

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



Nancy Garden



Barbara Ward

other, *Annie on My Mind* (1982), recently celebrated its twenty-fifth year in print.

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'être*—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.

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

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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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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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.

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.

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

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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 Chattfield, 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.

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

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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 manu-

script. 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.”

Barbara A. Ward is a visiting professor in literacy at Washington State University. She teaches classes on adolescent literature as well as methods courses for English Education and undergraduate preservice teachers. She is a committee member of the International Reading Association's Notable Books for a Global Society and is a devoted bibliophile.

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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.