused on the events that occur in the novel. Several wrote about the horror of reading the scene in which Billy Jo throws kerosene on her mother (thinking it is water). One boy said, "I don't cry reading books, but when I read that—I got tears in my eyes. That must have hurt so bad." Several students expressed their pathos for Billie Jo, suggesting, for example, that "it must have been horrible having a life like hers." A couple of students indicated that although the beginning of the story did not interest them, they later "got into it." One student stated, "it picked up toward the middle, and ended up being a book I could not put down." Several of her fellow classmates concurred.

Likewise, teachers' reactions to this book were overwhelmingly positive. However, unlike those of the students, the primary focus of their initial reactions was on the author's style. A group of two students and four teachers agreed that when they first saw the poetic format of the book, they anticipated that they would not like it. However, three agreed that Hesse's use of the poetic form of free verse was the aspect of the book they admired most after reading it. "It hardly

seemed like a novel, but it wasn't really like poetry either," observed one student. Agreeing strongly, her teacher stated, "I kept saying to myself, 'this is really amazing.' It's *both* poetry and novel and *neither* poetry nor novel at the same time."

Another aspect that both students and teachers agreed was "amazing" was the way that Hesse used language to capture reality of the Oklahoma Dust Bowl. One teacher commented, "I kept feeling like I had dust and dirt in my mouth. You could literally taste it. I've never read a book that captured the setting so vividly for me." Students, in contrast, suggested that this aspect was overwhelming: "I got tired of reading about dust. No place is that dusty." A social studies book club group served in the role of "knowledgeable other," and explained to the children (and an adult or two) about the geographic/climatic phenomenon of the dust bowl that coincided with the economic devastation of the Great Depression.

In general, teachers and students agreed that *Out of the Dust* was an excellent book. Two students suggested that they had never heard of the Dust Bowl, and had never read anything like *Out of the Dust*, but were glad they had the opportunity to read it. One teacher commented that, "Even though none of us lived through the Depression or Dust Bowl, we sure can get an accurate picture of what it was like during that time." A number of teachers associated the book with *The Grapes of Wrath*, a literary work that few of the students had ever heard of.

Louis Sachar. *Holes*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux. (1999 Newbery Award)

When Stanley Yelnats is wrongfully convicted of theft and sentenced to time at Camp Green Lake Juvenile Correctional Facility, the camp warden forces him and his fellow inmates to dig holes under the hot Texas sun in order to, as she puts it, "build character." In reality, the evil warden is using the boys at the camp to uncover a Wild West outlaw's hidden treasure. As he matures and comes to be his own person, Stanley discovers his future and his past as he learns of a generations-old family curse.

"I found myself really pulling for Stanley," one sixth-grader said. "He was such a likable character." Several teachers nodded in agreement. "I often find myself pulling for the underdog," commented one of the teachers. Indeed, adults and young readers of *Holes* seem to have strong reactions to the protagonist of the novel, Stanley Yelnats. During the discussion, the book club participants focused on elements of character and theme as they lauded Sachar for developing a character so well and for showing how he grows and changes in the face of adversity. This happened time and again in classroom discussions of the novel, which is a popular core novel for the sixth grade.

"I thought the story was really exciting, from start to finish," said a sixth-grade boy who later said he identified with Stanley in his struggle to like himself. Like *Walk Two Moons*, *Holes* has dual plots that come together only in the final pages of the book. Several students named *Holes* as their favorite book. The only negative comment made by one adult about the book was that, "it was a fun read, but did not seem to have much of a theme. I guess that is okay—some books are just for pleasure reading, but I don't think they should win the Newbery." In reply, Terry, a sixth-grader who proved to be one of the "more knowledgeable others" in the group, shared this story.

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> Two summers ago, I had to go to summer school because I didn't do any work during the regular year. It wasn't a juvenile jail, but it feel like it to me. One girl in my class wanted me to goof off and to never do any work and try to make the teacher mad. I wanted to pass so I wouldn't get held back. I think I was like Stanley, and because I hung in there, I passed. I did great in fifth grade last year, and now I'm in this book club. So I think the book did deserve to win, because it shows that hard work pays off.

The teacher "stood corrected."

Christopher Paul Curtis. *Bud, Not Buddy*. Random House. (2000 Newbery Award)

Bud Caldwell has survived many challenges in his ten years—abusive foster parents, poverty-filled Hoovervilles that popped up during the Great Depres-

sion, and most devastating, the loss of his mother. Driven by his hunch that a famous musician, Herman E. Calloway, is his father, Bud goes on a mission to find this man in hopes of regaining a sense of family.

This novel appealed greatly to both adolescents and adults. After it was a book club selection in early 2001, the book became a core novel, read and discussed in many seventh-grade English classes in both middle schools. Adolescent readers felt a real bond with Bud Caldwell, even though most of them were unfamiliar with the hardships of his life. "I want Bud to be my friend. I want to take him in and take care of him," one young reader commented in class. Another commented, "I totally get his sense of humor. Those sayings of his [the novel is filled with the philosophical musings of young Bud] crack me up. But they are so true. I mean that kid knows what he is talking about and he is only ten." Indeed, in over six classroom discussions I observed, students were eager to share their thoughts on the protagonist of Curtis's second novel. Many connected with the young character on many levels. One young man opened up to his class about his own experience of losing his mother in South Carolina and having to move to New York to be with a father he didn't know very well. Teachers, on the other hand, reacted to Bud in somewhat patronizing ways. While most found him to be a likeable kid, they were critical of the literary character, convinced that he was "far too wise for a ten year old."

Adolescent readers felt a real bond with Bud Caldwell, even though most of them were unfamiliar with the hardships of his life. . . . Teachers, on the other hand, reacted to Bud in somewhat patronizing ways.

A couple of teachers in the book club group were concerned that Christopher Paul Curtis made light of the Great Depression in the novel. "I'm not sure how I feel about the humorous tone he uses in a book that portrays such a devastating time in our history," one teacher complained. A student in the group piped in, "I don't know much about back then, but I sometimes make jokes when things are really [tense] to make things not seem so bad. I think Bud had to be funny to get though all of the things he did in the book." After a moment of silence, I barely heard the teacher's murmured response to a colleague sitting next to her: "Out of the mouths of babes." Again, this was a clear case of an open discussion when both teachers and students held positions of authority in the discussion, but where students seemed to shine as "more knowledgeable" (and perhaps more wise) than the adults in the group.

Lessons Learned

Louise Rosenblatt urges readers not to think of reading as a passive act but as an active one to which they bring their own personal prior knowledge, experiences, and beliefs. Thus, *each* reader within a reading community, including adults and young people, responds to literature for young people in different ways at different times. Adults often have a very different set of life experiences to draw on when reading a text, giving them different insights into that text. Does this always make them the "more knowledgeable others" when discussing literature with young people? Not necessarily. For if children's and adolescent literature as genres are defined as literature written for and about young people, then young people may, indeed, serve as the "more knowledgeable others" when discussing the experiences of young characters in literature with the adults in the community of readers. My research suggests that sometimes adult and young readers have similar responses to a work of fiction, while at others their responses may be very different. With this in mind, teachers should consider the three lessons I learned from my examination of adolescent and adult responses to literature written for young people.

1. *Listen to the voices of students when selecting literature to read with adolescents.* When selecting literature to read with their students, teachers should recognize that what *they* value in a text may not always been in sync with what their young students value. Therefore, teachers should not only pick literature that *they* like to read, but also include works to which the reactions of the young people in their class (or prior classes) have been favorable. The number of students who volunteered to give up a lunch period to discuss these books

with a group of adults indicates that they can be motivated when reading adolescent literature. While some of the students in our groups were high achievers and indicated on the survey that they were voracious readers, others who struggled in school and said they "rarely read for pleasure" volunteered to participate when they heard that we were focusing on literature that they could relate to and about which they had something to say. With this in mind, teachers should regularly provide young people in their classrooms the opportunity to read and discuss literature that is written primarily for and about young people. This is not to say that works of classic literature should be ignored; rather, there is room for a literature from a wide range of genres in the curriculum.

Student response to these seven books suggests that literature that has been deemed "distinguished" by being named Newbery Award or Newbery Honor Books do seem, in general, to appeal to many young readers. However, teachers need to recognize that there is no book that *all* students, *all* teachers, indeed *all* readers will agree upon as being "the best book I have ever read." When attempting to foster both efferent and aesthetic responses to literature, it behooves teachers to allow young adolescents to read books written for and about young people. While the Newbery Award is one benchmark for teachers to consider when selecting literature for classroom libraries, book clubs, or even books for whole class study, they should also seek out lists of outstanding books generated by young readers (e.g. reviews such as IRA Young Adults Choices, IRA Children's Choices; State-by-state Awards as found in Children's Book Council, 1996). In addition, teachers should remember that because non-linear plots, such as those in *Holes*, *The View from Saturday*, and *Walk Two Moons* may be difficult for some young readers, they may sometimes find it necessary to offer more scaffolding and support to readers as they make their way through such texts.

2. *Foster meaningful literature discussions through reader response pedagogy.* When using young adult or children's literature in the classroom for reading and discussion, teachers should seek and value the opinions, responses, and insights of their students, who in some cases may be "the more knowledgeable others." By acknowledging that they have things to learn from their students, teachers can go a long way toward creating a real "community of readers" in their classrooms. When students first joined the faculty book clubs, their comments were often very limited. However, as the adults in the group encouraged students to respond by giving value to their responses, students quickly became much more involved. I suspect that students observed our conversations when they first joined the mostly-adult group and through our modeling learned to respond to literature taking both an efferent and aesthetic stance. Likewise, when given the opportunity to serve in roles of authority during classroom literature discussions, students were far more engaged than in lessons following the traditional teacher initiation-student response-teacher evaluation pattern of discussion (Cazden 2001). Teachers who want to foster more active discussions in their classrooms must encourage young people to take both an efferent and an aesthetic stance as the respond to literature, and model these practices. This means that they encourage students to make personal connections with the literature that they read, but they must also teach students to seek meaning from the author through textual analysis.

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Likewise, as teachers seek to foster a community of readers who engage in reader response, they must create a classroom environment where it is okay to have an opinion that is different from that of the teacher or other young people in the class. Teachers and young people can have meaningful exchanges about literature, and they can disagree about certain aspects of the literature. This happened time and again during our book club meetings. Finally, teachers need to model probing and questioning techniques that help young people

to respond to literature from both an efferent and aesthetic stance. It is not enough to say *that* we like a particular character or an author's style, but we must learn to explore the question of *why* we respond as we do. What about the author's craft leads us to the response that we have?

3. *Allow adults* and *young people to be more knowledgeable others.* Because of their larger wealth of experience, teachers can sometimes serve as the "more knowledgeable other" in the learning community. We saw that quite often in our book club discussions—the history teacher knew about the Dust Bowl represented in *Out of the Dust*; a teacher who had lived in a small town had insight into the setting of *Wringer*. However, because the childhood or adolescent experiences of young people are more recent, and more closely related to those of the characters in the literature, they too can serve as the "more knowledgeable others." Several times the young people in the group demonstrated knowledge about the adolescent characters that were represented in the texts we were reading that the adults simply did not have. Teachers should recognize and celebrate this "shared power" and must allow students to have voice and expertise within the learning community. If book club discussions (or whole class discussions, for that matter) are used as a vehicle to mine the literature and to expand readers' understanding of a work of literature, then a respect for "more knowledgeable others" must be fostered. When adults in our group respected the knowledge of young people, the community grew more closely knit, and the level of discussion moved to a higher level. This was especially clear in discussion of the adolescent characters in *The View from Saturday* and *Holes*.

However, because the childhood or adolescent experiences of young people are more recent, and more closely related to those of the characters in the literature, they too can serve as the "more knowledgeable others."

So, was the comment of the teacher in the lunchroom valid? *Do* the responses and reactions of young people to adolescent novels differ greatly from those of adults? Although my research involved a small group of adults and young people reading and reacting to these seven adolescent novels, the data did shed some light on the answer to this question. Readers, no matter their age, have unique responses to and transactions with works of literature based on their prior knowledge, prior experiences, their purpose for reading a particular text, and even on their frame of mind when they are reading the text. It is impossible to generalize whether all adults or all young people will respond to a work of literature in a particular way or if their opinions will be predictable. Indeed, after reviewing the data that I collected during faculty-student book clubs over the past three years I can reaffirm Bob Probst's (1998) assertion that, "the actual encounter between a reader and a text is too complex to allow for reduction to a simple formula" (p.126). While it is true that because of their breadth of experiences, adults may bring more (or different) prior knowledge to the reading of a text written for young people, it is also true that that their prior knowledge may be further removed chronologically than that of young people reading the same text. That is, when a novel chronicles the experiences of an adolescent, an adult reader may have more difficulty relating to those experiences, and may have different opinions as to whether the adolescents in the book are "believable." This was the case during our discussion of young characters in several of the books that we read. Does this mean that adults cannot or should not read books written for young people? To the contrary, my research reaffirms that it is crucial for teachers to create situations where they can engage in meaningful dialogue with young people about a wide range of literature, acknowledging that both groups bring unique experiences to, interpretations of, and reactions to the reading of the text. When this happens, a true community of readers is formed, and both adults and young people in that community learn from the experience.

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Judith **Hayn** and Lisa **Hazlett**

Connecting LGBTQ to Others through Problem Novels:

When a LGBTQ Is NOT the Main Character

Our classrooms contain gay students whether we teach at the elementary or the college level or somewhere in-between. Students who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning are seated in those desks in front of us right next to students who do not. The presence of prejudice, overt or not, exists in a myriad of forms. The snickers, the catcalls, the tripping, the whistles, and the ubiquitous use of "faggot," "queen," "queer," dyke," and "fairy" as epithets occur on a frequent basis.

In *Voices of Diversity* (2006), Langer de Ramirez cites the following statistics supplied by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network in 2004:

- 81.8% of youth reported hearing homophobic remarks such as "faggot" or "That's so gay" frequently from other students.
- 75.1% of youth who reported feeling unsafe at school claimed that these feelings were due to either their sexual orientation or how they express their gender.
- 23.9% of youth reported frequent verbal harassment in school.
- 22.4% of youth reported sometimes, often or frequently suffering physical harassment (being pushed, shoved, etc.) in school due to their sexual orientation.
- 16.9% of youth reported some incident of physical assault (being punched, kicked, injured with a weapon) in the past year due to their sexual orientation.
- 57.9% of youth reported that they had personal property damaged or stolen in the past school year (85).

In addition, Taylor (2000) reports that homelessness is a problem for gay and lesbian youth: "As many as 30 percent to 40 percent of all runaways and homeless adolescents may be gay or lesbian" (223).

Yet, talking opening about homosexuality in schools may be the one area of diversity still unaddressed. If the statistics listed above don't give us a reason, what will? Why is this issue still ignored? Uribe (1994) eloquently reminds us:

> Despite the educational establishment's interest in the health and well being of its youth, issues of teen homosexuality have not been confronted. Thus, the youngest and most vulnerable members of the gay and lesbian community enter puberty and our schools at their own peril (169).

Uribe also asserts the wide acceptance of the belief that at least one in every ten in society is homosexual; in fact, this figure has remained consistent over the years. Thus, the issue for educators

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becomes paramount. How can we bridge the gulf that exists between the estimated 10% of our students and the other 90% who could be instigating and/or perpetrating the harassment indicated above?

If our students are therefore not as accepting of LGBTQ classmates as they are of other diversities, what is our obligation to these students? Daniel (2007) reminds us that adolescence is a tumultuous time as teens face, among other emotional and physical changes, their developing sexual awareness. For all of them, it is a confusing time, but for gay and lesbian youth, it can be frightening as well. They are two to six times more likely to attempt suicide and could be the reason for 30% of all successful teen suicides (75).

What can we do to help these teens feel safer and more secure? Daniel, in her article in *English Journal*, "Invitation to All: Welcoming Gays and Lesbians into My Classroom and Curriculum" cited above, offers several resources and strategies for communicating an openness and acceptance for all students. She includes suggestions for the classroom, for the use of literature, and for the outside community to help teachers establish themselves as "visible" allies "to all students, including students who are gay and lesbian" (76-77). Included is an annotated bibliography of contemporary young adult literature where homosexual youth can find themselves as the main character. All students ought to be able to find books that reflect who they are and who they are becoming. St. Clair (1995) reiterates the importance of providing literature for adolescents who struggle with what it means to be homosexual.

> If we as teachers truly believe that literature helps students understand themselves and the issues they face, then we have an obligation to provide our gay students with the same resources as we do other minority students (43).

We certainly support this view and additionally recommend heeding Cart's reminder in his 1997 article, "Honoring their stories, too: Literature for Gay and Lesbian Teens," where he asserts that all students need to read about gay and lesbian characters. He suggests that "sometimes a certain narrative distance may be necessary to make that possible" (43). Perhaps gay and lesbian characters who are integral to the story but not the focus can help us add verisimilitude in our efforts to open the minds of all of our students. Cart asserts his hope when he echoes Marion Dane Bauer's introduction to her 1994 anthology *Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence* as both speculate that in ten years "gay and lesbian characters will be as integrated into juvenile literature as they are in life" (44). Now that Cart's decade has passed, are there, as he envisions, texts where gay and lesbians fill roles just as any heterosexual character might?

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Cart examined his own premise in 2004 in "What a Wonderful World: Notes of the Evolution of GLBTQ Literature for Young Adults." He traces the history of the homosexual as a character in both adult and young adult American fiction. From the publication of the first young adult gay novel, *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip* by John Donovan published in 1969 to David Leviathan's *Boy Meets Boy* in 2003, Cart counts only around 150 texts in between. He concludes, however, that these numbers are on the rise; he finds "increasing numbers and varieties of opportunities, now being given to teens of every sexual identity, to see their faces in the pages of good fiction and, in the process, to find the comfort and reassurance of knowing they are not alone . . . " (52).

If Cart's research is right, and we believe it is, we intend in this discussion to suggest recently published possibilities among those texts that could be used to introduce all students to GLBTQ characters as whole-class reading selections, thematically as literature circle choices, as part of classroom libraries, or as recommendations for individual students, no matter the sexual orientation,

Caillouet (2007), in her article "Searching for the Happily-Ever-After: Young Adult Literature and the Lesbian Continuum," suggests the reader begin with James Howe's *The Misfits* (2003). She quotes Howe's interview which accompanies the audio version of the book where he says he wrote "the story not 'to change anyone's thinking' but 'to open thinking and open hearts'" (9). Howe's novel reaches out to younger teens and preteens who are beginning to experience the hormonal upheaval that characterizes middle level

development. In a hilarious tale, Bobby Goodspeed, the overweight, generally quiet and unassuming main character is twelve and moonlights as a tie salesman. His posse includes three other misfits: Addie Carle, a tall, intelligent and outspoken girl; Joe Bunch, the creative, gay character; and Skeezie Tookis, a black-leather-jacketed hooligan with questionable personal hygiene. The four have been the target of cruel name-calling and now that they're in seventh grade, they intend to fight back. Addie convinces them to enter the upcoming student council elections, but her brashness offends fellow classmates, teachers, and the principal.

This novel sets the stage for helping students identify with Joe as just another member of the gang who also happens to represent that 10 percent of the population who might have a representative sitting in that very classroom with them.

Bobby finally takes the hero's role and during his campaign reveals his feelings about the hurtful nicknames he has acquired—Pork Chop, Dough Boy, Lardo, and Fluff. Soon others begin to listen and take notice. The message about preadolescent stereotyping and the devastating effects of degrading labels rings true. Joe is just another kid who doesn't fit in and is the victim of name calling, but he is also an accepted, confident member of a group of friends. Bobby notes early in Chapter 2: "Joe figures he is who he is and what's the big deal, and I figure he is right about that" (12). Students need opportunities to experience the friendship among "the misfits" who rise up against the status quo and convince classmates of the harm that bigotry can cause. The text makes an excellent read-aloud for tweens who are just beginning to experience the pangs of puberty. This novel sets the stage for helping students identify with Joe as just another member of the gang who also happens to represent that 10 percent of the population who might have a representative sitting in that very classroom with them.

Another suggestion for younger teens is *Between Mom and Jo* (2006) by Julie Ann Peters. Nicholas Nathaniel Thomas Tyler is fourteen with four first names and two mothers. Nick's biological mom is the dependable one while Jo, her partner, is more reckless and impetuous. The impact of Mom's cancer and Jo's alcoholism leads to divorce. Because the women are a same-sex couple, Jo has no biological or legal right to Nick, although he prefers to live with her. What many of our students will see as an odd set-up, Nick views as normal. This is a novel that can initiate discussion on preconceptions, stereotypes, and fairness without dealing with an adolescent as the homosexual protagonist. Additionally, the problems both mothers have will be familiar to readers although the lesbian lifestyle may not be. Here it is the young protagonist who faces the issue of homosexuality although not his own; cancer, divorce, alcoholism, and custody issues seem more important to Nick than his parental partners' sexuality, and student readers can learn to appreciate this.

In addition to Nick's story mentioned above, Peters contributes novels with young women as protagonists. First, the groundbreaking *Luna* (2004) with its two tales—one is Regan's; and the other, her transgender brother Liam's. Regan has put her life on hold for him, but when he is ready to transition fully into Luna, Liam's alter ego, she is not sure she can handle the fallout. Told from Regan's point of view in the present and in flashback, the novel deals sensitively with an area of sexuality unexplored in young adult literature. A young man is determined to live his true identity, and his family struggles to accept Luna for who she really is. This selection might be too raw for less mature students, but the attention brought to teens who feel they are born in the wrong bodies could doubtless save lives. Transgendered persons may not be homosexual, as Cart states in the second article, but certainly the confusion surrounding their sexuality places them in same category as their GLBQ counterparts. For any teen reader, however, the focus on Regan and her confusion gives credence to a family and social situation many adolescents might not have encountered. Just opening a window for consideration of the transgendered teen offers the potential for increased awareness, even understanding.

A more accessible novel, and thus maybe more useful to the teacher, is Peters' *Far from Xanadu* (2005) where she again deals with adolescent sexual confusion. Xanadu, a sophisticated city teen, is exiled to an aunt and uncle in a small Kansas town after

drug dealing trouble. She encounters Mike Szabo, who dresses in her dead father's clothes, stars on the softball team, despises her obsessive mother, and engages in binge drinking. Mike admits her attraction to girls, especially Xanadu, as she struggles with the sexuality her gay best friend Jamie openly avows. The residents of Coalton accept Mike and Jamie; however, Mike grows to accept that she must leave the town to find a meaningful relationship, and sports may be the way out for her. The interaction and vulnerability of the characters, both gay and straight, places the three at the intersection of adolescent issues no matter the sexual orientation. The role reversals Mike epitomizes give readers a chance to reconsider their views on sexual stereotyping, as well as observe that support for a troubled teen can come from unexpected sources.

Bonnie Shimko's *Letters in the Attic* (2002) features Lizzy McMann as the twelve-year-old narrator who moves to upstate New York in the 1960s with her newly divorced mother to live with Lizzy's grandmother. Lizzy falls in love with Eva Singer, her movie-star-lovely new friend and neighbor. Although Eva finds a boyfriend and doesn't reciprocate her friend's crush, Lizzy must deal with the fallout after Eva tries to commit suicide when her hidden dyslexia adds to her feelings of unworthiness at home. This tale of first love unfolds through Lizzy's struggles with the ebb and flow of early adolescent physical and emotional development. The middle school adolescent who is just beginning to look for romance and dealing with crushes would identify with Lizzy's unreturned love while seeing the ties that friendship can forge between two mismatched young girls.

David Levithan has emerged as one of the strongest voices in the genre of gay fiction, and as noted above, Cart cites his novel *Boy Meets Boy* (2003) as a seminal publication in gay fiction. It features Paul as a high school sophomore who lives in what is essentially gaytopia, a fictional community somewhere on the eastern coast. Cart states: "It is the only novel since the genre began in 1969 that has no hint of selfhatred. . . . " (51). This unnamed community where Paul lives is populated with hilarious characters and situations; for example, Darlene, a transvestite, is Homecoming Queen and the quarterback of the football team. Paul has been identified as gay since kindergarten, which is a plus for the PTA, and the Boy Scouts are Joy Scouts as they became inclusive because of Paul while the Gay Straight Alliance is the most stellar group in school. All of this might be over the top, but Levithan adds friendship issues to Paul's wooing of the new guy Noah through his other friends—Tony and Joni, who are straight, and Kyle, who is not. Imagining a hate-free world where everyone can love without fear may indeed be fantastical, but this is a story that all teens of any sexual orientation must read. The concept is fantastic yet believable enough to allow for provocative and important discussion about tolerance embraced with acceptance.

Levithan offers another astounding tour de force in *The Realm of Possibilities* (2004) where he delineates the voices of twenty teens in an urban high school, each with a unique character and an inimitable story to tell. Interrelated as friends or acquaintances, the characters reach out to readers in a series of poems framed by the words of Daniel and Jed, a gay couple celebrating one year together. As Daniel points out, ". . . *my parents are okay with me being gay/but they would kill me if they saw me with/a cigarette*. . . "(5).

The middle school adolescent who is just beginning to look for romance and dealing with crushes would identify with Lizzy's unreturned love while seeing the ties that friendship can forge between two mismatched young girls.

The others reveal themselves in their own words as members of a high school community including a self-obsessed popular girl, an anorexic with a body-building jock boyfriend, a girl with a mother dying from cancer, one with a crush on her straight friend, and a young man engaging in sexual experimentation with his girlfriend. Their stories will resonate with teens who can recognize themselves and their friends in Levithan's portraits of all the possibilities in the adolescent world, and ultimately society as a whole. The poetic prose format, so popular with teens for its easy-reading flow, makes the novel accessible, and the powerful messages are clear. Every teen can identify with one or more of the characters and examine

sexual identity from a myriad of viewpoints that can lead to challenging discussions with students and among them.

Another novel utilizing the poetic prose genre is Helen Frost's *Keesha's House* (2003). Using sestinas and sonnets, Frost introduces the reader to the teens who found shelter, temporary or permanent, in a house Joe inherited from his aunt. She took him in when he was 12, and now he returns the favor to those who are like he was. Keesha is there because her mother is dead, and her dad is a mean drunk; she invites the others when life overwhelms them. The residents at one time or another include Stephie, who is pregnant at 16, and Katie who lives in the basement as she escapes a stepfather intent on molesting her. Harris has just come out to his parents; his homophobic father bans him from the family home, so Harris has been living in his car. The situations are realistic, and the adults in these teens' lives also speak eloquently in poetic form. *Keesha's House* presents issues faced by adolescents who are all, in one way or another, outsiders seeking a home. The text makes a wonderful readers' theater as the teens alternate their stories in each section while two sections are devoted to the adults who are dealing with the characters and also have their own memories of adolescent upheaval which assail them. By adopting a role, rather than stating his or her own opinion, an adolescent could safely examine alternative viewpoints.

***Keesha's House* presents issues faced by adolescents who are all, in one way or another, outsiders seeking a home.**

For fantasy enthusiasts, British writer Geoffrey Huntington offers a Gothic adventure in the Ravenscliff Series where the reader first meets Devon March in *Sorcerers of the Night Wing* (2002). Devon's unusual powers include levitating his dog, disappearing at will, and moving objects with only his mind. After his father's death, he is sent to live at Ravenscliff, where he hopes the mysteries of his past will be revealed. In the sequel *Demon Witch* (2003), Devon battles demons, vampires, and witches. Both books feature his group of friends, which include D. J., the rebel; Ana, the airhead; and the openly gay Marcus. A third book, *Blood Moon*, promises more of the perils of inheriting the title and abilities of a Sorcerer of the Order of the Night Wing. Fantasy seems to appeal to readers who seek an escape from reality, and gay/lesbian teen fiction offers this series, and others, where homosexuality is simply part of the character, not part of the plot. As students study character development, sexuality could become just another aspect, rather than the key motivation for behavior.

Sarra Manning's *Pretty Things* (2005) continues the realistic problem novel. Set in England, four young girls participate in a summer drama workshop prepping for a production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Told in alternating voices, a romantic triangle develops when Brie loves her gay best friend, Charlie, who prefers straight Walker, who falls for lesbian Daisy. Charlie doesn't think that being gay is his only identity while Daisy begins to enjoy sex with both Walker and her girlfriend. As in Shakespeare's play, issues of confusion, complications, and miscommunication eventually end in resolution for each character. The novel is explicit, so placing it in a classroom offers a risk, but the maturity of the subject matches the lives of too many older adolescents to ignore its potential for reaching readers confused about their place in the world.

A similar relationship occurs in Maureen Johnson's *Bermudez Triangle* (2004) where high school seniors Nina, Avery, and Mel are inseparable friends. While Nina is away at summer leadership camp, Avery and Mel fall in love with each other. On her return, Nina feels isolated and alone as she deals with accepting the romance between her two girlfriends while they seek time to be with the other. Avery cannot handle the pressure of discovery, seeks a heterosexual relationship, and leaves Mel to turn to Nina for comfort. The three obsess over their romances, fall in and out of love, discover new friendships, and stagger toward adulthood just as eighteen year olds about to graduate do, regardless of sexual orientation. Asking students to compare their own uncertainties over romantic tensions as high school draws to a close has value while they face the future with all its possibilities; the dialogue could help those who are questioning or not at this important crossroads for older teens.

Another realistic problem novel is Terry

Trueman's *7 Days at the Hot Corner* (2007), featuring Scott, a high school senior who deals with the shock of discovering that his best friend Travis is gay. Scott fixates only on the city baseball championship, his position on third base (the "hot corner" of the title), and potential college scholarships. After Travis confesses during the tournament that he is gay, Scott ends up with Travis's blood on his hands during a session at the batting cages. Scott fears the worst, and the seven days of baseball mirror the seven-day waiting period required at the county health clinic for the results of Scott's AIDS test. In addition, Travis has been thrown out of the house by his homophobic parents and moves in with Scott's dad. The highs and lows of a young athlete who suddenly finds himself deep in emotional turmoil over his best friend's revelations accompany vivid sports' commentary and action. The information about AIDS and HIV makes the book valuable for all teens, and its appeal for baseball enthusiasts makes the facts palatable in a tense read. Scott has to examine his own reactions and beliefs in this fast-paced novel, and other young men can follow his journey toward self-understanding.

Brent Hartinger's award-winning series about the secret gay-straight alliance created at Goodkind High School begins with the euphemistically titled *Geography Club* (2003). Russel Middlebrook and his gay and lesbian pals are presented as likeable teens who speak realistic dialogue in dealing with the differences they must keep hidden in the hypercritical world of high school. In the first sequel, *The Order of the Poison Oak* (2005), Russel spends the summer as a counselor in a camp for burn victims where he hopes to escape his identity as the token gay guy. He and the campers create the Order as a special club dedicated to all types of outcasts. The newest sequel is a real *Split Screen* (2007) where Russel and his best friend Min Wei sign on as extras in the locally filmed version of *Attack of the Soul-Sucking Brain Zombies* and also the title of Russel's tale. Min, incidentally a lesbian, writes of her adventures in *Bride of the Soul-Sucking Brain Zombies*, which the reader finds by flipping over Russel's story. The filming provides students from other schools as extras playing normal high school students who gradually morph into zombies. This setting provides the backdrop for teen romance, adolescent treachery, prejudice, and resolution just like any other teen problem novel. Hartinger's breezy style and his own collection of misfits has echoes of Howe's book mentioned at the beginning of this analysis. His are in high school and are much more charismatic, outrageous, and passionate enough to entice the older reader into the zany happenings of this appealing crew.

The information about AIDS and HIV makes the book valuable for all teens, and its appeal for baseball enthusiasts makes the facts palatable in a tense read. Scott has to examine his own reactions and beliefs in this fast-paced novel, and other young men can follow his journey toward self-understanding.

The final selection is a powerful collection of short stories by Nancy Garden, *Hear Us Out! Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present* (2007). Garden writes of the changing rights and social status of gay and lesbian adults and teens told by decades. The history of the changing rights and social status of gay and lesbian teens is told through essays and short stories. Beginning with the 1950s, each essay describes a decade in broad political and social terms with references to specific events pertinent to GLBTQ adults and teens of that era. The essay is followed by two stories, written by Garden and set during the decade featured in the essay. As this article has maintained, stories show how fiction reveals truth perhaps more subtly and powerfully than nonfiction. The issues and questions thus reach all teens, making it easier for contemporary youth to deal with the past and hopefully with their present. Like the other works recommended, these stories can be used to raise issues and questions about sexual orientation and behavior in the light of history. This information is just as vital, imperative, and significant for heterosexual adolescents as it is for those who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgendered, or still questioning their sexuality.

The above suggestions highlight only a few of the novels we feel might help classroom teachers and

others approach the issues faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, questioning adolescents. As Cart so lyrically states in his decade ago appeal:

> We need. . . more good novels that also inform the minds and hearts of non-homosexual readers, that offer them opportunities for insight and empathy by shattering stereotypes and humanizing their gay and lesbian peers. Not to have such books is an invitation to ignorance, which leads to fear, which leads to demonizing instead of humanizing, which leads to violence against not only the body but the spirit (45).

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Lisa Hazlett *is Professor of Secondary Education in the Division of Curriculum & Instruction in the School of Education at the University of South Dakota. Her research interests include diversity scholarship in young adult literature, with special emphases on rural issues. Now past president of the South Dakota Council of Teachers of English, she is serving as their SLATE Representative for NCTE.*

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Teri **Lesesne**

"A True Calling That Grows More Lovely Each Year":

Three Authors Pay Tribute to 2007 ALAN Award Winner, Teri Lesesne

Note from the editors: We asked this trio of top authors to say a few words about Dr. Lesesne, and they jumped at the opportunity. Many thanks to Jennifer Flannery for helping us connect with Gary Paulsen deep in the Alaskan bush!

I first met Teri Lesesne at an NCTE dinner years ago. "You're speaking at our humor conference in two and a half years," she said to me, grinning. "We can't wait." I decided not to mention that I might be dead in two and a half years. Worse than that—I might not be funny. But Teri is just so beyond all those what ifs, for all her half-filled glasses overflow. She puts herself out there to learn and teach and love and share with infinite enthusiasm. Enthusiasm, I learned recently, means "filled with God," and how she lives that out as a friend and colleague. When she's had losses, she makes them her gain. When she loves something—a book, a person, an idea—she lets the world know. She blogs with joy and confidence, and that's how she teaches. Again and again her students have told me, "I don't really have time to take this course, and I have to drive a really long way, and it's on Saturday and all that, but, well, it doesn't matter because . . ." a smile; a happy sigh . . . "Dr. Lesesne is teaching."

Dr. Lesesne is teaching, and thank God for that—in her books, in her classrooms, on her panels, in her blog, with her friends—matching books with readers and people with ideas that will change their lives. And now in print I get to say what I've wanted to convey for so long. Thank you, Teri, for the gift of your joy, your resilience, your unswerving insistence on excellence, your reservoirs of strength and wisdom, your gutsy laugh, and your fresh vision. And thank you most of all for showing us the beauty of a true calling that grows more lovely each year.

—Joan Bauer

* * * * *

You can't have much of a discussion about adolescent literature without Teri Lesesne's name coming up. It was one of the first names I heard back in the day when I was one of the young new guys and it's one of the first now. She reads voraciously and you can ALWAYS expect an honest response to your work. She's funny and smart and you always feel in capable hands when you're presenting at one of her conferences, or with her at a national conference. She's a great friend to authors and a great friend to the literature she loves. I can't say too much. My one complaint is what her name does to Spellcheck.

—Chris Crutcher

* * * * *

I write books for young people. That makes me a foot soldier. Teri Lesesne puts books in the hands of young people. That makes her a general on the front line of battle.

Teri seems to know everything about and everyone in the business of getting books and young people together. She forgot more last week about what kids like to read than most people will know in a lifetime—except I'm not sure that's true because of her prodigious memory ("Ah yes, page 67 of the hardcover not the paperback edition, midway down on the left, you wrote . . . ").

She's passionate and fierce and funny about books and kids and writers. She's a voracious and curious reader which makes her a great friend to both authors and young readers, and her support and encouragement make the world a little better than the way she found it.

—Gary Paulsen

Robert C. **Small,** Kathryn H. **Kelly,** and Pam B. **Cole**

"Thank you, Pat, for bringing so many of us into the circle of young adult literature":

A Tribute to 2007 Ted Hipple Service Award Winner, Patricia P. Kelly

Note from the editors: We asked this all-star team of YAL heavy hitters to say a few words about their former colleague, Patricia P. Kelly, winner of the 2007 Ted Hipple Service Award. Many thanks to Drs. Small, Kelly and Cole.

First, let me tell you how pleased I am that Pat Kelly has been selected to receive the Hipple Award. I had the great privilege of working with her as her doctoral advisor at Virginia Tech, where she developed an outstanding dissertation. I also have been her coauthor on a number of published articles related to Young Adult Literature in such professional journals as the *English Journal*, the *ALAN Review*, and the *Virginia English Bulletin* and so know the high quality of her work, her research, and her writing skill. She also was chosen to be the President of ALAN and coeditor of the *ALAN Review* and did an outstanding job. In addition, she has had a leadership role in the Conference on English Education (CEE) and served as a member of the CEE Committee for the Senior High School Booklist, the group that oversaw the development of the periodic publication, *Books for You*, when I was its editor. In addition, she and I were coeditors of the book, *Two Decades of The ALAN Review,* published by NCTE.

Consequently, I have had the opportunity to work with her on many tasks related to YA Literature, but what I remember most from the years of my activities working with her is that she is dedicated, hardworking, and collaborative but also light-hearted and fun to work along side of. She always has produced top-notch work whether writing an article or book, presenting at conferences, or serving as chair of a committee and has as one of her major dedications a commitment to Young Adult Literature.

So I say, "Congratulations, Pat" and also, "Thank you, ALAN, for making the very wise decision to present the Hipple Award to her."

—Robert C. Small

Robert C. Small, *Radford University Professor Emeritus, is past chair of ALAN and past coeditor of* The ALAN Review. *Dr. Small is also past chair of NCTE's Conference on English Education and former Dean of the College of Education at Radford University.*

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Although I was the committee member who formally nominated Dr. Kelly for consideration for the Hipple Award, the rest of the committee members all had stories, as well, as to why she should be the recipient. She has been my mentor since I was a graduate student—she planned out my whole program and got me enrolled in the Southwest Virginia Writing Project, introduced me to ALAN and constantly encouraged me to be an active teaching professional. Because of her, I served on numerous committees on local, state and national levels. She helped me gain confidence in myself as a teacher and teacher/leader. Knowing her has changed my life forever!

Dr. Kelly's contributions to the field of YAL have not only been remarkable in number but also in scope. She began a YAL discussion group which met once a month in which area teachers, I believe about ten of us, got together and discussed the books that we had read for that meeting. She helped us all develop an appreciation for YAL and helped us realize how to utilize YAL, even on the high school level. As an outgrowth of that group, she suggested that we write reviews of new YA books coming out, and encouraged us to work on the *Books For You* edition edited by Leila Christenbury. She also helped many of us prepare presentations for both ALAN and NCTE. And of course, she encouraged all of us to join ALAN and to attend all the ALAN workshops from the get go! She was president of ALAN, served as editor of *The ALAN Review* with Bob Small and so much more.

I could sing her praises forever and ever without end! She is my mentor, colleague, and friend.

—Kathryn H. Kelly

Kathryn H. Kelly *is an associate professor of English at Radford University where she teaches classes in children's and young adult literature and English education. Dr. Kelly is also past president of ALAN. Her research and publications deal with young adult literature and at-risk youth.*

* * * * *

I met Pat Kelly for the first time in the Spring of 1991 when I decided I wanted to earn a Ph.D. and teach English composition at a community college. "Are you sure that's what you want to do?" she asked. That one question changed my life and the way I view teaching and learning.

Pat became my doctoral mentor at Virginia Tech and introduced me to the world of young adult literature. Others who write a tribute to her will speak of her remarkable service in the field of young adult literature—her work as an editor of *The ALAN Review* and editor of *SIGNAL Journal* and the dozens of articles and book chapters she has written and conferences she has helped develop to promote the genre. But what I will always remember and respect the most is the selflessness she brought, and continues to bring, to the field of young adult literature. For Pat Kelly, making sure a doctoral candidate had an opportunity to publish, to meet an author, and to make connections with other young adult experts across the country were all more important than her own work. We *were* her work. Always the unassuming one at the annual ALAN workshop, she pushed a doctoral student forward in a crowd to meet one of her colleagues, "Here, she'd say, "meet ____, she/he will write a good chapter for that book you are editing." Thank you, Pat, for bringing so many of us into the circle of young adult literature and thank you for all you have done, and continue to do, to bring young adult literature to the forefront of the English curriculum.

—Pam B. Cole

Pam B. Cole *is Distinguished Professor of Middle and Secondary Education at Kennesaw State University. She is a past president of SIGNAL and former editor of* SIGNAL Journal. *Dr. Cole has recently taken over the editorship of the monthly book review column on the ALAN website. Her book,* Young Adult Literature in the 21st Century *(McGraw Hill), is due out in the fall of 2008.*

Diane P. **Tuccillo** with Victoria **Hanley**

Reading, Writing, and Victoria Hanley

We know that reading and writing go hand in hand. One cannot exist without the other. Much time is spent by us teachers and librarians in promoting both ends of this spectrum. We work hard to connect the right reader with the right book at the right time. We encourage readers to select books for pleasure, information, and enlightenment, and to appreciate the varied writing styles of the authors. Likewise, we try to teach teens the personal benefits of writing for enjoyment, self expression, and effective communication.

Victoria Hanley

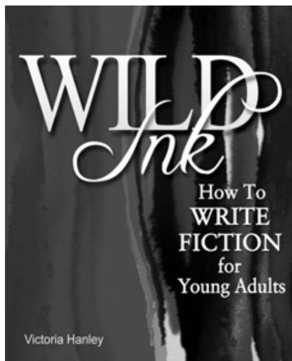
Interesting and relevant writing lessons and activities in the classroom help to steer teens in the right directions. However, the significance of good writing is especially enhanced when teens have an opportunity to discover that creating with words is something they can do independently whenever they choose, just like with reading. Even better is when they have opportunities to reach a reading or listening audience with what they have created, if that is what they desire.

Many teens enjoy keeping a journal, crafting poetry, writing short stories, and even writing novels. They dream of being published someday. They often seek out places where they can share their writing, get feedback, and improve. School and public libraries today are hopping on the bandwagon by providing places like these where teens can get together in creative writing clubs, compete in poetry slams, create teen literary magazines and newsletters, and write book reviews. Many after-school teen creative writing groups not only give teens a forum to share their work, play with words, and develop ideas, but they also bring in authors to give tips on how to be a better writer and how to get published. Victoria Hanley is one of those authors.

Recently, at my library, Victoria did a workshop for our teen creative writing club on creating memorable characters. She combined fun and thought-provoking activities that encouraged the teens to explore new approaches and perspectives. Using props and exercises with descriptive words, the teens learned how to make their stories more effective by developing believable characters readers can clearly see. A side benefit to having published authors like Victoria share their words of wisdom with teens is that they can tell firsthand about the publishing world in addition to making recommendations on how to be a better writer.

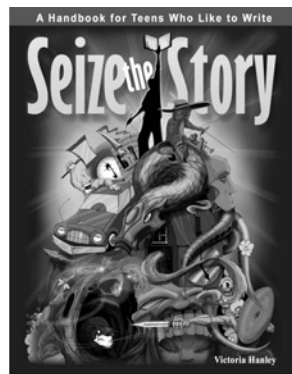
Victoria is an especially excellent presenter for encouraging teens to read as well as write because she not only has three wonderful fantasy novels, but she has also written two excellent new guidebooks on the craft of writing. One is for adults who want to write for teens, called *Wild Ink*. The other, *Seize the Story*, is for young adults who want to learn to write and to become better writers. Both books include not only step by step advice, activities, and information on building and improving writing skills, but they also include inspiring words of wisdom from an array of well known young adult authors.

These books are truly a labor of love, because



Victoria deeply believes in the value of the written word, connecting reading and writing, and encouraging writers to be the best they can be. She communicates well with teens in sharing these important messages. One boy, who told me that he never really thought much about creative writing before, sent me an email message:

"After attending the creative writing club with Victoria Hanley I got pretty interested in writing. I am curious if we can get more information on Mrs. Hanley's guide, *Seize the Story*, since it would help me become a better writer."



Try *Seize the Story* with *your* aspiring teen writers, and recommend *Wild Ink* to any adult writers who dream of writing a great young adult novel (perhaps even you!). Nurturing the writer in teens and the writer in adults who wish to create appealing literature for teens is a vital part of perpetuating that all-important reading-writing link.

An Interview with Victoria Hanley

DT: When did you start writing? When did you decide you wanted a career as a writer?

VH: As a child I amused myself by making up stories. I'd lie in bed when I was supposed to be sleeping, and imagine other lands where people were doing fascinating things. By fifth grade I knew I wanted to be a writer, but it took several more decades to really find my way as an author.

DT: Did you always enjoy fantasy books? Is that the reason you decided to write in this genre?

VH: I grew up in a household without a TV. We lived next door to a library for a while, and at one point I checked out all the books in the fairy tale section. I remember the librarian's quiet smile as I'd bring back one stack and exchange it for another. But I also read and enjoyed many other genres. It wasn't a reasonable decision to write fantasy—it was just that when I tried to write contemporary novels, my mind resembled a blank screen. Nothing occurred to me. Nothing!

DT: What inspired you to write your three popular fantasy books, *The Seer and the Sword, The Healer's Keep,* and *The Light of the Oracle*?

VH: The main characters for *The Seer and the Sword* made an appearance one night and then haunted me for over five years before I began to write them down. Does that count as inspiration? For me, characters tend to show up, stay on to help with the work of writing their stories, and then occasionally deign to visit after a book is finished. Plus, I wanted to write books for my children. That's always a powerful motivator.

Nurturing the writer in teens and the writer in adults who wish to create appealing literature for teens is a vital part of perpetuating that all-important reading-writing link.

DT: Tell me about your newest books, *Seize the Story* and *Wild Ink*. What inspired you to write them?

VH: *Seize the Story* takes readers all the way through the process of writing fiction, from beginning to end. Every element, from dialogue to setting, plotting to character creation, is laid out and illustrated with examples. But the tone of the book is not that of a dry writing manual—it's definitely written for teenagers. While writing it, I imagined a group of teens sitting in front of me.

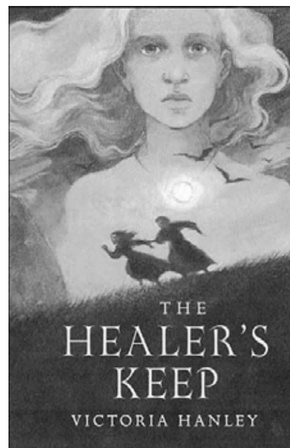
One of the most wonderful things about *Seize the Story* is that it includes interviews with YA authors besides myself—authors like Joan Bauer,

The kids soak in the information so fast, their writing often improves dramatically during a single session. But it's impossible to cover all the elements of fiction in one or two talks.

Chris Crutcher, David Lubar, Lauren Myracle, and many more—who also give teens their best advice on writing.

Wild Ink is essentially a grown-up's guide to writing fiction for young adults, although the section on publishing could also be useful to the more advanced teen writers who want to know the ropes about submitting their manuscripts and what to expect from agents and publishers.

As for what inspired me to write *Seize the Story*—I've now spoken to thousands of teens about writing fiction, and led many writing workshops. The kids soak in the information so fast, their writing often improves dramatically during a single session. But it's impossible to cover all the elements of fiction in one or two talks. Many students are eager to follow through with more, and now, with *Seize the Story,* I can leave them something to work with if they want to continue writing.



Wild Ink was inspired when I led a number of workshops for adults about writing for teenagers. Participants were so full of questions, it seemed as if it would take a book to answer them all. Again, the tone of the book isn't dry, even though there's plenty of information about submitting to agents and editors and all that. It's more about the heart of young adult (YA) literature—how to understand it, how to connect with your own teen material, and how to get past the obstacles so many writers face, obstacles like time, self-doubt, and rejection. *Wild Ink* also features writing advice and interviews with twenty other authors active in the field today.

DT: You recently did a session on creative writing, focusing on creating memorable characters, for the teen Creative Writing Club at my library. Why do you think it is important for authors to connect directly with teens about the art of writing?

VH: When aspiring young writers meet a published author, it puts a real face on the experience of creating a book. For instance, I like to show teens an example of an actual first draft, a complete mess of crossed out scribbles. That way, teens understand it's okay, it's natural, it's to be expected if their first attempts don't match the vision they have for the story they want to tell. They're reassured to find they're really on track even when they feel as if they're stumbling or losing ground.

The mix of self-expression and creativity that writing affords can be enormously rewarding—even therapeutic—to adolescents. And authors of young adult literature have a deep affinity for the travails associated with coming of age. (After all, that's what we write about.) I think teens can sense the fact that we respect them, and it makes a good opening for exchanging knowledge.

DT: What advice would you give to teachers and librarians who want to nurture an interest in creative writing among the teens with whom we work?

VH: The most primary advice you already know—encourage reading! Teachers and librarians are familiar with a thousand benefits of reading. It's so good for the mind. It's good for the heart. And it's great for learning grammar by osmosis.

Another suggestion: Encourage teens to engage in free journaling. By free, I mean write whatever comes to mind. It's fine to use good grammar or bad, be neat or very messy, make perfect sense or ramble incoherently. The point is to give the imagination a place to run free. When teens get into the habit of regular writing in a free journal, they forge a strong bond with the writer they have inside. It's like making a friend who will never be lost, a friend who can see them through rough times and smooth, a friend who will help

them open up to their own creative imagination. When they make a safe creative space, their stories will start to come through. And important as it is to eventually learn writing techniques, it's even more important to remember that the most important thing about a story is the story.

DT: What new writing projects do you have in the wings? Any new fantasy books (or other kinds of books)?

VH: It was great fun to make a foray into nonfiction, and my publisher, Cottonwood Press, has been remarkably wonderful to work with. But now I'm eager to get back to fiction, and I'm working on a couple of fantasy books.

Victoria Hanley *enjoys beating the odds and encouraging others to go for it too. She believes it's never too early or too late to get going on a book. Published in ten languages, her books have won awards at home and abroad. For more info, visit:* www.victoriahanley.com *and* www.cottonwoodpress.com.

Diane Tuccillo*, a past ALAN President, is Teen Services Librarian at the Fort Collins Regional Library District in Colorado. She contributes regular articles to the professional literature, teaches university courses online, and reviews for S*chool Library Journal *and* Voice of Youth Advocates. *She is the author of* Library Teen Advisory Groups: A VOYA Guide *(Scarecrow, 2005).*

Books by Victoria Hanley

Hanley, Victoria. *The Healer's Keep.* New York: Holiday House, 2002.

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April **Brannon**

Teaching *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky*:

An Opportunity for Educating about Displacement and Genocide

"NEVER AGAIN," are the words most often spoken in reference to the Holocaust. It is a short phrase, commanding and without ambiguity. It is also a call for action, and as citizens of the world, we are charged with ensuring the horrors of the Holocaust do not repeat themselves. In 2007, the National Council of Teachers of English conference program listed nine sessions on teaching about the Holocaust; the specific foci of these presentations suggest that English educators are using the classroom not only to develop reading and writing skills, but also to investigate history, politics, and ethics. In these sessions, presenters used the power of the story in Weisel's *Night* or the unmistakable voice of Anne Frank to discuss ways of teaching tolerance and activism to students. These presenters, and teachers like them across the world, are willing to tackle difficult subjects in their classrooms and worthy of admiration; they are doing meaningful work that shows a commitment to the teaching of English and to making the world a better and more humane place.

Yet, despite worldwide consensus that genocide must not be tolerated, the latter half of the twentieth century is one of the grimmest in recorded history. In her Pulitzer Prize winning book, *From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, Samantha Powers reminds us, "Genocide occurred *after* the Cold War; *after* the growth of human rights groups; *after* the advent of technology that allowed for instant communication; *after* the erection of the Holocaust Museum on the Mall in Washington, D.C" (503). In over five hundred pages, Powers chronicles the genocides of the last sixty years, and she highlights failed opportunities for intervention and repeated demonstrations of apathy from the American public. She ultimately concludes, ". . . time and time again, decent men and women chose to look away. We have all been bystanders to genocide" (xvi).

As English teachers, we are aware of the power of literature to educate and to expand consciousness, both intellectually and emotionally. Philosopher Richard Rorty believes that literature allows readers to have a vicarious experience through characters whose lives who are "outside the range of us" while English professor Lynn Nelson argues sharing stories can reduce violence. He quotes Leslie Marmon Silko to make his point:

> The Power of Personal Story
> I will tell you something about stories.
>   [he said]
> They aren't just entertainment.
>   Don't be fooled
> They are all we have, you see.
>   All we have to fight off
>   Illness and death (43).

Mary Warner, English Education professor and former teacher, speaks specifically to the role of literature in adolescents' lives and says, ". . . readers, especially adolescents facing a complex of issues, can grow an understanding of and sensitivity toward themselves and others" (xxiv).

If we are truly committed to impacting the world through education, it is important that we do not objectify history into a series of facts or reduce historical literature into just another text to analyze; instead, we need to show students the relevance of

our lessons and situate those lessons in the immediate present. Therefore, when we help students understand how something as horrifying as the Holocaust happened, it is important that we remember many genocides have happened since, and that another genocide is occurring *right now* in Sudan where the United Nations reports approximately 200,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million have been displaced. Arab janjaweed militiamen are blamed for the murders and attacks of millions of Sudanese citizens in what has officially been called a genocide (www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/sudan/fact_sheet.pdf).

Benson Deng, Alephonsion Deng, and Benjamin Ajak are refugees from Sudan, and they have written the book, *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky*. In it, the narrative voice alternates between the three authors as they recount their experiences growing up in Sudan; the format results in three different mesmerizing and tender accounts of childhoods of displacement. The story begins before the conflict in a small village where, as little boys, they would play with mud and "stand under the acacia trees and watch the giraffes curl their black tongues around the leaves above" (4). The safety of their surrounding is shattered when their village is attacked and "Grass roofs lit up like a cluster of torches. Guns started popping again. Cries. More explosions. The popping louder and faster" (52). It is at this point that the narrative truly comes to life because it is the beginning of the authors' fifteen-year walk across Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky has received critical acclaim and was the required summer reading for all students attending the Michigan Tech last fall. It is a timely and important work, and it is an opportunity for us, as educators, to use literature to create awareness about global issues.

Introducing the Book with Activities and Film

As already stated, the book is arranged chronologically. During their flight to the United States, the authors discover things such as toilet flushing and ice cream, but their lives after their arrival in America are not discussed. In 2003, directors Megan Mylan and John Shenk created the Emmy-award nominated documentary, *The Lost Boys*, which follows two young boys, Peter and Santino, as they adjust to life as refugees in the United States. The movie depicts a harrowing portrait of both what it is like to become part of a new culture and of contemporary America. While showing this film after reading *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky* is logical—it could function as a possible continuation of the story—it is even more useful as an introductory activity. The film poses serious questions about students' lifestyles and functions an anchor to begin a discussion on displacement. Of course, just as students have different life experiences, refugees also come from a variety of backgrounds and have undergone a multitude of different experiences; however, by watching Peter and Santino struggle with familiar things such as high school basketball, budgeting, and girls, students can begin to humanize some part of the refugee experience within a familiar context.

After viewing the film, students' learning is further enriched with a few introductory exercises on refugees. In his book, *Nurturing the Peacemakers in our Students*, Weber provides a chapter with numerous lessons for teaching about refugee experiences. He lists complete lesson plans for a series of useful activities including lessons from the *Save the Children* "Refugee Activity Pack" (To my knowledge, these lessons are no longer on the Save the Children website). In these lessons, students work in groups to brainstorm what makes a home and what items they would take with them if they were forced to evacuate. Again, these activities make a particularly useful starting point because they are grounded in what is familiar to students, that is, the places and environments that they know.

Reading *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky*

Once students are familiar with the concept of displacement, they are ready to begin reading the book. The alternating chapters create an almost surreal reading experience—the boys' stories overlap one another and create an account of life in Sudan that is layered and deep—but because each chapter is narrated in the first person, it is easy for students to lose track of whose voice is speaking. To help them understand the basic plot of each boy's story as they read, students should map the authors' journeys on

photocopied maps of the region. A map is provided in the introduction of the book, and it can easily be enlarged on a Xerox machine. The already labeled routes can be removed with correction fluid to allow students to mark the journey for themselves. The handout attached to the map is useful for introducing this activity (see Figure 1).

It is important to note that students will not begin their maps until Part Two of the book because that is where the authors' journeys begin. The first portion of the book contains descriptions of life in the boys' hometown of Juol and does not facilitate "tracking."

While a summary of the storyline is useful, students must move beyond mere plot summary into more sophisticated readings. Scholars such as Britton, Moffett, Rosenblatt, Atwell, and Keene and Zimmerman argue that readers should be engaged with a text in order to create their own meanings, and reader response journals are a widely used way to facilitate students' active engagement with their reading. Teacher Cynthia Ann Bowman argues reader response journals allow students "the opportunity to internally monologue, to actively participate with the literary work" (78) while Vaca and Vaca state, "When teachers integrate writing and reading, they help students use writing to think about what they will read and to understand what they have read" (261).

Once they begin reading Part Two, students keep a reader response log in which they write as if they were traveling along with one of the authors. Since Benjamin's chapters are short and infrequent, students

> Below is a map of Sudan and the neighboring countries. You have been given two identical maps. As you read each chapter, you will track the journeys of Benson and Alepho on each of the maps. Write a short summary of what you read in a one- to two-sentence entry. For example, in the chapter, "Why? Because." Benson is in the refugee camp Paniydo, so on Benson's map, you would find Paniyodo and make an entry that reads something like this:
>
> Benson is smacked by a UN teacher because he doesn't know proper English. His friend is poisoned by an old woman who dropped a salamander in his soup.

Figure 1. Guidelines Explaining to Students How to Track Characters on the Map

> You are going to pretend you are traveling with Benson or Alepho on their journey, and you will write about what you might have seen, felt, or experienced. Each time you read one of Benson or Alepho's chapters, you are going to imagine yourself in the situation and write a creative response to the chapter. For example when Alepho tells about the difficulty of bed bugs in the refugee camp, he writes:
>
> > At night we were tired, but we couldn't sleep because of the bedbugs. Every morning we'd get up and have bumps all over and smeared blood from scratching ourselves. . . .We couldn't kill them because if you did it could fill the whole building with its bad smell. Worse than a skunk, if someone squashed one, the boys would come in, 'Oh my God, you killed a bedbug'" (131).
>
> If you chose to write about this incident, you might write a description of what it felt like to be covered in bedbugs or you might imagine yourself so frustrated with bites that you killed one and had to deal with the consequences from the older boys.

Figure 2. A Hand-Out That Explains a Response Journal

choose between Benson and Alepho and create an entry to correspond with each chapter. The point of the response journal is to allow students a space to actively imagine themselves as part of the story and to deepen their understanding of the authors' experiences. Therefore, their responses should not be summaries of what happened, but should instead be creative works. Figure 2 is an example of a hand-out that describes this assignment.

While personal response is important, students should extend their understanding into a broader context. In their book, *Teaching Literature to Adolescents*, Richard Beach et al. describe many ways to interpret narratives, including examining settings and social worlds, which include social, cultural, and historical contexts" (134). Part of what makes *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky* such a teachable work is the way the authors situate themselves not only in their immediate environments, but also in a broader world and political context. Consider this excerpt from the chapter titled "Not in Our Mama's House No More":

> Seeing destroyed towns changed our mood. They didn't even look like villages anymore. I thought I understood why the Murahaliin attacked our village. They wanted our cattle, our things and our kids. But I didn't understand this complicated war, how it mortally devoured the land and left it so full of skeletons. The adults talked of the war all the time. They discussed slavery, apartheid, racism, segregation and tribalism. They called it a religious war. A jihad (123).

Throughout the book, there are accounts of UN and American intervention (or lack thereof), and students use the text as a jumping off point to deepen their own understanding of the ongoing struggle in Sudan. As they progress through the book, students should engage in ongoing mini-research projects on political and cultural issues that are relevant to what they have read. One particularly useful resource to facilitate this understanding is the Topics section of the *New York Times* website. In addition to a concise overview of the current situation in Sudan and a chronological listing of related newspaper articles, the site lists links to other useful sites such as the *UN Commission on Darfur* Report, the BBC country profile, and the *CIA Factbook* (<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/sudan/index.html?8qa>). Another valuable resource for gaining background is the thematic essays link on the *The Lost Boys* film site. Concise and well-researched essays on Sudan, the history of genocide, and refugees are available and make excellent hand-outs for students. Similarly, the site provides many useful teacher-written lessons on teaching about both refugees and genocide, and many of the lessons have hand-outs that are ready to distribute to in the classroom (<www.lostboysfilm.com/learn.html.>).

Culminating Project: Educating Others about Sudan

By the conclusion of the book, students have a rich understanding of what the authors experienced and a general knowledge of the broader political context of the narrative, but they are unaware of possibilities for activism. When teaching literature, particularly works that are politically charged, we have to be careful not to force our beliefs onto our students. If we were to require students to write editorials that speak out against the Sudan genocide or to institute a class-wide fundraising project for a non-profit relief agency, we would risk hijacking students' voices under the weight of our own agendas. Yet, if we believe that literature has the capacity to affect students' consciousness in meaningful and impactful ways, we have to show students how to claim a voice as concerned citizens and activists.

In her book, *Stirring Up Justice*, Jessica Singer advocates for the fostering of activism in the English classroom through student-generated projects that move beyond "'This [issue] bothers me'" and into exploration and inter-disciplinary research. She emphasizes a multi-media approach and displays student projects in a public gallery for the school community. Singer says, "Rather than reporting, the projects [a]re meant to inform others about particular issues and then offer original ideas and suggestions for ways people may become directly involved" (115). This model allows students to research topics that are interesting to them, and thus acquire valuable academic skills, without forcing them to adhere to a predetermined agenda. Such a strategy makes sense because it allows students to investigate possibilities for their own activism in an academic context without requiring them to move into a public sphere beyond the school community. Using an adaptation of Singer's model (see Figure 3), students create individual projects designed to educate others about any of the topics discussed in the book or movie.

Powers research on the genocides of the twentieth century led her to conclude that even in face of evidence, American politicians, journalists, and citizens assume that a genocide will not occur, and they trust in traditional diplomacy and negotiations. Once the genocide begins, they believe people who are careful will survive and donate humanitarian aid. Furthermore, political leaders look to the reaction of the American public when choosing to intervene, and society-wide silence is seen as indifference (xvi-xvii). These are troubling findings that are relevant to every member of the world community, but particularly to educators who shape our future citizenry and leaders. Therefore, we should use our ideals to shape our practice. So many of us got into the business of teaching English because we believe in the power of language and literature to develop social consciousness in young people and because we believe we could change the world. In *They Poured on Us from*

Based on your viewing of *The Lost Boys*, your reading of *They Poured Fire on Us from the Sky* and the activities you have completed in this unit, you are going to create a project that will inform people about refugees, genocide, or the situation in Sudan (for example, you might want to create a visual display of the illnesses that plague refugee camps, or you could survey people you know to see if they are aware of what is happening in Sudan. You might want to find out if there is a refugee community in our city and set up interviews with some of its members, or you might want to create a timeline that tracks the U.S. response to the Sudan genocide). In other words, what issue have you learned about that warrant further investigation? Ask yourself how you can teach a new way of seeing or understanding this issue that could potentially promote positive social change.

You will create a "lesson" that is visual, oral, written, or musical. This lesson will teach your message to an audience of your peers.

You will also create a statement to explain your final project, and you will display this statement along with your project in a gallery that will be on display for the school community.

Figure 3. Individual Project Guidelines, adapted from Singer's Model

the Sky, Deng, Deng, and Ajak have used their voices to show the world what is happening in Sudan. Let's help students listen and make an informed choice whether they want to passively accept the genocide in Sudan.

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CJ **Bott** and Elizabeth **McNeil**

Parrotfish: A Parrot, a Fish, or Something in Between?

An Interview with Ellen Wittlinger and Toby Davis

(Note from the editors: In order to give Ellen Wittlinger's important book, Parrotfish*, the attention it deserves, we have paired CJ Bott's interview with Ellen Wittlinger and Toby Davis with Elizabeth McNeil's analysis of the book and its place in young adult literature with transgender characters at the center. Dr. McNeil's analysis follows the interview.)*

Tolerance often follows personal experience or knowledge, and in today's world, there has not been much written about transgendered youth. In Ellen Wittlinger's recent YA novel, *Parrotfish,* she presents Grady, a transgendered female-to-male teenager who gently pulls us out of our ignorance. Part of Ellen's inspiration for this book was Toby Davis, who, though born female, is now living as a male.

CJ: Many authors take risks in their writing—some with structure, the safer risk—but you so often take the greater risk of content or subject matter, this time by telling the story of a transgender teen. What motivates you to take the greater and more important risk of introducing topics that many find too uncomfortable to write about?

Ellen: If it's uncomfortable to talk about, it's probably important to talk about. My last three books have dealt with oral sex among young teens [*Sandpiper*], spiritualism versus atheism [*Blind Faith*], and a transgender teenager [*Parrotfish*]. Kids are thinking and talking about issues like this, and I want to be part of that conversation.

I've always been the kind of person who wants to know everybody's secrets because what's hidden underneath is what makes us unique and interesting, what makes us human. And when I'm beginning a book, I like to choose a topic that I know a little about but want to know *more* about. That keeps the writing interesting to me.

CJ: Did this story come to you or did you go out looking for it? How did you research it?

Ellen: Well, in a way the story *did* come to me. My husband and I had just moved to western Massachusetts near where our daughter Kate lives, and she introduced us to some of her friends, one of whom was Toby Davis. She had told me before I met him that Toby, though born female, was living as a male. I liked Toby as soon as I met him. He's just a little shy with a big, warm smile and a good sense of humor. And it turned out Toby knew who I was. He'd read *Hard Love* as a teenager and was excited to meet me.

Before long an idea began to percolate. Why not write a story about a transgender teenager and ask Toby if he'd help me make sure it was a *true* story? I was a little hesitant to ask, but I ran it by Kate. She was enthusiastic and passed the idea along to Toby, who was thrilled.

Here, for the first time, is a book with hope for its transgender character. Grady is not going to get killed, or even beat up. He's not lamenting how tragic it is to be transgender, he's just trying to live his life honestly and make sense of his wacky family.

Before I even spoke to Toby, though, I wanted to know what I was talking about, so I read several books, *Transgender Warriors*, by Leslie Feinberg, and *Gender Outlaw* by Kate Bornstein, among others, which helped me understand the difference between sexuality and gender. I wanted to know what the issues were. Then I emailed Toby a list of 30 questions, all of which he answered. And then we met for an afternoon of tea and truth-telling at a downtown café. There was no question that Toby wouldn't answer at length. I think what amazed me most was that there was so much I didn't know about this subject. I think of myself as liberal, gay-friendly, and pretty up-to-date about what's going on in the world, but these things I didn't know.

I haven't written the story of Toby's life—that was never the intention. What I hope I have written is a story that gets it right about a transgender teen.

Toby: And that's why I love *Parrotfish* so much. Not just because Ellen is a great writer, or because she's created a character with such a great and honest FTM [female to male] voice. Here, for the first time, is a book with hope for its transgender character. Grady is not going to get killed, or even beat up. He's not lamenting how tragic it is to be transgender, he's just trying to live his life honestly and make sense of his wacky family. When I came out, there was no *Parrotfish* for someone to hand me. Now, thanks to Ellen, there is, and I feel incredibly blessed to have been part of that process.

Ellen: What Toby gave me was the *heart* of the book, the emotion, the soul. I couldn't have written it without him, and I wouldn't have tried. At least Toby loves it, and he's the audience I care about most.

CJ: There has only been one other YA book about a transgender teen, Julie Anne Peters's groundbreaking *Luna*. What do you hope to bring to the reader in *Parrotfish* that is different from *Luna*?

Ellen: Julie Anne Peters deserves a boatload of credit for blazing the trail in writing about transgender teens. My initial thought was just to write another book on that subject, because, after all, would we be satisfied with only one book on any other subject? Of course not—there should be a selection to choose from. There's more than one story to be told about transgender teenagers—they're certainly not all the same.

My book differs from Julie Anne's in several respects. First of all, it's written in the voice of Grady, the transgender teen himself, whereas *Luna* was narrated by the sister. Secondly, my protagonist is transitioning from female-to-male (FTM) whereas the opposite was true for Julie Anne's character. And finally, *Luna* paints a rather dark—and, unfortunately, often true—portrait of a transgender teen. In my novel, *Parrotfish,* Grady's coming out, while painful in certain respects, is also full of the humor of living with a big, rowdy family whose members basically love each other. Toby asked me for a positive ending, and I think the story earns one.

CJ: Grady's big crazy family—the ultimate Christmas fan of a dad, a bit of a controlling mom, a typical popularity-hungry younger sister, and a spacey younger brother, not to mention an aunt who has just had a baby thanks to a sperm bank donation—Grady almost looks like the stable one. And Christmas is a major theme in the book. Why did you pack so much into the story that takes place in only four or five weeks?

Ellen: I like to populate my protagonist's worlds as much as possible. I like to read books like that too, in which there are lots of people to keep track of—and I particularly love books that have big, crazy families in them. Probably because I *didn't* have one—I was an only child. For me, a book seems richer—and maybe more real—if there's a lot going on.

Also, in *Parrotfish* I wanted the reader to see

a variety of responses to Grady's transitioning. And I felt there had to be a baby present to remind us how immediately we want to identify a new person as "boy" or "girl." I wanted that baby there in the first chapter so we couldn't deny it—it's the first thing everybody asks when a baby is born.

And, yes, I do think Grady is the "stable" one—he's a pleasant, hard-working, easy-going kid who might otherwise blend into the background, except for that one thing, his discomfort with the gender into which he was born. Why is that one thing enough to send so many people into a tailspin?

About the Christmas theme: there was a family in the town where I grew up in Illinois that did something similar to this, and I always thought I'd use it in a book someday. They even turned their living area into a Victorian-themed stage and only entered wearing costumes.

The reason it's here is because of the aspect of being onstage, dressing up and becoming someone you're not, which, of course, Grady has been doing for sixteen years. When he finally appears in their annual "pageant" as a boy instead of a girl, it's the end of some things and the beginning of others. In fact, many of the characters are initially defined by their reactions to the over-the-top display and the work it takes to put it up every year.

CJ: It's amazing how you create all these pieces and then slide them together so smoothly. I do want to say that I love Sebastian! I have had a few students like him in my teaching career and have been very grateful for that. Thanks, Ellen, for another great character.

Ellen: I see Sebastian as a highly-evolved human being, the best that geek-dom has to offer. He seems to be straight, as evidenced by his interest in Eve, but he isn't a "man's man." He's happy to make dinner for his mother, and he goes out of his way to buy peppermint shampoo, for goodness sake! And he likes Grady as a female *or* a male—he responds to the person, and, with his scientific bent, also finds the questions of gender fascinating in themselves. (As they are.)

CJ: Toby, did you have a Sebastian in your world?

Toby: I had a couple of different Sebastian-type figures in my life. In high school, when I was still lesbian identified, I had a couple of guys who were my really close friends. When I came out to them as transgender my freshman year of college, one of them said to me, "You've always been one of the guys." Another one, my ex-boyfriend from a brief and rather platonic ninth-grade relationship, confessed to me that he thought I was hot when I was a girl, and still thought I was hot as a guy. That was a pretty awesome reaction. I was lucky enough to come out as transgender in an environment that was both educated and welcoming. I literally went down to dinner in my dorm one night and told everyone that I thought I might be transgender. No one was particularly fazed by it, and eventually a few of my friends from the dorm christened me "Toby," the name which remains mine to this day. However, I was most blessed in my best friend, who already had years of LGBT activism before starting college. When I confessed to her that I thought I might be transgender, she took me to a book shop downtown and handed me a copy of Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues*, a book about growing up as a butch (masculine) woman in the 1950s gay and lesbian bar scene, and then later transitioning to male. That book changed my life, because for the first time I saw someone put into words what it feels like to want to be seen as male, when everyone is telling you that you're female. That book also depressed the heck out of me, because growing up gay, lesbian, or transgender in that time was lonely and incredibly dangerous.

I see Sebastian as a highly-evolved human being . . . And he likes Grady as a female *or* a male—he responds to the person, and, with his scientific bent, also finds the questions of gender fascinating in themselves. (As they are.)

If we have lived our whole life taking the categories of male and female for granted, and all of a sudden somebody tells us that those things aren't infallible, that can shake up everything. Especially for a teenager who is already struggling to figure out who he or she is and how to fit into the world.

CJ: Most characters react to Grady's transitioning as though it has something to do with them, and that is their focus, rather than what it has to do with Grady. Is it because of their insecurities, their fear of change, or what? And how can that be dealt with?

Ellen: I think one of the first reactions people have to any kind of news about people close to them is, "What does this mean to me?" You could say this is selfish, or self-protective, to put a somewhat better spin on it. It's human.

Still, I didn't want everyone in his life to have a terrible reaction to Grady's announcement, and it seemed to me that, in this case, the women (mother, sister, best friend) might also have an underlying, probably subconscious, feeling of betrayal because Grady didn't want to be like them, even though that has nothing to do with his actions. He was "leaving" the female gender and joining the male, which didn't particularly bother his dad or brother who were comfortable with their own gender.

I don't think these reactions are necessarily typical. I imagine each family reacts in their own, complicated ways, but this was how I decided Grady's family would feel.

Toby: I think people feel threatened by other people's identities, especially gender identity. It's the whole idea of "if my friend is transgender, what does that make me?" If we have lived our whole life taking the categories of male and female for granted, and all of a sudden somebody tells us that those things aren't infallible, that can shake up everything. Especially for a teenager who is already struggling to figure out who he or she is and how to fit into the world. There are guidelines that tell us how we're supposed to act around guys as opposed to how we're supposed to act around girls. If someone comes along who doesn't fit into one of those categories neatly, the whole social map gets tossed out the window. Gender identity often raises the uncomfortable question of sexual orientation.

I agree with Ellen that the best way to combat all this fear is education. If people stop thinking of gender identity as somehow inherently linked to biology, as they become aware that male and female are not the only options, then being transgender will stop being so strange and threatening.

CJ: In reading *Parrotfish* and working with both of you, one of the things I have realized is how gender identity and sexual identity/orientation are not only different but are also not defined at the same time for any of us; my gender identity was defined years before my sexual orientation. And they might be redefined as life goes on. Could you define them again?

Ellen: Gender identity refers to who you feel like, whether a male, a female, or something in between. Sexual identity (or sexual orientation) refers to who you are attracted to, whether you're gay, straight or bisexual. These aren't linked.

Toby: Although I do like to raise the point that even biological sex isn't as set in stone as everyone thinks. It really shook my world up in a good way when I learned that the whole idea of two sexes and two genders is a social construct, not something inherently true and natural. This is important for me because it helped me stop feeling like a freak. I realized that it was just an imperfect system.

CJ: Would you explain the significance of the title, *Parrotfish*? Is it a parrot or a fish?

Ellen: A parrotfish is a real fish with colorings like a parrot that can change its gender from female to male. It was Toby's suggestion to find a natural metaphor for gender changing. I did some online research and found there were a number of fish and

other organisms that changed gender, but some of them had names like slime mold, which wasn't what I had in mind. Then I found the Parrotfish, not only a good name, but a good title and a beautiful fish too.

Ellen Wittlinger *is working on a book tentatively titled,* The Only Boy on Bristow Street, and awaiting the release of Love & Lies: Marisol's Story, *a companion novel to* Hard Love.

Toby Davis *is a 25-year-old playwright with a third of a YA novel up his sleeve.*

CJ Bott *is author of* The Bully in the Book and in the Classroom, *and can be reached through her website* < *www.bulliesinbooks.com* >

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* * * * *

Ellen Wittlinger's *Parrotfish*: Normalizing Transgender in Young Adult Literature

Elizabeth McNeil

Transgender identity is as old as human consciousness, though suppressed in Western modernity until the end of the 20th century.[1] As Michael Cart chronicles in his 2004 *ALAN Review* article, "What a Wonderful World: Notes on the Evolution of GLBTQ Literature for Young Adults," while a "new homosexual consciousness" emerged in adult literature and "the first stirrings" of YA literature following WWII (46), adult literary publications having to do with homosexuality, and YA literature having to do with any type of sexuality, were not published to any appreciable extent until the 1960s. In the '80s, as gay YA fiction was gaining ground, the "transgender" term was coined (Stryker 4), and adult transgender novels started to become available a decade later[2]; but not until 2004 did a serious work of YA fiction feature a fully realized transgender character.[3]

Critics consistently cite just three YA novels to date whose authors have crafted "believable, multidimensional" transgender characters: *Luna* (2004), by Julie Anne Peters; *Choir Boy* (2005), Charlie Anders's debut novel; and Ellen Wittlinger's *Parrotfish* (2007) (Rockefeller 521).[4] In *Luna*, the narrator's older sibling, Liam, is becoming Luna; in *Choir Boy*, the third-person narrative's protagonist, Berry, begins transitioning from male to female so that his voice will not deepen; and in *Parrotfish*, the narrator is a high school sophomore who was Angela and is now Grady. The main characters in all three novels are white and middle class, and only Anders's deals with the issue of hormone therapy to inhibit puberty.[5] Although Anders's fantastical *Choir Boy* received a Lambda Literary Award in 2006, it has thus far not garnered the literary acclaim Peters's and Wittlinger's realistic novels have received.[6]

Despite the fact that, in Peters's *Luna*, the mother surreptitiously supplies her post-pubescent son with hormones and the parents in Wittlinger's *Parrotfish* try to be accommodating, none of the parents in either novel is pro-actively supportive of her/his transitioning teen, and the father in *Luna* threatens violence when confronted with his son's femaleness. The inability of the parents to cope with their children's "gender dysphoria" leaves the teenagers to figure out strategies for transitioning on their own.

In *Luna*, the all-consuming process of supporting her brother's transition impedes the romantic and social coming of age of Regan, the novel's protagonist. Seeing Luna off at the airport in the novel's unsatisfying ending, Regan feels liberated from her lifelong role of sole confidante: "I walked, walked faster. Ran. Toward the door. The exit. The entrance. 'Good-bye, Liam.' I spoke the words aloud so their music filled my head: 'Hello, Regan'" (Peters 248). Though Regan has always been fully accepting of Luna's gendered reality, Peters deals with the basic unworkability of the gender transformation in the protagonist's life and the characters' particular family and community. However, Luna's destination, Seattle, is represented as a hopeful urban environment where she will reside with a friend who is living very successfully as a transgender woman.

While familial and communal integration is ultimately untenable in *Luna*, in *Parrotfish* Wittlinger insists on a fully situated transformation—for the protagonist, his family, his peers, and, ultimately, even for the larger community. Though this all-encompassing transformation could be read as somewhat too idealistically or glibly posited, the female to male (FTM) transition in *Parrotfish* is construed as less socially problematic than that of the male to female (MTF) transformation in *Luna*, and Grady's family and community more tolerant. As a result, the gender change in *Parrotfish* is slightly more easily negotiated.

While familial and communal integration is ultimately untenable in *Luna*, in *Parrotfish* Wittlinger insists on a fully situated transformation—for the protagonist, his family, his peers, and, ultimately, even for the larger community.

Whereas Peters does not make an argument for the naturalness of gender fluidity or sex reassignment, a major premise of Wittlinger's text is that very notion, taken from ichthyology. Interestingly, though perhaps too coincidentally, upon meeting his friend Sebastian for the first time, Grady proclaims his new gender identity, and Sebastian shares that he is doing a class research project on a gender-reassigning fish. The text thus goes on to educate both Grady and the reader:

> "Are you listening to me?" Sebastian said. "The Smithsonian website says that in lots of fish, gender ambiguity is natural—especially in reef fish. . . . Isn't that awesome?"
>
> He had my attention now. "What? Fish change from female to male?"
>
> "That's what I'm telling you. . . . [A]ll parrotfish do. And the two-banded anemonefish can change either way. Slipper limpets can change back and forth, and so can hamlets and small-eyed goby and water fleas and slime mold —"
>
> . . . I sighed. "It's just . . . I don't know what this has to do with me, Sebastian. I'm not a fish."
>
> . . . "[B]ut I thought you'd like some real evidence here that you are not alone in the animal world. There are other living creatures that do this all the time. 'Nature creates many variations.' I'm using that line in my paper." (Wittlinger 70-71)

Depicting transgendered embodiment in non-human nature, and offering scientific evidence, is one way that Wittlinger normalizes gender variance in *Parrotfish*, thus making her novel distinct from Peters's more problem-oriented text.

Also unlike Peters's *Luna*, which is not told through the perspective of the transgender youth, is that *Parrotfish* offers an interior portrait, showing how the protagonist himself deals with his transition. Grady, who knew "from the age of four or five" that he was a "typical, average, ordinary boy" (9, 19), had briefly identified as a lesbian ("just a pit stop on the queer and confused highway," Grady muses [18]—and a recognized pathway for some FTMs [Rubin 476]). He is now, during the month spanned in the novel, negotiating what he feels is his inherent heterosexual maleness. Though the problems Grady faces at home and school are more or less realistically portrayed, what predominates in the story is not tragic or violent upset but, rather, the protagonist's wit, humor, and maturity as he confronts and makes the best of each step of his coming out. He even interacts successfully with a girl upon whom he has a crush.

Grady's strength comes in part from his unconventional family. One parent is Jewish and the other Christian, though only Christmas is celebrated—in an overblown way—each year at their house, and his aunt has recently become a single parent through artificial insemination. His homeschooling up until high school is another factor that has permitted Grady to become an independent thinker. Determined now to "'be myself, that's all,'" at whatever cost ("I couldn't go back to being a girl; even if somebody beat me up for doing this, I couldn't"), Grady's ability to negotiate what, for others, could be a series of paralyzing or demoralizing situations is enhanced by his humor and linguistic creativity (Wittlinger 22, 54). As in many coming-of-age novels, writing/language is a powerful tool for Wittlinger's protagonist. Besides being a well-informed and articulate conversationalist, Grady is a writer who constantly imagines funny, self-compassionate rejoinders and dialogs:

> MRS. NORMAN: I suggest you take a yoga class, Angela. Rather than become a . . . [shivers] male. Learn to breathe deeply and stand up straight. Good posture is the key to mental health.
>
> ME: I'm not mentally unhealthy, Mr. Norman. I'm just a boy. (46)

Grady's abilities permit him to work effectively on an artistic project with his new friend Sebastian that

becomes a literal point of re-vision for Grady, his family and friends, and the townsfolk. By writing a new script for the family's rendition of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, Grady ends the annual decorating and acting extravaganza that has made their house a holiday focus for the town and defined December for the family, though all but the father now find the tradition oppressive. Grady's sense of authority regarding his own writerly ability and creative vision ultimately liberates his family members and friends to move on to what the novel promises will be a fulfilling new phase of their lives.

The acting trope also serves Wittlinger's ideological purposes. In the novel's final paragraph, Grady philosophizes, "Things change. People change. We spend a long time trying to figure out how to act like ourselves, and then, if we're lucky, we finally figure out that being ourselves has nothing to do with acting" (287). Literature can offer readers opportunities to explore unfamiliar realities, an especially intimate experience when that reality is embodied in the narrator, as Wittlinger has done with *Parrotfish*. Having "acted out" situations with the protagonist, we gain additional tools for enacting acceptance and negotiating change in the far more complex and emotionally charged real world.

Through educative aspects of the text, like the parrotfish exchanges and the resources listed at the end of the book, Wittlinger indicates that her novel is intended to inform as well as entertain. Gender identity affects us all, and ignorance regarding gender variance has led to terrible outcomes. In February 2008, 15-year-old Lawrence King, a well-liked, openly gay 8th-grader who had begun to come to school wearing makeup and feminine clothing, was fatally shot in the head during class by a peer, allegedly over Larry's gender expression. Of all hate crimes reported in 2006 (many obviously go unreported), 15.5% were linked to (perceived) sexual orientation (U.S. Justice). Anti-GLBT violence went up by 18% in 2006 (U.S. Justice), and 24% the following year (NCAVP). The problem, in other words, is only escalating. Perpetrators of the most violent of these crimes are male, which suggests that the social constructions of gender that are threatened by gender nonconformity need to be interrogated early in life. In an April 2007 blog posted after she had attended a reading by Wittlinger, Linda Braun notes:

> Ellen . . . recounted stories of being uninvited from schools and libraries when the community learned that she was going to talk about titles with GLBTQ themes. A main point Ellen made was that we may think that the world has come very far in the acceptance of GLBTQ teens and adults[;] however, acceptance is not universal and it's important to recognize that fact and work to help to guarantee that materials with GLBTQ themes for teens are kept on library shelves.

Perhaps Larry King's life and the contribution he would have gone on to make to our society could have been preserved through adequate resources and education.

Though tragic stories like Larry's have, until now, garnered all the media attention (when they have received attention at all), February 2008 also saw a positive story in the reports of the accommodation of an MTF second-grader in a Colorado public school during the 2007-08 school year.[7] In addition to positive news stories, transgender associations and websites are now available for families, teens, and adults, and this year saw the publication of the first manual of care—Stephanie Brill and Rachel Pepper's *The Transgender Child* (2008).[8] In terms of fostering intellectual acumen and social consciousness, this landmark text and transgender YA literature urge us to consider the personal and communal consequences of our offering gender awareness education.

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Notes

[1] Gender diversity (homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender, intersexuality, gender fluidity) is evident both in nature and in cultural artifacts and historical practices globally. In terms of the latter, see Leslie Feinberg's influential *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come* (New York: World View Forum, 1992) and *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* (Boston: Beacon P, 1996).

[2] Publication of GLBTQ scholarship and literature increased dramatically in the 1990s. The Lambda Foundation's Literary Awards began to include a transgender category in 1996 (see http://www.lambdaliterary.org/awards/previous_winners/paw_1996_1999.html).

[3] Though David Levithan's *Boy Meets Boy* (New York and Toronto: Knopf, 2003) and James St. James's *Freak Show* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007) include drag queen characters, these texts have been categorized as gay YA literature, although one reviewer contends St. James's protagonist is "probably transgender" ("The Hidden Side of a Leaf," 2007, 26 May 2008, http://cc.msnscache.com/cache.aspx?q=73428738053790&mkt=en-US&lang=en-US&w=cb8fd586,ff5ca6e6&FORM=CVRE3).

[4] Rockefeller divides what he calls "transgender-inclusive" YA literature into four categories: (1) stories that feature "characters who are consistently identified as the opposite gender but do not identify as transgender themselves"; (2) fiction that "present[s] and perpetuate[s] negative stereotypes"; (3) narratives that present "the option of passing as a different gender as a quick fix to a problem," which he says is "by far the most populous" category; and (4) "those few—very few—novels that craft believable, multidimensional characters who embody or face transgender themes in a plausible way" (520-21).

[5] Regarding pre-pubescent hormone therapy, see Brill and Pepper.

[6] For example, teenreads.com reviewed *Luna* and *Parrotfish*, but not *Choir Boy*. *Luna* was named an ALA Stonewall Honor Book and ALA Best Book for Young Adults in 2005, and won or was a finalist for many other awards. Thus far, *Parrotfish* was a finalist for the 2008 Stonewall Book Awards, was nominated for several other awards, and is included on notable booklists. *The Advocate* chose both *Parrotfish* and *Choir Boy* for its 2008 Top Picks for Trans YA Fiction list, so perhaps the latter text, because it is a first novel, is just off to a slower start.

[7] Also see a recent two-part NPR report by Alix Spiegel, "Two Families Grapple with Sons' Gender Preferences: Psychologists Take Radically Different Approaches in Therapy," 7 May 2008, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90247842, and "Parents Consider Treatment to Delay Son's Puberty: New Therapy Would Buy Time to Resolve Gender Crisis," 8 May 2008, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90273278.

[8] Films are also of value. Transgender youth experience is depicted in the award-winning Franco-Belgian-UK film *Ma vie en rose* (My Life in Pink) (1997) (its R rating in the U.S. has been opposed as transphobic). Teen transgender experience is presented in the independent documentary *Creature* (1999), and internet venues like YouTube house videos produced by transgender teens themselves.