

Books about Young Adult Literature (2000–2010):

A Retrospective

In recent years, the field of young adult literature has seen an explosion of books for and about adolescent readers. This plethora of new material—*books for teens* (fiction and nonfiction) and *books about teens and their literary preferences*—continues to line the bookshelves of popular bookstores and avid readers with an abundance that would make the founders of young adult literature smile with glee and pride.

With this in mind, I have prepared reviews of selected textbooks published from 2000–2010 that are devoted to the study of young adult literature. This column will not speak to specific new books of fiction for young adults, but I believe the books that are reviewed will serve for years to come as rich resources for those who care deeply about the promulgation of work that speaks openly and honestly about good books for teens.

References

The forerunner of all reference textbooks on the study of young adult literature is *Literature for Today's Young Adults* (Allyn & Bacon, 2008) by Nilsen and Donelson. Now in its eighth edition, this comprehensive and absorbing text frames the importance of the study of young adult literature within literary, historical, and social contexts.

Historically, it is worth noting that Nilsen and Donelson are pioneers in the study of young adult literature, both having studied with G. Robert Carl-

son (University of Northern Iowa), one of the leading lights in the study of books for adolescents. Together, in 1973, they helped create ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE), serving as its initial presidents and the founding editors of *The ALAN Newsletter*, which eventually became *The ALAN Review*.

Bucher and Hinton's *Young Adult Literature: Exploration, Evaluation, and Appreciation* (2nd ed., Pearson, 2009) is another innovative text revealing what is current and viable in the study of books for young adults. Filled with detailed suggestions for use in the classroom and multiple readings on critical viewpoints, this is a smart compendium for any young adult book lover.

Essentials of Young Adult Literature (2nd ed., Allyn and Bacon, 2009) is a delicious text filled with relevant information and tidbits about books for teens. Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown have compiled a text that includes extensive lists of recommended books, organized by genre and topic and annotated for ease of consideration for classroom use and personal reading. This resource is a perfect complement to Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson, and Short's equally compelling text, *Essentials of Children's Literature* (Allyn & Bacon, 2010).

Cole has a terrific new text entitled *Young Adult Literature in the 21st Century* (McGraw Hill, 2008). Cole's good work discusses in considerable depth the reading interests of adolescents. Each of the genre chapters includes illustrative methods for teaching

reading to all learners and annotated lists of relevant resources.

The Continuum Encyclopedia of Young Adult Literature (Continuum, 2005), edited by Cullinan, Kunzel, and Wooten, contains over 800 signed entries written by 200 contributors on every aspect of young adult literature. This one volume is suitable for those with both a passing and serious interest in the growth and depth of young adult literature.

Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature (Routledge, 2010) by Wolf, Coats, Enciso, and Jenkins is the first attempt to pull together in one volume the research on children's and young adult literature that is currently scattered across three intersecting disciplines: education, English, and library information science. The book's organization reflects the special interests of each of these disciplines. Section one focuses on readers, the province of education; section two on the analysis of text, the province of English and literature; and section three looks at the social contexts surrounding and influencing the intersections of readers and texts.

Edited Texts

Without a doubt, the birth of books for teens has brought forth a collection of texts with multiple essays about the study and teaching of young adult literature. What follows are some resources that highlight the best of this specific genre of edited works.

Exploding the Myths: The Truth about Teenagers and Reading by Aronson (Scarecrow, 2001) is a series of essays challenging what is considered acceptable and worthy for young adult readers.

Hit Lists for Young Adults 2: Frequently Challenged Books by Lesesne and Chance (American Library Association, 2002) is an excellent resource that illuminates some of the more frequently challenged young adult books of our day.

The Distant Mirror: Reflections on Young Adult Historical Fiction (Scarecrow, 2005) by Brown and St. Clair is a sharp companion for teachers and media specialists seeking to use historical fiction in their lessons.

From Hinton to Hamlet: Building Bridges between Young Adult Literature and the Classics (2nd ed., Greenwood, 2005) by Herz and Gallo examines how literature for teens has evolved from classical texts to

more contemporary fare and how each can complement the other.

The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969–2004 (Scarecrow, 2006) by Cart and Jenkins explores how sexual identity reveals itself in contemporary books for teens.

Trupe's *Thematic Guide to Young Adult Literature* (Greenwood Press, 2006) is a critical look at prominent ideas and issues raised in teen books and how these issues can be made relevant to young people.

A fun book is *Names and Naming in Young Adult Literature* (Scarecrow, 2007) by Nilsen and Nilsen. This intriguing work demonstrates how authors of young adult literature use the creation of names for people, places, events, inventions, animals, and imaginary concepts as one of their most important literary techniques.

Brenner's *Understanding Magna and Anime* (Libraries Unlimited, 2007) explores Japanese art forms anime and manga and their influence on books for teens. Highly visual, emotionally charged, and action-packed, this handy reference provides a brief history of anime and manga, discusses its common themes, cultural significance, and impact on adolescents everywhere.

Keeling's *Discovering Their Voices: Engaging Adolescent Girls with Young Adult Literature* (International Reading Association, 2007) is a thematic read about the portrayal of young girls in adolescent novels and how that has changed considerably since the birth of teen fiction.

A remarkable volume is Beers, Probst, and Rief's *Adolescent Literacy* (Heinemann, 2007), a collection of essays by educators and young adult authors alike on the profound forces and influences shaping contemporary adolescent literature as well as reading habits and resources.

Waller's *Constructing Adolescents in Fantastic Realism* (Routledge, 2008) allows the reader to explore one area of a literary genre that never tires—fantasy that speaks so vividly of real world events.

Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults (Routledge, 2009), edited by Hintz and Ostry, explores the creation of perfect and near-perfect societies in young adult books

Young Adult Literature and Culture (Cambridge Scholars, 2009), edited by Eiss, examines the interrelationship between teen books and popular culture.

Critical Approaches to Young Adult Literature (Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2009) is a highly analytical study of today's young adult literature. Latrobe and Drury explore numerous critical theories of literature—New Criticism/Formal Criticism; Psychological Criticism; Sociological Criticism; Relationships in Context; Historical Criticism; Gender Criticism; Opposite Sexes or Neighboring Sexes; Archtypal/Mythological Criticism; Popular Culture and Criticism; and Reader Response. In this book and accompanying CD-Rom set, the authors explore a multiplicity of methods to develop vibrant reading communities among adolescents, including understanding multiple intelligences, inquiry-based learning, and diverse beliefs. A detailed appendix, complete with annotated book lists, rounds this welcomed young adult resource.

Learning Curves: Body Image with Female Sexuality in Young Adult Literature (Scarecrow, 2009) by Younger explores in perceptive and insightful commentary an often-overlooked critical discourse: the female body as portrayed in books for adolescents.

Reynolds's *Mixed Heritage in Young Adult Literature* (Scarecrow, 2009) is a critical exploration of how mixed-heritage characters (those of mixed race, ethnicity, religion, and/or adoption) and real-life people have been portrayed in young adult fiction and nonfiction.

In *Young Adult Literature and Adolescent Identity across Cultures and Classrooms: Contexts for the Literary Lives of Teens* (Routledge, 2010), edited by Alsup, leading scholars examine the theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical connections between the reading and teaching of young adult literature and adolescent identity development. Specifically, this critical work addresses who is reading young adult literature, why they are reading it, and why teachers should teach it.

A unique spin on the study of young adult literature is Dewan's *The Art of Place in Literature for Children and Young Adults: How Locale Shapes a Story* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), a work that illuminates how a story's locale often underscores a book's theme.

Campbell's Scoop: Reflections on Young Adult Literature (Scarecrow, 2010) is a collection of essays whereby Campbell, a noted young adult book expert, shares her ruminations about trends and issues in the presentation of young adult books.

Finally, *Reading the Adolescent Romance: Sweet*

Valley High and the Popular Young Adult Romance Novel (Routledge, 2010) by Pattee is a terrific piece highlighting this very specific genre of young adult literature.

Practical Texts—Teaching

To be sure, there are a plethora of books devoted to teaching young adult literature—and in most unique ways. Here are a few.

Joan Kaywell put together a series using young adult literature to help resolve real-life issues. This sharp series from Greenwood Press pairs an educator with a therapist to share insights about troubled adolescent characters. Books included are Bowman's *Using Literature to Help Troubled Teenagers Cope with Health Issues* (2000), Kaplan's *Using Literature to Help Troubled Teenagers Cope with Identity Issues* (1999), Carroll's *Using Literature to Help Troubled Teenagers Cope with Societal Issues* (1999), Kaywell's *Using Literature to Help Troubled Teenagers Cope with Abuse Issues* (2004), and Allen's *Using Literature to Help Troubled Teens Cope with End of Life Issues* (2001).

Reading Rules: Motivating Teens to Read by Knowles and Smith (Libraries Unlimited, 2001) details numerous ideas for motivating teen readers. Included are practical classroom ideas and annotated lists of books for adolescents, educators, and parents.

Book Bridges for ESL Students: Using Young Adult and Children's Literature to Teach ESL (Scarecrow, 2002) by Reid provides practical classroom strategies using picture and chapter books for helping emerging English speakers grow in their proficiency.

Elliott and Dupuis's *Young Adult Literature in the Classroom: Reading It, Teaching It, Loving It* (International Reading Association, 2002) is a smart companion for teachers who are always asking themselves (or being asked), "Should I use young adult literature in the classroom? And if so, how?" Dividing the work into three sections—"Responding to Reading," "Exploring Genres," and "Studying Authors,"—this reference answers many questions about why young adult literature is relevant to classroom instruction (and a perfect substitute for the literary canon) and suggests a host of classroom instructional practices and related websites.

Sheppard's *Using Literature to Connect Young Adolescent Concerns throughout the Curriculum* (Na-

tional Middle School Association, 2004) and Bushman and Haas's *Using Young Adult Literature in the English Classroom* (4th ed., Prentice Hall, 2005) are both highly accessible classroom references filled with practical strategies for incorporating young adult literature in the traditional middle and high school English classroom.

Kunzel and Hardesty's *The Teen-Centered Book Club: Readers into Leaders* (Libraries Unlimited, 2006) is a practical how-to guide that addresses how book clubs "by, for, and about teens" are the only ones destined to succeed.

Similarly, Lesesne's *Naked Reading* (Stenhouse, 2006) is a book that lives up to its title. Unabashedly, Lesesne invites readers into how she motivates young readers to glom onto the intriguing and illuminating world of young adult books.

Equally appealing is *Teaching Literature to Adolescents* (Erlbaum, 2006) by Beach, Appleman, Hynds, and Wilhem, which examines the myriad methods with which one can introduce teen books to kids.

Rice's *What Was It Like? Teaching History and Culture through Young Adult Literature* (Teachers College Press, 2006) is a highly specific teaching text, one that aims to elucidate the role of historical fiction in teaching kids about their world.

Sprague and Keeling's *Discovering Their Voices: Engaging Adolescent Girls with Young Adult Literature* (International Reading Association, 2007) details a curriculum that infuses literature-based discussions to help adolescent girls deal positively with their lives and develop their own voices. Extensive literature reviews and a bibliography help in selecting appropriate books for teen girls.

Teaching Young Adult Literature: Sharing the Connection (Wadsworth, 2007) by Brown and Stephens is a good resource for all things possible and real when using young adult books in secondary classrooms.

Kaywell's *Dear Author: Letters of Hope—Top Young Adult Authors Respond to Kids' Toughest Issues* (Philomel, 2007) is a smart piece about letters written to authors by teens who care about the books they read.

Literature and the Web (Heinemann, 2008) by Webb and Rozeman explores how the World Wide Web can be your best resource for studying books for and about teens.

Layne's *Igniting a Passion for Reading: Successful*

Strategies for Building Lifetime Readers (Stenhouse, 2009) is a smart, inspiring read by an author who both writes for teens and prepares teacher educators.

Polette's *Mysteries in the Classroom* (Libraries Unlimited, 2009) outlines strategies for introducing adolescents to 17 teen mystery titles and 6 favorite teen mystery authors.

Practical Texts—Library

Not surprisingly, there have appeared a number of good resources that are aimed at librarians, so they, too, can help teens find good books written specifically for them.

Sullivan's *Reaching Reluctant Young Readers: A Practical Handbook for Librarians and Teachers* (Scarecrow, 2002) and *Serving Young Teens and Tweens* by Anderson (Libraries Unlimited, 2006) are smart companions for any librarian looking to enliven their services for both enlightened and uninformed teen readers

The Guy-Friendly YA Library (Libraries Unlimited, 2007) by Welch promotes a lively discussion about designing library and teen programs that are appealing to young male readers.

Tuccillo's *Teen-Centered Library Service: Putting Youth Participation into Practice* (Libraries Unlimited, 2009) is a detailed practical guide that can help you get teens involved in local libraries.

Farrelly's *Make Room for Teens!: A Guide to Developing Teen Spaces in the Library* (Libraries Unlimited, 2010) outlines in vivid detail step-by-step instructions for providing a highly accessible and engaging adolescent reading area in your local library.

Becoming a Young Adult Author

Naturally, eager readers aspire to be accomplished authors, and there are a number of helpful resources for budding young adult novelists.

Pelberg's *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Writing for Young Adults* (Alpha, 2006) is a comprehensive guide that introduces aspiring storytellers to the ins and outs of writing fiction and nonfiction for young adults. Information includes an overview of writing: dialogue and point of view; plot, setting, and character construction; choosing an agent and publisher; marketing the finished work, and more.

Crook's. *Writing Books for Children and Young*

Adults (Self Counsel Press, 2007) and Liu's *Writing for Children and Teens: A Crash Course (How to Write, Revise, and Publish a Kid's or Teen Book with Children's Book Publishers)* (Pivotal Publishing, 2008) are both excellent resources for learning the ropes about young adult publishing.

Wild Ink: How to Write Fiction for Young Adults (Cottonwood Press, 2008) by Hanley is a highly entertaining guide to the ins and outs of writing fiction for teens. Complete with exercises to help budding authors find their inner voice, this fun read also includes interviews with accomplished young adult authors—Joan Bauer, Chris Crutcher, T. A. Barron—that prove both informative and enlightening.

Brooks's *Writing Great Books for Young Adults: Everything You Need to Know from Crafting the Idea to Landing the Publishing Deal* (Sourcebooks, 2009) is another text that provides information for aspiring authors of young adult literature.

Annotated Texts—General

No list would be complete without mentioning all the annotated resources that concisely summarize the array of young adult books available.

Stephens's *Coretta Scott King Awards: Using Great Literature with Children and Young Adults* (Libraries Unlimited, 2000) is a book that combines annotations of these award winners with practical strategies for their classroom use.

Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults: Reflections on Critical Issues by Cai (Greenwood, 2006) examines multiple viewpoints surrounding the place of multicultural literature in schools—including who should write it, how it should be selected, and what function it plays. Although primarily geared to children's books, this is still an important critical resource.

In *100 More Popular Young Adult Authors: Biographical Sketches and Bibliographies* (Libraries Unlimited, 2002), Drew presents a treasure trove of information about contemporary authors and their good books for teens.

Libretto and Barr's *High/Low Handbook: Best Books and Web Sites for Reluctant Teen Readers* (4th ed., Libraries Unlimited, 2002) annotates more than 500 titles for kids who “are least likely to read.” Fiction and nonfiction are included, organized into broad topics designed to appeal to young readers.

Ansel & Holley's *What Do Children and Young Adults Read Next?: A Reader's Guide to Children and Young Adults*. (Gale Cengage, 2004) and Gillespie's *The Children's and Young Adult Literature Handbook: A Research and Reference Guide* (Libraries Unlimited, 2005) are invaluable resources that evaluate more than 1,000 publications, covering the entire range of materials dealing with the study and promotion of books for teens—general references, bibliographies, literary awards, professional organizations, etc.—from all over the world. Each chapter begins with a complete analysis of the chapter content, followed by many detailed annotations of related references.

Nadelman's *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults: A Comprehensive Guide* (5th ed., Libraries Unlimited, 2005) describes and categorizes nearly 7,500 fantasy novels and story collections published in English in the US between 1900 and 2004.

Mahood's *A Passion for Print: Promoting Reading and Books to Teens* (Libraries Unlimited, 2006) offers inspiring and practical guidelines for “turning on” even the most reluctant readers.

Keene's *The Big Book of Teen Reading Lists: 100 Great, Ready-to-Use Book Lists for Educators, Librarians, Parents, and Teens* (Libraries Unlimited, 2006) has more than 100 reproducible lists of books for ages 13–18, listed under every conceivable subject and theme, designed to motivate young readers.

In *Classic Teenplots: A Booktalk Guide to Use with Readers Ages 12–18* (Libraries Unlimited, 2006), Gillespie and Naden have selected 100 classic YA titles published from 1966–2006; each title is categorized by genre, and the authors provide detailed information about the book, the author, similar stories, and key passages that can motivate adolescent readers. Additionally, in *The Newbery/Printz Companion: Booktalk and Related Materials for Award Winners and Honor Books* (3rd ed., Libraries Unlimited, 2006), Gillespie and Naden provide the same treatment to all Newbery Medal winners from 1922–2006 and all Printz Award winners from the prize's inception in 2000 until 2006.

In *War and Peace: A Guide to Literature and New Media, Grades 4–8* (Libraries Unlimited, 2006), Walter presents about 400 annotated books, videos, CD-ROMs, and websites that discuss war and peace in defined thematic chapters.

Fichtelberg's *Encountering Enchantment: A Guide to Speculative Fiction for Teens* (Libraries Unlimited,

2006) organizes and annotates by genre, subgenre, and theme some 1,400 titles of fantasy, science fiction, and the paranormal, most published from 1990–2005.

Gotcha for Guys! Nonfiction Books to Get Boys Excited about Reading (Libraries Unlimited, 2006) by Baxter and Kochel offers citations for more than 1,100 books specifically intended to pique the interest of middle grade boys.

Cultural Journeys: Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults by Gates and Mark (Scarecrow, 2006) is a great resource for selecting literature that speaks of diverse cultures.

Young Adult Literature in Action: A Librarian's Guide (Libraries Unlimited, 2008) by Chance is a smart guide for those desiring a good, concise, smart overview of what is current and viable in young adult literature. For the uninitiated, Chance provides an activity-oriented survey of young adult books—realistic, fantastic, and informational—combined with theoretical understandings of why young adult literature matters. Using the genre approach allows the author to embed both classroom strategies and reader rationales for classroom teachers who are just beginning to use young adult books with their students.

Thomas and Barr have compiled *Popular Series Fiction for Middle School and Teen Readers* (Libraries Unlimited, 2008), providing a handy reference for the best and most popular adolescent fiction that appears in series format. For each of the 700-plus series titles, the authors provide a description, tips about its general appeal, and a list of each book in the series.

Gentle Reads: Great Books to Warm Hearts and Lift Spirits, Grades 5–9 (Libraries Unlimited, 2008) by McDaniel recommends nearly 500 affirmative feel-good stories about the triumph of the human spirit. These stories include tales of survival, strong women, and quick-witted souls. What makes these books unique is that they are for young readers who desire a great read, but want to avoid reading about risky or potentially dangerous activities.

Zbaracki's *Best Books for Boys: A Resource for Educators* (Libraries Unlimited, 2008) is the perfect compendium for those who know reluctant readers, especially boys. All 500 entries are organized by genre and offer detailed age-specific annotations. Genres include everything from reality to fantasy, including nonfiction and poetry.

Fraser's *Reality Rules! A Guide to Teen Nonfiction*

Reading Interests (Libraries Unlimited, 2008) describes more than 500 titles published since 2000 with a special appeal for teens interested in true-to-life stories.

In *Best Books for Middle School and Junior High Readers, Grades 6–9* and *Best Books for High School Readers, Grades 9–12* (Libraries Unlimited, 2009), Barr and Gillespie present approximately 15,000 entries for high school adolescents in each volume, with easily discernible annotations that cover the best in fiction and nonfiction published from 2004–2008. Special mention is made of Lexiles and titles available in audio format.

Genre Talks for Teens: Booktalks and More for Every Teen Reading Interest (Libraries Unlimited, 2009) by Schall previews more than 100 titles released between 2003–2008, detailing their plots, appeal, and age-level appropriateness.

Green Reads: Best Environmental Resources for Youth, K–12 (Libraries Unlimited, 2009) by Wesson organizes and describes some 450 fiction and nonfiction titles, both print and electronic resources, all designed to appeal to young readers and engender discussion about the environment.

Koelling's *Best Books for Young Adults* (3rd ed., American Library Association, 2009) is a perfect compendium for teachers and parents wanting to know the latest in books for teens. Arranged by genre and with a thorough index, the list of books with clear annotations makes for a smart presentation and easy resource

Hilbun and Claes provide a comprehensive review of book awards in each of America's 51 states in *Coast to Coast: Exploring State Book Awards* (Libraries Unlimited, 2010).

A Family of Readers: The Book Lover's Guide to Children's and Young Adult Literature (Candlewick, 2010), edited by Sutton and Parravano, and *Reading Ladders: Leading Students from Where They Are to Where We'd Like Them to Be* (Heinemann, 2010), by Lesesne, help educators find the right book for the right kids.

Meloni's *Teen Chick Lit: A Guide to Reading Interests* (Libraries Unlimited, 2010) is a comprehensive guide that categorizes and describes more than 500 titles; the 6 major chapters represent themes indicative of "literature for teenage girls." Each chapter includes a complete description of the representative theme or subgenre and then provides full bibliographic informa-

tion, age recommendations, awards, etc. As Meloni writes, “chick lit” has become one of the most popular genres for young women—even landing a Library of Congress subject heading.

In *Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Teen Literature: A Guide to Reading Interests* (Libraries Unlimited, 2010), Webber outlines some 300 fiction and nonfiction suggestions for straight and GLBT teens and their families. Complete annotations include sexual orientation references (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender) and additional resources.

Literature Links to World History, K-12: Resources to Enhance and Entice (Libraries Unlimited, 2010) by Adamson presents over 2,700 titles, fiction and nonfiction, for specific grade levels, essential to making literary connections to world history.

About Young Adult Authors

Finally, no list of books would be complete without a list of all the smart biographies that have been written about young adult authors:

Angela Johnson: Poetic Prose (Scarecrow, 2006) by Hinton

Caroline B. Cooney: Faith and Fiction (Scarecrow, 2002) by Carroll

Critical Companion to J. D. Salinger by Mueller and Hochman (Facts on File, 2010)

Gary Paulsen (Greenwood, 2007) by Blasingame

Jacqueline Woodson (Mitchell Lane, 2008) by Hinton

Janet McDonald: The Original Project Girl (Scarecrow, 2008) by Ross-Stroud

Laurie Halse Anderson: Speaking in Tongues (Scarecrow, 2009) by Glenn

Richard Peck: The Past Is Paramount (Scarecrow, 2008) by Gallo

Russell Freedman: Nonfiction for Teens (Scarecrow, 2009) by Bloom

Sharon Draper: Embracing Literacy (Scarecrow, 2008) by Hinton

Teaching the Selected Works of Chris Crutcher (Heinemann, 2008) by Monseau and Hauschildt

Teaching the Selected Works of Gary Paulsen (Heinemann, 2009) by Salvner and Monseau

Teaching the Selected Works of Katherine Paterson (Heinemann, 2007) by Stover

Teaching the Selected Works of Mildred D. Taylor (Heinemann, 2007) by Crowe

Teaching the Selected Works of Robert Cormier (Heinemann, 2007) by Monseau

Teaching the Selected Works of Walter Dean Meyers (Heinemann, 2007) by Zitlow

Virginia Euwer Wolf: Capturing the Music of Young Voices (Scarecrow, 2003) by Reid

The lists and descriptions in this article are not exhaustive, but they represent a fair overview of what is available when one begins the study of young adult literature. And the best thing is . . . there are more to come!

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Have a comment on *Critical Approaches to Young Adult Literature*? Please share your thoughts with us:

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