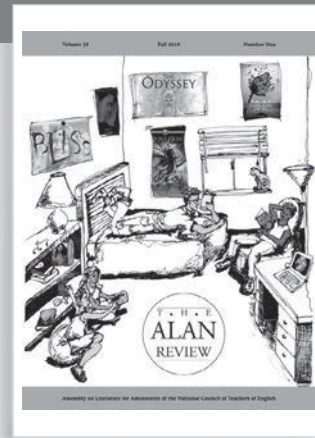


Volume 38

Number 1

Fall 2010



<i>Steven Bickmore</i>	From the Editors	3
<i>Jacqueline Bach</i>	Call for Manuscripts	6
<i>Melanie Hundley</i>		
<i>Katherine Mason</i>	From Preservice Teacher to Trusted Adult: Sexual Orientation and Gender Variance in an Online YAL Book Club	7
<i>Joni Richards Bodart</i>	Young Adult Authors as Trusted Adults for Disconnected Teens	16
<i>B. Joyce Stallworth</i>	Preservice Teachers' Suggestions for Summer Reading	23
<i>Denise Davila</i>	Not So Innocent: Book Trailers as Promotional Text and Anticipatory Stories	32
<i>Melanie D. Koss</i>	Representations of Digital Communication in	
<i>Eli Tucker-Raymond</i>	Young Adult Literature: Science Fiction as Social Commentary	43
<i>Melanie Hundley</i>	Clip and File	A1–A8
<i>Kevin B. Kienholz</i>	Island Hopping: From <i>The Cay</i> to <i>Treasure Island</i> to <i>Lord of the Flies</i> to <i>The Tempest</i> . . . and Back Again	53
<i>Joni Richards Bodart</i>	Booktalking: That Was Then and This Is Now The Library Connection	57
<i>Linda Oatman High</i>	Cracks of Light in the Darkness: Images of Hope in the Work of Laurie Halse Anderson and an Interview with the Author	64
	Stories from the Field	72

Coeditors

Steven Bickmore

sbick@lsu.edu
Louisiana State University

Jacqueline Bach

jbach@lsu.edu
Louisiana State University

Melanie Hundley

melanie.hundley@vanderbilt.edu

YA Book Review Editor

Melanie Hundley

Editorial Review Board

Lawrence Baines, *University of Toledo*
Katherine Barr, *San Francisco, California*
Kylene Beers, *Reading and Writing Project Teachers College*
Jean Borren, *Northern Arizona University*
Cynthia A. Bowman, *Columbus, Ohio*
Jean E. Brown, *Warwick, Rhode Island*
John "Jack" Bushman, *University of Kansas*
Michael Cart, *Chico, California*
Melissa Comer, *Cumberland College*
Chris Crowe, *Brigham Young University*
Pat Daniel, *University of South Florida*
Kevin Dupree, *University of Southern Mississippi*
Joan Elliot, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*
Bonnie Ericson, *California State University at Northridge*
Ted Fabiano, *Blue Valley Northwest High School*
Karen Ford, *Ball State University*
Nena Foster-Pritchard, *North Olmsted High School, Ohio*
Montye Fuse, *Arizona State University*
Marshall George, *Fordham University*
Wendy Glenn, *University of Connecticut*
Gail P. Gregg, *Florida International University*
Robin Denise Groce, *Mississippi State University*
Kay Bushman Haas, *Ottawa, Kansas*
Judith Hayn, *University of Arkansas, Little Rock*
Kathy Headley, *Clemson University*
Sarah Herz, *Westport, Connecticut*
Kaavonia M. Hinton-Johnson, *Old Dominion University*
Jaime Hylton, *University of New England*
Rita Karr, *Oklahoma Road Middle School, Maryland*
Joan Kaywell, *University of South Florida*
Kathryn Kelly, *Radford University*
Patricia P. Kelly, *Virginia Tech*
Daphne Key, *Papillon, Nebraska*
Dixie Keyes, *Arkansas State University*
Teri S. Lesesne, *Sam Houston State University*
Terry C. Ley, *Auburn University, Emeritus*
Rob Lockhart, *Morehead State University*
Arlene Harris Mitchell, *University of Cincinnati*
William R. Mollineux, *Sedgwick Middle School, Connecticut*
Elaine O'Quinn, *Appalachian State*
Elizabeth Poe, *University of West Virginia*
Suzanne Reid, *Emory and Henry College*
Gary Salvner, *Youngstown State University*
Barbara G. Samuels, *University of Houston at Clear Lake*
John S. Simmons, *Florida State University, Emeritus*
Robert C. Small, *Radford University*
Elaine C. Stephens, *Michigan*
Barbara Stover, *Chatfield Senior High School*
Lois Stover, *St. Mary's College of Maryland*
Alan Teasley, *Durham, North Carolina*
Mary Ann Tighe, *Troy State University*
Ellis Vance, *Fresno County Office of Education*
Elizabeth Watts, *Broward County, Florida*
Ann Wilder, *Durham, North Carolina*
Carole Williams, *St. Louis, Missouri*
Susan N. Wood, *Florida State University*
Geri Yaccino, *St. Charles Middle School, Illinois*
Connie Zitlow, *Ohio Wesleyan University*

Instructions for Authors

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ALAN Review prefers the use of the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).

SUBMITTING THE MANUSCRIPT. Authors are to submit manuscripts electronically to alanreview@lsu.edu. In the subject line please write: **ALAN manuscript submission**. All manuscripts should be in a recent version of Microsoft Word and use APA format. Complete submissions include, as separate attachments, the following documents: (1) A manuscript without references to the author(s). (2) A separate title page with author's name, contact information, affiliation, and a 2-3 sentence biographical sketch. In the case of multiple authors, the author submitting the manuscript will serve as the primary contact unless stipulated otherwise. (3) A brief statement that the article is original, has not been published previously in other journals and/or books, and is not a simultaneous submission.

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:	MARCH 1
WINTER ISSUE Deadline:	JULY 1
SUMMER ISSUE Deadline:	NOVEMBER 1

Cover credits: *The ALAN Review* cover "A Good Reader Is Easy to Find," was designed by Michelle Zoss, Assistant Professor of English Education at Georgia State University. Pictured are: *Return to Paradise* by Simone Elkeles, © 2010 Flux Books, 2143 Wooddale Drive, Woodbury MN 55125-2989. Used with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. *I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth the Trip.* by John Donovan, © 2010 Flux Books, 2143 Wooddale Drive, Woodbury, MN 55125-2989. Used with permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. *Anxious Hearts* by Tucker Shaw. Copyright 2010 Amulet Books, www.amuletbooks.com. *Bliss* by Lauren Myracle, Copyright 2008 Amulet Books, www.amuletbooks.com. *The Odyssey* by Gareth Hinds, Copyright © 2010, reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press. *Beat the Band* by Don Calame, Copyright © 2010, reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press. *Siren* by Tricia Rayburn. Used with permission of Egmont USA. *The Freak Observer* by Blythe Woolston, Copyright 2010. Used with permission by Lerner Books. *The Lost Hero* by Rick Riordan, Copyright 2010. Used with permission from Disney-Hyperion Books. *Dark Goddess* by Sarwat Chadda. Used with permission from Hyperion Books. *Bloodthirsty* by Flynn Meany, © 2010. Used with permission from Little, Brown. *Dark Song* by Greg Giles, © 2010. Used with permission from Little, Brown.



From the Editors

Before I loved *Ulysses* or *Hamlet* or *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, I loved books. I loved to read. I loved *The Outsiders*, Harry Potter, *The Babysitters Club*—all those books and characters were part of my reading life. Books were magical to me. Some were better than others but those were books I consumed, books I went to willingly. I want to teach books that kids come to willingly. And, some of those books are such quality works. How can I not choose them? What if I choose them *and* the students come to them willingly . . . and it changes everything about what I am teaching? Something to dream about. (Emma, 2008)

The theme for this issue focuses on preservice teachers, young adult literature, and the teaching of classical texts and/or YAL. Because I (Melanie) teach courses in young adult literature for future teachers, I often hear my students argue about whether or not YAL should be incorporated in middle and high school classrooms, whether YAL compares in quality to classic or canonical texts, and whether or not these books meet state and national standards. These same questions and arguments are the ones I heard in staff rooms as a middle school and high school teacher. The arguments seemed to settle into two camps—one arguing for “good” books and one arguing for books kids come to willingly. Their initial definitions of “good” books didn’t often include YA novels. And the list of books that kids come to willingly rarely included classical texts. There was little effort to merge the camps.

The students in my YAL classes often begin the semester with the idea that the texts we will be reading are not *quality* literature—complex enough for deep discussions or challenging enough for good read-

ers. Many of them remember loving particular novels as kids (they are always quick to specify as kids) before they moved on to “real books.” If I push or challenge the notion of “real” books and ask them to explain what makes a book worth reading and worth teaching, they struggle. They start with the argument that the “real” books (anything by Shakespeare or Joyce, selected novels from Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Hardy, Austen, Cather, Hurston, etc.) are just “good for you to read” because “they are part of Quality Literature” and make you “part of the culture.” When asked to define quality literature and identify how they know quality literature, their arguments break down. They regroup, refocus, and come to the next class ready to talk about complexity and the human condition. So, we start there.

The students define complex texts as those that allow for deep, rich engagement and discussions; they have multiple levels on which they can be read. They are texts in which a reader can dig deep and mine for more nuanced and layered understandings. Emmett explained, “There’s something to talk about, something that surprises you, something that makes you go *aha* or *oh*.”

With Emmett’s class, our first YA novel was *Holes*. I asked them to apply their definition of complex text to *Holes* to see if it met their criteria, to see if there was something more to this particular text than what they thought initially. Anna bounced into class holding a copy of the novel decorated with multi-colored sticky notes and a poster that explained her color-coded system. She had a color for gender roles

and whether or not the character met, challenged, or resisted their expected gender roles; a color for language play; a color for each of the three plotlines (and a chart that illustrated the shared elements of the plots); and a color for turning points in a character's life. Michael focused on the role of myth and legend in the novel, marking archetypal characters and uses of traditional symbols. Sarah and Liam both identified and explored elements of magical realism. Three other students focused on the role of fate and family. The discussion on this novel lasted for almost two hours and I said almost nothing.

When we debriefed, Liah said, "When I read [*Holes*] the first time, I didn't take the book seriously. It was a YA novel and easy to read." There were nods from the other 20 students in the classroom. "I read it," Anna said, "without a pencil or highlighter the first time." More nods. Liah picked up again, "I didn't expect anything from the book so I didn't find anything in the book. Emmet had talked about *aha* and *oh* moments. When I reread the book, I wanted to be the one who made those moments happen." There was a chorus of "me, too" from around the room. Nicole, a quiet student who rarely spoke up, said,

As I was reading *Holes* for the second time, I realized that I was reading it like I did when I was first in my AP classes. Then, when I read a book, I knew there was something there, something I was supposed to get or find or discover or whatever. Early in my AP classes, I was shaky with the tools I was supposed to use. I looked for symbolism because we had covered that or I looked for whatever we had covered recently. I assumed that the teachers had assigned that book because there was something valuable in it, but I didn't assume that about *Holes*. I didn't use my tools with this text and it was a self-fulfilling prophecy thing. Because I didn't look, I didn't find. My expectation of the book shaped what I found. What I brought to the book shaped how I read it and what I missed. That's a scary thought for me because it means that I wasn't my own reader exactly in high school. I found something in all those books because I expected to, because a teacher told me it was there; now I have to look at all the books I read with that in mind. Nobody'll be there to tell me. I'll be the teacher.

The class was quiet, pondering what she said. Emmet asked, "Does this mean that we think all those books we named are good books because someone told us they were?" I let the question sit for a few minutes. Anna asked, "Or does it mean that there are good books that we haven't been told are good books, and we need to find them for ourselves and for our

students?" Class discussions are interesting things. Good ones set the tone for the class, for the ways in which students can engage with each other around texts. A similar discussion played out this year; we read *Hunger Games*, and the students marveled at the complexity of the text and its elaboration of the human condition, at the challenges inherent in the way the author critiques society.

Frequently, we hear from preservice (and inservice) teachers that no matter how much they like YAL, they don't believe that they can teach it in their classrooms. "If I were somewhere else," they say, "it would be different." "If the current climate were different, then I could do more with these books." If. If. If. As teachers, *if* and *what if* are scary words. They help us imagine possibilities and potential failures. Changing something about the content taught in schools is risky. Adding new books to the curriculum requires attention to the larger context of the curriculum.

Sonia, a student teacher, requested to teach *Hunger Games* for her middle school placement; her cooperating teacher told her that *Lord of the Flies* is the 8th-grade YA novel and that changing it would involve a lot of paperwork, permission from the department chair, the principal, and the parents. Sonia eventually received permission to teach *Hunger Games* as a companion text to *Lord of the Flies*. She said, "While I am glad that I got to teach *Hunger Games*, it was a lot of work. If I have to do that every time I want to teach a different book, then I imagine I will choose to teach what is in the bookroom." Another student teacher wanted to use an LGBT text as an option for students in literature circles. She was told that she couldn't use that book as one of the options. The difficulties in changing or adding to the curriculum, especially when there may be censorship issues, make it challenging for teachers to imagine other options for their classrooms. The articles in this issue focus on the *what if* questions that the authors asked as they made a change in their classrooms or in their practices.

In the first article, "From Preservice Teacher to Trusted Adult: Sexual Orientation and Gender Variance in an Online YAL Book Club," Katherine Mason uses lesbian, gay, bisexual, and gender-variant YA literature with preservice teachers. She explores how an online book club introduced her students to the importance of being aware of this literature, the ways

in which they might use these texts with their future students, and the role these texts play in meeting the national call for attention to these issues.

Joni Richards Bodart reminds us that in a world that seems to increasingly accentuate the divide between adolescents and adults, young people still need adult guidance. That guidance seems to appear not only through the books that YA authors produce, but through their communications with their readers. B. Joyce Stallworth explains how students in a YA literature course used the common assignment of a book talk to help them create a summer reading list—one that, for some, expanded their opportunities to explore YA literature beyond the parameters of the class.

Denise Davila explores the emerging phenomenon of online book trailers. Students in her YA literature class respond and react to these specific “texts” as they consider the value and effectiveness of this publishers’ experiment to reach a broader reading audience. It seems clear that digital communication continues to influence adolescents and their reading. Melanie D. Koss and Eli Tucker-Raymond offer a textual analysis of a significant representation of YA realistic fiction in an attempt to discover how authors represent digital communication among their protagonists and other characters. Do they blog, text, email, or play online games? Indeed, do the teens in fiction

seem to mirror what we see in homes, the mall, or in schools, not just in e-communication, but in terms of ethnic or socioeconomic representation?

In “Island Hopping: From *The Cay* to *Treasure Island* to *Lord of the Flies* to *The Tempest* . . . and Back Again,” Kevin B. Kienholz chronicles his journey into and through young adult literature, offering us glimpses into the ways particular books shape our reading lives. Joni Richards Bodart provides a brief history and an introduction to booktalking in the Library Connection column, “Booktalking: That Was Then and This Is Now,” providing a contextual overview and resources for classroom teachers and media specialists. Linda Oatman High weaves a literary analysis of *Wintergirls*, *Speak*, and *Chains*, through an interview with Laurie Halse Anderson in which they explore the use of symbols in these three texts. She shows us the layers that Melanie’s students seek to find in their texts, demonstrating that these works qualify as important components to any classroom.

This issue’s Stories from the Field demonstrate what happens when three teachers find their own answers to the “If,” as they share their success with incorporating young adult literature into their own very different settings—a multicultural education course, an Advanced Placement course, and a remedial reading course.

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

Submitting a Manuscript:

Manuscript submission guidelines are available on p. 2 of this issue and on our website at <http://www.alan-ya.org/the-alan-review/>. **Note:** *The ALAN Review* is adjusting its submission deadlines to allow more time for editing and production. *The January 2010 deadline below represents a change from previous versions of this call.* Beginning with the Fall 2010 issue, deadlines will be announced as follows: Fall issue, March 1; Winter issue, July 1; Summer issue, November 1.

Summer 2011 Theme: What Does YA Literature Look Like in Spaces Other than the Classroom?

Young adult literature continues to permeate spaces other than the classroom: in libraries, bookstores, movie theaters, and the Internet. Consider the popularity of texts such as the *Twilight* series, the *Harry Potter* series, and *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (examples of books that have gone viral with young adults), and think about how these books and others like them develop communities of readers outside of the classroom. The theme of this issue asks us to explore the ways in which young adult literature functions outside of the classroom. In what spaces, other than the classroom, do you use young adult literature? What have you learned from book groups, especially those involving adults, that read young adult literature? How has cyberspace influenced the way you discuss young adult literature? In what way or ways does young adult literature become part of a young adult's life outside of school? This theme is meant to be open to interpretation, and we welcome manuscripts addressing pedagogy as well as theoretical concerns. General submissions are also welcome. Submission deadline: **November 1, 2010.**

Fall 2011 Theme: Converging Paths: YA Lit, The ALAN Review, and NCTE

This issue coincides with the 100th anniversary of NCTE, so it seems appropriate to consider the role of young adult literature, in particular *The ALAN Review*, and its relationship with NCTE. Which young adult authors or sessions have you seen at NCTE that inspired you or helped you reconsider how to incorporate YA Lit into your curriculum? What themes (social justice, issues of diversity, coming of age, to list a few) in YA Lit continue to speak to you or your students as they find books in your classroom or in your library? What direction should NCTE take in regards to our field? How do the NCTE conference and the ALAN workshop influence the place of YA Lit in the larger world of English education? How does your participation in these events influence how you teach young adult literature at the college level? This theme is meant to be open to interpretation and support a broad range of subtopics. General submissions are also welcome. Submission deadline: **March 1, 2011.**

New Section

Got a story about young adult literature you'd like to share? We are starting a new section featuring brief vignettes (no more than 300 words) from practicing teachers and librarians who would like to share their interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators around YA literature.

From Preservice Teacher to Trusted Adult: Sexual Orientation and Gender Variance in an Online YAL Book Club

I have never read a book that is geared around homosexuality. I was kind of expecting it to be in your face, but it's not.

—Ashley, preservice teacher

I always thought that “transgender” and “gay” were the same terms; however, as I read how Liam/Luna felt about his/her body, things became much clearer to me.

—Dawn, preservice teacher

Many of the preservice English teachers with whom I work report feeling enthusiastic but unsure about how to make their classrooms safe and inviting for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ). Yet little time in English methods courses is devoted to helping preservice teachers understand that schools privilege a culture of heteronormativity to the detriment of students (and adults) who identify themselves as or are perceived to be LGBTQ. Even more frustrating, these same preservice teachers often enter schools in which their colleagues have little awareness of or patience for differences in gender expression and sexual orientation.

This lack of awareness and initiative has very real consequences: students who identify as LGBTQ report feeling unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation and gender expression. And the bullying they face is not just initiated by fellow students; various members of the school community make (or silently condone through inaction) homophobic remarks, such as *faggot* or *dyke* or *that's so gay* (GLSEN, 2008).

What are we teaching students when we ignore, downplay, and even participate in these acts of hate and prejudice? Young adult (YA) author Julie Anne Peters finds answers to these questions in emails she receives from her readers and shares this lament: “It saddens me to hear how few trusted adults young people seem to feel they have in their lives” (Bott, Garden, Jones, & Peters, 2007, p. 49).

Future and current teachers must be prepared to be “trusted adults” for *all* their students and to initiate positive changes in their classroom and school communities regarding differences in sexual orientation and gender expression. For English teachers in particular, exposure to YA literature with LGBTQ content is one possibility for initiating those changes. The verisimilitude of these texts and their ability to act as windows that shed light on experiences that may be unfamiliar to the reader make them ideal starting points for a discussion about sexual orientation, gender variance, and the mistreatment and marginalization faced by students who identify as or are perceived to be LGBTQ.

Getting the Books into Teachers' Hands

In the fall of 2008, I set out to facilitate an online YAL book club for preservice secondary English teachers at Kennesaw State University (KSU) where I taught undergraduate methods courses. Located 25 miles northwest of Atlanta, KSU serves approximately 22,000 students, including over 200 undergraduate English Education majors. A book club seemed like a logical next step after my fall 2007 survey of local inservice and preservice English teachers' attitudes toward YAL with LGBTQ content revealed that although many respondents had negative perceptions of the texts, most had never actually read them (Mason, 2008).

Early that semester, I sent an email invitation to all undergraduate English Education majors indicat-

I hoped students would find online participation to be convenient and respectful of their hectic schedules.

ing that after the initial book club meeting, all discussions about the texts would take place asynchronously on a password-protected social networking site (www.ning.com). I hoped students would find online participation to be convenient and respectful of their hectic schedules. I

also revealed in the email invitation that the first ten participants would receive free copies of the texts—*Luna* (2004) by Julie Anne Peters and *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* (1995) by Jacqueline Woodson. I disclosed in the invitation that both of these novels feature LGBTQ characters and content, and I followed up with this statement:

You may be wondering why you should take advantage of this opportunity to add these texts to your personal collection. A 2007 NCTE Resolution notes that “not only do teachers frequently fail to address homophobic remarks when they hear them, but sometimes they also make such remarks themselves.” Reading YAL with LGBTQ content can enhance your awareness of differences in sexual orientation and gender expression and help you to respond more effectively and confidently in situations in which these differences are not respected, regardless of your personal beliefs. After all, it will soon be your responsibility to create a safe environment for all of your students, not just those who share your beliefs and characteristics.

Of the over 200 recipients of my email, only 11 responded to the invitation. Nine of those 11 attended the first meeting, and 6 (5 females and 1 male) ended

up participating in every aspect of the study, which included short pre- and post-participation surveys as well as the asynchronous online discussions about the texts.

Selecting the Texts

Few YA titles feature gender variant characters and themes, and since gender identity/expression is so often ignored in conversations and policies about LGBTQ issues, I wanted to be sure to include a text that addresses gender variance. In *Luna*, 15-year-old Regan's parents raised her and her older brother, Liam, as typical siblings who fit traditional gender roles. Although Liam's gender seems obvious from his physical characteristics, his brain tells him something quite different—that he's actually female.

All her life, Regan has watched Liam struggle to live up to their father's idea of manhood and has watched his true gender identity reveal itself during his late-night visits to her room to try on feminine clothes, apply make-up, and discuss sexual reassignment surgery. She observes his frustration, desperation, and isolation coalesce into an overpowering sense that suicide is the only solution. Their parents choose to ignore the signs that Liam questions his physical gender, while Luna, Liam's female self, emerges more and more frequently. As Liam begins transitioning from male to female, Regan is his only confidant, the only person to whom he can reveal who *she* truly is: Luna, the “girl who can only be seen by moonlight” (Peters, 2004, p. 2). Ultimately, Luna's silence becomes too burdensome, and, on her eighteenth birthday, she confronts her father with these words, “Dad, I'm a transsexual” (Peters, 2004, p. 221).

Of course, her challenges are only beginning, but she has found the strength to admit not just to herself, but to the world, who she truly is. Peters's use of Regan to tell this story allows normatively gendered readers a way into the text, a way to empathize both with Regan and with Luna. This is especially important for teachers who may not have encountered (or been aware of or sensitive to) gender variant people and issues in their prior experience or professional development.

To complement *Luna*, I selected Woodson's *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun*. This text introduces readers to 13-year-old Melanin Sun, who lives with

his mom, EC, in Brooklyn, New York. Melanin stands out because of both his appearance and his actions: he has very dark skin, which people often notice and comment upon, and he prefers to keep to himself, observing what's going on around him, writing in his notebooks, and collecting stamps of endangered species. He knows that his hobbies and interests make him different, and that "[d]ifference matters" (Woodson, 1995, p. 3). Although he tries to convince himself otherwise ("I knew it was faggy to collect stamps but I didn't care" [Woodson, 1995, p. 20]), Melanin recognizes that he does care what others think, which is why he reacts so harshly when his beloved mother tells him she is in love with a white woman named Kristin. In Melanin's world, being gay is a cause for ridicule and judgment. In fact, one of his best friends constantly berates him for stepping outside of gendered norms, labeling his actions and thoughts as "faggy," and reminding Melanin that he "could use a little toughening up around the edges" (Woodson, 1995, p. 47).

In her trademark striking, poetic prose, Woodson depicts an adolescent boy who initially rejects and then struggles to understand his mother's life and identity, while reflecting on the prejudice around and *within* him. Throughout the novel, Melanin reflects on various gendered activities that he enjoys, such as writing and stamp collecting, and qualities he possesses, like listening rather than speaking out. Sometimes, he questions the labels society imposes (masculine/feminine, gay/straight); other times, he confirms them in his own mind. His struggle with identity resonates with readers and serves as a positive example of a young adult who is learning to understand the world from multiple perspectives, rather than relying solely on his own viewpoint.

Both *Luna* and *Notebooks* feature heterosexual protagonists. Cart and Jenkins (2006) point out that while this may dilute the impact of the text's ability "to give faces to GLBTQ youth" (p. 91), it may also "provide an easier point of access to the story for straight readers, who are also an important audience for these stories" (p. 92).

Starting the Book Club

Setting the Stage

At the opening meeting, the nine participants signed consent forms, acquired the texts, and learned about

and explored our password-protected Ning site where the asynchronous discussions would take place. I provided each participant with a "Tips" sheet (see Appendix A) that explained how to access the Ning site, established a timeline for reading and responding (participants had approximately 1.5 weeks to read and respond to each text), suggested ways to keep up with the online discussions (e.g., check the site 2–3 times per week while and after reading each text), and set forth expectations for online etiquette. In addition, they completed a short, anonymous pre-participation survey at the opening meeting to gauge their attitudes toward and familiarity with YAL with LGBTQ content.

Other than setting up the Ning site and providing general prompts on the tips sheet, I did not participate in any of the book club discussions; I wanted to see what kinds of topics, questions, and reactions to the texts the participants would share without my input.

Six participants created their own forums and blogs on the Ning site, starting their own discussion threads and responding to those of their colleagues. After completing both texts, participants took an anonymous post-participation survey to gauge their attitudes toward YAL with LGBTQ content.

Searching for Understanding

In addition to exposing participants to quality YAL with LGBTQ content, one goal of this book club was to help students develop an understanding of the experiences of teens who identify as LGBTQ or whose family members do. According to Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (2006), "an understanding is best acquired by 'uncovering' (i.e., it must be developed inductively, coconstructed by learners) and 'doing' the subject (i.e., using the ideas in realistic settings and with real-world problems)" (p. 129). I attempted to encourage this understanding by stepping back and allowing the two YA novels to speak for themselves,

In her trademark striking, poetic prose, Woodson depicts an adolescent boy who initially rejects and then struggles to understand his mother's life and identity, while reflecting on the prejudice around and *within* him.

so participants could uncover their own meanings and interpretations. Although it was a challenge for me to refrain from jumping into the online discussions, I

I wanted to see the direction my participants would take on their own—what understandings they would come to.

wanted to see the direction my participants would take on their own—what understandings they would come to—without my guidance or interference, beyond the text selection and discussion prompts. The discussions in which they engaged provided participants with the opportunity to “do” the subject in a

way that was meaningful to their personal and professional development.

I analyzed participant responses on both surveys and in the online discussions using the framework of Wiggins and McTighe’s six facets of understanding, which are both “overlapping and ideally integrated” (p. 84):

- Explanation—“sophisticated and apt theories and illustrations, which provide knowledgeable and justified accounts of events, actions, and ideas” (p. 85)
- Interpretation—“interpretations, narratives, and translations that provide meaning” (p. 88)
- Application—“ability to use knowledge effectively in new situations and diverse, realistic contexts” (p. 92)
- Perspective—“critical and insightful points of view” (p. 95)
- Empathy—“the ability to get inside another person’s feelings and worldview” (p. 98)
- Self-Knowledge—“the wisdom to know one’s ignorance and how one’s patterns of thought and action inform as well as prejudice understanding” (p. 100).

I asked my participants to respond to the surveys and in the online discussions both as readers of the literature and as future teachers. Because I will share excerpts from the surveys (which were completed anonymously) and the online discussions (in which the participants identified themselves), some responses are attributed to participants through pseudonyms,

while other responses are anonymous. Perhaps because of the prompts I provided, participants generally used the discussion board to articulate their understanding in terms of explanation, interpretation, application, and empathy, and they used the pre- and post-participation surveys to reveal understandings in terms of perspective and self-knowledge.

Of the nine participants who took the pre-participation survey, six reported that they had never read YAL with LGBTQ content before, yet all nine expressed enthusiasm for learning more about this genre of YAL as well as the importance of teachers’ familiarity with these texts:

We will have students in our class that are LGBTQ, and I believe that they have been ignored by their teachers. As a teacher, it is important to understand the differences between our students so that we can treat each of them with respect and dignity.

As with urban literature, LGBTQ literature not only reaches a certain demographic of student but can be beneficial to all as it helps to promote multicultural education.

Evidence of Understanding

Explanation and Interpretation

Most of the participants’ responses on the discussion board revealed understandings in terms of explanation (making connections, sharing illuminating examples, explaining why) and interpretation (revealing the significance or meaning of an event or experience) as they responded to and questioned the texts. Some participants critiqued the authors’ choices in characterization, plot, and setting:

I thought the beach scene with Kristen [sic] and Melanin was a bit unrealistic. I felt like [Woodson] was rushing me through to get to the end of the book so it would wrap up “neatly” for her. —*Linda*

I do think [Peters] plays on gender stereotypes a little too much in the beginning, with the dad wanting the son to do the sports, and then asking the daughter to cook dinner. —*Amy*

I agree with Ashley that [Woodson] left us hanging when it came to Angie. I honestly felt a little disappointed since the last thing mentioned about her was right after the fight where she looked “confused and angry.” My only guess for the reason that Woodson did not clear things up is possibly based on the theme that not all things are black and white or Melanin and Sun. Maybe she wanted to leave the reader with a lot of gray areas the way life actually is. —*Adam*

Participants also revealed connections to their own experiences and popular culture. Ashley connected her reading of *Luna* to a popular reality television series, *America's Next Top Model*, Cycle 11, hosted by Tyra Banks; she critically reflected on the treatment of a transgender participant on the show:

On *America's Next Top Model*, there was a transgender girl. Her name was Isis. At first I didn't really think about it. She got voted off, but now I look back and think there were only a few of the girls that treated her like a girl; the others ignored the fact that she was even there. —*Ashley*

In her recollection of this television series, Ashley expresses her newfound understanding that a transgender female, for example, should be treated “like a girl,” a notion, she reveals, she hadn't really considered before reading *Luna*.

In another post, Linda distinguished between tolerance and acceptance: “Tolerance is something I do with my brussel sprouts and Sunday night football. I don't really like either, but I tolerate them for one reason or another.” And Tabitha responded with an example of acceptance from *Luna*: “Regan would go with Luna to the mall to shop and be there for her when she dressed as a girl. THAT is going beyond tolerance.”

Application

Of all the facets of understanding, application (using and adapting knowledge effectively in new, realistic contexts) was least evident in my participants' responses, most likely because the online discussion and surveys didn't ask participants to apply their knowledge in new settings. Most participants did reveal understandings in terms of what I would call hypothetical application; for example, a few shared their plans for including YAL with LGBTQ in their classrooms or discussed how they might respond if they learned that their own children were gay or gender variant:

I wonder if it would be harder to teach [*Luna*] here in the South versus other parts of the country. I imagine parents opting out of letting their kids read it. I wonder how we could deal with this issue. Should we just add the book in and see if anyone complains or ask the parents to read the book first, convincing them to give it a try? — *Tabitha*

[Regarding the mom in *Luna*], I was shocked at first that she was just ignoring the whole thing and then I got really pissed because as a mom (granted, mine are 4 and 3) I could not believe she treated Liam like Luna didn't even

exist. If I caught my son wearing my make-up and clothes I would be like ok, let's talk, not respond with “don't tell your sister.” —*Ashley*

One participant, Tabitha, actually did apply her knowledge of YAL with LGBTQ content in a conversation with a friend after reading both texts:

I spoke to a good friend of mine who would never allow her children to read texts in school with LG content. After describing these books to her, she changed her mind and felt that, yes she would have no problem with it. I think that in talking to parents about teaching this text perhaps it is important how we describe the rationale behind it. —*Tabitha*

Like Tabitha, I have found that the people who have the most negative perceptions of YAL with LGBTQ content are usually the people who have not read any of it themselves. This just further emphasizes the need to get these books into teachers' hands so that they might see for themselves the quality of the literature and its power to reflect and reveal the experiences of LGBTQ youth, their families (of origin and of choice), and their communities.

Perspective

Book club members revealed their understandings in terms of perspective (critically considering multiple points of view) most frequently in the anonymous surveys. Some noted the ways in which YAL with LGBTQ content might assist them in helping their students develop respect and appreciation for multiple perspectives. One participant noted that “these texts force readers to challenge their mindsets and possibly make a paradigm shift,” while another noted that “literature should connect to students' lives and also give them a personal challenge. Dealing with issues that are hard to talk about can help give students a greater view of multiple perspectives.” A third participant discussed the value of such texts in disconfirming negative stereotypes about the LGBTQ community:

Just as multicultural education has recently become a focal

I have found that the people who have the most negative perceptions of YAL with LGBTQ content are usually the people who have not read any of it themselves.

point in education, I believe that studies regarding LGBTQ content should be added into the curriculum. Students have so many negative stereotypes drilled into their heads by the media about how the LGBTQ community is not worthy of being treated with respect, how they are a disgrace to society; however, as teachers using this content in our class, we have the potential to slowly break down these stereotypes so they do not perpetuate into future generations.

Two other participants also revealed the importance of resisting a culture of heteronormativity in schools and beyond:

Ignoring the fact that not everyone is heterosexual makes those that aren't feel as if they are inferior.

As teachers we need to be careful not to assume that every family consists of the traditional mother and father. The safety of the classroom begins with the teacher educating herself on the realities in the lives of her students.

Empathy

In contrast with developing a sense of perspective, which requires us to remain detached as we critically consider multiple viewpoints, empathy requires us to

embrace another person's worldview and "perceive sensitively on the basis of prior direct experience" (Wiggins and McTighe, 2006, p. 84). Reading *Luna* and *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun* allowed my participants to gain some (additional) experience with the LGBTQ community as they lived vicariously through Regan and Melanin. For example, Tabitha was able to empathize with the challenges Regan

faced in her attempt to support and protect Liam while maintaining her own identity: "Liam/Luna had no one to turn to but his sister Regan, and this was too much to bear for one person." And, after reading *Notebooks*, Amy, who was completing her student teaching experience, revealed her increasing disgust with anti-LGBTQ language:

When students say that things are "gay," something turns that didn't turn so much before. Not that I have not noticed the insensitivity and ignorance of that phrase, but after read-

ing this book it is as if I have been in the seat of a 14-year-old versus this 22-year-old perspective from someone with no real experiences with the gay community. —Amy

Tabitha and Linda expressed empathy for family members of LGBTQ people after reading *Notebooks*:

Melanin's mother's revelation left him wondering about himself and his own identity. On page 63 Melanin thinks, "If she is a dyke, then what did that make me?" This scene points to the possible difficulties in revealing this to a child raised to believe that being gay or lesbian is wrong either through family or his friends. The same reaction is sometimes exhibited by a parent who is told that their child is gay/lesbian. This knowledge may cause them to reflect on their own identity as a parent. —Tabitha

Tabitha, I agree with you that learning that a parent or child is gay must be a difficult time that causes one to reflect on how that person's "gayness" affects them. A father or mother may ask, "Where did I go wrong?" or go into denial, which may be even worse. —Linda

I am impressed by Tabitha and Linda's attempts to put themselves into the shoes of people whose family members embody their LGBTQ identity. If we can demonstrate our understanding of someone's initial response of confusion, fear, disdain, or self-righteousness in the face of difference, we might also be able to help that person see a way to appreciate and celebrate difference, rather than revile it.

Self-Knowledge

In both the surveys and the online discussion, book club members did not hesitate to reveal their own perceived ignorance, changing perspectives, and questions as they demonstrated their understanding in terms of self-knowledge (awareness of one's own ignorance, prejudice, and patterns of thought):

Reading these books has taught me that I have a long way to go before I will be fully equipped and prepared to deal with all problems facing students in the classroom.

I think a teacher walks a tightrope between support and intrusion in students' lives. How do teachers maintain that important professional perspective and be emotionally open to their students? I cannot impose my views and values on the class but I can expose those minds to different viewpoints that will expand their thinking.

In a discussion of their inservice teacher professional development book group, Bruce Parker and Jacqueline Bach (2009) acknowledge that "[c]reating spaces for educators to engage with texts that

Book club members did not hesitate to reveal their own perceived ignorance, changing perspectives, and questions as they demonstrated their understanding in terms of self-knowledge.

are meant to represent complex identities, without having an expert or access to other perspectives on these experiences, can reify negative stereotypes and assumptions” (p. 97). As my participants articulated their understanding in terms of self-knowledge, some misperceptions and assumptions emerged, causing me to question my methodology of simply observing the discussion, rather than participating in it. In their survey responses, two participants articulated concerns about how to recommend texts with LGBTQ content to students:

I would like to know how to recommend an LGBTQ novel without offending the student. If they identify as LGBTQ, I may not know as a teacher, but only suspect it . . . I'm not sure how to go about offering a book without making them feel weird or uncomfortable, or even angry if they are not LGBTQ, which could potentially get me in a lot of trouble when I was trying to help.

While it is important for teachers to be able to recommend YAL with LGBTQ content [to students], I am more concerned with being put in the role of “counselor” to a LGBTQ student. I certainly want to connect with my students and give them a safe place and a confidential ear; however, I could not just walk up to a gay student and say, “Hey, I have this great book about transgenders . . . wanna read it?!” How as teachers do we “know” a student’s sexual orientation in order to be able to recommend LGBTQ books that may interest them?

These are fantastic questions that demonstrate these preservice teachers’ enthusiasm and thoughtful consideration of their students but that also point to misconceptions I need to address in my teaching and in my written response here. First, in the second response, it seems that the participant is conflating sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in the example of providing a “great book about transgenders” to a gay student. Second, it’s not necessary (or particularly worthwhile) for teachers to recommend books with LGBTQ content only to students who identify as LGBTQ. In fact, since the purpose of quality literature is not just to mirror the reader’s reality but to also provide a window into different realities, teachers should attempt to recommend these texts to *all* students—if not as part of a required reading list, then at least during book talks, or as part of book passes, as advocated by Emily S. Meixner (2009). Additionally, teachers should never initiate a conversation about a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity in an attempt to get the student to come out. It’s not our

place to identify or single out students who we think might be gay or transgender, and we should “avoid calling individual students ‘gay,’ ‘lesbian,’ ‘bisexual,’ ‘transgender,’ etc. until [we] have first heard students use a particular term to describe themselves” due to the fluidity of these labels (Weinberg, 2009, p. 50).

Final Thoughts

The 2007 NCTE Resolution on Strengthening Teacher Knowledge of LGBT Issues advocates formal integration of the study of LGBTQ issues in all teacher preparation programs. In addition to this important step toward equal rights for all members of our school communities, teacher educators (and teachers themselves) might also consider facilitating book clubs that feature YAL with LGBTQ content. In my own book club, I was pleased to learn from these preservice teachers’ insights, questions, anxieties, misconceptions, and changes in perspective in relation to these texts. In fact, most of the online discussion participants requested that we continue our study of YAL and our online discussions, and several offered suggestions to improve the discussion itself:

We should do it more often and possibly add nights of viewing plays and movies as a group about transgender identities and sexual orientations.

More face to face meetings, coffee shops, etc. to build a stronger sense of community and make for deeper conversation. A kind of hybrid style would work best.

Although my participants appreciated the flexibility the online forum offered, they also desired face-to-face interactions and additional media featuring representations of various sexual orientations and gender identities. In addition, I would like to be an active participant in the book club next time, sharing my expertise and resources, offering an additional perspective, inviting lurkers to participate, and learning along with my participants.

Another participant noted the value of seeking out the perspectives of members of the LGBTQ community:

It’s not necessary (or particularly worthwhile) for teachers to recommend books with LGBTQ content only to students who identify as LGBTQ.

I would have liked to have gotten an online perspective from someone from the LGBTQ community. (Maybe I did and didn't know it?!)

Even though members of the LGBTQ community cannot act as representatives of the entire group, I appreciate this participant's acknowledgement that we must actively seek out those perspectives. I also appreciate this participant's revelation that a person's sexual orientation and gender identity may not be perceptible without verbal clarification or observed embodiment of the identity.

Book clubs that feature YAL with LGBTQ content are one possibility for scattering light on sexual orientation and gender variance.

Although the response to my book club invitation was lower than I hoped and expected, I am confident that with time and persistence, future and current teachers' interest in LGBTQ issues will grow. For the past three years, I have included YAL with LGBTQ content in book passes in my English methods courses. Each semester

more and more students select those texts to read, teach, and inspire inquiry for class projects like the multigenre research paper.

In its 2009 report, "Stepping Out of the Closet, into the Light," the National Education Association urges educators to pay attention to and take a stand for students, noting that "a single, supportive adult in the lives of GLBT students at school is the most critical factor in increasing the GLBT students' sense of safety and academic achievement and in decreasing the risk of truancy or dropping out" (Kim, p. ix). Book clubs that feature YAL with LGBTQ content are one possibility for scattering light on sexual orientation and gender variance and encouraging future and current teachers to be "trusted adults" for every student.

References

- Bott, C. J., Garden, N., Jones, P., & Peters, J. A. (2007). Don't look and it will go away: YA books—a key to uncovering the invisible problem of bullying. *The ALAN Review*, 34(2), 44–51.
- Cart, M., & Jenkins, C. A. (2006). *The heart has its reasons: Young adult literature with gay/lesbian/queer content, 1969–2004*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.
- GLSEN. (2008, October 8). 2007 national school climate survey. Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network. Retrieved from <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/2340.html?state=research&type=research>.
- Kim, R. (2009, October 14). A report on the status of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in education: Stepping out of the closet, into the light. National Education Association. Retrieved from <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/glbstatus09.pdf>.
- Mason, K. (2008). Creating a space for YAL with LGBT content in our personal reading: Creating a *place* for LGBT students in our classrooms. *The ALAN Review*, 35(3), 55–61.
- Meixner, E. S. (2009). "Would you want to read that?": Using book passes to open up secondary classrooms to LGBTQ young adult literature. *The ALAN Review*, 36(3), 92–8.
- NCTE. (2007). Resolution on strengthening teacher knowledge of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues. National Council of Teachers of English. Retrieved from <http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/teacherknowledgelgbt>.
- Parker, B., & Bach, J. (2009). Gender variant and transgender issues in a professional development book group. *English Journal*, 98(4), 96–101.
- Peters, J. A. (2004). *Luna*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Weinberg, M. (2009). LGBT-inclusive language. *English Journal*, 98(4), 50–51.
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Understanding by design* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Woodson, J. (1995). *From the notebooks of Melanin Sun*. New York: Scholastic.

After teaching at Kennesaw State University for four years, Katherine Mason, a former middle school English teacher, is now an assistant professor of English Education at Wichita State University. She has presented at professional conferences and published articles on teaching English Language Learners, cooperative learning, effective writing instruction, and young adult literature with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) content.

Appendix A

Tips for Participating in Our Online Book Club

Accessing Our Book Club Site:

Once you have responded to the e-mail invitation and set up your account, you can simply go to www.ning.com and click “sign in” to access our site. You can also go directly to <http://lgbtqyal.ning.com/> and sign in.

Timeline:

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Sept. 30 | Opening meeting: consent forms, survey, explore http://lgbtqyal.ning.com/ |
| Oct. 1-11 | Read and respond (online) to <i>From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun</i> |
| Oct. 12-22 | Read and respond (online) to <i>Luna</i> |
| Oct. 23-27 | Take post-participation survey (I will send link via e-mail.) |

The dates of the readings and discussions are fluid. I would like for you to begin with *Notebooks*, but please feel free to continue responding to it after Oct. 11, and feel free to respond to *Luna* before Oct. 12.

Asynchronous Online Discussions:

Unlike a traditional book club that meets face to face, our discussions will take place online asynchronously; this means we can communicate without being online at the same time. While this adds to the convenience of participating, it does require that you check our site consistently in order to truly participate in the conversation. For example, after reading (or even during your reading of) one of the texts, visit the discussion site to post your initial response(s) and read and respond to other participants’ posts. Check back a few times over the course of the week to see if anyone has responded to your post, and respond to that and other posts as you see fit.

Online Etiquette:

Our book club site is private, meaning that only invited participants can view and contribute to the site. Keeping in mind that we are all colleagues and members of the same program, please check your responses for a courteous tone before posting.

Responding to the Texts:

Please respond honestly to the texts. There are no right or wrong answers, and I’m not “grading” you on grammar and mechanics, so feel free to write freely, focusing more on *what* you want to say, rather than *how* you say it. Here are some prompts to get you started:

1. What surprised (or didn’t surprise) you? Why?
2. What did you learn from the text? What questions does the text raise for you?
3. What connections can you make between the text and . . .
 - your own life—as a student, as a teacher?
 - other texts (including the other assigned text for this book club)?
 - society/the world?
 - history?

In addition to sharing your personal connections to the text, feel free to link to online visual/audio resources and/or URL’s for our reference.

4. What passage(s) struck you as particularly insightful, powerful, provocative, or dubious? Note them in your commentary (include a page number for our reference), and discuss your reaction to the passage(s).
5. How do these readings impact your thoughts about your current or future teaching?

Young Adult Authors as Trusted Adults for Disconnected Teens

There is in our society a culture of abandonment, a culture of isolation, a culture of alienation, a culture of adolescence. Different researchers call it different things: a second family (Ron Taffel, Taffel & Blau, 2001), a tribe apart (Patricia Hersch, 1998), the world underneath (Chap Clark, 2004), and more. But no matter how it is conceptualized, these terms all describe one thing: adults live in one culture, adolescents live in another, and for the most part, these two do not connect or overlap. Middle and high school students have fewer and fewer adults in their lives who can act as role models, and, as a result, they must learn how to become adults from their peers, rather than from adults themselves, as the previous generations have done.

In the past, adolescents proudly proclaimed their independence and rejection of adult beliefs and mores. Today, however, it seems as if adults are rejecting *them*, and this rejection seems to begin when the children are statistically younger than they used to be. It appears, in fact, that adults do not bother to reach out to these adolescents; instead, they leave adolescents on their own (Clark, 2004) and, in many instances, condemn them for making costly mistakes borne of ignorance of the way the world works (C. Crutcher, personal communication, January, 2010). And this is happening at a time when evidence proves that adolescence today is more difficult, complex, and treacherous than previous gen-

erations experienced (Bodart, 2006).

A wide variety of things have contributed to this phenomenon. First, we must look to changes within the family: the fracturing of the nuclear family, increased mobility and relocations, and the necessity for two-paycheck households (Taffel & Blau, 2001; Thurnow, 1997). Second, we need to be aware of changes within society as a whole: the increase of societal dangers and predators, the growing sophistication and immediacy of communication using a variety of technologies, and changes in the social/athletic organizations originally designed to support adolescence and adolescents (Clark, 2004). Modern adolescents are on their own, entering a time of life that has traditionally been difficult to navigate, even with the support of caring adults, and today's teens must do it with only the support of their friends, who are likely to know very little more about being an adult than they do.

When children entered adolescence in the late 1940s, it was part of a culture far different from ours today. Then, most teens grew up in extended nuclear families, and divorce was rare—something to be

avoided at all costs. Church and community organizations helped families coach adolescents, teaching them what adulthood was and how to achieve it. Today, for a variety of reasons, those things are no longer true.

We live in a culture that is physical, but also virtual. The World Wide Web touches every

**Adults live in one culture,
adolescents live in another,
and for the most part,
these two do not connect
or overlap.**

part of our lives, and has changed the ways we communicate, learn, shop, and are entertained. Email has replaced handwritten, stamped, and delivered “snail mail,” listservs and other online user groups instantly connect anyone who wants to be connected, allowing individuals to share their ideas and beliefs with thousands of people at a time. Social networking software has made it possible for anyone to reinvent themselves, and many have. Twitter lets people share even the most mundane events or ideas in 140 character bursts—nothing is too trivial for a tweet. A wide variety of computer games have gone online, allowing players from all over the world to compete against each other. Cell phones have replaced telephones, slowly at first, and then more and more rapidly, as they became smaller, smarter, and more reliable. Personal computers first became affordable, and then essential. Laptops made them portable, and ubiquitous when traveling, making it harder and harder to limit work to 40 hours a week. People not only want information, they want it immediately, and the easier to find, the better. And teens and tweens, “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) who have had instant communication for their entire lives, are most likely to use the newer or newest technology to stay in touch with their worlds and the people in them (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010).

As a result of all these changes, our society and culture look very different from just a few years ago. While some adolescents still have an original nuclear family, with the extended family from previous and current generations, the vast majority do not (Delisio & Bendtro, 2008; Williams, Sawyer, & Wahlstrom, 2005). Their parents are busy with their own lives, relieved or delighted to be free of caretaking responsibilities. In many families, teens come home from school, decide what they’ll eat and when, and if they’ll do homework, watch TV, text or call their friends—all without much or any contact with their parents (Williams, 2000). Adolescents spend 40% less time with their parents than they did 30 years ago. The single-mother household is becoming the norm, and with those mothers at work, more than 2 million children under the age of 13 are left completely without adult supervision, both before and after school. No one takes care of them (Thurow, 1997). The social/sports activities that preadolescents and adolescents par-

ticipate in have, in most cases, become competitive rather than recreational, increasing participants’ stress rather than reducing it (Clark, 2004).

School has also become more competitive, and budget cuts have eliminated the programs considered to be less important or more recreational—art, music, and libraries, even some sports. Teachers have been trapped by required standardized testing, and many no longer have time to include subjects or activities that are not a part of the curriculum that supports the tests, no matter how valuable they are (Clark, 2004).

In addition, life has become more dangerous in a wide variety of ways. More information is available to adolescents, but online information is unfiltered and unreliable. Basing decisions or actions on it can be very risky. Drugs, violence, and gangs are still around, and they have not lost their influence. Shootings still

happen, and innocents still die. We have been at war in the Middle East for 10 years, and today’s adolescents have grown up listening to reports of battles and suicide bombers, lists of dead and wounded, knowing that they could end up being a part of that war, and maybe one of its casualties. Bullies continue to persecute those they see as weak or different, but

the threat of retaliation has gotten more real, as some victims fight back violently, with guns or bombs. Schools have metal detectors, and security lines at airports grow longer in order to enforce more and more restrictions that are supposed to make us safer, even though we don’t always *feel* safer because of them. And, as the recession continues, more and more people are not able to make rent or mortgage payments, and end up going to shelters or living in cars or on the street. Food banks are struggling to meet the increased demand from people who have nowhere else to go. Everyone always seems to be just one emergency from disaster. It’s like the old vaudeville plate-spinning act. Everything is fine until one plate falls. Getting that plate going again while maintaining control over all the rest of the plates is all but impos-

While some adolescents still have an original nuclear family, with the extended family from previous and current generations, the vast majority do not.

sible. And doing that as an adolescent, with limited power and limited means, is far closer to impossible than it is for an adult.

Another change in our culture is the length of adolescence, which is now far longer than it was when it began in the 1940s. At that time, adolescents referred to people who were in high school, and the stage lasted only 3 or 4 years. As teens' entry into the workforce has been delayed, and post-high school education has become more

necessary, adolescence has gradually lengthened into the early to mid-20s, after college or graduate school. And while these late adolescents proclaim their independence and adulthood, they may still live at home or depend on their parents to some extent. If the hallmark of entering adulthood is the ability and the desire to live independently of parents—financially, psychologically, and physically—these late adolescents have not

achieved it. They do not yet know how to be adults.

So, what do today's adolescents need to help them survive the rejection, the abandonment of the adult culture? First of all, they need their peers, their friends, the ones that they really trust. They are the "second family" Taffel refers to that has replaced the nuclear family they have lost. This family provides much of the structure in adolescents' lives, helps them make decisions, resolve problems, and provides emotional and psychological support (Taffel & Blau, 2001).

Research has shown over and over that the difference between teens' success or failure, achieving or stagnating, is one adult who is present, affirming, supporting, advising, inspiring, and dependable. Children and teens are resilient, most able to overcome even the most difficult circumstances, but they can't do it alone (Delisio & Bendtro, 2008). They aren't "superkids" or "invincibles" who can bounce back from adversity without a scratch. Their experiences leave scars, but with the support of their peers and at least one caring adult, they can succeed in life (Blum,

1998). An adult can show the way, make a difference, change a life.

This connection is so essential that tribal cultures throughout history developed relationship systems so that a child without parents could have several "mothers" and "fathers" (Delisio, 2008). It really does take a village to raise a child (Clinton, 1996). It can be a relative, a friend, a teacher or coach, a librarian, or other adult who is available for the kind of authentic, one-on-one conversation that can allow a teenager to begin sharing what his or her life is really like, behind the façade teens wear when they have to deal with adults or others outside their culture. It is a carefully crafted mask that shows them as independent, successful, coping, maintaining, and self-sufficient. But it is still just a mask (Clark, 2004).

And if no adult is present, sharing one with a friend can be the next best thing—an adult connected with a friend or "family" member. The adult shares information with the teen who trusts him or her, and that information can then be passed on to the others in the "second family," even if they don't know that adult personally. Some adults can draw a whole "family" to them, and build supportive relationships with several teens who are also connected with each other. But there are other ways for teens to find an adult who can be a trusted source of information, wisdom, and affirmation.

Contact doesn't need to be face to face; trust isn't dependent on physical proximity; the ability to get in touch with others 24/7 isn't limited to peers or friends. The Web never closes, and anyone who can access it can reach out and touch someone else—through email, websites, blogs, IMs, or tweets. And while it can be a dangerous place for unwary or naïve teens, it can also be a source of information and support. Adolescents feel just as comfortable using these new lines of communication as teens in the '60s and '70s felt using the phone or writing to their favorite music or movie stars. And as the number of young adult books increased in the '70s and '80s, authors also began to get letters and email from their readers reacting to their books.

For years, Robert Cormier had been getting letters from teens who read his first YA novel, *The Chocolate War* (1974). Their passionate letters and questions surprised and delighted him, since none of his three previous books for adults had elicited much response

Research has shown over and over that the difference between teens' success or failure, achieving or stagnating, is one adult who is present, affirming, supporting, advising, inspiring, and dependable.

at all. It was those letters that convinced him he was a YA author, and that his readers deserved his respect—in what he wrote and in how he responded to them (Campbell, 2006). In 1976, when he realized he would have to put a phone number in his second book for young adults, *I Am the Cheese*, he knew that at least a few of his readers would try it to see if it worked. He didn't want to use a 555 number, because teens would know it was fake and perhaps mistrust some of the other parts of the book. But if he made one up, it might belong to someone, sometime, somewhere, who would get calls that probably would not be appreciated. So, after discussing it with his family, he used his own home phone number, and when teens called asking to speak to Amy, they ended up speaking to Cormier himself, ready to listen, ready to share advice and ideas, ready to be whatever they needed him to be, for as long as they needed to talk (R. Cormier, personal communication, June, 1985). Many of them called him more than once, relying on him to be that one adult who could make a difference in their lives. And at least one of them credits him with saving her life. Because of their conversations, she was able to resist committing suicide. Since Cormier's death, which was traumatic for her, this young woman has corresponded with Patty Campbell, who was Cormier's close friend and biographer (P. Campbell, personal communication, October, 2006).

Today, young adult authors have websites and emails, Facebook and MySpace pages, they blog and tweet, and their readers use all of these avenues to ask for advice, to respond to the books they've read, to share the scary and important questions they can't ask anyone else. And just as Cormier did for more than 20 years, these authors respond, in ways and in numbers that weren't possible in the past, when snail mail and the telephone were the only ways to communicate. Communication today is easier and more convenient than in the past, and today's teens are constantly in touch with those who are important to them: friends, family, acquaintances, and more and more often, the authors of books they read. These authors write the books their readers ask for, the books they need to survive or succeed. They reach out to individuals, share insights and wisdom, and offer solutions that those readers had not thought of or considered. These authors have the same deep commitment to help their readers that Cormier did. They know the power of

their books to connect with teens, to educate, comfort, support, inform, and even amuse them. Teens recognize the reality that these authors portray, and realize that they can be trusted to tell the truth—in the responses from their websites, in the books that they write, and the characters they create (Bodart, 2006).

Adolescence is a time when we all feel alone, even in the middle of a crowd. We are looking for someone who can reduce that loneliness, and help us feel more connected, more accepted and understood. Young adult authors make sure that their readers can make those connections

by including language, characters, settings, and situations that teens can recognize (Bodart, 2006). This frequently means that the books that can help the most are often the ones that are more likely to be criticized because of the emotional intensity of the reality they portray; of course, *this* is why teens identify with them so strongly (Bodart, 2007). That identification can promote change and even healing, as teens are able to see themselves or their situation from a new perspective, with new knowledge, which can help them succeed in changing their behavior, changing their lives (Jones, 2006).

But the emotion that goes hand in hand with such changes can be threatening to adults. Adults who try to protect teens from reality, who believe that if teens don't read about something they will not know about it or think about it, frequently find the reality of these books too much to take, and do all they can to remove them from library shelves and from school classrooms, while caring teachers, librarians, and authors do all they can to keep them available for teens who badly need the information they contain (Bodart, 2006).

There is no question that young adult authors are committed to writing books that will make changes in the lives of their readers, but how do they conceptualize those readers? Whom are they writing for, and do

Adults who try to protect teens from reality, who believe that if teens don't read about something they will not know about it or think about it . . . do all they can to remove them from library shelves and from school classrooms

they see adolescents as the culture of abandonment that researchers have found? How do they define adolescents and adolescence? Do they recognize adolescence as a separate culture with its own characteristics, rules, boundaries, and mores? If not, what is their perspective, and what was its genesis? Why do they choose to write dark, gritty, realistic, and controversial fiction? What are the drawbacks and the rewards

Chris Crutcher also knows the pain of adolescence from his years as a therapist, and many of his books reflect the increasing gap between adolescents and their parents.

they find? Looking at the writings, websites, and blogs of four YA authors, the articles that have been written about them, and the interviews they have done, the answers to those questions begin to get clearer.

Laurie Halse Anderson is the author of several YA titles, three of which have elicited both praise and challenges: *Speak*, *Twisted*, and *Wintergirls*. She says

that in the ten years since *Speak* was published, she has gotten thousands of letters and emails, and has spoken to half a million high school students. The message she's heard over and over was how much they miss their parents. Some parents are physically gone, working two or three jobs to make ends meet, and other parents are just emotionally gone, even if they're present physically. Although many adults today think that teens are trying to pull away from them, the truth is, teens really need adults in their lives, and a lot of kids are "broken" because adults aren't there for them. They need present, emotionally engaged adults, who are willing to share their knowledge, information, and wisdom, just as Anderson does.

Because she is a YA author writing about the pain and confusion of adolescence, she has "been put in a unique position, as have many YA authors, of becoming a sort of mother/father confessor for this generation. When young people read a lot of books and actually connect with them, they often seek out the writer, through e-mail, letters, or in person, to talk to us in a uniquely intimate way" (2005, p. 53). Anderson, for many of her readers, has become that trusted adult who can help explain what is happening, or has

happened, to them, to their friends, their school, their family, their world. "They want us to show them how to find the strength to go on. They desperately want us to give them the tools they need [to survive]" (p. 53). "Young adults do experience a lot of pain, and often, perhaps, their behavior is an acting out caused by a hurt too deep for words" (p. 55). "Our culture is not equipped to love and cherish teenagers. We'll take their money, we're very happy to take their money, but we don't give them much back in return" (2005, p. 55). "Pretty much every kid in America has . . . that ugly, gloomy, dark hole [inside] that they can't find a way out of. I've gotten letters that say, 'Ok, like, I'm the biggest jock of the school and if you ever tell anybody this I'll kill you, but I know exactly what that girl feels like.' That's something we need to pay attention to" (p. 55).

Chris Crutcher also knows the pain of adolescence from his years as a therapist, and many of his books reflect the increasing gap between adolescents and their parents. "For years kids—teenagers—came into my office to say how unheard they felt by the adults in their lives; parents and teachers. We're either able to hear about their lives in their native tongue, or we're not. When we're not, they stop talking to us. Who can blame them?" (2008).

In 2005, Crutcher posted a letter to the Alabama teens of the Limestone School District, after *Whale Talk* was banned there because of its authentic dialogue, aka, "curses." In it, he shared the story of the girl who was the inspiration for one of the most graphic scenes in the book. She was one of his clients at the mental health center where he worked. "Her biological father didn't even know of her existence and her mother didn't have the emotional strength to keep her out of the eye of the hurricane of her stepfather's hatred. She couldn't eat at the table until her younger, white stepbrothers had finished. She wasn't allowed to play with toys until they were broken and handed over to her. The first time I saw her she was standing over a sink, [frantically scrubbing her arms], trying to wash the brown off her skin so her (step)daddy would love her. . . . The language that [four-year-old] little girl used was even tougher than what my character used in *Whale Talk*" (2005). Because his books are based in reality, Crutcher does everything he can to reflect that reality—"I don't tone down things because they are disturbing, or because

they might be offensive. Life is often disturbing. Life is often offensive. It's just part of the deal" (C. Crutcher, personal communication, January, 2010). Crutcher listens to teens, hears their stories, and writes about them—"I want to be remembered as a storyteller, and I want to tell stories that seem so real that people will recognize something in their own lives and see the connections. [Because] we *are* all connected" [italics added] (McDonnell, 1988). And connections mean seeing the other person clearly, honestly, truthfully. "When we turn away from tough material in stories that kids face every day in real life, we take ourselves off the short list of people to turn to. Kids would much rather we found ways to discuss those tough issues than to pretend they don't exist" (Crutcher, 2008). Pretending that they don't exist means teens' disconnection deepens, and they are left with only peers for advice.

Gail Giles also recognizes the gap between adolescents and adults, and explains how she dealt with it during her adolescence. With two people working outside the home, she says, it means that the child (or children) in that home is being brought up by television and video games, a "feral child." And this same situation exists when the parents are present and neglect or emotionally and physically abuse the children. In her dysfunctional home, her mother was home, but was emotionally abusive. Giles had to look elsewhere to find a trusted adult. Her best friend's mother became that adult. Later, as a high school teacher, she saw other teens do the same thing, finding an adult, a teacher, a librarian, someone or something that they could trust, and many times, that something was a book, a book that spoke to them, a book that reflected the world they saw around them. A book like the ones she now writes. And like most YA authors, Giles wants her stories to be real, so she writes in the teen vernacular. When she is criticized for it, she wonders about people who notice the language, but not the violence—"I want to scream, 'He killed someone and you are upset about a swear word? Hello? Priorities?'" (G. Giles, personal communication, December, 2009).

Ellen Hopkins writes verse novels on dark subjects—drug abuse, cutting, suicide, teen prostitution—because she thinks that subjects like these need to be brought into the light and examined, rather than hidden away. "I feel it's important . . . because that's the only way we're going to develop empathy for people

who are going through them. We need to make it real and to be brutally honest about it. That honesty is what my readers appreciate, because those characters don't feel crafted. They feel like they're real people, and to a large part they are. . . . I hope I can show [my readers] a way past the black moments, show them that there are people around them that care. Often they get this feeling that 'It's just me against the world, nobody cares about me.' If I can help them see the connections in their own lives to friends or family, or a way past their addiction, or a way past cutting, or a way past these thoughts of ending it all, that's more important than anything" (Powells.com, 2007).

Ellen's books reflect real life, and they take the reader right to where the action is, allowing him or her to see what the addiction or the predator is really like. The monsters can't avoid the limelight, so all their ugliness can be clearly seen. No one can be adequately protected from a perpetrator who is an unknown. Adults may want to believe that bad

things aren't happening any more, but they are, and knowing about them in all their ugliness is the only way to make them stop. G. K. Chesterton once said, "Fairy tales do not tell children that dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children the dragons can be killed" (Dosani & Cross, 2007, p. 38). A more contemporary take reflects this need for the truth, even when it is ugly: Young adult literature doesn't tell teens that monsters exist. Teens already know that they exist—they see them every day. Young adult literature tells teens that the monsters can be killed.

"We can't make life prettier for youth, but we can arm them. . . . We have to give our kids the tools [to fight back]." Teens write to Ellen about all of her books, and some she hears from more than once. She met a girl at a book signing who confessed to being a cutter. "She has stayed in touch and as she struggles to stay away from drugs and self-injury, she often

Young adult literature doesn't tell teens that monsters exist. Teens already know that they exist—they see them every day. Young adult literature tells teens that the monsters can be killed.

But the most important thing about the connections YA authors have with their readers is . . . the impact on the individual teens themselves, and how they are able to change their lives because of a book they read and the person who wrote it.

authors understand and relate to those readers can help teachers, librarians, and others understand their books better and use them more effectively. This information can also be valuable in challenge situations, because providing a context for the work can explain and support the inclusion of graphic and/or controversial content.

But the most important thing about the connections YA authors have with their readers is not the impact on institutions and adults who work with teens, but the impact on the individual teens themselves, and how they are able to change their lives because of a book they read and the person who wrote it. Those connections between reader and writer may be only a drop in the bucket toward reconnecting with this disconnected part of our society, but enough drops, enough connections, can make that bucket overflow.

Joni Richards Bodart, internationally known as the leading expert on booktalking, is an assistant professor at San Jose State University SLIS, where she is in charge of the Youth Librarianship curriculum. The Booktalk! series from H. W. Wilson is considered to be the standard in the field. Her most recent title is Radical Reads 2: Working with the Newest Edgy Novels for Teens (Scarecrow, 2009). She is on the 2011 Printz Award committee, and was awarded the 2010 Scholastic Library Publishing Award for lifetime achievement and excellence in youth librarianship. You can contact her at jrbodart@slis.sjsu.edu.

emails or calls me, as her mother is largely absent. We have become very close.” For her, Ellen is the trusted adult that can help her believe in herself and succeed (Powells.com, 2007).

And these are only a few of the YA authors who are connecting with, influencing, and being influenced by the teens who read their books. I believe that connection has made YA literature deeper, richer, and better able to impact and influence its readers. Knowing how its

References

- Anderson, L. H. (2005). Loving the young adult reader even when you want to strangle him (or her)! *The ALAN Review*, 32(2), 53–58.
- Blum, D. (1998). Finding strength: How to overcome anything. *Psychology Today*, 31(5), 32–44. Retrieved July 1, 2010, from <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/199805/finding-strength-how-overcome-anything>.
- Bodart, J. R. (2006). Books that help, books that heal. *Young Adult Library Services*, 5(1), 31–34.
- Bodart, J. R. (2007, June 22). *Censorship, controversy, and challenges*. Speech at YALSA Sins of YA Lit Preconference (American Library Association Annual Conference '07), Washington DC.
- Campbell, P. (2006). *Robert Cormier: Daring to disturb the universe*. New York: Delacorte Books for Young Readers.
- Clark, C. (2004). *Hurt: Inside the world of today's teenagers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Clinton, H. R. (1996). *It takes a village: And other lessons children can teach us*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Crutcher, C. (2005, March). CC sounds off: To the students of Limestone School District. Message posted to <http://www.chriscrutcher.com/content/blogcategory/48/37/>.
- Crutcher, C. (2008). CC sounds off: Masturbation happens. Message posted to <http://www.chriscrutcher.com/content/blogcategory/49/38/>.
- Delisio, E. R. (Interviewer) & Bendtro, L. K. (Interviewee). (2008, October 8). The importance of nurturing resiliency in children [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from EducationWorld.com website: http://www.educationworld.com/a_issues/chat/chat233.shtml
- Dosani, S., & Cross, P. (2007). *Raising young children: 52 brilliant little ideas for parenting under 5s*. Oxford, UK: Infinite Ideas.
- Hersch, P. (1998). *A tribe apart: A journey into the heart of American adolescence*. New York: Fawcett.
- Jones, J. L. (2006). A closer look at bibliotherapy. *Young Adult Library Services*, 5(1), 24–27.
- Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A., & Zickuhr, K. (2010, February 3). Social media and young adults. Retrieved from Pew Internet & American Life Project: <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Social-Media-and-Young-Adults.aspx>.
- McDonnell, C. (1988). New voices, new visions: Chris Crutcher. *The Horn Book Magazine*, 64, 332-335.
- Powells.com (Interviewer) & Hopkins, E. (Interviewee). (2007). *Kids' Q & A* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from Powells.com website: <http://www.powells.com/kidsqa/hopkins.html>.
- Prensky, M. (2001, October). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1–9.
- Taffel, R., & Blau, M. (2001). *The second family: Dealing with peer power, pop culture, the wall of silence—and other challenges of raising today's teens*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Thurrow, L. C. (1997, January 27). Changes in capitalism render one-earner families extinct. *USA Today*, A17.
- Williams, A. (2000, March 30). Disconnected adolescents. *New York Amsterdam News*, 91(13), p. 8.
- Williams, B., Sawyer, S. C., & Wahlstrom, C. M. (2005). *Marriages, families, & intimate relationships*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Preservice Teachers' Suggestions for Summer Reading

The 24 preservice English language arts teachers who were enrolled in my spring semester (2009) Young Adult Literature (YAL) course completed assignments quite similar to those required in many such courses focused on contemporary YAL. For instance, they read novels from the *Young Adult Library Services Association* (YALSA) booklists and created annotations from selected titles. Additionally, they:

- reflected on articles, textbook chapters, and class discussions on topics like censorship and the benefits/challenges of incorporating YAL into the curriculum;
- crafted teaching ideas and designed standards-based lesson plans integrating YAL;
- presented studies of contemporary YAL authors; and
- booktalked self-selected titles from YALSA's reading lists.

Moreover, many of these preservice teachers entered the course with the typical skepticism about young adult literature (Nilsen & Donelson, 2008) because it was inconsistent with their traditional views of "quality" literature in which they were well versed. In fact, during the very first class meeting, Corrine (all names are pseudonyms), one of these outspoken skeptics, was quite frank about the "uselessness" of several popular contemporary young adult novels, including *Twilight*. My attempt to counter by suggesting that such books have attracted millions of new teens into reading and by paraphrasing Hipple (1997), ". . . the

that of teen reading is important," had no effect on Corrine. I will return to her later.

In contrast, some of the preservice teachers had read YAL during their young adult years and were familiar with current titles. These perspectives can be summed up by Judy who said, "I loved reading young adult novels when I was in school. I still enjoy them." All of the students were majoring in English language arts education, and most were completing this required course during their junior or senior year; one student was in the alternative master's degree program. Four of the undergraduates were also completing their student teaching internships during that semester. Among the student teachers, three were placed with cooperating teachers who incorporated YAL into their reading curricula.

The Course

My YAL course has undergone several reinventions over the 13 years I have taught it because of my efforts to ensure the course maintains relevancy and currency. Over that time, I have come to believe that the course should serve as a space where preservice teachers can purposefully practice strategies for developing a balanced reading curriculum through a process of ". . . talking, reading, critiquing, and sharing as a community of learners" (Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006, p. 487). Most specifically, I use a workshop approach in the class where we read *about* the genre and its subgenres and study different literary approaches to teaching YAL. However, the majority of the semester is spent on reading, booktalking, and

responding to contemporary titles. At a minimum, we read eight new titles. However, they also complete projects that require reading additional titles (see syllabus <http://bama.ua.edu/~jstallwo/syllsp09.pdf>).

Effective Booktalks

Booktalks can be highly effective strategies for sharing titles and encouraging students to read from a wide variety of genres (Keane, 2009). Certainly my students found each other's booktalks overwhelmingly beneficial. As noted in the syllabus calendar, each of us presented a short booktalk of three to five minutes for one of the eight novels from the required reading list. Presenters highlighted major themes, insights, feasibility for teaching, reactions, and other issues they deemed important. The most important rule of our booktalks was that presenters could not deliver boring plot summaries. They were encouraged to consult <http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/> and the textbook to find guidelines for presenting excellent booktalks. The complete booktalk assignment is located in Appendix A, and the Scoring Rubric is in Appendix B.



Teacher booktalking *Stargirl*

After a productive four months of reading, studying, debating, booktalking, and engaging with YAL, I ended the course with a challenge to the preservice teachers: continue reading widely and deeply by developing your own personal summer reading lists

from the titles you learned about but did not have the opportunity to read during the semester. Summer allows us more time to think, enjoy, and reflect on what we read, so summer is a good time to make independent reading choices (Williams, 2003).

In an effort to support their work on these lists, I incorporated steps toward that goal into their final examination, where they reflected on and reviewed:

- the booktalks and annotations (see sample annotation in Appendix C) presented by their classmates and by me;
- new authors to whom they were introduced during class discussions, author spotlights from the textbook, and Internet YAL author podcasts and interviews (e.g., Charlie Gibson's interview with Markus Zusak from *ABC News Video on Demand* at <http://abcnews.go.com/Video/playerIndex?id=1737821>);
- new genres and formats from which they had not previously read (e.g., graphic novels); and
- titles that teens in their lives suggested to them over the semester (e.g., the students in middle and high schools where they were completing clinical placements for their various teacher education field courses).

Based on those directives, they developed realistic summer reading lists consisting of at least 10 titles with rationales, if there were compelling reasons that led them to particular selections. These titles and the preservice teachers' reflections are explored next.

The 10 titles most often cited reflect diverse genres and formats, from graphic novels to a long-time favorite among young adult novels. See Figure 1 for the titles and selected comments from the preservice teachers that illuminate their reasons for including these novels.

Explanations and Observations

The titles listed most often for summer reading by the preservice teachers certainly reflect the persuasiveness of the booktalkers, as several members of the class commented on the quality and effectiveness of the booktalks and annotations. For example, Morgan commented, "The books I chose [for summer reading] are not necessarily the highest rated or even my preferred genre. But all of the books I listed are the ones that stood out to me during the booktalk presentations."

<i>The Top Ten Reading List</i>		
Title	Number of Times Cited	Relevant Comments from the Preservice Teachers
1. <i>The Chocolate War</i> by Robert Cormier	14	"I would like to read more classic YA literature." Trevor "I originally did not like it, so I stopped reading. I'd like to give it a second chance." Jenny
2. <i>Son of the Mob</i> by Gordon Korman	13	"This book is being read by my students [in my student teaching placement], and they recommended it to me." Natasha "This was my favorite booktalk! I just thought it sounded like a really fun read." Meghan
3. <i>Looking for Alaska</i> by John Green	12	"I enjoyed the John Green podcast and like the fact that it is set in Alabama." Margaret
4. <i>Coraline</i> by Neil Gaiman	11	"I didn't know this was a book! I saw the previews for the movie, so now I want to read it before I see it." Wendy
5. <i>Breathing Underwater</i> by Alex Flinn	8	"Teenage relationship abuse is very real, and this book sounds like it is a good exploration of the problem." Ted
6. <i>Luna</i> by Julie Anne Peters	8	"I believe teachers must read books with controversial content." Judy
7. <i>Push</i> by Sapphire	8	"This book would be painful to read, but teachers have to know that incest can happen to our students." Jada
8. <i>Sold</i> by Patricia McCormick	8	"Mary gave a great booktalk, and I want to read this since I haven't read much international YAL!" Gary
9. <i>The First Part Last</i> by Angela Johnson	8	"According to the survey I gave my students, this was their favorite." Natasha
10. <i>The Book Thief</i> by Markus Zusak	7	"The author interview was fascinating, and I think this book would be excellent in a unit on the Holocaust." Maggie

Figure 1. Preservice teachers' Top Ten list for young adult novels they look forward to reading

Charlotte concluded, "The booktalks offered wide perspectives and approaches to a variety of novels for the classroom and those not so appropriate . . . they were beneficial to our knowledge and understanding of the effects of young adult literature and its place in the classroom."

The summer selections also reflect these preservice teachers' understanding that they must read beyond their comfort zones. That is, many of them were not initially enamored with genres such as science fiction, fantasy, adventure, and the supernatural. Rather, they saw realistic fiction or the problem novel as "the genre in young adult literature" (Nilsen & Donelson, 2008, p. 150), and titles from this genre were most often cited. However, there is something of a trend among young adults toward preferences for other genres (Koss & Teale, 2009). Even these 20-somethings selected some fantasy and historical fiction for their summer reading.

Discussion of Specific Titles

The overwhelming choice to read *The Chocolate War* was not surprising because only two members of the class had read this classic YAL title. As Trevor concluded, he wanted to know something about YAL from its early days. Further, at the outset of the semester, the class listened to an audio presentation from Cormier where he explained his motivations for writing *The Chocolate War*. Cormier's commentary prompted Carl to select this novel for a booktalk, which was an outstanding presentation using music and a "late night radio disc jockey" format. Carl's approach and his interesting critique piqued others' interests in this story. As a result, 14 members of the class planned to read Cormier's classic during the summer.

Another title that created much curiosity was *Sandpiper*, a book that was at the center of much

local controversy because of a grandparent's attempt to have it removed from a Tuscaloosa, Alabama, high school library in 2007. Sexually explicit language constituted the grandparent's objection. Ultimately, but reluctantly, the school board voted (<http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6513724.html?nid=2413>) to allow the book to remain on the shelves. *Sandpiper* was listed four times as several class members wanted to know what prompted so much censorship concern from this grandparent and many other members of that school community. Their collective sentiment was summed up by Corrine: "I have to admit, I'm curious to see what the controversy was all about."

After watching an *on demand* television interview (Gibson, 2009) with Markus Zusak, many of the preservice teachers became intrigued with *The Book Thief* and how the novel could powerfully impact the way English and history teachers design units on the Holocaust. Additionally, two graphic novels—*American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang and *Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons—were each mentioned five times. Preservice teachers who had never read graphic novels and did not understand their structure gained an appreciation for the format and were committed to reading these novels along with titles from other less popular genres in order to expand their reading repertoire. For instance, Maria commented, "I have a newfound appreciation for/obsession with graphic novels." Their desire to read other selections like *Son of the Mob*, *Coraline*, *Looking for Alaska*, and *Push* resulted from opportunities to learn how these different books could match the interests and needs of 21st century teens, and, as Bushman and Haas (2005) concluded, reading such books may increase young adults' understanding of themselves and their worlds. Overall, the preservice teachers took ownership of their projects by providing comprehensive information on a wide array of novels through creative and critical approaches.

Class project presentations also influenced the preservice teachers' summer reading choices. Students had several options for their final project (see Appendix A), and three groups chose to study adolescents' reading interests by surveying groups of middle and high school students. The overwhelming finding from these projects was that teens wanted more diverse and interesting choices in their reading curriculum. Ac-

ording to the teens who participated in the surveys, *Son of the Mob* and *The First Part Last* were their favorite leisure reading novels. As a result, these titles were selected by the preservice teachers for summer reading (*Son of the Mob* was cited 13 times, and *The First Part Last* was cited 8 times) because they believed that they had a responsibility to read novels that are popular with contemporary teens.

Beyond informing their summer reading choices, these survey projects were also particularly helpful as the preservice teachers came to realize that teachers need ". . . to find ways to link students' out-of-school reading interests with content requirements rather than replace one with the other" (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001, p. 369). Similar to conclusions from Bott (2008), the preservice teachers were able to articulate why teachers and librarians must be as knowledgeable as possible in order to match teens and books in a variety of different ways beyond whole-group reading in the classroom. For example, they identified options such as summer reading lists with extensive choices, school book clubs, self-selected titles for free reading and sustained silent reading, and literature circles. Finally, in addition to these ideas for increasing students' motivation to read independently, they also were adamant that teachers must read widely from a plethora of different genres and be committed to engaging *with* young adults in authentic ways that support and scaffold the students' independent reading and thinking (White & Kim 2008; Reeves, 2004; Williams, 2003).



Stallworth and middle school students discussing *Ties That Bind*, *Ties That Break*.

While their grades have long been submitted, and thus they had no responsibility for reporting their progress to me, several of them routinely updated me on their reading progress over the past academic year. During these face-to-face or email discussions of their summer reading, we have investigated topics such as ways to integrate specific titles that address state and local curricular standards. Three examples from the preservice teachers in the class who completed their student teaching internships this past academic year illustrate these conversations. In an email with the subject, “Reading widely and deeply,” Jenny shared with me that she taught a graphic novel during her student teaching. She went on to say, “I thought about you when I volunteered to teach it because I would have never taught a graphic novel if it had not been for your YAL class!” Wendy emailed me that she read eight new YA novels this spring semester. Finally, Meghan, who is also a university honors student, was required to complete independent research with a faculty advisor. She invited me to work as her advisor to transform the summer reading “assignment” into a project to fulfill this honors program requirement. By integrating what she learned in the course with her independent research during the summer and our exchanges, Meghan developed an intriguing unit plan that paired Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Stahler’s young adult novel *Doppelganger* to explore themes such as the duality of human existence. These kinds of opportunities allow us as teacher educators to have sustained conversations with preservice teachers, and that dialogue becomes an avenue to support their uses of YAL in authentic and meaningful ways as they prepare to become new classroom teachers.

Summary

Working purposefully and intentionally to integrate young adult literature into the curriculum increases the likelihood that young adults will become confident, mature, and lifelong readers (Stallworth, 2006). That perspective continues to inform my practice and approach to teaching the young adult literature course. Reading deeply and widely with our preservice teachers facilitates a natural process of their understanding, appreciating, and respecting titles that they, for the most part, have not read. Our classroom conversations must include topics like managing censorship, locating

resources, developing critical approaches to reading, and designing standards-based and literacy-rich strategies for teaching these novels. Preservice teachers might enter the YAL course with the notion that such works cannot be “serious literature,” but when teacher educators facilitate such idea exchange and dialogue, those students exit the experience excited about creating opportunities for their future students to enjoy and learn from these books.

I end with my original skeptic Corrine’s statement in her final reflection, which showed a significant change of perspective:

I have to say that the booktalks, author spotlights, discussions, and projects really helped open new genres and potential books to me. The class really opened up new doors of reading to me. I was pleased and surprised that we covered all of the genres that we did; it proved that we are a group of diverse learners with diverse tastes. These books are great!”

I invite readers of this article to experience some of the titles from these preservice teachers’ *Top Ten Reading List*.

B. Joyce Stallworth is professor of English Education and the Senior Associate Dean in the College of Education at The University of Alabama. Her primary research interests are related to teachers’ conceptions of pedagogy with and from multicultural perspectives and the purposeful integration of young adult literature into the middle and high school curriculum.

References

- Bott, C. J. (2008). Hooked on YA lit!: A book group for teachers and librarians. *Voice of Youth Advocates*, 31, 400–403.
- Bushman, J., & Haas, K. (2005). *Using young adult literature in the English classroom* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Hipple, T. (1997). It’s the THAT, teacher. *English Journal*, 86(3), 15–18.
- Gibson, C. (2009). An interview with Markus Zusak. Retrieved March 25, 2009, from <http://abcnews.go.com/Video/playerIndex?id=1737821>.

Reading deeply and widely with our preservice teachers facilitates a natural process of their understanding, appreciating, and respecting titles that they . . . have not read.

- Ivey, G., & Broaddus, K. (2001). Just plain reading: A survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36, 350–377.
- Keane, N. (2009). Booktalks—quick and simple. Retrieved May 26, 2009, from <http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/default.htm>.
- Koss, M., & Teale, W. (2009). What's happening in YA literature? Trends in books for adolescents. *The Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 52, 563–572.
- Nilsen, A., & Donelson, K. (2008). *Literature for today's young adults* (8th ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon.
- Reeves, A. R. (2004). *Adolescents talk about reading: Exploring resistance to and engagement with text*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Stallworth, B. J. (2006). The relevance of young adult literature. *Educational Leadership*, 63(7), 59–63.
- Stallworth, B. J., Gibbons, L., & Fauber, L. (2006). It's not on the list: An exploration of teachers' perspectives on using multicultural literature. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49, 478–489.
- White, T., & Kim, J. (2008). Teacher and parent scaffolding of voluntary summer reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 62, 116–125.
- Williams, L. (2003). Summer belongs in the hands of the students: Celebrating choice in school reading lists. *Voice of Youth Advocates*, 26, 368–371.

Young Adult Literature Books Cited

- Cormier, R. (1974). *The chocolate war*. New York: Knopf Books for Young Readers.
- Flinn, A. (2002). *Breathing underwater*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Gaiman, N. (2003). *Coraline*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Green, J. (2005). *Looking for Alaska*. New York: Dutton Juvenile.
- Johnson, A. (2003). *The first part last*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Korman, G. (2002). *Son of the mob*. New York: Hyperion.
- McCormick, P. (2006). *Sold*. New York: Hyperion.
- Meyer, S. (2006). *Twilight*. New York: Little, Brown Young Readers.
- Moore, A., & Gibbons, D. (2008). *Watchmen*. New York: DC Comics.
- Namioka, L. (1999). *Ties that bind, ties that break*. New York: Random House.
- Peters, A. (2004). *Luna*. New York: Little, Brown Young Readers.
- Sapphire. (1996). *Push*. New York: Knopf.
- Shelley, M. (1984). *Frankenstein*. New York: Bantam Classics.
- Spinelli, J. (2004). *Stargirl*. New York: Random House.
- Stahler, D., Jr. (2008). *Doppelganger*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Wittlinger, E. (2007). *Sandpiper*. New York: Simon Pulse.
- Yang, G. L. (2008). *American born Chinese*. New York: Square Fish.
- Zusak, M. (2006). *The book thief*. New York: Knopf Books for Young Readers.

Appendix A: Explanation for Book Annotations and Booktalks

- We will all read (and/or listen to **unabridged** CD/digital) **eight contemporary** young adult novels from the **reading list below**. You must compose short annotations for each book that would inform other teachers/librarians looking for books to use in their classrooms/libraries. Note additional guidelines for some of the choices on the list.
- Discuss possible classroom uses, list awards the novel has won, censorship issues, brief plot summary, genre, character list, personal reflection, etc. Click Stallworth Annotation (or see Appendix C) to see a sample. Turn in hard copies of your annotations. These annotations should be in the same form as the samples on the Web link above.
- You must choose **one** of the novels to present to the class during scheduled booktalks. Make enough copies of your annotation for the class when you present. Sign up for a booktalk slot on the first night of class.
- Each booktalk must be a **three- to five-minute INTERESTING and CREATIVE presentation** of the novel you present. You should discuss the book's major themes, insights you gained from reading it, feasibility for teaching, your reaction, and other issues you deem important. **DO NOT** give us boring plot summaries. Consult <http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/> and the textbook for guidelines on presenting excellent booktalks.

continued on next page

Reading List

I. Read one title from **ONE** of the following authors:

Gary Paulsen	Mildred Taylor
Robert Cormier	Karen Cushman
Lois Duncan	Avi
Lois Lowry	Chris Crutcher
Walter Dean Myers	M. E. Kerr
Robert Lipsyte	Virginia Hamilton
Cynthia Voigt (other than <i>Homecoming</i> or <i>Dacey's Song</i>)	Caroline B. Cooney

II. Read any **SIX** from the ALA 2009–2010 Top 10 Best Books for Young Adults. The lists can be accessed at <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklistsawards/bestbooksya/bbyahome.cfm>.

III. Choose **ONE** of the following:

- A. Read a contemporary young adult novel that would appeal to the modern male teen. Discuss whether or not you agree with this statement from Robert Lipsyte: "I think boys don't read as much as we'd like them to because (1) current books tend not to deal with the real problems and fears of boys, and (2) there is a tendency to treat boys as a group . . . which is where males are at their absolute worst. . . instead of as individuals who have to be led into reading secretly and one at a time."
- B. Read a contemporary YA novel with a female as a main character. How is the girl portrayed? How will girls ages 12–18 react to it? Why would you teach or *not* teach this book in a whole-class setting?
- C. Listen to an unabridged YA **award-winning** novel on CD/digital. Would students enjoy audible books? Why or why not? What are the benefits and challenges of using audio books with secondary students?
- D. Read a graphic novel. What is the special appeal of this genre to teenagers?
- E. Read a biography or autobiography for young adults. Use the suggestions in our text.
- F. Read a book from either the science fiction or fantasy genre. Use the suggestions in our text. What is the special appeal of this genre to some teenagers?
- G. Read a book by an international author and discuss any differences in setting, diction, tone, plot, etc., as compared with novels by American authors.
- H. Read a book that is part of a several-novel series. Discuss how the novel fits into the series and the number and kinds of books available in the series.

For a total of EIGHT novels

Appendix B: Booktalk Scoring Rubric

Name _____

Book Title _____

Date _____

Criteria	Possible Points	Points Earned
The booktalk was interesting and creative.	5	
The presenter highlighted themes and insights.	5	
The presenter discussed teaching ideas.	5	
The presenter shared his/her reactions.	5	
The booktalk was between 3–5 minutes.	5	
Total:	25	
Grade:		
Comments		

Appendix C: Sample Annotation

Title:	<i>The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things</i>
Author:	Carolyn Mackler
Publisher and Date:	Candlewick Press, 2003
Reading Level:	6.8
Interest Level:	Grades 8 – Up
Genre:	Realistic Fiction
Awards:	Printz Award Honor Book ALA Best Book for Young Adults New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age YALSA Teens' Top Ten Book <i>Publishers Weekly</i> Cuffie Award for Best Book Title
Main Characters:	Virginia, Shannon, the Shreves Family, Mrs. Crowley
Setting:	New York City, Present Day
Censorship Issues:	Teen Body Perceptions; Some Sexuality
Major Themes:	Insecurities, Self-Discovery, Teen Relationships, Renewal

Brief Summary:

Fifteen-year-old Ginny (Virginia Shreves) is not a *model* Brewster High School student (i.e., MBS) and doesn't aspire to be. Yet she desires to be simply noticed as a worthwhile human being at Brewster and in her family. When readers meet Ginny, her best friend has moved thousands of miles away, she is unseen at school, and she believes that she is an outcast among her "beautiful and fit" family of two perfect older siblings and successful parents. Ginny is overweight, has a very poor self-image, and has determined the best way to manage life is to withdraw and become "numb."

When her brother Byron is involved in an "ordeal" at Columbia University, Ginny is emotionally impacted and cannot understand why everything in her family is "brushed under the carpet and [her parents] never deal with what's really going on" (p.158). This way of life is particularly troublesome because Ginny's mother is a therapist specializing in adolescent behavior. The incident at Columbia, while tragic, serves as a catalyst for change in the Shreves's house of denial and simultaneously ushers in a new way of thinking and doing for Ginny as she learns that ". . . outside appearances can be deceiving and sometimes people aren't all they're cracked up to be" (p. 184).

Classroom Uses:

I do not think this book is a whole-class read, although one teacher with whom I work uses it as a whole-class read. If read in class, teachers and librarians can find many ways to use this novel, from analyzing the title of the book to creating occasions for teens to discuss social issues and health issues. Teachers can also incorporate music and current events. Further, teachers can find many opportunities to teach literary elements, especially plot and characterization.

Personal Reflection:

I enjoyed this book, and I believe it is an accurate characterization of the lives of teenagers today. I would recommend *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things* to teachers, counselors, librarians, parents, and teenagers.

Reviewed By: B. Joyce Stallworth

For more information on *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things*, go to:

<http://www.carolynmackler.com/The-Earth-My-Butt-and-Other-Big-Round-Things-by-Carolyn-Mackler.asp>

http://aol.teenreads.com/guides/earth_my_butt1.asp

Not So Innocent: Book Trailers as Promotional Text and Anticipatory Stories

I have a challenge for you before you begin this article. Examine the columns shown below and consider the relationship between the two wordlists.

Olympic Dreams	Confused
Happy	Denial
Hopeful	Detention Center
Devon	Baby
Soccer Player	Hopeless
Normal	Desperation
Mature	Pregnancy
Conscience	Attempted Murder
Straight-A Student	Punishment

Penguin Young Readers Group uses these two sets of words in a 30-second YouTube book video trailer to promote the 2009 young adult novel *After* by Amy Efav (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUCOBQf2GpQ>). As the trailer opens, each word in the first column moves into the white space of a static video frame to systematically form a uniform block arrangement that mimics a wordle. The block momentarily freezes while the frame expands to incorporate the still image of a slender young woman leaning against a wall. Then one by one, each of the original words disappears and is replaced by a new word from the second column. The new words appear at angles and cut across the frame to create a chaotic, non-rectangular arrangement of the words.

Meanwhile, the image of the young woman transforms to reveal that she is pregnant. When the chaos stops, the words sweep off the screen. The empty

frame horizontally divides in half, white on top and black on the bottom. Now, the video tells viewers: “You’ve done the unthinkable.” The word *unthinkable* appears on the bottom half of the screen. The next frame asks: “What happens . . . *after*?” With dramatic pause, the word *after* is highlighted against the black background. The trailer concludes with a still image of the book cover, which incorporates the book title, author, the Penguin logo, and the book website: <http://www.after-book.com>. Finally, in the YouTube video description box, Penguin’s July 24, 2009, message states: “On sale August 11, 2009,” letting consumers know when the new book will be released.

Just as movie producers commission trailers to advertise their new films, some book publishers and authors now commission online video trailers to promote young adult novels. According to Jerome Kramer, acting publisher at *Kirkus Media* (as cited by Maul, 2006a), book trailers offer “a promotional campaign for books like nothing that’s ever been done” (p. 1). Unlike student-made book videos, which are examined in the context of digital booktalks (Gunter & Kenny, 2008) and school literature response activities (Kajder, 2008), studies of the promotional video campaigns for books appear rarely in the educational research literature. In this article, I investigate the impact of publishers’ promotional video trailers on prospective readers’ expectations for new young adult books. Further, I argue that book trailers are unique texts that include anything that is constructed through language, including silence (Jones, 2008), and can be in any form—“written, oral, signed, electronic, pictorial, etc.” (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993, p. 311).

Table 1. Books titles and URLs for video trailers of current young adult novels

Book Title	URL
<i>After</i> by Amy Efav	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUCOBQf2GpQ
<i>How I Live Now</i> by Meg Rosoff	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qt_aDmkEPTQ
<i>The Adoration of Jenna Fox</i> by Mary Pearson	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnk1zPw_PHC
<i>The Hunger Games</i> by Suzanne Collins	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TnxXoMpF3c
<i>The Maze Runner</i> by James Dashner	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2-zYcD-dDs
<i>Very LeFreak</i> by Rachel Cohn	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-OxDa1fl2t0

Video trailers for the books listed in Table 1 will serve as the basis for this article in which I will first discuss the relevance of book trailers for today's digitally enabled youth. Then, I will describe the major attributes of book trailers, proposing that they be viewed both as texts and cultural artifacts. Next, I connect the videos to Wolfgang Iser's (1978) concept that readers develop *horizons of expectation* in response to text. Finally, I present the findings of three studies in which undergraduate college students respond to the promotional book trailers mentioned in Table 1.

Relevance

Digitally Enabled Youth

Today's book trailer trend comes at a time when viewing online videos is a common practice among digitally enabled youth. YouTube (2010) reports that people view 2 billion online videos on YouTube per day, worldwide. Correspondingly, the Kaiser Foundation's Generation M² report (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010) shows that 70% of young people between the ages of 8 and 18 use the Internet on a typical day (p. 20). While online, these young people most frequently watch online videos, engage in social networking, and play computer games (p. 21).

Youth who view online videos likely share a cultural cognizance with them. Smagorinsky (2001) argues: "[T]exts are composed of signs that themselves are inscribed and codified as *cultural artifacts* and are read by people whose ways of encoding are conditioned by participation in cultural practice. . . . [R]eaders and texts share a cultural cognizance" (p. 146). As a result, promotional book video trailers are cultural artifacts within this global cultural practice of viewing online videos.

When social-networking Internet users enjoy online videos, they may post them to their MySpace, Facebook, or Twitter pages. Facebook alone has a growing audience of more than 400 million active users (Facebook, 2010), which demonstrates that social networking is a global cultural practice, too. Given these statistics, friend-to-friend video sharing of online book trailers could ignite interest in books, since people are most frequently motivated to read and/or buy books based on a friend's recommendation (Publisher's Weekly, 2007).

Familiarity & Novelty

In addition to valuing books recommended by friends, Mackey (1996) argues that young people may also value texts that appear in different formats because they seem more important and "the most worth attending to" (p. 20). This suggests that young consumers may think that a book they have seen in an online video trailer will provide a worthwhile reading experience because it is represented in both textual and digital media.

Consumers may also gravitate toward books that are promoted in a recognizable context. Video book trailers employ the familiar film trailer model to advertise new releases to prospective readers. Kernan (2004), a film trailer scholar, observes that trailers offer "more of what you know and love" and affirm both the familiar and the novel (p. 43). Hale (2002) sees that chain bookstores take up this same ideology in creating displays that highlight familiar and desirable titles, thereby assuring customers that they will not be disappointed with their new book purchase.

Related to this merging of familiarity with novelty, *Kirkus Reviews* inaugurated the Teen Book Video Awards in 2006. Similar to the Academy Awards,

the Teen Book Video Awards help to “promote great books where teens live online,” says Jerome Kramer of *Kirkus Media* (Maul, 2006c, p. 1). For the 2009

Could online video trailers spark an interest in books in the same way that film adaptations do?

contest, Random House challenged student filmmakers to produce motion picture book trailers for the following novels: *Very LeFreak* by Rachel Cohn (released January 12, 2010); *Fallen* by Lauren Kate (released December 8, 2009); and *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner (released October 6, 2009). The contest mimicked popular television contests such as *American Idol* and *So You Think You Can Dance* with a familiar online voting process. During the month of October 2009, Internet users viewed the three book trailer finalists and voted for the winner at the following website: http://www.kirkusreviews.com/kirkusreviews/book_video/index.jsp.

The video book trailer for *Fallen*, created by filmmaker Benjamin Bliss, won the contest. On December 1, a week before *Fallen* was released, the novel was already #72 on Amazon.com’s best-selling teen book list, which included several books from the *Twilight* series. In addition, *The Maze Runner* was on Amazon.com’s top 100 teen booklist. While it is unclear whether the Teen Book Video Awards influenced buyers, the coincidence is suggestive.

Could online video trailers spark an interest in books in the same way that film adaptations do? A host of books have been adapted for movies over the last several years; among them are *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, *Curious George*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the Harry Potter series, *The Polar Express*, *Tuck Everlasting*, *Babe*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. In looking at recent book sales after the movie releases, the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) Research and Development Committee (2006) notes: “If one judges by sales alone, it appears that movies can generate interest in books and vice versa” (p. 46). Ferguson (1998) observed that more than half of the youth in her survey of book buyers were inclined to purchase a book that corresponded with a movie they had recently seen. At the library, Sturm (2003) also saw a connection between movie releases and chil-

dren’s library book selections. Given these findings, there is potential for video book trailers to influence reader preferences.

Trailer Attributes

Kernan (2004) observes that most film trailers share common attributes, which provide a familiar framework for viewers. These attributes include: a) an opening or closing address to the audience about the source text (e.g., young adult novel); b) an introduction of the main characters; and c) a selection of scenes from the source text or montages of “quick-cut” action scenes (p. 9). The two types of book trailers examined in this article do, indeed, reflect these attributes. The first employs still and/or animated images, and usually includes text and a sound track. Actors and dialogue are usually absent, as in the trailers for *After* and *Hunger Games*. The second type most resembles movie trailers. Like the promotional videos for *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*, *How I Live Now*, and *Very LeFreak*, these book trailers include actors, live action scenes, and narration and/or dialogue.

Both types of book trailers in this article provide basic information about the novels. The trailers for Scholastic’s *Hunger Games*, Penguin’s *After*, Henry Holt’s *Adoration of Jenna Fox*, and Random House’s *How I Live Now* and *Very LeFreak* give closing addresses. Each shows the title, author, and book cover in the final frames of the trailer. A message about the release date and/or where the book can be purchased is also provided. Random House tells viewers *Very LeFreak* will be: “Available Everywhere Books Are Sold [in] January 2010.” Penguin, on the other hand, uses the YouTube video description box to inform viewers that *After* will be: “On Sale August 11, 2009.”

All but one of the five trailers, *Hunger Games*, introduces the main characters either in name or by sight. (The trailer for *Hunger Games* mentions “two teenage heroes.” The main character, Katniss, is identified in the YouTube description box for the video.) Penguin includes the main character’s name, Devon, in a large bold font as part of the first video wordlist. In the live action trailer for *Very LeFreak*, the main character is introduced in the opening scene by her laptop, which chimes “Good morning, Very. It’s time to get up. You’re looking hot today.” Very groans and tumbles out of bed to click the computer on her bed

table. In the trailers for *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* and *How I Live Now*, the main character narrates the video as she appears in the scenes.

Both types of book trailers offer either a montage of quick-cut images or a selection of action scenes from the novel to pique audience interest. For example, in the trailer for *The Hunger Games*, the flickering image of a television screen with static reception is the background to the following text: *Each year in the ruins of North America . . . 24 teenagers are forced to enter the Hunger Games. Only the winner survives. Every moment is televised.* This merging of image and text foreshadows scenes from the novel and creates space for viewer interpretation.

In contrast, the book trailers for *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*, *How I Live Now*, *Maze Runner*, and *Very LeFreak* resemble blockbuster movie trailers presenting a montage of scenes from the source text. For example, the trailer for *Maze Runner* is like a movie trailer for a horror film. It features a strange, unforgiving setting called the Glade. Underscored with suspenseful music and eerie sounds, the trailer opens with the main character, Thomas, enclosed in what appears to be a concrete shaft in the ground. All Thomas knows is his name. In the next scene, Thomas meets other young men who are also trapped in the Glade. One of these men reports that the group has been waiting for Thomas to help them find an exit through the maze. In the final scene, Thomas says that he wants to be a “maze runner.” Then the camera turns to a bruised and bloodied young man chained to a table. The boy screams and bucks his body.

On the lighter side, the trailer for *Very LeFreak* presents like a movie trailer for a dramatic comedy. Very wakes to a computer greeting and moves through a series of daily events, each affected by her unabated use of technology. Her school administrator gives an ultimatum and, in the next scene, Very enters an electronic addicts’ rehabilitation center. Here, the electrical outlets are covered with wire cages, and group activities include chanting: *“Faces are better than Facebook. Why Twitter when you can talk?”* For today’s digitally connected teen, such a place could be awful. Very must persevere for 28 days without any of the things that, presumably, help her feel connected to other people. The viewer is left wondering if Very will last in the electronic detox program.

While the latter book videos resemble blockbuster film trailers, there is an important difference. Movie trailers commonly feature actual excerpts from the full-length films, which are the source texts. In contrast, book trailers “give filmmakers an opportunity to share their interpretations of unique stories,” says Susan Muirhead, the filmmaker of the book trailer for *How I Live Now* by Meg Rosoff (cited from Maul, 2006b). In book trailers, viewers see the filmmakers’ translation of young adult novels. Butler (1995), in his discussion of film adaptations of books submits, says, “As with any conversion from one language to another, the most successful translation [of book to film] is never a strictly literal one” (p. 310). Similarly, the most successful translation of story elements into a promotional book trailer may not be literal. Panaou & Tsilimen (2010) argue that realistically speaking, it is not possible to maintain the very same subject and style of a source text in a translation. Rather, it becomes an interpretive re-contextualization of the source text (Mackey, 2010). Consequently, book trailer viewers actually see a filmmaker’s personal response to a young adult novel, which is inevitably affected by the filmmaker’s past experiences and current interests (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994).

Book trailer viewers actually see a filmmaker’s personal response to a young adult novel, which is inevitably affected by the filmmaker’s past experiences and current interests.

Book Trailers as Anticipatory Stories

Soter (1999) suggests that in examining a text relative to its author (or a trailer relative to its filmmaker), the text is not so innocent. From this perspective, the rhetorical strategies an author/filmmaker uses to persuade readers are more transparent. According to Kernan (2004), the film trailer is strategically designed to achieve the effects of “a unique form of narrative film exhibition, wherein promotional discourse and narrative pleasure are conjoined” (p. 1). This promotion–pleasure union also exists in book trailers, regardless of whether the video is live action, animation, still images, or a combination thereof.

Moreover, as a form of advertising, trailers are themselves *little story* adaptations of a bigger source text (Kernan, 2004). These *little stories* are expected to foster anticipation and intrigue among viewers. Will Very survive the detox program in *Very LeFreak*? Will Thomas solve the maze in *Maze Runner*? What happens after Devon does the unthinkable in *After*? Who is Jenna Fox, anyway? What are the *Hunger Games* and why does only one survive? As little stories, promotional trailers are infused with “a kind of pregnancy,” which prompts

Instead of the actual source text, we really want to read the idealized films or novels we envisioned in response to the trailer.

viewers to envision “imaginary (as-yet-unseen) film[s]” to satiate their curiosities (Kernan, 2004, p. 13). Instead of the actual source text, we really want to read the idealized films or novels we envisioned in response to the trailer.

Kernan’s (2004) observation that trailers prompt audiences to envision stories before their public release dates correlates with Wolfgang Iser’s (1978) reader response theory. According to Iser (1978), gaps in a text create “blanks which the reader is to fill in” (p. 169). Bressler (2007) explains that when the text does not provide readers enough information about a character, the setting, an event or relationship, or other story elements, readers must fill in these “gaps” using their own knowledge base. As a result, readers create what Iser calls *horizons of expectations* (cited from Bressler, 2007, p. 85). Readers’ *horizons of expectations* for a source text expand and contract according to the depth of the gaps of the film or book trailers. When readers begin to fill in the gaps with an idealized storyline, the promotional value of the trailer rises because readers will likely see the film or read the book to confirm their expectations surrounding the source text. Once they engage with the source text, readers will frequently modify their *horizons of expectations* to accommodate the conflict, shifts, and changes that occur in the story (Bressler, 2007).

The Studies

The following set of studies examines college students’ *horizons of expectations* in response to the publisher’s

promotional video trailers for the young adult novels *After* by Amy Efav, *How I Live Now* by Meg Rosoff, *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* by Mary Pearson, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, *The Maze Runner* by James Dasner, and *Very LeFreak* by Rachel Cohn. The first study considers *After* and *Very LeFreak*. The second study focuses on the four other novels. Three groups of students who were enrolled in my undergraduate classes in adolescent and young adult literature at a large Midwest university participated in the studies as part of the course curriculum.

Methodology

Group A consisted of 4 men and 12 women who consented to participate in the first study during winter term 2010. With the exception of two women, who were older than 30, the students in Group A were in their early twenties and of European American descent. Two groups participated in the second study. Group B included the Group A students along with 8 additional women and 2 additional men, for a total of 26 participants. One woman in Group B was of African American descent, while the other participants were of European American descent. Group C consisted of 15 women and 8 men who participated during spring term 2010. In Group C, 2 of the men and 2 of the women were older than 30. The other students were in their early twenties. Two women were of African American descent while the other participants were of European American descent.

As a class activity, I required that students in my adolescent literature courses view the publishers’ book trailers on YouTube at least twice and write a response to each of the trailers. In the first study, I simply asked Group A students: What do you think the book is going to be about? In the second study, I asked Group B and C students to address the following set of questions in their responses: What do you think the book is going to be about? Would you be interested in reading the book? What do you think are the most significant aspects of the promotional video trailer? The data I present in this article reflects only the responses of participants who had not read the selected book.

Data Analysis

I coded the participants’ responses to the book trailers and categorized them in terms of comments regarding characters, setting, plot overview, significant events,

genre/story descriptors, connections to other texts, anticipated future reading experiences, and aesthetic qualities of the online video. Table 2 shows the results of the first study. Table 3 shows the results of the coding for participants' responses to the book trailers in the second study.

Results: Study I

After. As Table 2 demonstrates, the horizon of expectations of the 30-second text-based trailer for *After* varies among the participants. Thirteen participants think the main character is a girl who became pregnant, while 2 think the protagonist is a boy who gets his girlfriend pregnant. Half of the participants comment that the lead character is a good student. Three expect different murder scenarios, and 4 anticipate that the story will, in part, occur at a jail or a detention center. Other participants foresee that themes related to emotional struggle are part of the book.

Very LeFreak. In contrast to the result for *After*, the horizon of expectations for the 1-minute/53-second live action trailer for *Very LeFreak* are more uniform. For example, all of the participants agree that the story is about Very. Eleven participants (68%) anticipate that technology will be a major theme in the story. Half expect that Very's addiction to electronics will cause her to go to a rehabilitation/camp program. None of the participants in this first study, however, indicate a preference for either reading or avoiding *After* and *Very LeFreak*, based on the promotional book trailers.

Results: Study 2

The Hunger Games. Based on the trailer, approximately two-thirds of the participants expect that *The Hunger Games* is about a deadly contest in which the last survivor wins. While this 1-minute/11-second trailer is entirely text-based with an underlying soundtrack, the participants anticipate that the book will share similarities with a range of survival-based reality television series, select films, and historical gladiator games. Moreover, based on the trailer, 95% of the students in Group C want to read the book.

Table 2. In Study 1, 16 participants responded to 2 book trailers. Their comments were coded and grouped by category, listed by row. The "Comments" column shows the number of participants who share common expectations. For example, 2 participants expect that the lead character in *After* is male and gets his girlfriend pregnant. In contrast, all 16 participants expect that Very is the lead in *Very LeFreak*.

AFTER		VERY LEFREAK	
Total Group A Participants: 16		Total Group A Participants: 16	
Category	Comments	Category	Comments
CHARACTER(S)		CHARACTER(S)	
Female lead character	13	Very is the lead character	16
Male lead character	02	<i>An electronic-aholic</i>	08
<i>He gets his girlfriend pregnant</i>	02	SETTING	
Descriptors of lead character		Rehab / program / camp	08
<i>Good student</i>	08	PLOT OVERVIEW	
<i>Athlete</i>	06	Addiction leads to rehab	08
<i>Perfect/Organized life</i>	04	SIGNIFICANT EVENT(S)	
SETTING		Entering rehab	08
Jail / Detention Center	04	THEMES	
PLOT OVERVIEW		Technology / electronics	11
Girl becomes pregnant	15	Life change	03
Boy murders girlfriend	01	Relationships	01
Lead character murders baby	01	Social skills	01
Other character murdered	01	Irony	01
Bad decision including crime	02		
SIGNIFICANT EVENT(S)			
Pregnancy	15		
THEMES			
Ruined dreams / life	07		
Confusion, denial, fear	02		
Dual lives	01		
Family issues	01		
Guilt	01		
Loneliness	01		
Putting life back together	01		

None of the participants require more information to make their decision about the book. This is not the case with any other trailer.

The Adoration of Jenna Fox. As a result of this 2-minute/3-second trailer, most of the participants (78%) comment that a character suffers a coma in the story. More than half mention an accident as well as memory loss. However, not everybody thinks that Jenna Fox is the lead character. At least 7 participants expect that the protagonist does not know Jenna at all. Approximately 50% of the participants are interested in reading the book. Two participants made connections to other texts.

Table 3. In Study 2, at least 41 participants responded to promotional book trailers for: *The Adoration of Jenna Fox*, *How I Live Now*, *The Hunger Games*, and *The Maze Runner*. Their comments were coded and grouped into common categories, listed by row. The “Comments” columns show the number of participants who share common expectations for each book. For example, 28 participants expect that Thomas is the lead character in *The Maze Runner*, and 17 expect that he lost his memory. Among the 23 Group C respondents to *The Hunger Games*, 22 want to read the book as a result of the trailer. In contrast, 24 participants do not want to read *How I Live Now* after viewing the trailer.

THE ADORATION OF JENNA FOX Total Participants: 41 Group B: 18; Group C: 23		HOW I LIVE NOW Total Participants: 49 Group B: 26; Group C: 23		THE HUNGER GAMES Total Participants: 43 Group B: 20; Group C: 23		THE MAZE RUNNER Total Participants: 43 Group B: 20; Group C: 23	
Category	Comments	Category	Comments	Category	Comments	Category	Comments
CHARACTER(S)		CHARACTER(S)		CHARACTER(S)		CHARACTER(S)	
Jenna Fox	12	Girl	12	Two lead heroes	04	Thomas / male lead	28
Girl (general)	11	Girl & her younger sister	2	Teen/Child players	20	<i>Recently abducted</i>	05
Girl: <i>not Jenna Fox</i>	07	Teens (general)	05	<i>Forced to compete</i>	10	<i>Has memory loss</i>	17
Alien	01	SETTING		Viewers of the H. Games	02	<i>Wants be a “runner”</i>	09
Jenna’s father	04	War zone	40	H Game Sponsors	03	Boys / teens	22
SETTING		Wilderness	08	SETTING		<i>Different jobs /roles</i>	03
In the future	14	PLOT OVERVIEW		North America	15	<i>Outcasts from society</i>	02
PLOT OVERVIEW		War occurs	40	Post-war/Apocalyptic	19	<i>Some nearly crazed</i>	01
Character in accident	23	Loss of family and friends	32	Famine/ scarcity	07	Unknown authority group	13
She wakes from a coma	32	Characters try to survive	20	Island location	01	<i>Tests the boys</i>	07
Recovery of memory	22	Characters hide from others	07	PLOT OVERVIEW		Dangerous creatures	04
She relearns and adjusts	14	SIGNIFICANT EVENT(S)		Fight to death: 1 survivor	28	<i>Hunt humans</i>	02
Something mysterious	14	War	40	Hungry people compete	04	<i>Minotaur</i>	01
<i>No control of own body</i>	03	Finding dead soldier	08	Games: world televised	17	SETTING	
SIGNIFICANT EVENT(S)		THEMES		Games: gov’t controlled	02	The Glade	09
Waking from coma	32	Loss	32	SIGNIFICANT EVENT(S)		In the future	03
THEMES		Survival	20	H. Games: Annual event	25	Alternate universe	01
Confusion	06	Death	09	THEMES		Prison	01
Identity & self-discovery	05	Family	07	Survival	28	PLOT OVERVIEW	
STORY DESCRIPTORS		War versus peace	04	Violence / Death	07	Solve the maze	25
Mystery	05	STORY DESCRIPTORS		Competition	04	Escape to survive	19
Suspense/ Thriller	04	Mystery	05	Hunger	04	Fight for survival	06
TEXT CONNECTIONS		Suspense/ Thriller	04	Social commentary	03	Spread of virus	02
<i>Flight of the Navigator</i>	01	TEXT CONNECTIONS		Collaboration/solidarity	02	SIGNIFICANT EVENT(S)	
R.L. Stein scary stories	01	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	01	Exploitation of people	02	Boy is chained to table	09
READING INTEREST		Cormac McCarthy novels	01	STORY DESCRIPTORS		THEMES	
Want to read book	21	Gary Paulsen novels	01	Suspenseful / thriller	09	Survival	25
Will not read book	12	<i>Terminator</i> (film)	01	Futuristic dystopia / Sci-fi	06	Teamwork	10
Need more information	02	Current war in Iraq	01	Scary	01	Power struggle	08
TRAILER AESTHETICS		READING INTEREST		TEXT CONNECTIONS		Conspiracy	06
Good narrator’s voice	05	Want to read book	19	Reality Television	13	Desire to go home	03
Mystery: mirror reflection	04	Will not read book	24	Gladiator era games	03	Search for Identity	01
Music supports story	03	Need more information	04	<i>Survivor</i> (TV series)	03	STORY DESCRIPTORS	
No action: boring trailer	03	TRAILER AESTHETICS		<i>Gladiator</i> (TV contest)	01	Scary / creepy	16
		Not enough information to capture attention	13	<i>Lost</i> (TV series)	01	Suspenseful / thriller	11
		No context for war	04	<i>Mad Max/Thunderdome</i>	01	Graphic / horror	04
		Depressing and dull	02	<i>Saw</i> (film)	01	Sci-fi	04
		Slow video: slow book	02	<i>The Running Man</i> (film)	01	TEXT CONNECTIONS	
				Sci-fi books (1984; <i>Fahrenheit</i>)	01	<i>Saw</i> (film)	05
				Horror films (general)	01	Horror films (in general)	04
				READING INTEREST		<i>Survivor</i> (TV series)	02
				Want to read book (Group C only)	22	<i>Holes</i> (book / film)	02
				Will not read book (Group C only)	01	<i>Bourne Identity</i> (film)	01
				TRAILER AESTHETICS		<i>Cube</i> (film)	01
				Less information: More appeal	10	Harry Potter (series)	01
				TV static and image are intriguing	10	<i>Hunger Games</i> (book)	01
				Captivating sound track	10	<i>Lost</i> (TV series)	01
				Compelling book reviews at end of video	13	Mythology: Theseus	01
						READING INTEREST	
						Want to read book	26
						<i>Book: “page turner”</i>	03
						Will not read book	11
						Need more information	6
						TRAILER AESTHETICS	
						Good: actors & dialogue	09
						Good: lighting & film craft	06
						Good: sound effects	05
						<i>“Just like a film trailer”</i>	05

The Maze Runner. Based on the 1-minute/40-second video trailer, over 60% of the participants want to read *The Maze Runner*. More than half of the participants noted that the characters' survival in the novel is associated with solving a maze. The textual connections that students made to this book trailer included mythology, film, and another book, which has also been adapted to film.

How I Live Now. Even though the largest pool of participants (49 students) responded to this 2006 Teen Book Video Awards finalist, the results are the most uniform. For example, 81% expect that based on the 1-minute/22-second trailer, *How I Live Now* is about life in wartime. Over 65% expect the loss of friends and family, and over 40% commented on the theme of survival. What's more, 52% of the participants do not want to read the book. The majority of the comments about the aesthetic qualities of the trailer were negative, with 24% of the participants not having enough information to capture their interest. In addition to referencing the war in Iraq, participants connected this trailer to more books than television and film titles.

Discussion

Given that the two studies are limited to students who were enrolled in my adolescent literature course, generalizations of the results are not widely applicable. These studies suggest, however, that promotional book trailers can both positively and negatively influence prospective readers' *horizons of expectations* for young adult books. For instance, 95% of Group C wants to read *Hunger Games*, while only 30% of this same group is interested in the 2005 Printz Award winner, *How I Live Now*.

Results from the first study show that the participants' *horizons of expectations* regarding the characters, plot, and themes of the novel *After* were more varied than their expectations for *Very LeFreak*. One possible explanation for this difference is that the director of the *Very LeFreak* video, Rosie Lambert, emphasized a single character and plotline in the persuasive *little story* she developed for the 1-minute/53-second live-action book trailer. Such emphasis is not as apparent in the 30-second text-based trailer for *After*, even though the trailer highlights pregnancy. In this instance, readers infer meaning from a combination of

textual clues that support multiple interpretations and could broaden readers' *horizons of expectations*.

Through the literary lens of Cultural Poetics, by which text is a "social production" (Bressler, 2007, p. 224) that reflects the cultural discourses in which it is situated, the second study shows that book trailers are both social productions and cultural artifacts. As products of today's digital Internet culture, online video trailers incorporate visual, audio, and textual modes into a digital storytelling framework. They also promote storytelling and reading in different formats. For instance, book trailer content is based on creating a little story narrative that highlights a bigger story narrative, which is primarily available in traditional book formats. Successful trailers influence viewers to deviate from digital video media in order to engage with the bigger source text in another mode.

As artifacts of popular cultural practice, compelling book trailers also prompt readers to make connections to other stories and media. *The Hunger Games* trailer provides a fine example. Over 46% of the participants read the trailer in the context of popular culture and made connections to reality television; mentioned were current shows such as *Survivor*, *Lost*, and *American Gladiators*; films such as *Saw*; as well as popular science fiction books. Similarly, at least 30% of the viewers of *The Maze Runner* trailer identified commonalities with television and film text, particularly the horror movie *Saw*. These connections stem from the cultural practice of reading and referencing popular media text as part of contemporary discourse.

These connections also reinforce the theory that readers recognize and relate to stories through multiple formats that extend beyond books (Mackey, 1996; Rosenblatt, 1978/1994). For instance, 11% of the viewers of *The Maze Runner* trailer volunteered that they liked the trailer as an independent story. One viewer comments: "[B]ecause the trailer consisted of all live actors and was shot like a very well-done horror film, I almost just want to watch the movie of this

As artifacts of popular cultural practice, compelling book trailers also prompt readers to make connections to other stories and media.

book.” In this instance, the reader resonated with the film format of the story. Hence, the narrative world is not restricted by format. Only readers are limited by modality.

The studies also demonstrate how video trailers can positively and negatively influence readers. Participants’ responses to the trailer for *How I Live Now* offer insight. Nearly half of all of the participants reported they had no desire to read the book after viewing the trailer. Thirteen viewers specifically commented that the book trailer does not provide enough

information about *How I Live Now* to convince readers to engage with the source text. One student writes, “I don’t think I would be interested in reading this book based solely on the trailer. It doesn’t seem to give much information about what direction the book would be going, or really who the characters are and why

they are running through the woods with a compass. Nothing about it really grabbed my attention, so I can’t say I would go out and read the book.”

In addition to not having enough information, at least two participants saw a parallel between the aesthetic qualities of the video trailer and the aesthetic quality of the book. One student observes, “It took 30 seconds for the film trailer to get to the point, which makes me think that the book would lag.” This comment reveals how potential readers may link the filmmaker’s pacing of the trailer with their own *horizon of expectations* for the pacing of the novel. In this scenario, the filmmaker’s translation of *How I Live Now* as a persuasive little story does not foster broad audience appeal among prospective readers.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, at least three participants commented that based on the trailer, they think *The Maze Runner* will be a page-turner. One student writes, “Yes [I’d read the book], the trailer makes it seem really suspenseful. I like page-turners.” Another student comments, “The trailer was very fast-paced, which made me think that the book will be fast as well, and I love action-packed books.”

Unlike the respondents who saw a negative connection between the aesthetic quality of the trailer and *How I Live Now*, these students equate the suspense the filmmaker Brighton Linge created in the video trailer for *The Maze Runner* as a marker for the quality of the book. In this situation, Linge’s little trailer story influences the viewers’ *horizons of expectations* for *The Maze Runner*, and they anticipate a page-turner.

Finally, in response to the trailer for *The Hunger Games*, a viewer writes, “I don’t know what the book is about, and I don’t care. The video served its purpose—I am very interested in finding out more about the book” Given that the *Hunger Games* trailer does not feature actors and dialogue like the trailers for *How I Live Now* and *The Maze Runner*, this viewer’s response suggests there is no apparent rule that live-action trailers garner more interest among viewers of online videos than other trailer formats.

The filmmakers’ ideal audience, however, is apparent in book trailers. Iser (1978) calls this ideal audience the *implied reader*. So, this implied reader may be someone who is very familiar with online videos and takes interest in the specific text, images, sounds, and film craft that movie/book trailers present. Likewise, the implied reader for *The Hunger Games* may be a person who has cultural knowledge of survival contests and the relatively recent phenomenon of reality television. This reader also recognizes the white noise of scrambled audio frequencies, the appearance of static television reception, and the view through the lens of a video recorder. In other words, the ideal reader is steeped in popular culture and able to connect with text on multiple levels and modes.

Implications

The results of the studies imply that as digital, multimodal texts, promotional online video trailers can strongly influence viewers’ expectations of books and affect readers’ decisions to purchase, borrow, and/or read new book titles. Moreover, the studies suggest that readers’ engagement with online book trailers is shaped by cultural practice and informed by the readers’ knowledge of popular culture.

So, what does this mean for teacher and teacher educators? Statistics such as those at the beginning of this article indicate that online video viewing and sharing is an established cultural practice. (Scholas-

In other words, the ideal reader is steeped in popular culture and able to connect with text on multiple levels and modes.

tic's promotional trailer for *The Hunger Games* that was uploaded prior to the first book release in September 2008 has been viewed approximately 80,800 times on YouTube as of this writing.) This suggests that there is an ongoing paradigm shift. Digitally enabled youth are using multimodal Internet tools to interact with books in ways that did not exist even ten years ago. In addition to viewing promotional trailers, they are engaging in activities such as directing, producing, and sharing their own fan-made book videos; creating soundtracks for books; writing book reviews; communicating with authors via websites and blogs; participating in social network book clubs; and publishing fanfiction that expands their favorite books. As a result, teachers and teacher educators may find themselves at a crossroads. They can follow the business-as-usual route, or they shift directions and begin to incorporate new modalities into their literature and language arts programs.

In shifting pedagogy to integrate multimodal cultural practices into the classroom, it is important for teachers and teacher educators to understand how young adults use Internet tools to support their personal literary objectives. For example, a respondent to the trailer for *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* writes that she tested her hypothesis about the book by viewing a fan-made video, "which confirmed immediately that the book was about perceptions of reality . . ." Another participant decided to visit book review websites because she was not satisfied with the trailer for *How I Live Now*. Other students reported that after seeing the trailers, they conferred with friends and siblings online about the books. A few even shared that once they responded to the promotional trailers for class, they continued watching book videos that were listed on the same YouTube pages. These voluntary activities reflect students' routine engagement with Web-based technologies.

As a first step in a new direction, teachers and teacher educators might start at the YouTube website, where they can view book trailers and fan-made videos, and consider their own curiosities and *horizons of expectations* about the source text. From here, they can determine which Internet resources will further their engagement with the book and investigate the connections they make with the text.

Conclusion

When readers begin to envision an idealized text to fill in the gaps of little trailer narratives, the trailer's promotional value rises and the filmmaker's assumptions about what the implied readers desire are also reinforced (Kernan, 2004). However, once readers engage with the book, they may need to modify their expectations to accommodate the actual story. Consequently, if the book exceeds readers' trailer-driven expectations, the readers might argue that the trailer didn't do the book justice. If the book *doesn't* meet readers' expectations, the readers might declare that the book wasn't as good as the trailer. Either way, promotional book trailers can influence readers' initial interest in a book.

As young people's interaction with technology increases and the spectrum of video sharing and social networking platforms grows, the examination of the interplay between promotional book trailers and young adult literature continues to be relevant. This article suggests that through online book trailers, prospective readers are positioned to conjure *horizons of expectations* that could be satisfied by reading the featured novel. There are no guarantees, however, that the filmmakers' translation of the novel into promotional discourse will actually appeal to readers. In the end, we cannot judge a book by its trailer, and more research is needed to describe adolescents' engagement with promotional book videos in and outside of the school setting.

Denise Davila is a doctoral student in the School of Teaching and Learning at Ohio State University.

References

- ALSC. (2006). See the movie, read the book: Do book-based films increase reading? *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library Service to Children*, 4(1), 45–46.
- Bloome, D., & Egan-Robertson, A. (1993). The social construction of intertextuality in classroom reading and writing. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 28, 305–333.

Through online book trailers, prospective readers are positioned to conjure *horizons of expectations* that could be satisfied by reading the featured novel.

- Bressler, C. E. (2007). *Literary criticism: An introduction to theory and practice* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Butler, T. (1995). Books to films. *Horn Book Magazine*, 71, 305–314.
- Facebook. (2010). *Press room*. Retrieved on June 1, 2010 from <http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>.
- Ferguson, A. (1998, October 12). Reading is cool. *Publisher's Weekly*, 245, 28–31.
- Gunter, G., & Kenny, R. (2008). Digital booktalk: Digital media for reluctant readers. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 8(1), 84–99.
- Hale, D. (2002). Storyselling: Are publishers changing the way children read? *Horn Book Magazine*, 78, 509–517.
- Iser, W. (1978). *The act of reading*. London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jones, S. (2008). *Girls, social class, and literacy: What teachers can do to make a difference*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann
- Kajder, S. (2008). The book trailer: Engaging teens through technologies. *Educational Leadership*, 65(6). Retrieved on December 10, 2009, from: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar08/vol65/num06/The-Book-Trailer@-Engaging-Teens-Through-Technologies.aspx>.
- Kernan, L. (2004). *Coming attractions: Reading American movie trailers*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Mackey, M. (1996). Strip mines in the garden: Old stories, new formats, and the challenge of change. *Children's Literature in Education*, 27, 3–22.
- Mackey, M. (2010). Spinning off: Toys, television, tie-ins, and tinsel town. In S. Wolf, K. Coats, P. Enciso, & C. Jenkins (Eds.), *Handbook of research on children's and young adult literature* (pp. 495–507). New York: Routledge
- Maul, K. (2006a, May 9). Book video awards change the rules for book promotion. *Book Standard*. Retrieved on December 4, 2009, from AllBusiness.com: <http://www.allbusiness.com/retail-trade/miscellaneous-retail-miscellaneous/4404104-1.html>.
- Maul, K. (2006b, November 28). Teen book video awards debut tonight. *Book Standard*. Retrieved on December 4, 2009, from AllBusiness.com: <http://www.allbusiness.com/retail-trade/miscellaneous-retail-miscellaneous/4404668-1.html>.
- Maul, K. (2006c, November 29). Teen book video awards event wrap-up. *Book Standard*. Retrieved on December 4, 2009, from AllBusiness.com: <http://www.allbusiness.com/retail-trade/miscellaneous-retail-miscellaneous/4404671-1.html>.
- Panaou, P., & Tsilimen, T. (2010). The implied reader of the translation: Picture books and their implied readers translated from one language/culture to another. In S. Wolf, K. Coats, P. Enciso, & C. Jenkins (Eds.), *Handbook of research on children's and young adult literature* (pp. 419–426) New York: Routledge.
- Penguin Young Readers. (2009, July 24). *After* by Amy Efav. Retrieved on January 30, 2010, from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUCOBQf2GpQ>.
- Publisher's Weekly*. (2007, February 26). Top eight reasons for buying a book. *Publisher's Weekly*, 254(9), 23.
- Rideout, V. J., Foehr, U. G., & Roberts, D. F. (2010). *GENERATION M2: Media in the lives of 8- to 18-year-olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved 6/1/2010 from <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/mh012010pkg.cfm>.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978/1994). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2001). If meaning is constructed, what is it made from? Toward a cultural theory of reading. *Review of Educational Research*, 71, 133–169.
- Soter, A. (1999). *Young adult literature & the new literary theories: Developing critical readers in middle school*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sturm, B. (2003). *The information and reading preferences of North Carolina children*. Chicago: American Association of School Librarians. Retrieved on December 10, 2009, from <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb/slmrcontents/volume62003/readingpreferences.cfm>.
- YouTube. (2010). *YouTube Fact Sheet*. Retrieved on June 1, 2010, from http://www.youtube.com/t/fact_sheet.

Representations of Digital Communication in Young Adult Literature:

Science Fiction as Social Commentary

In this article, we explore adult authors' representations of how characters in young adult literature (YAL) use digital communication such as text messaging, blogs, instant messaging (IM), social networking websites, and email. We argue that digital communication is a new feature of YAL that has not yet been adequately explored. We examine how the prevalence of digital communication in contemporary society is represented in texts developed for the teen market by describing the who, what, and why of digital communication found in the novels. We also examine meta-themes present in the novels as the characters themselves reflect upon how digital communication impacts their lifeworlds.

Digital Youth

Digital media are everywhere. Young people are "growing up in an era where digital media are part of the taken-for-granted social and cultural fabric of learning, play, and social communication" (Ito, Davidson, Jenkins, Lee, Eisenberg, & Weiss, 2008a, p. vii). Literacy practices of today's adolescents are different from teens of previous generations (Gee, 1987; Alvermann, Hinchman, Moore, & Phelps, 1998). Through new media, today's teens are discovering new ways to communicate and express themselves (Bruce, 2004), and the explosion of teen participation on the Internet and through mobile technologies has affected ways in which they read, write, and socialize (Rheingold, 2002). New types of reading and writing, online and offline, through different digital devices

(IM, email, text messaging) create new literacy practices. Even rules and conventions are changing, such as the increased use of "chatspeak" (e.g., abbreviations, emoticons). Teens use new media as extensions of themselves—embodied tools for telling others who they are in that instant and who they might like to be (Weber & Mitchell, 2008). As a result, they are spending more time presenting and re-presenting themselves to others through digital communication. But what types of identities are they presenting, to whom, and for what purposes?

When adults write about the online habits of youth, they often make them out to be victims of predators (i.e., Dateline NBC's "To Catch a Predator" series, Corvo, 1997), lonely geeks walled up in their rooms playing violent video games, or illiterate socializers destined to forget how to spell, write, and shake hands (Herring, 2008). However, most youth use online digital media as extensions of their offline lives. They talk to the same people online as offline, and they talk about the same topics: friendships, romance, and their daily lives (Ito et al., 2008b). In the case of social networking sites, the difference is that such communication is now perpetually inscribed for the world to see. What had once been private is now public, searchable by an audience invisible to the authors (boyd, 2008). As in their offline worlds, youth take great care in presenting who they are, first figuring out what the rules of engagement in a given group might be, and then experimenting until they find an acceptable online persona. Teens' use of digital media

should be conceptualized as a continuous part of their lives, and their time online as a part of their fluid and dynamic identity development. How then, is this represented in literature about and for young adults?

One aspect of teen's lives—the daily use of digital communication—is appearing in YAL as both part of

the setting and through “faux computer-mediated messages and texts as part of the story” (Gardner, 2005, para. 1). Such texts are situated in a cultural-historical time and place, but a constantly evolving time and place. Ironically, paper-based books are static snapshots of organic and dynamic social practices, not representative of the diverse whole of adolescents' daily lives.

Ironically, paper-based books are static snapshots of organic and dynamic social practices, not representative of the diverse whole of adolescents' daily lives.

For instance, the explosion of Myspace, Facebook, and Youtube-type social networking sites is just beginning to appear in YAL. Perhaps most important, YA texts that portray digital communication tend to represent certain types of adolescents using such digital communication. And these characters are constructions of possibilities for young people.

The Research Study Parameters

Research Questions

The study asks, in YA realistic fiction novels that incorporate digital communication: 1) Who are the main characters and in what settings do they use digital communication? 2) What types of digital communication are being integrated and what writing conventions are being used? 3) What is the content of the digital texts that characters produce? 4) How are characters in such novels positioned as purposeful types of people? 5) What meta-discussions of digital communication practices are present?

Methodology

In order to examine how digital communication is being represented in YAL, we compiled a list of 125 YA contemporary realistic fiction novels published between 2000–2009 that incorporated digital communi-

cation in daily lives of adolescents. Our sources were: a) *The Horn Book Guide*, b) online children's literature databases, c) the authors' personal collections, and d) queries to children's literature focused listservs. We acknowledge that our list is not comprehensive, but we believe it provides a representative sample. Thirty-one titles (25%) of the books were read and coded by the authors to complete the content analysis (see Table 1).

Codes were created to identify which characters were using digital communication, how and why they were using it, and how digital communication was represented overall. Setting and Character categories have long been used in content analyses in children's and YAL (e.g., Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000) to provide an indication of the “content” of books. Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Religion were included because of the significance of diversity in current discussions of literature and literacy education (Temple, Martinez, & Yokota, 2006). The inclusion of Book Category, Text Type, and Writing Conventions stemmed from constant comparative note-taking and category making as a result of the authors' wide reading of YA books (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The authors each read and coded 15% of the texts independently. We achieved approximately 92% agreement. We then discussed and resolved any discrepancies before coding the remainder of the texts.

We examined the representations of digital communication discourse along Halliday's (1978) three meta-functional planes of communication: a) textual-structural forms the discourse takes in terms of writing convention and global organization (e.g., IM, email); b) ideational content discussed by characters; and c) interpersonal-social identities set up for characters as users of digital communication, and how these identities juxtaposed with other characters. Analysis of textual communication included: type of book (e.g., epistolary), type of digital texts used (e.g., email), writing conventions (e.g., emoticons), and change of font, color, or structure. Analysis of ideational communication included: content of communication (i.e., school assignments, social events), as well as name-brand references to popular culture and product placement.

We also coded characters' discussions of their own practices with digital communication, along with the affordances, constraints, and general discourses

Table 1. Young adult literature used in study

Title	Author	Copyright Date
<i>Big Mouth and Ugly Girl</i>	Oates, Joyce Carol	2002
<i>Bloggrls: nugrl90 (Sadie)</i>	Dellasega, Cheryl	2007
<i>A Bottle in the Gaza Sea</i>	Zenatti, Valerie	2008
<i>ChaseR: A Novel in e-mails</i>	Rosen, Michael J.	2002
<i>Click Here (To Find Out How I Survived the Seventh Grade)</i>	Vega, Denise	2005
<i>Code Orange</i>	Cooney, Caroline	2005
<i>Confessions of a Boyfriend Stealer [A Blog]</i>	Clairday, Robynn	2005
<i>Donorboy</i>	Halpin, Brendan	2004
<i>The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things</i>	Mackler, Carolyn	2003
<i>Earthgirl</i>	Cowan, Jennifer	2009
<i>Entr@pment: A High School Comedy in Chat</i>	Spooner, Michael	2009
<i>A Fast and Brutal Wing</i>	Johnson, Kathleen Jeffrie	2004
<i>From E to You</i>	D'Lacey, Chris, & Newbery, Linda	2000
<i>The Kingdom of Strange</i>	Klinger, Shula	2008
<i>Kiss & Blog</i>	Noël, Alyson	2007
<i>Little Brother</i>	Doctorow, Cory	2008
<i>M or F?</i>	Papademetriou, Lisa, & Tebbetts, Chris	2005
<i>The Market</i>	Steele, J. M.	2008
<i>Miss Misery</i>	Greenwald, Andy	2006
<i>An Order of Amelie, Hold the Fries</i>	Schindler, Nina	2004
<i>Remote Man</i>	Honey, Elizabeth	2000
<i>rob&sara.com</i>	Peterson, P. J., & Ruckman, Ivy	2004
<i>The Secret Blog of Raisin Rodriguez</i>	Goldschmidt, Judy	2005
<i>serafina67 *urgently requires life*</i>	Day, Susie	2008
<i>Snail Mail No More</i>	Danzinger, Paula, & Martin, Ann M.	2000
<i>Something to Blog About</i>	Norris, Shana	2008
<i>Sun Signs</i>	Hrdlitschka, Shelley	2005
<i>tmi</i>	Quigley, Sarah	2009
<i>Top 8</i>	Finn, Katie	2008
<i>ttyl</i>	Myracle, Lauren	2004
<i>The Year of Secret Assignments</i>	Moriarty, Jaclyn	2004

they raised. Analysis of interpersonal communication included categories such as Friend or Student, as well as the purposes of their communication (e.g., romantic interests, identity creation). Finally, we open-coded characters' "meta-statements" about digital communication to develop themes from characters' expressions of beliefs and values around digital tools. Themes from the meta-statements included the use of writing in digital vs. nondigital texts, and the veracity of information, danger, and identities on the Web.

StudyResults

Setting/Character Description

The majority of titles (84%) were set in large cities or suburbs (see Table 2). Furthermore, 93% of the books were set in upper middle class or middle class neighborhoods, with only 7% of the books representing other populations.

Approximately 75% of the books used high-school-aged main characters who were White. Of the books where race was unclear, character descriptions

Table 2. Setting/Character Description

Description	Number (Percentage)			
	Location	Cities 7 (23)	Suburbs 19 (61)	Other 5 (16)
Class	Upper Middle Class 14 (45)	Middle Class 15 (48)	Working Class 2 (7)	
School	High School 23 (74)	Junior High 4 (13)	College 1 (3)	Other 3 (10)
Ethnicity	European American 15 (48)	Unclear 9 (29)	European; White 3 (10)	Multiple Cultures 4 (13)
Gender	Male Only 3 (10)	Female Only 5 (16)	Comb 23 (74)	
Religion	Christian 7 (23)	Jewish 2 (6)	Muslim 1 (3)	Unclear 23 (74)
Sexual Orientation	Straight 30 (97)	Gay 1 (3)	Questioning 2 (6)	

such as “. . . shiny blond hair, big blue eyes, golden tan . . .” (Noël, 2007, p. 2), caused us to infer that the books likely had White characters. It is significant to note that each book that included multiple ethnicities was primarily set in a “White world,” and non-White characters tended to be culturally generic (Sims-Bishop, 1995).

To provide a fuller description, we examined characters’ gender, religion, and sexual orientation. There was a fairly even split in the gender of main characters, and many books had main characters of both genders. In 97% of the books, we coded characters as having either a Christian or unmarked religion. We also noted that 97% of the characters were heterosexual. Only one book portrayed a gay character.

A typical book in our study would most likely take place in a middle class suburban area, with White, straight, Christian main characters. Yet, these characteristics do not adequately represent the diverse nature of the greater American population. It is statistically documentable that use of the Internet or email is widespread throughout multiple demographics. A nationwide Pew Foundation survey (Lenhart, Arafeh, Smith, & Macgill, 2008) of teens between 12 and 17 found that 96% of Whites, 92% of African Americans, and 87% of Latinos said they used the Internet or email. Eighty-six percent of respondents whose families earned \$30,000 or less also affirmed use of Internet or email. As for religion, about 79% of the U.S. population claims some form of Christian denomina-

tion (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008). It seems that current YAL over-/under-represents youth digital communicators, as described above, in ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic categories.

Textual Dimensions of Communication

Book Categories

YA text types that incorporated digital communication were books that: a) consisted solely of digital communication; b) included digital communication within traditional narrative structure; or c) were written as epistolary novels. The characters in these novels rely on digital communication as a part of their daily lifeworlds, much as digital technologies are integrated into adolescents’ lives and identities in real life (Leander & McKim, 2003; Lewis & Fabbos, 2005). (See Table 3.)

Types of Digital Communication Texts

Digital texts in the books consisted of emails, IM conversations, text messages, blog entries, website pages, chat room conversations, and social networking sites (see Table 3). Email and IM conversations were the most prevalent text types, but blog entries and text messaging also appeared regularly. Lenhart, Madden, and Hitlin (2005) found that 89% of Internet users ages 12–17 sent or read email, 75% sent or received instant messages, and 38% sent or received text messages. These numbers have increased, with text messaging fast becoming the preferred method of com-

munication. In another Pew Report (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007), 28% of teens have their own online blog, 27% have their own personal webpage, and 55% have a posted profile on at least one social networking site. Thus, the text types prevalent in YA novels closely parallel teens' real lifeworlds, yet have not caught up with current social networking technologies.

Writing Conventions

Some forms of digital communication have different writing conventions than paper-based texts. A variety of writing conventions common to digital technology were found, including the use of all caps to equate shouting, emoticons, abbreviations, acronyms, and a lack of capitalization and punctuation usage (see Table 3). Authors and publishers made attempts to make the digital texts simulate digital formats as much as possible, with fonts and structures that set the digital text apart from traditional narrative text.

Ideational Dimensions of Communication

Content of Communications

The content of the digital texts tended to relate to school assignments, social events, friendships and arguments, romantic relationships, and chronicles of teen characters' daily lives. The focus on daily, personal lives is commensurate with research into students' online habits. In fact, some characters mentioned that they were not "computer geeks," did not spend all of their time online, and primarily used digital technology for social purposes (e.g., *Top 8*, Finn, 2008; *Something to Blog About*, Norris, 2008). (See Table 4.)

Commercial and Popular Culture

References to popular culture in the books often seemed to be product placements. References to Krispy Kremes and Starbucks in *ttyl* (Myracle, 2004), for instance, both set up the characters' world and acted as *de facto* or deliberate advertisements for these products. Most books used sporadic references to commercial products, as in *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things* (Mackler, 2003), which included mention of products such as Diet Pepsi and Doritos.

Popular culture references also served as configurations of identity signifiers. For instance, in *Donor-*

Table 3. Book Categories, Text Types, and Writing Conventions

Description	Number (Percentage)
Book Category	
All dig com, one type	4 (13)
All dig com, multiple types	4 (13)
Dig com imbedded, one type	3 (10)
Dig com imbedded, multiple types	15 (49)
Epistolary	5 (15)
Text Type	
Email	23 (74)
IM	17 (55)
Text messaging	10 (32)
Blog	10 (32)
Website	8 (26)
Chat	6 (19)
Other	14 (45)
Nondigital	13 (42)
Writing Conventions	
All caps	22 (71)
Emoticons	17 (55)
Abbreviations	20 (65)
Acronyms	17 (55)
Word variations	16 (52)
* * [representing sounds, such as giggles]	7 (23)
Lowercase	18 (58)
Use of phrases	19 (61)
No punctuation	14 (31)
Other	9 (29)

boy (Halpin, 2004), a book in which a girl's lesbian mothers die and she is forced to live with her sperm-donor dad, the mainstream heavy metal interests of the father were juxtaposed with his daughter's more esoteric rock choices. These types of references set up the positionings of the parent and child, at first to indicate their separate worlds, and later to symbolize the relatively new closeness of their relationship. References to the Internet or specific websites, such as Google, were mentioned more frequently in books published after 2006. The majority of popular culture references tended to make connections to television, movies, or fashion.

Table 4. Content of Communications

Content	Number (Percentage)
Discussions of school assignments	19 (61)
Daily life events	28 (90)
Social events—school	21 (68)
Social events—out of school	25 (81)
Friendship	27 (87)
Arguments between friends	18 (58)
Romantic relationships	18 (58)
Relationship issues—boy/girl	12 (39)
Relationship issues—girl/boy	3 (10)
Relationship issues—mixed sex friends	13 (42)
Relationship issues—partners	14 (45)
Sex	8 (26)
Drugs/alcohol/cigarettes	9 (29)
Religion	5 (16)
Historical reference	1 (3)
Current event	5 (16)
Family	22 (71)
Work/job	5 (16)
Other	15 (48)

The “composite” ideational content of digital communication texts in YAL would most likely be the daily lifeworld of the affluent White suburban teen in platonic social interactions with peers. Texts they write include information about relationships, friendships, families, and entertainment. What is less explored is the extent to which youth are being marketed to, both online and off (Herring, 2008). There is little, if any, critique in YAL of the creation, saturation, and exploitation of the youth market by big business.

Interpersonal Dimensions of Communication

Communication always positions those involved in the communicative act, both in terms of who they communicate with and for what reasons. In our analysis, we only included main characters’ use of digital texts and their positionings through their use of such texts.

Characters primarily used digital tools to communicate with friends and significant others or to meet new people online. Only occasionally did teenage characters email, IM, or text-message adults in their lives. Rather, they communicated as students, friends, children, boyfriends or girlfriends, and siblings. In

42% of the books, characters used digital communication to create different identities, depending on who they were talking to or trying to meet and what purposes they had for partaking in the communication.

Research has found that youth actively explore identity online, either to see how others might react, to overcome shyness, or to make friends (Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter, 2005). In *The Kingdom of Strange* (Klinger, 2008), for example, a girl wishes to form a friendship during an online class assignment. She incorrectly assumes her partner, who does nothing to correct this misconception, is a girl, and a growing friendship is shattered and repaired as their genders are revealed. In some digital genres, such as blogs, teens are more truthful about themselves in their online communication than they might be in real life (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005). This was represented in numerous titles, including *serafina67 *urgently requires life** (Day, 2008) and *Something to Blog About* (Norris, 2008), in which main characters revealed intimate details about their personal lives in their online journals.

Meta-Discussions of Digital Communication Technologies

Beyond the digital texts themselves, many titles included commentaries on the use of digital communication, usually in the form of characters’ writings about some aspect of the topic. From these meta-discussions we created a few prominent themes.

Writing

Several novels discussed how digital communications were bringing about the loss of paper-and-pencil writing and the “butchering” of the English language through the use of “chatspeak.” For example, in *The Year of Secret Assignments* (Moriarty, 2004), an English teacher requires his class to write paper-and-pencil letters in a pen pal project. Within the text, he gives a speech to his students lamenting the loss of the formal letter. In *A Fast and Brutal Wing* (Johnson, 2004), teens are aware of different usages and vary their emails based on the recipient. For instance, when Doug writes an email to an adult, he includes a discussion of using proper grammar and sentence formation rather than chatspeak; however, in emails to his friends, he uses chatspeak, including smileys, abbreviations, and lowercase letters. Lenhart and col-

leagues (2008) found that although 85% of all teenagers were engaged in some form of digital communication, 60% of those teens did not think of those digital texts as writing. Fifty percent said they used informal writing styles in school, 38% said they used shortcuts, such as LOL, and 25% said they used emoticons in school writing. A majority said they regularly used chatspeak out of school.

Identity Constructions, Safety, and Privacy

Another theme was the idea of being able to construct or hide one's identity in online communication and the relative perceived safety of online identity practices. *Sun Signs* (Hrdlitschka, 2005) includes a significant focus on online identity construction and how one never can be sure about who is on the other end of an online communication. In one series of emails, the main character learns that three of her online friends have been lying about their identities. She also realizes that she herself was omitting a major aspect of her life and only shared selected parts of herself. In the end, there was discussion of how easy it was to alter one's identity when solely communicating through email. This idea of hiding one's identity or creating an altered online identity was found in a number of the novels, including *From e to You* (D'Lacey & Newbery, 2000), *rob&sara.com* (Peterson & Ruckman, 2004), *The Kingdom of Strange* (Klinger, 2008), and *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea* (Zenatti, 2005).

An additional aspect of identity construction depicted and discussed was how easy it is to misunderstand intentions over cyberspace. This perspective was exemplified by explicit discussion in *The Secret Blog of Raisin Rodriguez* (Goldschmidt, 2005) on how blogging only shows one side of a person, the side the blogger wishes to put forth. Similarly, the creepiness and/or value of being a "lurker" (not identifying oneself or participating) in chat rooms (*M or F?*, Papademetriou & Tebbetts, 2005; *Remote Man*, Honey, 2000) or a commenter on others' blogs (*serafina67 *urgently requires life**, Day, 2008; *Miss Misery*, Greenwald, 2005) were discussed. This secretiveness could lead to harmful events if the characters' personal information (i.e., name, address) were revealed. On the part of the lurker, this could be seen as brilliant and resourceful, but on the part of the participant, it could be perceived as harmful or creepy. Overall, it seemed to be a double standard; it was okay for one

to lurk, but one had to be wary that others could and would be doing the same thing.

Notions of safety and privacy were addressed in relation to conceptualizations of identity, lurking, and lying on the Web. Privacy was examined in terms of characters being warned not to put identifying information into emails or websites, since so much personal information is available on the Internet and individuals' rights to and assumptions of privacy are changing. In *The Kingdom of Strange* (Klinger, 2008), students were required to do an online class pen pal assignment. Instructions warned against posting identifying information, such as last names, phone numbers, or addresses, and prohibited the posting of photos. Students were to either post on the school-created website or via the exchange of emails created specifically for the project.

In *serafina67 *urgently requires life** (Day, 2008), the main character starts a blog and random strangers read it and post comments, leading to a discussion of people not being who they say they are and possible negative consequences. Toward the end of the novel, an entire blog entry was devoted to the dangers of posting personal information on the Web. Sexual predation was also a concern in books such as *Big Mouth and Ugly Girl* (Oates, 2002).

Terrorism

Terrorism was also a theme, either in terms of terrorists gaining information online or teens communicating online in order to subvert acts of terror (*Code Orange*, Cooney, 2005; *Big Mouth and Ugly Girl*, Oates, 2002; *Little Brother*, Doctorow, 2008). In *Code Orange*, terrorists who wish to develop a biological weapon kidnap the protagonist after he posts a message on several websites about possibly finding a smallpox scab. In *Big Mouth and Ugly Girl*, digital communication is used between two characters to develop a friendship. When one character is accused of trying to blow up the school after joking with friends, he compares his own (unfair) predicament to real terrorist actions by referring to the Internet as a place where

Toward the end of the novel, an entire blog entry was devoted to the dangers of posting personal information on the Web.

the 9/11 suspects obtained information and planned the attacks. *Little Brother* focuses on the aftermath of a terrorist attack. W1n5t0n, a teen male expert hacker and technological whiz, is caught near the site of a terrorist attack in San Francisco and is arrested and tortured by the Department of Homeland Security. When he is finally released, w1n5t0n devises plans to subvert the newly imposed big brother surveillance and security measures. He creates an underground teen online network of subversion designed to encourage teens, whom the book purports are more knowledgeable about technology than adults, to use their technological capabilities to communicate and expose government surveillance and oppression. Through these books, the Web was characterized as both a personal tool for social communication and a global tool for social subversion or destruction.

Filling in the Gaps

Characters in the books primarily involve affluent, heterosexual, White Christian suburbanites talking to one another about their daily lives, relationships, and

families. The few discussions of the uses and dangers of the Internet concentrate on geeks, freaks, and terrorists. The Web helps teens communicate, meet new people, and complete school assignments. It also helps strangers find each other when they cannot be seen together in the real world (Oates, 2002; Zenatti, 2005) or when they're in search of new friends (D'Lacey & Newbery, 2000; Hrdlitschka, 2005). The benefits and inherent dan-

gers of online communication are also themes common in current public discourse about uses of digital communication (CTIA, 2008; Herring, 2008).

Many books did capture connections and traversals between offline and online realms as two places in one world. New social spaces such as Myspace, Facebook, and Youtube (Lenhart, et al., 2007; Trier, 2007a, 2007b), and massively multiplayer games (MacArthur,

2007; Steinkuehler, 2006) are just beginning to be represented in current YAL. In *Top 8* (Finn, 2008) and *serafina67 *urgently requires life** (Day, 2008), for example, online social networking sites are considered crucial to a teen's social life, and how often one posts and how one is presented affects the teens both offline and online. Multiplayer online games are also referenced. In *Little Brother* (Doctorow, 2008), it is the playing of an online game that causes the main character to be in the vicinity of the fictional terrorist attack upon which the book is based. *Little Brother* also shows how online games and blogs are means with which teens can communicate and interact with individuals they know in real life or in solely online capacities. These activities are becoming more significant in the lives of today's teens, and it is unlikely that any static novel can capture contemporary teen life as technology and fads keep changing.

Moreover, Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American adolescents are rarely represented in the novels, and in the few instances where they are represented, they are not using digital communication. The working class and poor are also ignored. If literature reflects society, then these novels reflect poorly on how much (or how little) access to digital communication is given to a wide range of children. If literature is supposed to open new worlds, then there is an almost complete absence of alternative models to White privilege and participation in digital technologies.

Implications

Teachers have used blogs (Witte, 2007) and IM (Albright, Purohit, & Walsh, 2002) to engage students in talking about novels that do not involve digital communications. Such learning experiences have allowed students to reflect on their own language practices. Using new technologies to talk about books that foreground digital communications could be an additional way for teachers to engage students in reflecting on language, communication, and identity development. For instance, a unit of study might begin by comparing and contrasting the codes of various textual genres, but would extend to examinations of who uses such texts and for what purposes. But, much of the discourse on youth practices, including this article, is from adult perspectives. Engaging youth in "talking back" to such discourses can empower them to have

As digital communication becomes an increasingly salient practice in the lives of young adolescents, we need to think about how digital practices position them as certain kinds of people.

some influence on how they are being represented.

As digital communication becomes an increasingly salient practice in the lives of young adolescents, we need to think about how digital practices position them as certain kinds of people. Such work must also consider how adolescents position themselves vis-à-vis digital communication. We offer our research as the groundwork for a critical examination of digital communication in YA texts used in and out of classrooms so that teachers and students may become aware of transparent positionings of tools, uses, and users of digital communication. We also hope that publishers, teachers, and students suggest and develop alternatives for the conventions, content, and characters of such books. One such way may be with *Little Brother*, the text of which the author, Cory Doctorow, made available for free download (<http://craphound.com/littlebrother/download/>) in the hope that others would “remix” his book to create their own stories. As more novels are written that incorporate digital technologies, and as digital technologies continue to become more prevalent and pervasive in our world, we need to find spaces in which to interrogate who is represented and who is left out, not only in the stories of our students’ lives, but in the types of real access they have to communication and representation now and in their futures.

Melanie D. Koss is an assistant professor of children’s literature in the Department of Literacy Education at Northern Illinois University. She teaches children’s literature, young adult literature, and multicultural children’s literature courses. She has published articles in *The ALAN Review*, *Signal*, and *The Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy (JAAL)*. She is also a book reviewer for *Booklist* and serves on the editorial board of both *The Journal of Children’s Literature* and *JAAL*.

Eli Tucker-Raymond is a post-doctoral fellow with the Chèche Konnen Center at TERC, a nonprofit science and math education research and development organization located in Cambridge, MA. He explores how multimodality and multimedia can create humanizing perspectives in K–12 Teacher Education learning environments, particularly in the content areas. He has published articles in *Cultural Studies of Science Education* and *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*. He serves on the editorial board of *Language Arts*.

References

- Albright, J., Purohit, K., Walsh, C. (2002). Louise Rosenblatt seeks QtAzBoi@aol.com for LTR: Using chat rooms in interdisciplinary middle school classrooms. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 45, 692–705.
- Alvermann, D. E., Hinchman, K. A., Moore, D. W., & Phelps, S. F. (1998). *Reconceptualizing the literacies in adolescents’ lives*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- boyd, d. (2008). Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, identity, and digital media* (pp. 119–142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bruce, B. C. (2004). Diversity and critical social engagement: How changing technologies enable new modes of literacy in changing circumstances. In D. Alvermann (Ed.), *Adolescents and literacies in a digital world* (pp. 1–18). New York: Peter Lang.
- Corvo, D. (Executive Producer). (1997). *Dateline NBC: To Catch A Predator* [Television series]. New York: National Broadcasting Company.
- CTIA—The Wireless Association and Harris Interactive. (2008). *Teenagers: A generation unplugged*. Retrieved December 2009 from <http://www.ctia.org/advocacy/research/index.cfm/AID/11483>.
- Galda, L., Ash, G. E., & Cullinan, B. E. (2000). Children’s literature. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research: Volume III* (pp. 361–402). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Gardner, T. (2005). *Reviews@tengrrl.com*. Retrieved April 2006 from <http://www.tengrrl.com/reviews/2005/06/from-danny-to-raisin-young-adult-books.shtml>.
- Gee, J. P. (1987). *What is literacy?* Paper presented at the Mailman Foundation Conference of Families and Literacy, Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. Baltimore, MD: University Park Press.
- Herring, S. C. (2008). Questioning the generational divide: Technological exoticism and adult constructions of online youth identity. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, identity, and digital media* (pp. 71–92). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Huffaker, D. A., & Calvert, S. L. (2005). Gender, identity, and language use in teenage blogs. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10(2). Retrieved June 16, 2010, from <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/120837938/HTMLSTART>.
- Ito, M., Davidson, C., Jenkins, H., Lee, C., Eisenberg, M., & Weiss, J. (2008a). Series Foreword. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth identity, and digital media* (pp. vii–ix). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ito, M., Horst, H., Bittanti, M., boyd, d., Herr-Stephenson, B., Lange, P. G., et al. (2008b). *Living and learning with new media: Summary of findings from the digital youth project*. Chicago: MacArthur Foundation.

- Leander, K. M., & McKim, K. K. (2003). Tracing the everyday "sittings" of adolescents on the Internet: A strategic adaptation of ethnography across online and offline spaces. *Education, Communication, & Information*, 3, 211–240.
- Lenhart, A., Arafeh, S., Smith, A., Macgill, A. R. (2008). Writing, technology and teens. Retrieved June 16, 2010, from http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/247/report_display.asp.
- Lenhart, A., Madden, M., Hitlin, P. (2005). Teens and technology. Retrieved June 16, 2010, from http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/162/report_display.asp.
- Lenhart, A., Madden, M., Macgill, A. R., & Smith, A. (2007). Teens and social media. Retrieved June 16, 2010, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2007/Teens-and-Social-Media.aspx>.
- Lewis, C., & Fabbos, B. (2005). Instant messaging, literacies, and social identities. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 40, 470–501.
- MacArthur Foundation. (2007). *FOCUS: Teen voices on digital media and society: A global kids online dialogue*. Retrieved December 2009 from <http://www.globalkids.org/olp/focus/focusreport.pdf>.
- Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2008). *U.S. religious landscape survey*. Retrieved June 16, 2010, from <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>.
- Rheingold, H. (2002). *Smart mobs: The next social revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Basic Books.
- Sims Bishop, R., and the Multicultural Booklist Committee. (Eds.) (1995). *Kaleidoscope*. National Council of Teachers of English.
- Steinkuehler, C. A. (2006). Massively multiplayer online videogaming as participation in a discourse. *Mind, Culture, & Activity*, 13, 38–52.
- Temple, C., Martinez, M., & Yokota, J. (2006). *Children's books in children's hands: An introduction to their literature* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Trier, J. (2007a). "Cool" engagements with YouTube. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 50, 408–412.
- Trier, J. (2007b). "Cool" engagements with YouTube: Part 2. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 50, 598–603.
- Valkenburg, P. M., Schouten, A. P., & Peter, J. (2005). Adolescents' identity experiments on the Internet. *New Media and Society*, 7, 383–402.
- Weber, S., & Mitchell, C. (2008). Imaging, keyboarding, and posting identities: Young people and new media technologies. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, identity, and digital media* (pp. 25–48). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Witte, S. (2007). That's online writing, not boring school writing": Writing with blogs and the Talkback Project. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 51, 92–96.

Literature Cited

- Cooney, C. (2005). *Code orange*. New York: Delacorte.
- Day, S. (2008). *serafina67 *urgently requires life**. New York, Scholastic.
- D'Lacey, C., & Newbery, L. (2000). *From e to you*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Doctorow, C. (2008). *Little brother*. New York: Tor Teen.
- Finn, K. (2008). *Top 8*. New York: Scholastic Point.
- Goldschmidt, J. (2005). *The secret blog of Raisin Rodriguez*. New York: Penguin.
- Greenwald, A. (2005). *Miss Misery*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Halpin, B. (2004). *Donorboy*. New York: Villard.
- Honey, E. (2000). *Remote man*. New York: Knopf.
- Hrdlitschka, S. (2005). *Sun signs*. Custer, WA: Orca.
- Johnson, K. J. (2004). *A fast and brutal wing*. Brookfield, CT: Roaring Book Press.
- Klinger, S. (2008). *The kingdom of strange*. New York: Marshall Cavendish.
- Mackler, C. (2003). *The earth, my butt, and other big round things*. London: Walker Books.
- Moriarty, J. (2004). *The year of secret assignments*. New York: Scholastic.
- Myracle, L. (2004). *ttyl*. New York: Amulet Books.
- Noël, A. (2007). *Kiss & blog*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Norris, S. (2008). *Something to blog about*. New York: Amulet.
- Oates, J. C. (2002). *Big mouth and ugly girl*. New York: Harper-Teen.
- Papademetriou, L., & Tebbetts, C. (2005). *M or f?* New York: Razorbill.
- Peterson, P. J., & Ruckman, I. (2004). *rob&sara.com*. New York: Laurel Leaf.
- Zenatti, V. (2005). *A bottle in the Gaza Sea*. New York: Bloomsbury.

<p>City of Cannibals by Ricki Thompson Historical Fiction/Henry VIII/Self-Discovery Front Street/Boyd's Mills Press, 2010, 269 pp., \$18.95 ISBN: 978-1-59078-623-9</p> <p>Sixteenth-century Tudor England could be a confusing place for anyone. But for sheltered Dell, 16, on the run from her abusive father and their cave home outside London, it is especially daunting. Wary of the city whose inhabitants supposedly eat each other alive, Dell encounters kindly folks, develops her own puppetry skills, and learns about her mother's time in the city. Her fellow Londoners' loyalties are torn between the Pope and King Henry VIII, who, desperate for a male heir, tosses wife after wife aside, causing a rift between church and state. As novice Ronaldo awakens Dell's own sexual desire, she realizes that while the city's citizens may not literally be cannibals, many are misled by their passions and a king intent on perverting the law.</p> <p>The pitch-perfect period slang and descriptions of bawdy citizens, carelessly spilled chamber pots, poverty, disease, and despair portray a city awash in vulgarity.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Tallulah, LA</p>	<p>Cinderella Cleaners: Prep Cool by Maya Gold Humor/Mystery Scholastic, 2010, 192 pp., \$5.99 ISBN: 978-0-545-12960-2</p> <p>Diana and the gang at Cinderella Cleaners are back! Diana has always been curious about how the other half learns and, as a public school student, she is fascinated with the idea of attending an upscale private academy. When a private-school uniform is dropped off at Cinderella Cleaners, she has the opportunity to find out what it would be like.</p> <p>Diana sneaks into Foreman Academy to find the person who stole her best friend's cell phone. The pressure is on—will Diana be able to convince everyone at Foreman Academy that she is a prep-school student? Will she be able to pass the pop quizzes? Will she be able to handle the mean girls who seem to be out to get her? Will she get her best friend's cell phone back?</p> <p>This story is a lively, first-person account of Diana's adventures and is a welcome addition to the Cinderella Cleaners series.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>
<p>Compromised by Heidi Ayarbe Realistic Fiction/Homelessness/Runaways Harper Teen, 2010, 452 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 978-0-06172-849-5</p> <p>Maya has spent most of her life on the run. Her father is a con man, and when his schemes go wrong (and they always do), Maya uses what she knows about science to fix them. Then, her father ends up in prison, and Maya is sent into foster care. As things get steadily worse for Maya, she learns that she may have an aunt who might be willing to give her a home. She is not sure the aunt exists but feels that, given her current situation, she should try to find her.</p> <p>Maya is joined by two unexpected allies on her journey from Reno to Boise. She discovers that the life of a runaway is much more dangerous than she thought. Those scientific rules that she has previously relied on to get her out of difficult situations don't really apply to her (and her friends') struggle to survive.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>	<p>Dead Fred, Flying Lunch Boxes, and the Good Luck Circle by Frank McKinney Quest/Fantasy/Friendship/Courage Health Communications, 2009, 308 pp., \$18.95 ISBN: 978-0-7573-1382-0</p> <p>Imagine that you are walking to school with your dad, minding your own business, when you spot a dead fish. Oh, yuck! But wait, this dead fish talks! Ppeekk has just moved to Florida. Her parents are too busy for her, and her new school uniform is itchy. Her life is ordinary and lonely until she picks up a talking dead fish named Fred. Ppeekk's life changes when she is given a mission that can possibly lead to her death. With the help of her new friends, Ppeekk must find the courage to save High Voltage, Fred's kingdom in the sea. But how can such a small girl battle the great and terrible prehistoric shark, Megalodon? With the help of flying lunch boxes, manatees, and a charmed good luck circle, of course. This is a fantastical adventure beyond anything you will ever experience, and one you certainly won't forget.</p> <p>Kim Coyle Nashville, TN</p>

<p>Delcroix Academy: The Candidates by Inara Scott Hyperion Books, 2010, 304 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Mystery/Fantasy ISBN: 978-1-4231-1636-3</p> <p>Dancia isn't the top student, the best athlete, or the most talented artist. She doesn't mind that her drab clothing and unpopularity make her invisible, because the alternative could be dangerous. Dancia has powers she doesn't know how to handle. When she sees someone in trouble—car crashes, people falling—Dancia imagines unusual things happening to save them, and suddenly, they happen. Letting people into her life, she fears, will only make matters worse.</p> <p>When Dancia accepts a scholarship to the prestigious Delcroix Academy, she fears she won't be able to maintain her low profile for long. Will her new teachers find out about her gift? Can she risk making friends and keep her powers at bay? Teen readers will enjoy uncovering the mysteries behind Delcroix Academy in Inara Scott's <i>The Candidates</i>. Though Delcroix is fictional, Dancia's struggles to find truth, identity, and friendship inside its gates are engaging and real.</p> <p>Caroline McCoy Nashville, TN</p>	<p>Early to Death, Early to Rise by Kim Harrison Harper Teen, 2010, 228 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Supernatural/Mystery/Angels ISBN: 978-0-06-171817-5</p> <p>Madison Avery is back in the sequel to <i>Once Dead, Twice Shy</i> and is still struggling to figure out how her powers work, what her relationship with Josh will be, and how to keep her father from learning that she is actually dead. Barnabus and Nakita have worked out a tentative truce as they try to teach Madison how to do her job as Dark Time Keeper.</p> <p>Madison, Barnabus, and Nakita try to prevent a deadly computer virus from being released. You would think that knowing what is going to happen in the future and who is going to do it would help you prevent it. However, Madison and her cohorts discover that changing someone's fate is not an easy task. They are sabotaged in their efforts by another Time Keeper and his protégé.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>
<p>Gamer Girl by Mari Mancusi Speak, 2008/2010, 256 pp., \$7.99</p> <p>Divorce/Games/Friendship ISBN: 978-0-14-241509-2</p> <p>For Maddy Starr, life could definitely be better. After her parents separate, Maddy is forced to move in with her grandmother, miles away from her old school and friends in Boston. Her first day at a new school lands her the nickname "Freak Girl," and nothing seems to be going right except her ability to draw manga like a pro. But then her dad gives her Fields of Fantasy, a computer game where she can transform from Freak Girl to Allora, the gorgeous elfin princess she created. Allora doesn't let bullies get to her, and she even attracts the knight in shining armor, Sir Leo.</p> <p>In this blend of virtual and real life, Maddy is able to find herself, gain confidence, and finally stand up to the Haters. Teens of all ages will enjoy watching Maddy's transformation, which includes humor, real-life conflicts, and even a bit of romance.</p> <p>Marlowe Brandt Nashville, TN</p>	<p>Going Bovine by Libba Bray Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2009, 495 pp., \$17.99 ISBN: 978-0-385-73397-7</p> <p>Illness/Family/Relationships</p> <p>Mad Cow Disease? Who gets that? All Cameron wanted to do was get through high school with minimal effort; then he is diagnosed with Creutzfeldt-Jacob (Mad Cow Disease). This diagnosis changes Cameron's life and his relationship with his relatively dysfunctional family.</p> <p>Before his illness, Cameron had been reading the story of Don Quixote, and as his illness progresses, he finds himself battling Dark Wizards and Fire Giants. Cameron's battles, or hallucinations, parallel Don Quixote's in both their epic nature and their hopelessness. His Dulcinea, a punk angel with a serious sugar habit, tells him there is a cure for his illness if he will search for it. Cameron embarks on the wild journey, or hallucination, joined by his Sancho, named Gonzo, a death-obsessed master gamer. He and Gonzo battle cults and vigilantes, encounter physicists and jazz musicians, all in the hope of finding the cure and what matters most in life.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>

<p>Hex Hall by Rachel Hawkins Hyperion Books, 2010, 336 pp., \$16.99</p> <p><i>Hex Hall</i> is a witty supernatural comedy. Sophie Mercer discovered she was a witch at age 13. Three years later, she tries to help a friend by casting a love spell that completely misfires; as punishment, she is sent to Hecate (Hex) Hall. Hex Hall is boarding school for problem Prodigums (witches, warlocks, shape shifters, vampires, etc.). By the end of Sophie's first day at Hex Hall, she has made three powerful (and beautiful) enemies, developed a hopeless crush on a popular girl's boyfriend, and discovered that there are such things as ghosts. To top off her first day, she discovers that her new roommate is not only the most hated person on campus, she is also the only vampire on campus.</p> <p>When someone starts attacking students on campus, the only suspect is Sophie's roommate. Sophie is determined to solve the mystery—in fact, all the mysteries—on campus. Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>	<p>How I, Nicky Flynn, Finally Get a Life and a Dog by Art Corriveau Amulet Books, 2010, 272 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Nicky Flynn is almost 11 when his world capsizes. Mom and Dad divorce and sell his suburban home. Mom rents a one-bedroom dumpy apartment in a seedy section of Boston, and he starts sixth grade in a new school. He is sure his mom is lying about why his dad isn't seeing or calling him.</p> <p>Mom brings home Reggie, a guide dog who didn't make the grade, and Nicky comes to rely on the German shepherd. Nicky lies, breaks into homes and cars, and commits other misdeeds in order to be with Reggie.</p> <p>Nicky is in many ways typical of kids who are thrust into situations they don't understand. He just wants to fit in at school and can't seem to get anything right. He eventually runs away from home, and his life on the lam is a page-turner for tweens who crave action and adventure.</p> <p>Judith Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>
<p>Incarceron by Catherine Fisher Dial, 2010, 448 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Incarceron is a prison . . . and it is alive. It began as an experiment, a model place where prisoners could be kept away from society but still flourish. The inmates live in cells surrounded by metal forests and rundown cities. Only one person, in all the centuries this prison has existed, has ever escaped.</p> <p>Finn and Claudia are desperate to escape to the Outside. Most prisoners don't believe Outside exists, but Finn believes it does. Claudia, the Warden's daughter, knows it does because she lives Outside. She promises to help Finn escape if he will help her avoid an arranged marriage.</p> <p>The first book in an exciting new series, <i>Incarceron</i> is full of unexpected twists and turns. The escape to Outside is more dangerous than Finn and Claudia could have ever imagined.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>	<p>Indigo Blues by Danielle Joseph Flux, 2010, 240 pp., \$9.95</p> <p>Indigo is facing ultimate humiliation. Her ex, Adam Spade, has penned and sings a #1 song, <i>Indigo Blues</i>, for his band Blank Stare. Now the lyrics are everywhere, and the band is rocketing to stardom in New York City. Indigo, however, suffers unwelcome attention back home in her small town high school as she plays out her senior year.</p> <p>Indigo just wants to live her own life on her own terms: she wants her best friend Cat to offer support; her potential new boyfriend (and popular jock) Tripp to pursue her; her interfering, genius little brother Eli to come up with solutions to her problems; and nasty enemy Kristin to just go away. Indigo faces continual pressure when the whole world accuses her of cruelly breaking Adam's heart, and she feels like everyone wants a piece of her. Told in alternating viewpoints by protagonists Indigo and Adam, the tale of romance on the rocks unfolds realistically as teenage love clashes with overnight musical celebrity.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>

<p>POD by Stephen Wallenfels Nameless, 2010, 212 pp., \$19.95</p> <p>Science Fiction/Apocalypse/Survival ISBN: 978-1-60898-011-6</p> <p>The discordant sound of screeching metal awakens 15-year-old Josh from his comfortable bed in rural Prosser, Washington. The insistent voice of her mother awakens 12-year-old Meg from her slumber in their duct-taped car parked in a hotel garage in bustling Los Angeles, California. From those separate wake-up calls, two seemingly disparate narrative strands are wrapped around the appearance of alien spacecrafts in the skies. The intruders seem unfriendly, zapping anyone who ventures outside and leading Josh to dub them Pearls of Death (POD). Alternating chapters describe the separate efforts of Josh and Meg to gather food and water, to counteract boredom, and to protect themselves from those around them. As is often true in tales such as this one, threats realize from those around them. As is often true in tales such as this one, threats realize that humankind has unplumbed reserves of cruelty and inhumanity as well as compassion and courage.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Tallulah, LA</p>	<p>Raised by Wolves by Jennifer Lynn Barnes Egmont, 2010, 418 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Werewolves ISBN: 978-1-60684-059-7</p> <p>Brynn's parents were killed by a rogue werewolf when she was four. She was adopted by Callum, the alpha of a werewolf pack. Her life has been one of rules and strict expectations. At 15, she pushes at the boundaries but doesn't go too far over the line. Brynn goes exploring, even though she was told explicitly not to do so, and finds Chase, a newly-turned teen werewolf locked in a cage. She sees him shift, and it brings back memories of her parents' murder. Brynn and Chase become close and find themselves struggling to find answers to questions. Their search for those answers challenges the very rigid pack hierarchy. Brynn no longer knows who to trust. Where will the search for answers take them? And, what does Chase mean when he says, "I got bit"?</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>
<p>Secret Saturdays by Torrey Maldonado Putnam Juvenile, 2010, 208 pp. \$16.99</p> <p>Realistic Fiction ISBN: 978-0-399-25158-0</p> <p>Middle school best friends Sean and Justin excel at schoolwork, love writing raps, and live in the same housing project. But when Sean starts taking mysterious weekend trips, hanging with older kids, and bullying classmates, Justin worries. <i>Secret Saturdays</i> is about friendship and about how to talk to someone you care about when they're pushing you away.</p> <p>The book plays with form, interspersing rap lyrics with prose. This should appeal to young rap fans, though it is sometimes difficult to really "hear" a rap on the page, and the lyrics can seem so plot-focused that they read more like journal entries than songs. In addition, the story's central mystery—where does Sean go on those weekend trips?—might not be that mysterious for readers familiar with the effects of urban poverty. Despite these flaws, <i>Secret Saturdays</i> is a pleasant read with engaging characters to whom many middle schoolers will relate.</p> <p>Susan Weinstein Baton Rouge, LA</p>	<p>Still Sucks to Be Me by Kimberly Pauley Mironstone, 2010, 384 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>Fantasy/Vampire/Coming of Age ISBN: 978-0-7869-5503-9</p> <p>Being a teenager is difficult! Parents don't appreciate you. Friends flip out on you for no reason. Your boyfriend is in Brazil, and there is a cute guy in town who is more like you than anyone else. To top it all off, you are moving to LA . . . that's Louisiana! Mina "Smith" is a teenager and is now a newly turned vampire. Being a vampire was supposed to make things easier, but unfortunately, Mina finds out that being all-powerful and all-knowing doesn't stop her from still being a teenager. She must use both her vampire powers and her teenage qualities to fix the train wreck that is her life.</p> <p>This hilarious sequel is wonderfully written and a refreshing novel within the vast vampire genre. Being a teenager still sucks, but the vampire thing is something worth getting used to.</p> <p>Kim Coyle Nashville, TN</p>

<p>Stringz by Michael Wenberg Westside Books, 2010, 216 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Realistic Fiction ISBN: 978-1-934813-33-1</p> <p>Fourteen-year-old Jace Adams is used to moving, but when his mom and he move to Seattle, Washington, to live with his Aunt Bernice, he is miserable. Bernice makes him sleep in the shed out back, he makes some enemies at school, and he can't surf. His only solace is his cello, but even that enjoyment is threatened as his new orchestra teacher banishes him to last chair. If Jace wants to move back to California, he's going to need more than the \$30-\$40 he makes a couple of times each week as a street musician downtown.</p> <p>Help comes from his new orchestra friends, Marcy and Elvis, who convince him to enter a prestigious competition for young African American and Latino/a musicians. Can Jace win the competition and move back to California? With some likeable characters, <i>Stringz</i> is an enjoyable read. Mild language usage.</p> <p>Jacqueline Bach Baton Rouge, LA</p>	<p>The Cardturner by Louis Sachar Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2010, 352 pp., \$17.99 ISBN: 978-0-385-73662-6</p> <p>The summer between junior and senior year doesn't look exciting for Alton Richards. He has no job so he has no money. His girlfriend dumps him so she can date his best friend. Then his parents insist that he drive his rich great-uncle Lester to bridge club four times a week. Because Uncle Lester is old and blind, Alton will also have to be his cardturner—even though Alton has no idea what that means. Alton becomes fascinated by his wealthy, old, and blind great-uncle and worries about the number of people trying to worm their way into Lester's good graces (and his will).</p> <p>As Alton learns bridge, he struggles to figure out his own life, his relationship with pretty Toni Castaneda, and the difference between perception and reality. This wry and witty novel makes you question what you know and what you think you know.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>
<p>The Dead-Tossed Waves by Carrie Ryan Delacorte/Random House, 2010, 407 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Loss/Self-Discovery/Apocalypse ISBN: 978-0-385-73684-8</p> <p>A barricade protects the citizens of Vista from the ever-shambling zombies yearning for human flesh. Mary lives in the lighthouse, watching for zombies who may wash ashore. When they do, she decapitates them. The barricade and Mary keep Vista safe from the zombies, also known as the Mudo or the Unconsecrated. When Gabrielle, Mary's daughter, crosses the Barrier to hang out with her friends one night, her actions have consequences for the entire village.</p> <p>In this companion novel to <i>The Forest of Hands and Teeth</i>, readers learn more about what happened to its heroine, Mary, once she arrived in Vista. After the truth is revealed about Gabry's past, both women embark on separate journeys through the dangerous forest—Mary to find the truth about those she left behind, Gabry possibly to find her past and her future. The pages are filled with horror, beauty, and spiritual ruminations as the characters are tested constantly.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Tallulah, LA</p>	<p>The Half-Life of Planets by Emily Franklin & Brendan Halpin Hypertion Books, 2010, 224 pp., 16.99</p> <p>Friendship/ Acceptance/ Adversity/ Identity/Love ISBN: 978-1-4231-2111-4</p> <p>Liana is an aspiring planetary scientist who loves to kiss. She has even earned a not so welcome reputation. Hank is a boy with Asperger's syndrome who loves music. The unlikely pair meet and discover that their differences just might make them perfect friends—maybe even something more. The only problem is that Liana has sworn to herself that she won't kiss anymore boys, and Hank cannot stop talking about music long enough to try kissing a girl. Told from both Liana's and Hank's perspectives, the story develops through the questioning that each teenager asks about the other and themselves. With a little help from the planets, Liana and Hank realize that no matter how different they are to everyone else, they still have each other. <i>The Half-Life of Planets</i> is an uplifting teen romance story filled with laughter.</p> <p>Kim Coyle Nashville, TN</p>

<p><i>The Line</i> by Teri Hall Dial Books, 2010, 219 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 978-0-8037-3466-1</p> <p>Science Fiction/Resistance to Government</p> <p><i>The Line</i> takes place sometime in the future where currency is a cred, pictures are called digms, computers are streamers, and the United States is a repressive regime that has closed its borders. Rachel is an adolescent who lives a quiet life on an isolated orchid farm behind the “line”—the National Border Defense System that keeps outsiders away and prevents citizens from leaving the country. When Rachel makes contact with someone on the other side of the line, everything she believes to be true about Away, the Others, and her own family becomes questionable.</p> <p>In this well-written novel, Hall weaves a critical perspective on news media, civil rights, and government with a compelling narrative about a young girl coming of age in an unequal society. <i>The Line</i> will keep readers on their toes as they witness characters navigate the ethical dilemmas inherent to standing up for what is right.</p> <p>E. Sybil Durand Baton Rouge, LA</p>	<p><i>The Midnight Curse</i> by L. M. Falcone Kids Can Press, 2010, 208 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 978-1-55453-358-9</p> <p>Mystery/Family</p> <p>Charlie and Lacey, eleven-year-old fraternal twins, experience a preposterous romp and series of supernatural adventures around Blaxton Manor in small Hampton Hollow, England. Great-uncle Jonathan Darcy has died, and they and their single mom have an all-expenses paid trip to the reading of his will.</p> <p>The fun begins with myriad strange occurrences, mysterious mayhem, and exciting escapades involving ghosts, spirits, and a helpful psychic. The intrepid duo struggles to lift the curse passed onto Charlie from Uncle Jonathan, whose deceit years ago sent an innocent man to the gallows. Each chapter ends on a climactic moment, so the book is a perfect read-aloud for 6th graders and under.</p> <p>Judith Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>
<p><i>The Reckoning</i> by Kelly Armstrong Harper, 2010, 400 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Supernatural/Friendship ISBN: 978-0-06-166283-6</p> <p>In the third book of The Darkest Powers series, Chloe, Derek, Simon, and Tori are still on the run from the Edison Group. The people that they’ve run to for help are afraid of the powers the four teens have. Ghosts are attacking Chloe, and a local werewolf pack is stalking Derek. Just when the four teens think things can’t get any worse, they realize that at least one of the people who are supposed to be helping them has betrayed them to the Edison Group.</p> <p>Chloe, Derek, and Simon are still not sure that Tori is on their side, they don’t know which adult is the betrayer, and they don’t know how to escape the house in which they are currently trapped. Will this be the time the Edison Group catches them, or will they be able to bring the corporation down?</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>The Red Pyramid</i> by Rick Riordan Hyperion Books, 2010, 528 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Mythology/Adventure/Family ISBN: 978-1-4231-1338-6</p> <p>Since their mother died, Carter and Sadie have been separated. Carter travels the world with their Egyptologist father and longs for a home; Sadie lives in London with their grandparents and longs for adventure. Dr. Julius Kane, their father, brings Carter and Sadie together on Christmas Eve at the British Museum. The experiment, intended “to set things right,” doesn’t go as planned, and Dr. Kane unleashes Set, an Egyptian god. Set banishes Dr. Kane and causes a huge explosion. Carter and Sadie are forced to flee.</p> <p>Carter and Sadie learn that the Egyptian gods are waking up, and Set, one of the worst, is after their family. The two siblings begin a journey that will take them around the world as they struggle to save their father, discover family secrets, solve the riddles of the House of Life, and try to understand Set’s desire to destroy their family.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>

<p><i>The Sixty-Eight Rooms</i> by Marianne Malone Random House Books for Young Readers, 2010, 288 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 978-0-375-85710-2</p> <p>The Art Institute of Chicago houses a collection of 68 miniature rooms; this collection is called the Thorne Rooms. Each room represents a different place and time; every detail is perfect, almost eerily so. There's something magical about the exquisite detail in each room, and Ruthie, a sixth grader on a class field trip to the Art Institute, is fascinated. Ruthie and her best friend, Jack, discover a key that allows them to shrink small enough to explore the rooms, but as they do, they come to realize that they are not the first—a previous explorer left something important behind, and Jack and Ruthie try to find a way to return it.</p> <p>This is a lively adventure that weaves together the excitement of being small, a magical setting, and history.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>The Sky Is Everywhere</i> by Jandy Nelson Dial Books/Penguin, 2010, 277 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Loss/Self-Discovery/Music/Siblings ISBN: 978-0-8037-3495-1</p> <p>Seventeen-year-old Lennie Walker is content to remain in the shadow of her thespian older sister Bailey. But Bailey's unexpected death leaves Lennie lost and without purpose. Wrestling with several uncomfortable realizations concerning her assumptions about Bailey's ambitions, Lennie mourns, leaving messages in various places for her sister. Unexpectedly, Lennie and her sister's skater boyfriend Toby find solace in each other's company, and the encouragement of musician Joe helps Lennie return to her love for music. As Lennie learns more about her sibling and her family, she also discovers half-forgotten truths about herself.</p> <p>This beautifully written novel about loss, betrayal, healing, and whatever we leave behind is filled with romance, laughter, and beautifully written passages that will resonate long after the pages have been finished. In short, this book will break your heart and then piece it back together again, a testimony to the healing power of all kinds of love.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Tallahassee, FL</p>
<p><i>The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary</i> by Jeff Kinney Amulet Books, 2009, 201 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>Film/Comedy/Nonfiction ISBN: 978-0-8109-9616-8</p> <p>We fell in love with Greg Heffley in the first <i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid</i> book. Talk of the upcoming movie took the Wimpy Kid to a whole new level—Hollywood. Jeff Kinney takes us on a wild adventure through the making of the <i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid</i> movie. Kinney shows every aspect of how movies are made, from casting to the secrets of making it snow in July. He incorporates both the drawn cartoons and real photographs from the movie. The book gives background information on the actors who play our favorite characters, as well as a guided view into the process of turning the beloved book into a film. <i>The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary</i> is a wonderful companion to the books and the movie. One suggestion: make sure you read the book series before reading <i>The Wimpy Kid Movie Diary</i> because it gives some plot elements away.</p> <p>Kim Coyle Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Trickster: Native American Tales:</i> Indians of North America/Folklore/Tricksters <i>A Graphic Collection</i> edited by Matt Dembicki Fulcrum Books, 2010, 231 pp., \$22.95</p> <p>ISBN: 978-1-55591-724-1</p> <p>A groundbreaking collection of engaging stories, <i>Trickster</i> is the first graphic anthology of Native American trickster tales. Twenty-one Native American storytellers worked closely with artists to create authentic retellings of traditional stories. Each story represents the cultural experiences of the storyteller, and the accompanying graphics are rich and colorful. Since current research shows graphic novels engage students' critical thinking through the synthesis of graphics and text, this book is ideal for increasing achievement in reading.</p> <p>The book contains a list of contributors and their cultural backgrounds, so students could study different Native American cultures and use this book to enhance their understanding of those cultures. Teachers could use this book to study folklore, establishing patterns and themes students find intriguing. From an ego-driven coyote to the hijinks of wildcat and the hilarity of rabbit's Choctaw tale, <i>Trickster</i> brings together Native American folklore and graphic novels for the first time.</p> <p>Kenan Metzger Muncie, IN</p>

<p><i>Truancy</i> by Isamu Fukui Tor Teen, 2010, 432 pp., \$9.99</p> <p>Speculative Fiction/Action ISBN: 978-0-7653-2258-6</p> <p>Tack lives in a world where school is meant to control and stifle students, and he grows increasingly wary of the oppressive educational system. He shares his annoyance with only two people—his little sister, Suzie, and a mysterious boy named Umasi who doesn't go to school. Umasi tells Tack about a group of teens called the Truancy, whose members have decided to rise up against the Educators in an attempt to vanquish the school system. At first, Tack has no interest in joining a group committed to violence, but when the Truancy kills someone he loves as collateral damage, Tack joins the Truancy with the hope of finding and destroying its leader in an act of revenge. This novel expertly crafts a compelling commentary on contemporary education systems, and the adventurous teen will not be able to put it down.</p> <p>Marlowe Brandt Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Voices of Dragons</i> by Carrie Vaughn Harper Teen, 2010, 320 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Adventure ISBN: 978-0-06-179894-8</p> <p>Do you believe in dragons? In this alternate history novel, Kay Wyatt lives on the border of the human world and Dragon. The human world has cell phones, school, the Internet, and other typical teen worries. Dragon has, well, dragons. In Kay's world, dragons and humans have a peace treaty that keeps each on their own side of the border.</p> <p>Kay goes on a solo hike and is rescued from an accident by Artegal, a dragon, who wants to practice his human speech. The two become friends and, when the tentative peace is broken, must rely on each other to rebuild the peace before too many lives are lost. The author blends reality, legend, history, and technology into an interesting, fast-paced novel with appealing, well-rounded characters.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>
<p><i>You Don't Even Know Me: Stories and Poems about Boys</i> by Sharon G. Flake Disney/Jump at the Sun, 2010, 195 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Relationships/Voice/Identity ISBN: 978-1-4231-0014-0</p> <p>This highly readable collection amplifies the voices of urban teens as they maneuver through their city streets, facing the unique challenges that teen males encounter in today's world. The 14 poems and 9 short stories remind readers that their assumptions about the young African American males sitting beside them in classrooms are often completely false. Teens will relate to much in these stories, often recognizing themselves and their own difficult choices. Familiar concerns about homelessness, suicide, or dying young are addressed as well as doing the right thing amid regrets after making costly mistakes.</p> <p>In "Scared to Death," 17-year-old Tow-Kaye finds that marrying his pregnant Cinderella may not lead to happily-ever-after. The short stories "Fat Man Walking" and "Girls Make You Weak" are, by turns, hilarious and yet poignant, revealing the love that may be found in the streets of Philadelphia and, by extension, in our own neighborhoods.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Tallulah, LA</p>	<p><i>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to:</i> Melanie Hundley 1021 Delmas Ave. Nashville, TN 37216-3630 To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Melanie Hundley at melanie.hundley@vanderbilt.edu.</p>

Island Hopping:

From *The Cay* to *Treasure Island* to *Lord of the Flies* to *The Tempest* . . . and Back Again

*I have wrought my simple plan
If I give one hour of joy
To the boy who's half a man,
Or the man who's half a boy.*

—(Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Preface to *The Lost World*)

Most people who are passionate about literature can probably look back and point to the book that launched them on a lifelong journey of reading. For me, it's easy to recall my first encounter with the novel that started me down a long, long path lined with literature: Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*. As a fourth-grader at Luther Burbank Elementary School in Oklahoma City, I stumbled onto Taylor's story of an unlikely duo shipwrecked on a deserted island and found it to be the perfect introduction to the magic of reading; it offered adventure and friendship and danger and, ultimately, a hopeful ending. These key ingredients drew me back time and time again to check that book out from the library, making *The Cay* both the first "real" book I can remember reading and the first real book I can remember re-reading—an important step in building my confidence as a young reader (Lynch, 2008/2009, p. 341). Looking back, this novel stands at the head of the line of hundreds of subsequent books that have become a part of me as a person and, certainly, as a part of my life as an English teacher.

Naturally, I left Philip and Timothy and their cay behind over time, turning instead to other books and other adventures. I moved on to meet up with Jim

Hawkins and Long John Silver during their tribulations on *Treasure Island*. I sailed on from there to a deserted tropical island, where I made the acquaintance of Ralph, Piggy, and the rest of William Golding's shipwrecked boys. From there, it was on to even more "mature" works, until at some point I found myself marooned by Shakespeare's tempest with Prospero, Miranda, and the others. And without being aware of the process, I had island-hopped my way well clear of Taylor's "simple" adventure story, summarily dismissing it from my bookcase; I had moved into "serious" literature, without giving any thought to the possibility that I might enjoy a round trip.

Pam Cole (2009) argues, however, that YAL "can spark interest in the classics and vice versa" (p. 513). While the idea that YAL might serve as a launching point that leads to more canonical works—to the classics—Cole reminds us that the relationship between YAL and the classics may be less linear and more recursive in nature. In the case of my own reading life, I unfortunately gave no thought to returning to my reading roots until I had the occasion to take, and subsequently teach, a course in young adult literature.

Anyone who has taken such a class can surely recall learning of the many qualities of YAL espoused

by its passionate proponents: Young adult literature has great breadth in terms of literary genre, offering its readers selections in fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, graphic novels, short stories, and more (Nilsen and Donelson, 2008, p. 31). Young adult literature deals seriously with issues and emotions important to young readers (Nilsen and Donelson, p. 35). Young adult literature tackles social, cultural, and environmental

issues that impact the lives of your readers (Bucher and Hinton, 2010, p. 10). Young adult literature offers stories that explore a wide range of ethnic and cultural groups (Nilsen and Donelson, p. 32). And, of course, young adult literature offers sophisticated, quality literary experiences for its readers. These famil-

I've been most surprised to find that I am now arguing just as strongly on behalf of young adult literature for *adults*, as well.

iar arguments in support of YA literature strike me as quite reasonable and convincing, and I am now an unabashed supporter of the field. I consider it an invaluable resource and, in fact, a literary treasure chest sitting wide open, inviting any young reader inclined to reach down and grab hold of its contents.

More than that, however, I've discovered how important young adult literature has become to me as a teacher and as a reader who outgrew the adjective "young adult" more than 20 years ago. As an avid reader who became a high school English teacher and then a college English professor, I've traveled a professional path along which studying literature became an increasingly "serious" business. Somewhere along the line, stories became merely occasions for talking about literary terminology. Focusing our attention predominately (or even exclusively) on the literary elements that make up a story becomes an easy trap for many English teachers; it remains in both our own interest and the best interests of our students to remember that knowing literary terminology should serve us in our efforts to render better, more sophisticated readings, and learning it should serve as a means to a greater end—not an end unto itself.

If we're not vigilant on this point, plots became specimens to probe for critical events, such as the *rising action* and the *denouement*. Literary characters increasingly serve primarily as exemplars of terms such

as *flat*, *round*, *stock*, and *dynamic*. And analysis, close readings, and criticism edge further into the forefront of our thinking. At least, that was my experience, and I found myself becoming further and further removed from what had originally drawn me to reading in the first place: the love of a good story and the companionship of wildly interesting people doing amazing things in interesting places and times.

Arguing YAL

My renewed acquaintance with young adult literature, however, has changed all that. While the arguments for YAL for *young adults* make perfect sense to me, I've been most surprised to find that I am now arguing just as strongly on behalf of young adult literature for *adults*, as well. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle clearly envisioned the model reader for *The Lost World* as either a youngster with a yearning to address serious questions about human nature or, alternatively, a mature adult who has held onto just enough of a childlike sense of wonder to love a good old-fashioned adventure story. In either case, Doyle's description of his ideal reader remains the most apt description I've ever read of the essential qualities required of a reader of young adult literature, and it certainly holds forth the possibility that adults can enjoy and appreciate the very same literary works loved and valued by younger readers.

So, while I have an easy time envisioning a loyal adult readership of YAL, I would suggest that a specific segment of the adult population might stand in a unique position to benefit from a healthy dose of young adult literature: English teachers. An occupational hazard of sorts exists for English teachers, some of whom find themselves put into the position of constantly analyzing and scrutinizing, and sometimes dissecting, that which they love. In "Introduction to Poetry," Billy Collins (2003) describes some young readers' confrontational approach to literature and reminds us that teachers may, unwittingly, pass that kind of clinical, dispassionate approach on to their students:

*But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.*

*They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means. (p. 3)*

And when enough time is spent forcing meaning out of literature, it may be easy to disconnect from that which initially drew us to the field in the first place: Amazing characters. Grand adventures. And serious ideas sharing space with a good story.

Reading young adult literature as an adult—and as a teacher—has afforded me the chance to be a young reader again, to reconnect with what first drew me into the pages of book after book. My renewed acquaintance with authors such as Gary Paulsen and Paul Fleischman and Lois Lowry and Sharon Creech has provided me with much of what I had unknowingly lost over the years . . . the feeling of great anticipation upon opening an unfamiliar book for the first time. The tactile satisfaction I get from the feel of cradling a book that fits snugly in my hand, as opposed to the unwieldy heft of a textbook. Finishing a book with, if not a happy ending, a sense of hopefulness and optimism that the lives of the characters I've come to know and care about might work out after all. The chance to reconsider my sadly entrenched thoughts about subjects like justice and freedom and independence and what it means to be in the never-ending process of growing up. And belonging to a loosely affiliated community of readers that genuinely loves its books and wants to talk about them with anyone who might be interested.

YA literature has given me back all of these things, a most important gift for an English teacher, a surprising and pleasant reminder of a time before analysis papers and exams and class discussions, affording me the unexpected opportunity to move back in time and enjoy literature in a way I had left behind long ago, without my even being aware of the loss.

When I reread *The Cay* today, I easily slip back into a literary landscape I vividly recall from my early days as a reader—a world filled with action and adventure and amazing characters that fascinated me as a fourth grader. However, I see much more going on in this little novel now that I'm a reader with a few more years of experience behind me: I appreciate Theodore Taylor's facility with language when he opens his novel and simultaneously grabs me squarely by the shoulders by writing, "Like silent, hungry sharks that swim in the darkness of the sea, the German submarines arrived in the middle of the night" (p. 9). I can see now that Taylor understands how important it is to think about how we come to

confront our own mortality, how important it is to recognize and celebrate not only our commonalities but also our differences, and how inevitable it is that we all are constantly in the process of developing our own unique identities. And, when I read this novel today, I can appreciate the fact that this is a book about much more than an old man and a young boy stuck in a precarious situation, but that it's an occasion for the author and his readers to wrestle with important cultural, social, and racial issues that are as important today as they

were when I first read the story in 1978. In short, this novel reminds me that all great YAL—indeed, all great literature intended for any audience—offers this same richness and complexity that I recognize and appreciate every time I return to *The Cay*.

Renewal

I stand at the beginning, really, of my renewed reading life with young adult literature. In many ways, I feel just as I did when I was ten years old, had just finished reading *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (Lewis, 1950/2000), and realized I had six more books to go in *The Chronicles of Narnia*—that an entire world was waiting for me if I would just pick up the next book and open it. At that moment, I knew without any question that I was poised on the leading edge of a reading adventure full of promise and possibility, which is just how I feel now when I think about the vast field of young adult literature I've yet to explore.

My recent re-acquaintance with all that YAL lit has to offer not only changed my reading habits, but it has dramatically altered the landscape of my home library, resulting in a more accurate picture of just how I have made the journey from *The Cay* to *Treasure Island* to *Lord of the Flies* to *The Tempest* and back again. My many volumes of Kurt Vonnegut's work now share space with Richard Peck. Mark Twain has shifted just a bit to accommodate Carl Hiassen. Willa Cather now resides next to Lois Lowry. And William

And when enough time is spent forcing meaning out of literature, it may be easy to disconnect from that which initially drew us to the field in the first place.

Shakespeare finds himself shifting over to make way for Laurie Halse Anderson. Anyone who took the time to closely examine my bookshelves now would surely have a better understanding of how I came to be the reader I am with the tastes I have, and they would certainly get a crystal clear sense of why I started this journey toward a life filled with reading and teaching in the first place.

Kevin Kienholz is an associate professor in the Department of English, Modern Languages, and Journalism at Emporia State University, Kansas, where he primarily teaches English methods and young adult literature. Prior to joining the faculty at ESU, he taught language arts for seven years at Stillwater High School in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

References

- Bucher, K., & Hinton, K. (2010). *Young adult literature: Exploration, evaluation, and appreciation* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Cole, P. B. (2009). *Young adult literature in the 21st century*. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Collins, B. (2003). *Poetry 180: A turning back to poetry*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks.
- Doyle, Sir A. C. (1912/2004). *The lost world*. Franklin, TN: The Dalmation Press.
- Lewis, C. S. (1950/2000). *The lion, the witch, and the wardrobe*. New York: HarperCollins Children's.
- Lynch, T. L. (2008/2009). Rereadings and literacy: How students' second readings might open third spaces. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52, 334–341.
- Nilsen, A. P., & Donelson, K. L. (2008). *Literature for today's young adults* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Taylor, T. (1969). *The cay*. New York: Doubleday.

2010 Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award Winner and Finalists Announced

The Assembly on Literature for Adolescents (ALAN) of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) is pleased and proud to announce the winner of the 2010 Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award for Young Adult Fiction. Established in 2008 to honor the wishes of young adult author Amelia Elizabeth Walden, the award allows for the sum of \$5,000 to be presented annually to the author of a young adult title selected by the ALAN Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award Committee as demonstrating a positive approach to life, widespread teen appeal, and literary merit. The winner of the 2010 Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award is ***Fire* by Kristin Cashore** (Dial).

The 2010 Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award finalists are ***Marcelo in the Real World* by Francisco X. Stork** (Arthur A. Levine); ***The Monstrumologist* by Rick Yancey** (Simon and Schuster); ***North of Beautiful* by Justina Chen Headley** (Little, Brown and Company); and ***The Sweetheart of Prosper County* by Jill S. Alexander** (Feiwel and Friends).

All Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award titles will be identified by an award sticker—gold for the winner and silver for the four finalists. This year's winning title and finalists will be honored at an open reception on Monday, November 22, immediately following the 2010 ALAN Workshop in Orlando, Florida.

The 2010 Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Committee would like to thank: the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Foundation; the ALAN Executive Council; the ALAN Board of Directors; past AEWA chair Dr. Wendy Glenn; NCTE; and last, but not least, the more than twenty publishers who submitted titles for consideration.

The 2010 Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Committee considered 202 young adult titles throughout the process. The committee was comprised of ten members representing the university, K–12 school, and library communities. They are: Daria Plumb (chair), Erica Berg, Jean Boreen, C. J. Bott, Lois Buckman, Jeff Harr, Jeff Kaplan, Bonnie Kunzel, Teri Lesesne, and Barbara Ward. For more information on the award, please visit **ALAN Online: The Official Site of the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents** at <http://www.alan-ya.org/>.

Booktalking:

That Was Then and This Is Now

Library Connection Editor's Note: *As the foremost "booktalking expert in the library world," Joni Bodart has often been asked: "How did booktalking start?" "Did you start it?" "How did you learn to book-talk?" I wondered, too, and Joni agreed to share the answers to these questions as well as offer ideas to help teachers and librarians incorporate booktalking in their schools and libraries. Here you will discover the history of booktalking—an important school/library connection—and ways that you can learn how to use high-interest booktalks with your students today. —Diane P. Tuccillo*

I remember when and where I saw my first booktalks (though "book talk" began as two words in its conceptual infancy, this now-respected practice has earned one-word status) and how my career developed from there, so that is where I will begin. It was the spring of 1969, and I was in my last semester of college, about to graduate in May. I'd taken YA literature the previous fall, and I had long list of titles I wanted to read. *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones* was one

of them, as were *The Outsiders*, *The Contender*, and *The Pigman*. Those titles and others persuaded me that I wanted to be a young adult librarian, so my practicum the next semester was in the young adult department of the Dallas Public Library's central library. Another prospective librarian and I worked under the supervision of Judy Kuykendall. She took us to a high school that was having an "Enoch Pratt Free Library style" book fair, with all kinds of people doing presentations, including Judy's booktalks. She stood up in front of a group of students and did two booktalks in what I now know was the "Enoch Pratt style"—a memorized passage from a book, lasting about ten minutes.

I was enthralled! I knew instantly as I watched her mesmerized audience that I wanted to do that, too! She taught the two of us, her practicum students, how to do booktalks that semester, and I remember having to memorize them, practicing over and over.

In 1971, I was back in school, working on my MLS and taking a class in children's and young adult programming. In that course, I had

to tell a story and do booktalks, but these were a different kind of talk; we didn't memorize, we simply told something interesting about the book. I learned that these talks followed a pattern devised by Amelia Munson, who worked with teenagers in the New York Public Library in the 1920s, and which had become the "classic" style of booktalking. (In more recent years, some people have referred to it as "the Bodart method," which always makes me chuckle.) When I moved to Alameda County Library after graduation to become their first regional YA librarian, I set up a school visiting program within three months, and I've never looked back.

You might wonder, how did the technique of booktalking start in the first place? Miriam Braverman, in her 1979 title, *Youth, Society, and the Public Library*, traces the history of young adult services through three libraries—New York Public Library, Cleveland Public Library, and Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland. She explains that young adult services began in 1920, when Mabel Williams of the New York Public

Library began systematic work with high school students. School visits and booktalks were an integral part of the services she designed (p. 18), to make reading more interesting and exciting to teens. These classroom presentations had two parts. First, the librarians talked about the library and how to use it, and then they talked about several books that would be intriguing and interesting to teens. There was no set formula for how to structure the talk, and librarians were able to adapt their presentations for each individual group (p. 21). Each librarian was free to find the formula that worked best for her within a broad framework—to excite the teens about books and encourage them to read the ones presented. Being honest and open about the books inspired teens’ trust in the librarians’ recommendations and created a rapport, and presenting titles that teens would be interested in resulted in increased circulation and more requests for school visits from teachers and school administrators (pp. 22–23). While most booktalks were done in classrooms, the librarians also spoke to assemblies and to classes that came to the libraries.

It’s easy to see that from the very beginning, connections were being built among booktalks, school visits, teachers, and public and school librarians. We have worked together to encourage reading and a love of books. We have been determined to provide teens with the very best in excellent reading, and have promoted it with booktalks. We have taught students how to write and perform their own booktalks, rather than book reports, because they are more fun and can

pique more interest. Peer recommendations that reveal only a part of the book can be very powerful!

Truly, the first booktalks did have an impact on the teens who heard them. While no formal statistics were kept, other than the number of classes visited per year, anecdotal evidence does suggest that students wrote down the titles presented and came into the library to check them out (p. 75). This evidence ensured that the school visiting program continued.

When Amelia Munson began working at the New York Public Library in 1926, she did school visits and spoke to classes that came to the libraries, using booktalks to inspire teens to read for fun. In her 1950 title, *An Ample Field*, she details how to prepare a talk on an individual title and also how to prepare a whole booktalking presentation. She recommends that librarians include a few titles “that simply walk off . . . your shelves without even a friendly push from you” because it will show students “your friendly and understanding attitude” toward YA literature (p. 98). Focusing the presentation on the interests and needs of the group you are visiting and beginning with a title you can connect to current events can ensure that you are seen

It’s easy to see that from the very beginning, connections were being built among booktalks, school visits, teachers, and public and school librarians.

as approachable, aware of what is going on in the world, and in touch with what is of interest. To open the presentation, choose an incident, character, or conversation from your first book, and begin to talk about it “with gusto and dispatch, savoring your recollection of the book as you go along and presenting it so that its special appeal, the thing that sets it apart from all other books, is apparent” (p. 98).

Munson describes the booktalk as a cross between storytelling and a book review, but not exactly like either (p. 99), which sounds remarkably like the current definition of booktalks as they are used today. In fact, Munson’s description of them and how to create them seems to be the first mention of the modern and now classic method of booktalking that I now use. Her focus is on each group—their interests and what they might enjoy hearing; this informs the decision about which titles to present. She points out that just telling the group that the story is interesting and exciting isn’t enough. The story must come alive for the group, must captivate and intrigue them. The booktalker must avoid getting bogged down in too many details or confusing the audience with references to too many characters. She recommends ending on a high note and then moving on to the next book (p. 99). She also recommends including something for everyone in the group, so the teens stay interested in and attentive to the presentation. Maintaining eye contact with the audience is also an important part, and helps the audience see the booktalker as someone who is friendly, respectful, and genuinely interested in them.

Munson also includes suggestions for what *not* to do. She says that reading from the book should be avoided whenever possible, because it puts the book between the booktalker and the audience. Booktalkers should use their own words to convey the story. The timing of the presentation should be planned in advance, so the booktalker doesn't outstay her welcome. Staying within time parameters will heighten the chances of being asked for a return visit (pp. 100–101).

In 1932, another strong booktalking program took place at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Maryland, where Margaret Alexander Edwards was hired as the first young adult librarian. In 1937, she went to New York and talked with Mabel Williams about the collections and services Williams had provided for teens, returning home “bursting with ideas” about booktalks and school visits (p. 181), and how they could be done most effectively and efficiently. With this focus, Edwards trained librarians to do booktalks in a much more formal and rigorous way than Williams, with a set format for the content and the presentation (p. 190).

Edwards included specific instructions for voice modulations, gestures and other body language, what you could and couldn't do, and even how to change scenes. One of her librarians recalled that Edwards also believed that the booktalker should “disappear” while on stage, while the author's words kept the audience's attention (p. 194). Booktalks were excerpts from the book, memorized word for word, and requiring an inordi-

So while I didn't start booktalking, I did standardize and popularize it through my books and workshops.

nate amount of practice to get both words and gestures right. Each excerpt was 8–10 minutes long.

Edwards felt that giving teens a chance to hear the author's own carefully chosen words would be more powerful than a talk written by a librarian, who wasn't an author. “These book talks are in polished form,” she said. “No one is floundering around trying to think of something to say” (pp. 195–196). “Few people speak well extemporaneously The sooner he memorizes the talk, the smoother his presentation will be” (p. 196). When done well, Edwards's style certainly worked—her librarians had the respect of both faculty and students, because they brought the idea of reading for pleasure into the schools they visited.¹ In describing the effect of booktalks and school visits, Edwards noted that “they humanize the librarian and the library. They get more people into the public library and into contact with books and librarians than any other thing that can be done” (pp. 197).

Edwards had five objectives for booktalks: sell the idea of reading for pleasure; introduce new ideas and new areas of reading; develop an appreciation of style and character; lift the level of reading by using only the best in literature; and

humanize the library and the librarian. She was very specific about how to accomplish these objectives, and identified several elements for her librarians to demonstrate when doing booktalks, some of which seem remarkably contemporary: Don't start speaking until your audience is ready to listen, and be sure everyone can hear you. Give the title and author before beginning to talk, bring the story to life, vary your tone of voice, change the pace, and use pauses for emphasis. Stand firmly without rocking, don't read from the book, or pretend to have read a book that you have not read. Watch your body language, and be aware of nervous gestures. Let your audience see the emotions of the book on your face—it helps you connect with them. Watch for boredom, so you can make a quick change to another book. Don't talk to groups over about 30 if possible. With larger groups you lose eye contact, and the attention of your audience (pp. 120–122).

The format of school visits was just as precisely planned as that of individual talks. Two or three librarians went to each classroom, and after an introduction, passed out copies of a numbered book list—about 250 titles divided into several subjects or categories. Students would look over the list, call out numbers for the titles they wanted to hear something about, and then listen to one of the librarians describe the book briefly. After a few of these, a librarian would do a formal booktalk and then go back to letting students choose which books were described. Librarians did 2–3 formal talks during each visit plus enough shorter book descriptions to fill up the time.²

After I started my first booktalking/school visiting program in 1974, I did booktalks and school visits 20–30 hours a week for the next five years—first at Alameda County Library and then at Stanislaus County Free Public Library. In addition, I also taught librarians and teachers how to do booktalks, first as part of YA librarian training for ACL, then for local and regional groups of librarians across California. In 1978, Jerry Stevens, a YA librarian in Fresno, California, decided that I should write a book about booktalking. I laughed at him, but he tricked me into describing my booktalking experiences and workshops to a representative from the publisher H. W. Wilson at a librarians' conference, and the rest, as they say, is history.

I did two series of titles for H. W. Wilson between 1980 and 1998—the *Booktalk!* series of five volumes and the *Booktalking the Award Winners* series of four titles. During 1992–1993, I did three books with Libraries Unlimited, two on booktalking and one on “thin books” for book reports. In the last ten years, I have done three books for Scarecrow Press, one on “thin books” and two on working with controversial titles for teens. All of my books include booktalk samples and brief booktalking “how-to” information.

So while I didn't *start* booktalking, I did standardize and popularize it through my books and workshops, making it an essential tool for the YA librarian. Today, it is common for someone interviewing for a YA librarian position to be asked about booktalking, and perhaps to demonstrate a talk during the interview. Booktalking is taught

In 1978, Jerry Stevens, a YA librarian in Fresno, California, decided that I should write a book about booktalking.

in library schools as part of the Young Adult curriculum, and could easily be a part of YA materials courses in colleges of education—and sometimes is.

As Virginia Walter and Elaine Meyers (2003) said, “Joni Bodart probably did more than any other single individual during this time [1970s–1980s] to make booktalking an essential skill in the young adult librarian's toolkit. Her handbooks made it look easy, and many librarians who had enjoyed telling stories to younger children found booktalking to teens to be just as rewarding. Public librarians looked to junior and senior high schools for captive audiences of teens to ply with books. Did it work? Did they read more and better? No research data is available, but many YA specialists firmly believe that booktalking is the most important element of young adult library services. Michael Printz, who was a high school librarian in Topeka, Kansas, and the person for whom the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Printz Award was named, once said, “The greatest thing for getting kids and books together is the booktalk” (p. 19).

I created the four types of booktalks—plot summary, character description, short story or anecdotal, and mood—and the four

unbreakable rules of booktalking—don't talk about a book you haven't read; don't tell the ending; don't talk about a book you don't like; and don't imitate someone else's style of booktalking, but rather do what you are most comfortable with. I also standardized the lengths of a flash (30 seconds to one minute), short (1–2 minute), and long (3–4 minute) booktalk. While all three lengths can be part of a booktalking presentation, the flash talk is also appropriate for doing individual reader's advisory work with teens.

I determined early on that it made sense to teach teachers how to do booktalks, because even if they don't do formal booktalks, information on how to make a book sound intriguing can be very helpful when trying to interest students in books. In order to support teachers' efforts to include booktalking as part of the curriculum, I created and used in my workshops two helpful lists: one identifies educational objectives (see Fig. 1) and the other suggests activities for a booktalking unit in middle and high schools (see Fig. 2).

I also taught middle and high school students to do booktalks instead of book reports, transforming a potentially boring assignment into something much more exciting, as well as giving them a chance to keep secrets (about the ending and other things) from their friends. Some school districts even had an orientation for kids starting middle school, including an introduction to the school library and booktalks given by eighth graders. Teens are very creative when you give them a chance to be, perhaps using a “dead body” on a gurney as a prop

1. To have students hear a booktalking presentation from an experienced booktalker so they can see firsthand how involving and enticing such a presentation can be.
2. To give students a fun reading experience, to know the joy of a captivating story, and to be able to share that pleasure with someone else.
3. To explain the differences between an oral book report and a booktalk.
4. To analyze their book, select the most appropriate section or character to emphasize in their booktalk, and explain why it was selected.
5. To understand the different points of view from which a booktalk can be written, select the most appropriate one for their talk, and explain why that perspective was used.
6. To demonstrate successful preparation for speaking before a group and follow up by giving the presentation.
7. To evaluate others' skills in booktalking and explain and support the evaluation.
8. To give others constructive oral and written criticism, including both ideas on how to improve their work and feedback about the parts of the booktalk that they liked.
9. To understand and accept constructive criticism about their work and apply that criticism appropriately.
10. To discover other books they want to read as a result of hearing their classmates' talks.

Figure 1. Educational objectives for a booktalking unit

1. Listening to a booktalking presentation that demonstrates good booktalking practices and procedures.
2. Hearing a lecture on the various methods of booktalking, including how to select a book, write a talk, practice the talk, perform the talk, and respond to feedback about the talk and the performance.
3. Examining several books to decide which ones to read prior to selecting one for a booktalk.
4. Evaluating the titles read to decide which one would be best suited to a booktalk.
5. Analyzing the book to decide which plot line, character, or scene to emphasize in the booktalk.
6. Writing a first sentence and outline of the booktalk.
7. Writing the booktalk.
8. Editing or rewriting the talk after input from the teacher.
9. Transferring the talk to note cards for the presentation, using either full text, outlining, or a combination.
10. Practicing the booktalk.
11. Performing the booktalk.
12. Receiving written and oral criticism on the performance.
13. Responding to criticism appropriately.
14. Giving written and oral criticism to others based on the performances.
15. Making a list of titles they would like to read, based on their classmates' performances.

Figure 2. Educational activities to prepare for a booktalking unit

for a murder mystery, creating a soundtrack for the booktalk, or even doing a digital booktalk—but more about that later!

A lot has changed in the 30 years since I published the first book on booktalking. Today you can find booktalks and how-to

information everywhere, written by practicing YA and children's librarians, university professors, and others. The types of booktalks and the rules of booktalking that I created have become part of the landscape of booktalking, and few people cite me as their source—flattering *and* irritating!

So where do we go from here? As our world becomes increasingly dependent on technology, librarians and teens have begun to seek out new and exciting forms of booktalks, frequently called "Booktalking 2.0." You no longer have to be face-to-face with a booktalker to enjoy a booktalk. Booktalks are now available online. Scholastic has hundreds of my talks at <http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/tradebooks/booktalks.htm>. The site includes print booktalks and also some booktalks that have been videotaped, "talking head" style. You are welcome to use all of them, in part or in whole.

Random House also has a long list of booktalks, written by school and public librarians (available at <http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/librarians/booktalks.html>). They vary in quality, but are still a great resource. As far as I can tell, these talks are offered only in print form.

Bookwinks (<http://bookwink.com>) is another great source for excellent "talking head" videos. While it doesn't have as many talks as the other two sites mentioned, the ones on this site are beautifully written by Sonja Cole, a book editor and reviewer who, as a former middle school librarian and high school teacher, delivers her talks with energy and enthusiasm.

Nancy Keane's website, <http://>

nancykeane.com/booktalks, has over 5,000 talks that anyone can use. Some of them are excellent, but others need revision to make them more interesting and exciting. Nancy wrote some of these talks, but most were submitted by librarians and teachers. She also has dozens of booktalks available as podcasts, to which you can subscribe. Each of them is only a couple of minutes long, and Nancy's pleasant voice is easy to listen to. After listening to several, she definitely made me want to read the books.

You can also find "talking head" booktalks and podcasts of individual talks on YouTube, Google Video, TeacherTube, and bliptv, to mention only a few of the sites. Some are amazingly good, and others are horrifyingly or hilariously bad, so you will need to be selective. Search under booktalks, book talks, and booktalking for the largest number of hits.

The most exciting new thing in the world of booktalking is the book trailer, based on the movie-trailer format we are all familiar with. They come in a variety of formats: slides with captions and music in the background, slides with music and a voice-over, live action with actors speaking to each other, live action with music and a narrator, or a combination of styles. They are created by librarians, teachers, and, increasingly, teens themselves. You can find them on public and school library Web pages; on YouTube, Google Video, TeacherTube, bliptv; on individual blogs and websites; and lots of other places. As with the print and "talking head" booktalks, these trailers vary widely in quality and content, from excellent to painful

to watch, so again, selectivity is the key.

There are several companies that create "book trailers" for authors, publishers, and others interested in promoting specific titles. Circle of Seven Productions (<http://www.cosproductions.com/index.php>) claims to have trademarked the name "book trailer" in 2002, and creates sophisticated trailers for authors and publishers. There are a number of book trailers on their site to demonstrate the quality of their product, but they are hard to get to, and most feature adult titles. They have partnered with the University of Central Florida's Digital Booktalk Project (<http://digitalbooktalk.com>) to produce lively booktalks for K–12 students. Most of the 76 talks on the site are excellent, live action, and feature UCF students as actors.

Expanded Books publishes book trailers for all ages, including teens, which they include under "Filter by genre/children," located at <http://expandedbooks.com/video/genres?show=desc&genre=3&q=>. They have 83 children's and YA videos. Most are slideshows with narration or captions, and are quite well done. However, they also include some that show the author talking about a book, and others that use excerpts from reviews to sell the book. Book Screening (<http://bookscreening.com>) is similar to Expanded Books, but lists YA titles under "youth." It also has slideshows with captions or narration that are very effective, with authors talking about their books.

Random House sponsors an annual Book Video Competition with Kirkus Reviews and Barnes

and Noble bookstores. It challenges student filmmakers to create book trailers for one of three YA books published by Random House. The 2009 winners are available at <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/kirkusbva>.

Naomi Bates is a high school librarian in Texas who is an avid booktalker and has been creating book trailers for several years. Her trailers are slideshows with either written or oral narration. She gets both music and images from free websites to avoid infringing on copyright. Check out her book trailer on *By the Time You Read This, I'll Be Dead* by Julie Anne Peters (<http://naomibates.blogspot.com>); then scroll down for her booktalk on the same title, both posted on April 16, 2010. A great example!

Since 2006, Pima County Public Library in Arizona has sponsored an annual competition for teens who want to make book trailers on their favorite books. You can see all the winners at <http://www.library.pima.gov/teenzone/trailers/index.php>.

Here are some sites that will help you create book trailers with your teens:

- "YA Books and More" — <http://naomibates.blogspot.com/2008/07/how-i-create-digital-booktrailers.html>
- School librarian Joy Millam's advice—<http://booktalksandmore.pbworks.com/Files-and-Documents>
- Romance novelist Brenda Coultter's tips—<http://brendacoultter.blogspot.com/2007/06/promoting-your-novel-how-to-make-book.html>
- Author Jill Elizabeth Nelson's ideas—<http://canblog.typepad>.

com/canbookmarketing/
2007/02/make_a_book_tra.html

- Avid reader Crystal Booth's advice at "Book Trailers"—<http://www.squidoo.com/booktrailers>

Finally, for those of you who want to include "Booktalking 2.0" in your school library or classroom, a book to try is *The Tech-Savvy Booktalker: A Guide for 21st Educators* by Nancy Keane and Terence Cavanaugh. It is a bonanza of ideas on how to combine booktalks and technology for the benefit of your students, perfect for school librarians and teachers. It is incredibly detailed, and includes lesson plans, standards, rubrics, assessments, and exquisitely precise instructions, complete with lots of screen shots and photographs.

As for what's going to happen in the future of booktalking—who knows? I'm convinced that books, reading, and libraries will continue

to exist and prosper, although they will probably look somewhat different. Printed books may become electronic books, and libraries may be virtual or have collections with formats we can't even guess at today. However, as long as there are books and teens, and teachers and/or librarians to work with them, there will be booktalks, and they will continue to convince teens to enjoy reading and to explore the world of imagination—through books.

Joni Richards Bodart, internationally known as the leading expert on booktalking, is an assistant professor at San Jose State University SLIS, where she is in charge of the Youth Librarianship curriculum. The Booktalk! series from H. W. Wilson is considered to be the standard in the field. Her most recent title is Radical Reads 2: Working with the Newest Edgy Novels for Teens (Scarecrow, 2009).

She is on the 2011 Printz Award committee, and was awarded the 2010 Scholastic Library Publishing Award for lifetime achievement and excellence in youth librarianship. You can contact her at jrbodart@slis.sjsu.edu.

Notes

¹ p. 196, Braverman

² p. 33, Edwards

References

- Braverman, M. (1979). *Youth, society, and the public library*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Edwards, M. A. (2002). *The fair garden and the swarm of beasts: The library and the young adult* (Centennial ed.). Chicago: American Library Association.
- Keane, N. J., & Cavanaugh, T. W. (2009). *The tech-savvy booktalker: A guide for 21st century educators*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.
- Munson, A. (1950). *An ample field*. Chicago: American Library Association.
- Walter, V. A., & Meyers, E. E. (2003). *Teens and libraries: Getting it right*. Chicago: American Library Association.

2011 Call for CEL Award for Exemplary Leadership

This award is given annually to an NCTE member who is an outstanding English language arts educator and leader. Please nominate an exceptional leader who has had an impact on the profession through one or more of the following: (1) work that has focused on exceptional teaching and/or leadership practices (e.g., building an effective department, grade level, or building team; developing curricula or processes for practicing English language arts educators; or mentoring); (2) contributions to the profession through involvement at both the local and national levels; (3) publications that have had a major impact.

Your award nominee submission must include a nomination letter, the nominee's curriculum vitae, and no more than three additional letters of support from various colleagues. Send by **February 1, 2011**, to: Patrick Monahan, 4685 Lakeview Dr., Interlochen, MI 49643; pjmonahan1@gmail.com (Subject: CEL Exemplary Leader).

Cracks of Light in the Darkness:

Images of Hope in the Work of Laurie Halse Anderson and an Interview with the Author

Author Laurie Halse Anderson is known for her guts and pluck in taking on such controversial topics as date rape, slavery, anorexia, and abuse. Anderson dives deep into the churning, stormy waters of adolescent angst, writing unflinchingly with her trademark audacious flair.

Anderson's novels submerge both her readers and her characters deep into the darkness where they often swim against the tide and struggle for redemption. Rather than leaving them drowning in despair, however, she brings both reader and protagonist up for light and air, skillfully instilling and infusing hope into each of her books. "Ending on an encouraging note is part of my moral code. Teenagers need to see a model of hope and growth," Anderson states.

Anderson's 1999 landmark novel *Speak* started it all, launching her into her own niche on the outer fringes of 1999's pink-jacketed young adult literature, and making the author a star. *Speak* was a revolutionary book, with its haunting, tree-adorned cover planting the Anderson firmly on the radar of reviewers, readers, teachers, and librarians.

Riding the wave of the Internet, the groundbreaking author started her website in the year 2000, opening the lines of communication with teens who related to her novel *Speak*. By 2005, Anderson started to become proactive in reaching out to her readers with the beginnings of a blog, "Madwoman in the Forest." Emails surged in: a torrent of words that reassured the author that her books were indeed touching—and changing—lives.

Anderson says that the word most often emerging in the emails is *honest*. "I don't sugarcoat anything,"

she said in a *School Library Journal* article.

My critical responses to Anderson's images of hope in her books *Wintergirls*, *Speak*, and *Chains* follow, along with the author's answers to my questions during an interview on August 13, 2009.

Wintergirls

The story of a teenage girl named Lia who is dealing not only with the ravages of anorexia, but also with the death of her best friend from the same disease, *Wintergirls* is a flight in the dark. The reader is catapulted immediately into Lia's shock and grief as she learns of her friend Cassie's death, and we fall with her into the blackest of nights.

Anderson brightens the darkness for the first time with a tentative flicker of hope in the image of an uneasy light in Lia's bedroom at night. "Plastic stars wait on the cold ceiling, watching the light switch, nervous, ready for the dark and their cue to glow" (p. 32). The hope here is a tense and edgy one, as jittery as the nervous plastic stars on the cold ceiling.

Anderson gives the reader a bit more hope and light a few pages later, with a flashback of Lia and Cassie's first meeting, back in third grade.

She showed me her antique dolls and plastic horse collection, and best of all, a real treasure chest that had rubies and gold and a piece of green sea-glass born in the heart of a volcano.

I told her that sea-glass came from the ocean.

"This is different," she said. "It's 'see-glass,' like seeing with your eyes. If you look through it when the stars line up right, you can see your future." (p. 37)

Anderson once again returns to the see-glass as a symbol of hope for Lia's friend in a scene that takes place at Cassie's funeral service:

I reach into my jacket pocket and pull out the small disk of green see-glass, born in the heart of a volcano, capable of showing the future. I stole it from Cassie's room when we were nine, but I could never make it work, no matter how the stars were lined up.

I slip the glass into her frozen hand. (p. 87)

In *Wintergirls*, the author also uses mirror glass as a symbol of hope and light. Here's a scene where Lia gazes wistfully into her old dance studio, which is lit up in the winter night:

I stop in front of the florist shop. On the second floor, the lights are on in my old dance studio. I spent a lifetime staring into the mirrors up there. I'd flex and leap, and bow and sweep; a sugarplum, a swan, a maiden, a doll. (p. 83)

Mirrors, now Lia's worst enemy in her battle with distorted body image, were once vehicles of fantasy and hope and light. Reflected in the glass, Lia could be a sugarplum, a swan, a maiden, a doll. The mirror here reflects the hope that perhaps Lia as seen in the glass might once again view the magical possibilities of life.

Later in the book, Anderson continues her use of glass as a symbol of hope, direction, and guiding light in this passage:

On my way to pick up Elijah Saturday morning, I stop at the store to buy a map and a compass. The GPS is on my Christmas list, in ink. What I really need is a crystal ball, but nobody sells them around here. (p. 130)

The wish for a crystal ball conveys Lia's hope for the future and for guidance, and it joins symbols of see-glass and mirrors in Anderson's "glass as hope" symbolism.

In a dream scene, where Lia encounters her dead friend Cassie and they fight for the see-glass, Anderson again utilizes the glass to symbolize the possibility of hope for the future. "She turns around as I hold it up again and look through the leaf-colored crystal out the window to the stars lining up above us" (p. 271). Here, through the see-glass, Anderson's character sees the future as holding stars amidst the blackness.

Anderson also uses the moon as a symbol of hope and light when the character Lia relates her fairy-tale version of how her mother and father fell in love.

They paddled a canoe to the middle of the water and laughed. The moon saw how beautiful they were and how much in love, and gave them a baby for their very own. Just then, the canoe sprung a leak and started to sink. They had to paddle hard, hard, hard, but they made it to shore just in time. (p. 74)

Later, the moon and stars again serve as symbols for hope in a scene where Lia needs to call her mother immediately in order to save her own life.

It takes almost the rest of my life to get to the office but because the moon is paying attention to my visions and the stars are lined up, the quarters are in the drawer and the pay phone does work. (p. 273)

Lia's descent into the darkness of anorexia resembles the archetype of a young woman (usually at the dawning of sexuality) who becomes spell-bound or enchanted. Lia reflects a familiarity that's found in both a mythological and a fairy-tale version of this archetype.

Borrowing from the myth *Persephone*, in which the entire world freezes into winter, Anderson uses the moon and stars, as well as a light in a motel room, in a tentative glimmer of hope at the book's darkest moment.

The snow has stopped. The crescent moon hangs high, stars rubbing their hands together, teeth chattering. I shuffled toward the office. The door to 113 is open. The lights are on. (p. 268)

Anderson uses not only the myth of *Persephone* in *Wintergirls*, but she borrows also from the *Sleeping Beauty* fairytale (Grimm, 1969), in which the main character, Briar Rose, reaches adolescence and falls into the curse of a deep sleep, surrounded by a hedge of roses. Rose images are to be found both in *Sleeping Beauty* and in *Wintergirls*, where Lia's journey is like that of a rose dying only to return to life. The hedge of rose thorns in the Brothers Grimm fairytale "held fast together, as if they had hands," creating a metaphor of Briar Rose as being held in captivity with no hope of rescue. In *Wintergirls*, "Thorn-covered vines creep across the floor, crackling like a bonfire. Black roses bloom in the moonlight, born dead and brittle" (p. 43).

Anderson's description of Lia's life gives us the impression of joylessness, a kind of limbo between life and death. This state could be said to relate to Briar Rose's spell of sleep. Just as Briar Rose and her

kingdom are imprisoned by the curse, so Lia and her family are bound by her disease. Both Briar Rose's castle and Lia's home life fall into winter, much as the curse in *Persephone*.

In the fairy tale, Briar Rose, pricked by a spindle of an old woman spinning flax, "fell down upon the bed that stood there, and lay in a deep sleep." In Anderson's novel, Lia is sleepwalking through life as an anorexic, a nearly self-induced state of sleep, and when she is hospitalized for her disease, she falls into the same lifeless sleep as Briar Rose. "They tell me I was ten days in the hospital. I slept. Dreamless" (p. 274). Anderson even riffs upon spinning imagery in *Wintergirls*: "I am spinning the silk threads of my story, weaving the fabric of my world. I spun out of control" (p. 277).

Briar Rose's castle is encircled by an impenetrable wall of thorns in the Brothers Grimm fairy tale. Anderson's character, too, is imprisoned by a wall of thorns, but an emotional one, rather than a literal wall. Upon learning of her best friend's death, the character in *Wintergirls* is confined in her own agony: "My walls go up and my doors lock" (p. 1).

Briar Rose's father, the king, is a loving parent. When his baby is born, the king "could not contain himself for joy," and he ordered a great feast. Lia's father, too, is a caring parent. "My father smooths my hair again. "Thank God you're safe" (p. 35).

In *Sleeping Beauty* (Grimm, 1969), Briar Rose is rescued by a king's son who ventures through the hedge and "opened the door into the little room where Briar Rose was sleeping." Anderson's Lia finds refuge in a young man: the motel employee who unlocks the door to the room where Lia's friend Cassie died.

Flower imagery is also used in *Sleeping Beauty*, as the king's son steps through the hedge—now covered with "large and beautiful flowers." In *Wintergirls*, Lia stops in the darkness in front of a florist shop, where "the girl reflected back from the window in front of me has poinsettias growing out of her belly and head" (p. 83). When Lia attends Cassie's funeral, a scene in which Lia refers to her friend as being Sleeping Beauty, "brown-edged chrysanthemum petals drop loudly from the wreaths . . ." (p. 85).

The end of *Sleeping Beauty* is much like the conclusion of *Wintergirls*: Briar-Rose and Lia both awaken and come back to life. There, Anderson uses flower imagery as a symbol of hope and healing. "Cassie's

parents show up the day the crocuses open. We cry" (p. 277). Spring comes and the ice melts, just as in the Persephone myth and in *Sleeping Beauty*, where the castle community awakes and the flowers and roses outside spring to life. *Sleeping Beauty* and her king's son "lived contented until the end of her days." Anderson's Lia starts to put her life back together with an image of spinning: "I spin and weave and knit my words and visions until a life starts to take shape" (p. 277).

Anderson's stories are not only about the fall into darkness; they are about the return into the light. Just as Persephone comes back to life and *Sleeping Beauty* awakens, so too do the characters created by Laurie Halse Anderson. On the book's last page, the reader knows that hope is possible with Anderson's use of a mirror and thawing ice. Despite the fact that this is not a happily-ever-after ending, the reader is left with hope.

There is no magic cure, no making it all go away forever.

There are only small steps upward; an easier day, an unexpected laugh, a mirror that doesn't matter anymore.

I am thawing. (p. 278).

Wintergirls glows with Laurie Halse Anderson's instillation of hope amidst despair, with water, snow, ice, candlelight, mirrors, green glass, and a wished-for crystal ball reflecting glimmers and shimmers of light for readers who may be struggling with the same issues as Lia. Hope is illuminated.

The author's choice of symbols in *Wintergirls*, whether conscious or not, are effective and illuminating. Moon and stars are symbols of light in the darkness; candles light the night; mirrors reflect who we are and who we hope to be; a piece of see-glass can foretell a future with hope, much as a crystal ball. With these items, Anderson has managed to suffuse illumination and enlightenment upon the darkest of subjects. She has used the clearest and most luminous of symbols—glass, candle, moon, and stars to light a path for the protagonist of *Wintergirls*.

"The truer the symbol, the deeper it leads you, the more meaning it opens up," said Flannery O'Connor (1969, p. 72).

In *Writing Fiction: A Guide to Narrative Craft* (Burroway & Stuckey-French, 2007), Burroway states that "when a literary symbol fails, it is most often because it has not been integrated into the texture of

the story” (p. 346). As Friedman puts it in *Writing Past Dark* (1994):

Before a thing can be a symbol it must be a thing. It must do its job as a thing in the world before and during and after you have projected all your meaning all over it. (p. 99)

Anderson’s symbols are all *things*, with jobs in the world beyond their roles in her fiction. Hope is illuminated.

In my interview with Laurie Halse Anderson, the author revealed that *Wintergirls’* images of light as hope were not intentional, nor were they conscious.

A: Did you consciously use symbols of hope in *Wintergirls*?

LHA: No. They snuck in. I still don’t really understand much about symbolism, and I have no clue what a theme is.

A: While gathering your crumbs of information for the book, did you purposefully start with the image of crumbs on the stepmother’s lips?

LHA: In early drafts, the book opened with the image Lia had of herself on an altar, surrounded by vultures pecking at her flesh. I changed it to the muffin crumbs because I didn’t want to slap my readers across the face on the first page.

A: In a book titled *The Copycat Effect*, Coleman (2004) wrote of the idea that reading something could cause some readers to copy the crime. He focused upon school shootings as being perhaps “inspired” by media coverage. In the 1970s, it was claimed that suicides were inspired by the movie *The Deer Hunter* (Cimino, 1978), and as far back as the 1800s, there was what was known as the “Werther Syndrome,” in which 200 young boys committed suicide as a copycat effect of reading *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (von Goethe, 1774/ 1989). I know that *Wintergirls* has sparked controversy and discussion of a possible “copycat effect” among teen readers prone to anorexia. Should we as writers worry about this so-called “copycat effect” and the possibilities of reactions to our own works?

LHA: You can only write the story that is in your heart. If you allow your story to be shaped by external forces and opinions, you might consider writing copy for advertising instead of novels because it pays better.

A: I believe that *Wintergirls* is your darkest book. How can a book about a really dark subject make a kid feel less alone?

LHA: Here’s a quote from an email I received yesterday:

So this has kinda turned into a thank you letter, because I feel something from that story, and I’m really glad I read it, because now I know that I’m not alone. Thanks for saving me, even though you didn’t know you were doing it.

I think books about dark subjects help many readers face the harsh realities of the world and make more intelligent, healthy decisions when the darkness creeps up on them.

A: You used the myth of *Persephone* for inspiration in telling the story of *Wintergirls*, incorporating the image of the whole world turning into winter. This winter also recalls *Sleeping Beauty’s* long dreamless sleep and the way the thorny hedge surrounded her for all those years. I thought that was brilliant, and the contrast of sparkling white snow with the black psyche of an anorexic girl struggling to stay alive was striking. Do you think that writers might find it helpful to take a look at mythology while writing our own novels, especially those with dark subjects?

LHA: Myth is our air and water. To ignore it is like only allowing yourself to use half of the letters in the alphabet.

A: Have you ever thought of *Wintergirls* in terms of swimming in the dark and coming up for air and light?

LHA: Honestly? Not really. But I see life through the lens of hope, and I suppose it is inevitable that my perspective leaks into my stories.

Speak

In her novel *Speak*, Laurie Halse Anderson (1999/2009) plummets into the tormented psyche of a girl named Melinda, who refuses to talk after a summer date rape incident. We readers immerse ourselves in Melinda's mind, empathizing with the character who believes that "It is easier not to say anything. Shut your trap, button your lip, can it. Nobody really wants to hear what you have to say" (p. 9).

Anderson's protagonist finds hope in art, as well as in innocent childhood activities, nature, and (once again) ice and mirrors. "Art follows lunch, like dream follows nightmare," (p. 9) relates the narrator Melinda.

His room is Cool Central. He keeps the radio on. We are allowed to eat as long as we work. He bounced a couple of slackers who confused freedom with no rules, so the rest of us don't make waves. It is too much fun to give up. (p. 77)

Mirrors, too, reflect hope in *Speak*. A mirror's absence is a symbol of lost hope in this passage: "I get out of bed and take down the mirror. I put it in the back of my closet, facing the wall" (p. 17). As in *Wintergirls*, the mirror is a symbol of self-image, and the protagonist is losing hope and faith in her strength, and so she hides her reflection.

In addition to the light and mirrors, *Speak* leaps into new territory with a thematic strand that utilizes physical activity and play as a symbol and image of hope.

Running makes me feel like I am eleven years old and fast. I burn a strip up the sidewalk, melting snow and ice three feet on either side. (97)

Tennis symbolizes hope and power in a passage in which Melinda triumphs over her opponent:

I bounce the yellow ball, one two three. Up in the air like releasing a bird or an apple. . . . My racket takes on a life of its own, a bolt of energy . . . I'm tough enough to play and strong enough to win. (p. 170)

Innocent childhood play symbolizes the possibility of a return to purity in a winter break scene where Melinda makes a snow angel.

I tromp to an unmarked piece of snow and let myself fall backward. The scarf falls over my mouth as I wave my wings. The wet wool smells like first grade, walking to school on a cold morning with my milk money jangling in the tips of my mittens. . . . I believed in Santa Claus. (p. 71)

Anderson uses not only snow angels, but bicycle riding to communicate a sense of innocence that translates as hope for a return to better days. As the character Melinda pedals through the streets of a sleeping suburb, she relates: "I ride like I have wings. I am not tired. I don't think I'll ever have to sleep again" (p. 190).

Childhood experiences are also used in an Easter scene in which Melinda's hope for a return to innocence is clear: "I made hard-boiled eggs for lunch and drew little faces on them with a black pen" (p. 143). Melinda's lack of typical teenage self-consciousness is an effective communication to the reader that the little girl inside might prevail and win the battle that's raging inside her silence.

As in *Wintergirls*, nature, too, symbolizes hope in *Speak*, along with the changing of seasons and the coming of spring.

May is finally here and it has stopped raining. Good thing, too—the mayor of Syracuse was about to put out a call for a guy named Noah. The sun appears butter-yellow and so warm it coaxes tulips out of the crusty mud. A miracle. (p. 165)

Tulips aren't the only flower imagery appearing in *Speak*. Melinda plants marigold seeds and says, "Too much sun after a Syracuse winter does strange things to your head, makes you feel strong" (p. 180).

Tree metaphors abound throughout the book, coming to a powerful climax with a description of Melinda's tree art at the end of the novel.

My tree is definitely breathing; little shallow breaths like it just shot up through the ground this morning. This one is not perfectly symmetrical. The bark is rough. . . . Roots knob out of the ground and the crown reaches for the sun, tall and healthy. The new growth is the best part. (p. 196)

Melinda's art project is the ultimate symbol of hope, with new growth, breath, height, and reaching for the sun creating a commanding image and planting hope for a happy (yet, like the tree, not perfect) ending. Melinda's tree takes on an even greater beauty and sense of strength and hope with this passage:

My tree needs something. I walk over to the desk and take a piece of brown paper and a finger of chalk . . . I practice birds—little dashes of color on paper. It's awkward with the bandage on my hand, but I keep trying. I draw them without thinking—flight, flight, feather, wing. Water drips on the paper and the birds bloom in the light, their feathers expanding promise. (p. 197)

The final image of hope, on *Speak*'s last page, comes as it does in *Wintergirls*—with the melting of ice:

The tears dissolve the last block of ice in my throat. I feel the frozen stillness melt down through the inside of me, dripping shards of ice that vanish in a puddle of sunlight on the stained floor. Words float up.

Me: "Let me tell you about it." (p. 198)

With the thawing of the ice, the character has found her voice . . . and hope.

A: Is *Speak* something of a metaphor for your own "speaking out" as an author who's not afraid to speak—or write—the truth?

LHA: Absolutely. The writing of *Speak* was me daring myself to find my voice and use it. That's the most outrageous thing any artist can do. It is also the most necessary.

A: I love the scene in *Speak* where Melinda holds a sliver of glass to the boy's neck and says: "I said NO." In my opinion, these three words instill hope in the reader that Melinda will indeed be okay. Do you agree?

LHA: Yes and no. The most hopeful words for me are at the end of the book, when she turns to her teacher and starts to talk to him.

A: *Speak* was told in first person, as was *Wintergirls*. Do you believe that a first-person voice is more effective in telling a difficult story?

LHA: Not necessarily. But it is very effective in YA literature because of the intense amplitude of adolescent emotions.

A: Before beginning your novel *Speak*, you heard the literal voice of Melinda in the darkness one night. Have you heard any voices for other works? How can we as writers tune in to our own voices?

LHA: The trick is to *not* tune into your voice. You have to let it creep up on you, like a fawn in the forest.

Chains

Laurie Halse Anderson's historical novel *Chains* (2008) is the story of Isabel, a 13-year-old African American who is waging an excruciating war for freedom from slavery. Held in slavery by a hateful New York City couple, and straining to glimpse a sliver of light within these blackest of days, Isabel and her sister Ruth find hope and light in nature. The first kernel of hope for Isabel is found in a jar of seeds that her late mother never had a chance to plant.

I looked around our small room, searching for a tiny piece of home I could hide in my pocket.

What to take?

Seeds. (p. 13)

Isabel's hope is a tentative and uncertain one, and she reflects: "I didn't know what they'd grow into. I didn't know if they'd grow at all" (p. 14).

Isabel also finds hope in the ghosts of her ancestors, who she believes just may have the power to save her. In a scene where Isabel and her sister are being transported on a boat to the city of New York, Isabel ponders the fact that salvation can't arrive while she's on the water. "Momma said that ghosts couldn't move over water" (p. 25).

Isabel ventures forth with a show of hope when she plants her mother's seeds.

When the fat moon rose the next night, I planted the mystery seeds I had taken from Momma's jar. I did not know what they would grow into, but planting them deep in the cool dirt was a comfort. (p. 84)

As in *Wintergirls*, Anderson uses the moon as a symbol of hope in *Chains*.

"The moon was my friend. It lit up the library enough for me to make my way without stumbling into anything" (p. 98).

Hope is also found in Isabel's dreams:

In my dream I stood on a sandy beach, my back to the sea, the moon over my left shoulder. An enormous map was unrolled at my feet. The roads on it were marked with velvet black ink, rivers a pearly blue, mountains a speckled green. It was a map of a country I had never before seen. (p. 130)

In a horrific dark scene where Isabel is branded with a hot iron, her hope appears in the misty ghosts of her parents. "My momma and poppa appeared from the shadows. They flew to me and wrapped their arms

around me and cooled my face with their ghost tears” (p. 148).

As Isabel’s body and soul are racked with pain from the fire branding, the ghost of an ancestor soothes her. “She talked Jamaica, more song than words, and brought bitter tea to my mouth and made the world smell of lemons and told me to sleep” (p. 149).

Isabel finds “spots of hope” at Christmas, with a wreath stuck to the front of a tent, a butter churn, and wood smoke. “Smoke swirled slow from the top of a chimney, dipped at the roof line, then rose up to the stars” (p. 248).

A frozen winter’s morning shines with optimistic possibilities for Isabel.

The sun rose bright the next day, catching in the icicles that hung from the eaves and jumping off the snow like a mirror. The linens pegged out on the line were froze stiff as wood and covered in a lacework of ice. The clouds scuttled away and the sun blazed, turning the yard into a garden of jewels. (p. 267)

In *Chains*, as in *Wintergirls* and *Speak*, ice and snow symbolize hope and a mirror is used as an image of light. A mirror reflecting the protagonist’s image also reflects hope in a scene where a candle and a mirror illuminate Isabel in the night. Her parents’ ghosts and memories blend together in the image, joining as one reflection that is Isabel. “My nose and mouth recollected Momma’s, but the set of the eyes, those came from Poppa. As I stared, their two faces came forth and drifted back, until I could see only me” (p. 286). Isabel touches the branded letter “I” that’s now “a pink ribbon embroidered on my skin,” and she finds strength and hope and beauty in the scar that came from the branding. “*This is my country mark*. I did not ask for it, but I would carry it as Poppa carried his. It made me his daughter. It made me strong” (p. 286).

In the last pages of *Chains*, Isabel’s hope is found in water. “I rowed that river. I rowed that river like it was a horse delivering me from the Devil” (p. 298). Isabel’s hope and light come with her strength, and muscles born from hard work and slavery.

My back, my shoulders, my arms, they pulled with the strength of a thousand armloads of firewood split and carried, of water buckets toted for miles, of the burdens of every New York day and New York night boiled into two miles of water that I was going to cross. (p. 298)

The water is both hope and obstacle in this scene, and the results of slavery (the muscles) serve as both servitude and hope, blended together into one push across water that will result in freedom.

Ghosts and moon once again symbolize hope and light when Isabel realizes that the ghosts of her ancestors can indeed move across water, as the spirits tug Isabel’s boat forward with their strength. “My eyes closed and the moon drew me west, away from the island of my melancholy” (p. 299). When Isabel opens her eyes, she discovers that the boat has reached shore. Wood smoke is used as hope when Isabel notes: “Heaven was crystal lit with white angel fire, colored peach at the edges. Heaven smelled of wood smoke” (p. 299).

The branches over the boat are covered in ice, as is Isabel, but as in *Wintergirls*, the ice begins to crack. “I was coated in ice, too, that fractured and crackled as I moved” (p. 300). The image of the water and of the rising sun and of the river flowing south out to sea lets Isabel know that she has arrived in Jersey . . . and set herself free.

The symbols of hope found in water, sun, ice, and wood smoke are Isabel’s triumph and her freedom.

A: I once heard Louise Hawes say that we as readers get communion from the best books, and that writers and readers meet halfway and do together what they could never do alone. I believe that *Chains* was a form of communion between present and past, white and black. Have you ever thought of writing as a form of communion? Is there a book from your own childhood with which you felt that connection?

LHA: For me, writing is a communion with a Spirit that is much more vast than I can comprehend. With readers, it’s more a conversation around a campfire. . . . I suppose that has elements of communion, too, but at a different level.

A: Some reviews observed that *Chains* ended on a note of redemption for the characters. Are redemption, salvation, and hope all the same thing? If not, which would you rather leave with your readers?

LHA: Redemption and salvation are religious constructs that do not have universal resonance. Hope

rings true to every heart; I pick that one, please.

Laurie Halse Anderson may be a doyenne of darkness, but she is also a harbinger of hope. In Anderson's stories, there is always a harbor of hope, a resting place in which readers may find a safe haven. Whether it be through glass, mirrors, candles, water, moon, stars, ghosts, ice, or snow, Anderson's symbols reflect and illuminate, allowing cracks—or beams—of light into the darkness. Anderson's characters grow and change, and the light guides them along the way.

Unintentional and subconscious as they may be, Laurie Halse Anderson's symbols of hope shine intuitively, and her moral code of including hope in her stories is a fulfilled responsibility. In the darkest moments of Laurie Halse Anderson's books are found the light of transformation and of hope. My final question to the author was this:

A: Some say it was F. Scott Fitzgerald who said that hope was the one thing man could not live without. Jacqueline Susann alleged that hope was a drug. Edgar Allan Poe contended hope was a shadow or illusion meant to tempt man to madness, and Raymond Chandler thought that hope was for suckers. What is hope for Laurie Halse Anderson?

LHA: Hope is a decent reason to get out of bed every morning.

Linda Oatman High (www.lindaoatmanhigh.com) is an author of books for children and teens. This article comes from her critical thesis in the third semester of the MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults program at Vermont College, Montpelier.

References

- Anderson, L. H. (2008). *Chains*. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's.
- Anderson, L. H. (1999/2009). *Speak* (10th anniversary ed.). New York: Puffin.
- Anderson, L. H. (2009). *Wintergirls*. New York: Viking Juvenile.
- Burroway, J., & Stuckey-French, E. (2007). *Writing fiction: A guide to narrative craft & writing poems with workshop guide to creative writing value pack*. New York: Longman.
- Coleman, L. (2004). *The copycat effect: How the media and popular culture trigger the mayhem in tomorrow's headlines*. New York: Pocket Books.
- Cimino, M. (Director). Spikings, B., Deeley, M., Cimino, M. & Peverall, J. (Producers). (1978). *The Deer Hunter*. Universal City, CA, USA: Universal Studios .
- Friedman, B. (1994). *Writing past dark: Envy, fear, distraction, and other dilemmas in the writer's life*. Brattleboro: Harper Paperbacks.
- Grimm, J., & Grimm, W. (1969). *The sleeping beauty and other tales*. Chicago: Children's Press.
- Horning, K. T. (2009). Fearless: An interview with Laurie Halse Anderson. *School Library Journal*. Retrieved on June 29, 2010, from www.schoollibraryjournal.com/article/CA6660876.html.
- O'Connor, R. F. (1969). *Flannery O'Connor. Mystery and manners*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.
- von Goethe, J. H. (1774/1989). *The sorrows of young Werther* (Michael Hulse, Trans.). New York: Penguin.

Stories from the Field

A Multicultural Education Practice with Muchacho by LouAnne Johnson

Sung Choon Park

Assistant Professor
Curriculum and Instruction
University of Arkansas
scpark@uark.edu

Many teacher educators experience challenges in bringing multicultural issues into the multicultural education courses for predominantly white preservice teachers. I have found that using *Muchacho*, published in 2009 by LouAnne Johnson who wrote *Dangerous Minds* (originally titled *My Posse Don't Do Homework*), helps my students make connections between multicultural education in theory and practice. In my Multicultural Issues in Education class, I give them an assignment for which they have to 1) choose five important multicultural issues and summarize each issue by using a primary textbook, *Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society* by Gollnick and Chinn (2009), 2) support each issue with (con)textual information from *Muchacho*, and 3) explain how to address each issue in their own classroom or with their own students.

Muchacho's protagonist, Eddie Corazon, a Mexican American high school junior living in New Mexico, can teach preservice teachers about multiple perspectives, perspective consciousness, and multicultural issues in an authentic and legitimate voice: "I don't know how many times somebody told me to go back where I came from except I am where I came from We didn't cross the border, mijo. The

border crossed us. The Corazons been living here for three hundred years" (p. 17). This statement leads us to discuss Eurocentrism and how it is related to the perspectives toward Native Americans and other immigrants. In addition, my students expressed empathy, not sympathy, in understanding social justice issues. As Eddie reflects, "We don't need people feeling sorry for us. We need those hard teachers who know what it feels like to wake up hungry every day for sixteen years" (p. 15).

Many preservice teachers may never be able to understand fully what Eddie and other students experience in their everyday lives. However, the voice in young adult literature can help preservice teachers develop culturally relevant pedagogy when they empathize with characters who deal with multicultural issues every day, understand social injustices related to multicultural backgrounds of the characters, and develop pedagogical practices to help their own students succeed academically at school and culturally in the society.

References

- Gollnick, D., & Chinn, P. C. (2009). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society* (8th ed.). Columbus, OH: Pearson.
- Johnson, L. (1995). *Dangerous minds*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Johnson, L. (2009). *Muchacho*. New York: Knopf.

Junie B. Jones in a Middle School Classroom?

Christy Duchien

Corvallis Middle School
Corvallis, Montana
christyd@corvallis.k12.mt.us

A first impression of my 7th-grade reading enhancement class may indicate chaos, but taking a second glance indicates reading is being enjoyed. The class is split into book club groups of varying reading levels and interests, showing how diverse readers can come together to read and discuss young adult literature. Every element of the groups was student-chosen, including which group to join, which book to read, how much to read each class period, and who leads group discussions. The largest, a group of six girls, is reading through Junie B. Jones books by taking turns reading out loud to each other. The fluency that comes from even the struggling readers is amazing. Every student is using emotion and voice fluctuations to fit the character and the situation. They are having fun, they are making connections, and most of all, they are becoming confident readers, which in my experience turns students into lifelong readers.

Other groups include boys reading through Jerry Spinelli books, a pair reading the Percy Jackson series, two girls reading Patricia McCormick's *Cut*, three other girls reading Ben Micklethwait's *Petey*, and another group of boys reading through the *Twilight* series at a pace comparable to some of my most voracious readers; even guys like vampires and romance. When I sit with each group and participate in their discussions, I am always impressed listening to what the students are thinking while they are reading, what their opinions are, what questions they have while reading, what moral implications may arise, what vocabulary terms are looked at, and what predictions are made.

I don't think that these groups would be as successful in accomplishing all of this if they weren't allowed so much autonomy. Being able to sit where they choose, allowing them to have snacks if they wish, and choosing how, what, and who to read with creates an environment of respect for all readers. As a reading teacher, there is nothing better than sitting back and watching a multifaceted class of students ingest and digest young adult literature.

Pass the Book Around

Shalonda Shillow

Belaire High School
Baton Rouge, LA
sshillow@yahoo.com

Teaching literature to high school seniors can sometimes be as painful as getting teeth pulled. When I mentioned to my students the requirements for their Independent Reading, I received moans and groans. These moans and groans were from reluctant students who didn't want to read on their own in addition to the already-mandated texts in the curriculum. I assured them that they had the option of choosing which specific books they wanted to read over the course of the school year. I suggested two young adult novels that I was exposed to during my undergraduate and graduate school experiences: *Speak* and *Inexcusable*.

I sparked my students' curiosity about the novels by appealing to their interests in teen issues like identity, peer pressure, and pressures of high school. At this point, my students really began to listen. When I was done, one of my students asked for permission to borrow one of my copies of *Speak*, while another asked to borrow a copy of *Inexcusable*. Of course I said "Yes."

As time went on, I forgot about the books and began teaching the mandated texts. One day, the two students who borrowed my books were turning them in right as two other students were approaching me. The latter two students heard about *Speak* and *Inexcusable* from their classmates and were coming to me to request permission to borrow the books. The idea of my students discussing novels outside of the classroom is definitely one of the rewards of teaching.

Young adult novels are great for motivating reluctant readers and for keeping avid readers interested. They help draw connections between real-life experiences and literature. After reading *Speak*, one of my students said, "I learned that if you don't or won't speak up for yourself, who would? *Speak* seems something like a survival kit." These connections that my students are able to make are a testament to how young adult novels can inspire students to read more and to begin making these literary/real-world connections that many of them were unable to do before.

References

Anderson, L. H. (1999). *Speak*. New York: Puffin.
Lynch, C. (2007). *Inexcusable*. New York: Simon Pulse.

NCTE PRESENTS...

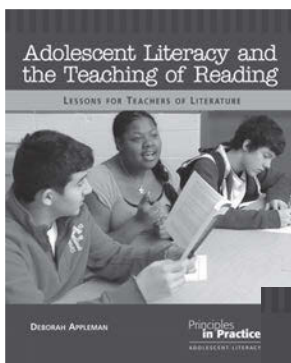
Principles in Practice

Cathy Fleischer, Special Imprint Editor

The Principles in Practice imprint offers teachers concrete illustrations of effective classroom practices based in NCTE research briefs and policy statements.

Each book discusses the research on a specific topic, links the research to an NCTE brief or policy statement, and then demonstrates how those principles come alive in practice: by showcasing actual classroom practices that demonstrate the policies in action; by talking about research in practical, teacher-friendly language; and by offering teachers possibilities for rethinking their own practices in light of the ideas presented in the books.

Books within the imprint are grouped in strands, each strand focused on a significant topic of interest. Books in the adolescent literacy strand include:



ADOLESCENT LITERACY AND THE TEACHING OF READING

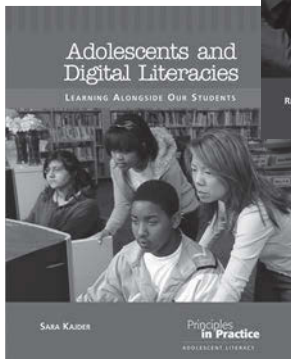
Lessons for Teachers of Literature

Deborah Appleman

Deborah Appleman dismantles the traditional divide between secondary teachers of literature and teachers of reading and offers a variety of practical ways to teach reading within the context of literature classrooms.

117 pp. 2010. Grades 9–12. ISBN 978-0-8141-0056-1.

No. 00561 \$24.95 member/\$33.95 nonmember



ADOLESCENTS AND DIGITAL LITERACIES

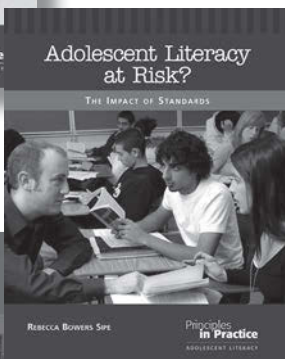
Learning Alongside Our Students

Sara Kajder

Sara Kajder examines ways in which teachers and students co-construct new literacies through Web 2.0 technology-infused instructional practices.

119 pp. 2010. Grades 9–12. ISBN 978-0-8141-5299-7.

No. 52997 \$24.95 member/\$33.95 nonmember



ADOLESCENT LITERACY AT RISK?

The Impact of Standards

Rebecca Bowers Sipe

Rebecca Bowers Sipe offers an in-depth look at the world of standards. Throughout the book, she raises questions that are significant to teachers and administrators who are concerned about the direction the standards movement has taken.

127 pp. 2009. Grades 9–12. ISBN 978-0-8141-2296-9.

No. 22969 \$24.95 member/\$33.95 nonmember

**To Order: Visit our website at www.ncte.org
or call toll free at 1-877-369-6283**

NCTE

National Council of Teachers of English

THE PROFESSIONAL HOME OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COMMUNITY

NCTE PRESENTS...

Fresh Takes on Teaching Literary Elements

How to Teach What Really Matters about Character, Setting, Point of View, and Theme

Michael W. Smith and Jeffrey D. Wilhelm

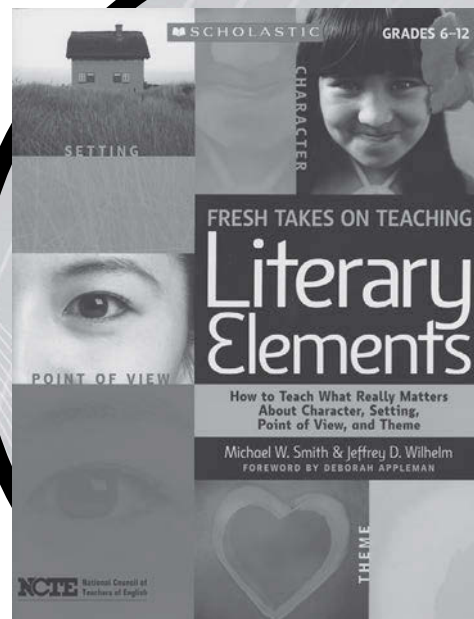
Foreword by Deborah Appleman

Bring new power and purpose to the study of literature with innovative tools and strategies that deepen students' understanding of literary elements and help them apply that understanding to their reading as well as their writing.

Rich, original passages illuminate the intricacies of character, setting, point of view, and theme, and deeply engaging activities framed by inquiry enable students to transfer what they learn not only to new reading situations but also to the way they think through problems and live their lives.

208 pp. 2009. Grades 6–12. A copublication of Scholastic Inc. and NCTE.

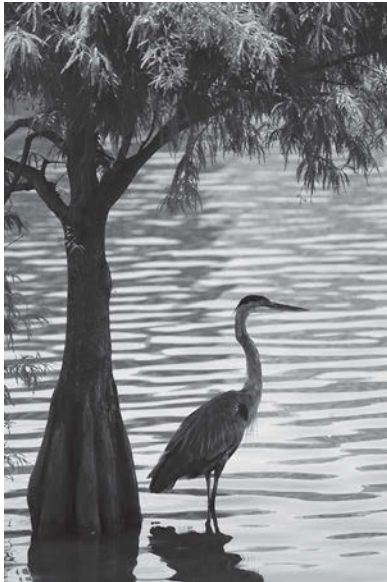
No. 17953 \$23.95 member/ \$25.95 nonmember



**To Order: Visit our website at www.ncte.org
or call toll free at 1-877-369-6283**

NCTE National Council of Teachers of English

THE PROFESSIONAL HOME OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COMMUNITY



Photos courtesy of the Orlando/Orange County CVB, Inc.

Teachers and Students Together: Living Literate Lives

**National Council of Teachers of English
November 18-21, 2010 • Orlando, Florida**

Join thousands of K-12 classroom teachers, college faculty, administrators, and other educational professionals, as they gather to hear award-winning speakers, attend idea-packed sessions, share best practices, and test the latest teaching materials at the NCTE Annual Convention in Orlando!

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Early Registration Rates (before 9/15/10)

- Member - \$210
- Nonmember - \$285
- Student member - \$90
- Student nonmember - \$100

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more convention information, visit www.ncte.org/annual or contact NCTE Customer Service at **1-877-369-6283**.

