



From the Editors

The theme of this issue asks us to consider the influences and intersections of race, class, gender, culture, and sexual identity in young adult literature. We posed questions authors might consider: What roles do adolescents feel trapped in or empowered by? How are issues of race, class, gender, culture, and sexual identity explored or challenged in YAL? Who is silenced or marginalized by an aspect of their identity? Which novels help students explore or try on different identities? Those questions (as well as the censorship actions that are directly related to identity that are currently going on in Arizona) made me (Jackie) think about my own identity as an advocate for young adult literature.

Coincidentally, two of this issue's articles not only focus on Kluger's 2008 novel *My Most Excellent Year: A Novel of Love, Mary Poppins, & Fenway Park*, but also include the same quote from the novel—a line from Steven Sondheim's musical *Merrily We Roll Along*: "Here's to us./Who's like us?/Damn few." Sometimes, that's how I feel about being part of the young adult literature community. We are committed not only to reading these texts but also to using them with readers in a number of ways, including as bridges to canonical texts, to increase (or begin) a lifelong love of reading, to explore ideas of social justice, and to improve reading comprehension skills. While some of our future tasks include demonstrating YAL's potential roles within the new Common Core State Standards, this issue examines what we have always known about the power of a young adult text—that the many ways in which readers identify with the characters can be powerful catalysts to self-understanding.

I hope the reader forgives me. I'm going to group articles together in terms of similarity rather than introducing them in order of their appearance in this issue. I'll start with the articles that provide provocative ideas for using YAL to discuss identity with students. First, in her yearlong study of an adolescent book club funded by a Gallo Grant, Lisa Scherff considers the intersections between James Gee's theories of identity and the graphic novel *Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty*. In their article, "Locating Queer Community in Award-Winning LGBTQ-Theme Young Adult Literature," Katherine Mason, April Brannon, & Elle Yarborough demonstrate how they use titles featuring LGBTQ characters from the past five years with their students in young adult literature courses. They point out that there has been a shift in this literature and that more YAL exists today "that depicts LGBTQ characters who are part of welcoming, supportive communities of LGBTQ people and their allies." Beth Buyserie and Crag Hill consider the wider identity issues addressed in Kluger's novel *My Most Excellent Year*, which they argue presents a wide variety of identities for readers to try on.

Two articles deal with the importance of incorporating the visual element into the English classroom—one with *teaching* visual texts and the other having students *respond to texts visually*. Nathan C. Phillips's work always gives me great ideas, and his column "Helping Students Respond Visually to Young Adult Literature" on how to teach visual texts is not to be missed. It's clear, concise, and contemporary. Jennifer S. Dail's article written with Tony Giles, "*The Hunger Games* and *Little Brother* Come to Life on Voice

Thread,” is an exciting look at ways students might “appropriate technology” to fight for a cause.

Three of our articles ask educators to seek out titles to use with their students that contain various representations of adolescents’ identities, but to do so equipped with knowledge of how to identify quality literature that addresses the potential audience or the experiences depicted in the text. Drawing from Alfred Tatum’s work on enabling texts, Casey H. Rawson and Sandra Hughes-Hassell’s article, “Rethinking the Texts We Use in Literacy Instruction with Adolescent African American Males,” urges educators to provide students, especially African American adolescent males, with texts that contain African American male characters with a variety of experiences and/ or backgrounds. In “A Critical Analysis of Language Identity Issues in Adolescent Literature,” Nancy L. Hadaway, Terrell A. Young, and Barbara A. Ward examine how the identities of adolescents who are English language learners are represented in 20 recommended and/ or award-winning YAL novels. Finally, Kristen B. Harris’s article on the missing representations of dating violence in YAL provides a close reading of Dessen’s *Dreamland* alongside real events of dating violence in order to point out the troubling, realistic representation found in this novel.

Sharon Kane’s article, “To Thine Own Self Be True: But First, Write Your Way to That Self,” and Donna Miller’s “Young Adult Literature as a Hu-

manitarian Core” both deal with the depiction of the humanities and the arts in YAL. Kane points out and categorizes the many types of writing that protagonists employ in order to work through or just deal with issues of identity(ies). Miller explores the idea of helping students see the intersection of the humanities with social issues; she finds many characters in YAL who are able to express their feelings about their societies through artistic endeavors.

In the author’s column, Rachel Caine explores her relationship with books and how she grew to love them. It’s a love letter of sorts to those who love YAL, have followed its trajectory, and are interested in writing or just learning more about the business. Judith A. Hayn’s interview with Canadian author Marthe Jocelyn is a wonderful conversation on the role of YAL nonfiction, and readers will find several new titles to add to their “must-read” list, if they are not already familiar with her work.

This issue’s Stories from the Field are all—to borrow a term from one of them—revolutionary, in a way. They are stories of readers relating fictional characters’ lives to real events, as well as breaking rules out of a love for reading. These are the stories that those of us who have taken risks using texts in our classroom, even just placing them on the shelves, can relate to. You may connect your identity as a lover of YAL with these readers and their stories.

So, here’s to our authors. Enjoy.

ALAN Foundation Research Grants

Members of ALAN may apply to the ALAN Foundation for funding (up to \$1,500) for research in young adult literature. Proposals are reviewed by the five most recent presidents of ALAN. Awards are made annually in the fall and are announced at the ALAN breakfast during the NCTE convention in November. The application deadline each year is **September 15th**.