

T . H . E
ALAN
REVIEW



National Council of Teachers of English *(Re)Inventing the Future of English*

2013 Annual Convention

November 21–24, 2013

Postconvention Workshops, November 25–26, 2013

Boston, Hynes Convention Center

Register by November 1, 2013, and save!



Member	\$250
Nonmember	\$325
Student Member	\$100

CONNECT. GET ENERGIZED. (Re) INVENT YOUR FUTURE

“NCTE’s Annual Convention is the time when we connect in person with all those people we learn with [online] throughout the year. We meet old friends for the first time and we make new friends whom we immediately follow on Twitter. It is a time to connect and reconnect, a time to refocus our conversations.”

—Franki Sibberson, NCTE member and Annual Convention attendee for 20+ years



For Convention information, visit www.ncte.org/annual or call NCTE Customer Service at 877-369-6283.

NCTE's Peer-Reviewed Journals

*Cutting-edge articles on core issues
in literacy education*



Language Arts

Peggy Albers, Caitlin Dooley, Amy Flint,
Teri Holbrook, and Laura May,
Georgia State University



Voices from the Middle

Doug Fisher, Nancy Frey, and
Diane Lapp, San Diego State University



Award Winning English Journal

Ken Lindblom, Stony Brook University



English Leadership Quarterly

Susan Groenke, University of Tennessee-Knoxville



Talking Points

Carol Gilles, University of Missouri-Columbia



Teaching English in the Two-Year College

Jeff Sommers, West Chester University



College Composition and Communication

Kathleen Blake Yancey, Florida State University



New Editor

College English

Kelly Ritter, University of
North Carolina-Greensboro



Research in the Teaching of English

Mark Dressman, Sarah McCarthy, and
Paul Prior, University of Illinois



English Education

Lisa Scherff, Florida State University and
Leslie S. Rush, University of Wyoming

*I love receiving the English Journal; it is the single most
useful professional development resource I have.*

—Jen Sabatelli, NCTE member and subscriber since 2004

*NCTE members
enjoy online access to
ALL journals published more
than two years ago!*

NCTE

National Council of Teachers of English

Join now:

<http://www.ncte.org/join>

Subscribe today:

<https://secure.ncte.org/store/journals>

Have questions? Call 877-369-6283.

<p><i>A Girl Named Digit</i> by Annabel Monaghan Houghton Mifflin, 2012, 187 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Young Adult Fiction/Espionage ISBN: 978-0-547-66852-9</p> <p>Farrah Higgins has a secret. She seems like your average teenager, but she's actually Digit, math genius extraordinaire. When her supersonic brain became a problem in middle school, though, Digit went into hiding. Now a senior, Farrah's goal is to lay low until she can join her mathematically inclined peers at MIT. One afternoon, while watching television, she stumbles onto a number sequence, throwing herself into the center of a terrorist plot. As she and John, her dreamy FBI caretaker, navigate the world of espionage, Farrah realizes that maybe she didn't need to hide Digit all this time. But now, Farrah has bigger problems. She has to stay one step ahead of the terrorists, because they don't care if she's Farrah or Digit—they just want her dead. Annabel Monaghan seamlessly weaves together quirky characters, clever dialogue, and non-stop action in this exciting novel.</p> <p>Diana Liu Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Break My Heart 1,000 Times</i> by Daniel Waters Hyperion, 2012, 352 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Mystery ISBN: 978-1-4231-6088-5</p> <p>In the aftermath of The Event, which extinguished the lives of millions of people within seconds, ghosts have become commonplace images among the living. Indeed, every morning Veronica briefly sits down to breakfast with her father, who has been dead for years. Every day she and her mother are forced to relive losing him, their hearts broken again and again.</p> <p>One of Veronica's high school teachers, Mr. Bittner, also struggles with loss, but he copes differently, seeking a new victim through whom he might resurrect his dead daughter, Eva. As the anniversary of Eva's death once again approaches, he becomes convinced Veronica will be the perfect host for his beloved child. Veronica and her new crush, Kirk, embark on a project to investigate the appearance of ghosts around town and must unearth the mysteries of Mr. Bittner's past, lest Veronica become just another ghost by his hand.</p> <p>Rachel Wilkinson Nashville, TN</p>
<p><i>Castle of Shadows</i> by Ellen Renner Fiction/Mystery Houghton Mifflin, 2010, 390 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Princess Charlotte Augusta Joanna Hortense of Quale, or Charlie to her friends, has not seen her mother in five years since her mysterious disappearance. Now, her father spends all his time shut up in his bedroom, building card castles while the kingdom is beginning to plot rebellion. One day, Charlie finds a valuable clue to where her mother may be, but her freedom is limited under the hateful eye of Mrs. O'Dair, the castle's housekeeper. She does not know whom she can trust within the castle walls, but will have to find out soon or face the consequences.</p> <p>Charlie speaks with the straightforwardness of a child, and her quest to find her mother becomes a journey to find her own self-worth and identity. Her courage is inspiring as she risks her own safety to save those around her.</p> <p>Candy Lee North Brunswick, NJ</p>	<p><i>Catherine</i> by April Lindner Brown/Poppy, 2013, 320 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Relationships/Romance/Obsession/ Classics Little, ISBN: 978-0-31619-692-5</p> <p>A tragic yet undying love is at the center of this edgy modern retelling of <i>Wuthering Heights</i> (Brontë, 1847), as the story alternates between Catherine and, 20 years later, her daughter Chelsea. After Chelsea finds a hidden letter from her long-missing mother, she travels to The Underground, an exclusive club in New York that belonged to her grandfather and where her mother grew up and fell in love. Upon her arrival, Chelsea is befriended by budding musician Cooper who works at the club, but she fears its owner, Hence, because of his violent fits of anger. While staying in her mother's old room, Chelsea finds her mother's diary describing the growing closeness and passion between her and Hence. The misunderstanding that severs the lovers' bond seems quite likely, and the impulsive reactions of Hence and Quentin, Catherine's brother, seem true to their natures, possibly inspiring a search for copies of the original love story on which this one is based.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Pullman, WA</p>

<p><i>Come August, Come Freedom: The Bellows, The Gallows, and the Black General Gabriel</i> by Gigi Amateau Candlewick, 2012, 240 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>A slave named Gabriel is unable to both defend the love of his life and earn the money to buy her freedom, so he makes a decision. Freedom for just his own family is not enough. Using the forge to turn pitchforks into swords and his eloquence to turn dreams into rallying cries, Gabriel plots a rebellion involving thousands of slaves, free blacks, poor whites, and Native Americans.</p> <p>Amateau's storytelling is outstanding in this book as she tells the story of a slave showing how horrible slavery was. Everything that Gabriel goes through becomes a driving force behind his starting a Revolution to bring liberty to those who have been wronged in their lives. This story shows Gabriel putting everything on the line to achieve freedom for everyone he cares about. After reading this book, I think that Gabriel is a true hero.</p> <p>Alex Klement Baton Rouge, LA</p>	<p><i>Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Third Wheel</i> by Jeff Kinney Amulet Books, 2012, 224 pp., \$13.95</p> <p>Bestselling author Jeff Kinney has done it again. The seventh episode of his Diary of a Wimpy Kid series brings hilarious joy to any reader as his cartoon illustrations successfully resurrect the memories of our middle school days.</p> <p>It's February and you know what that means. Love is in the air, and Greg Heffley is stuck in the middle of it all. The upcoming Valentine's Day dance has turned Greg's world upside down as he and his best friend, Rowley, scramble to find dates for the dance. An unexpected twist soon grants Greg a partner, and Rowley is left the odd man out. However, the night has just begun and things are about to change. Who will find love? Kinney's heartwarming story, filled with twists-and-turns, is guaranteed to transport any reader to a state of a pure delight.</p> <p>David Chang Chicago, IL</p>
<p><i>Four Secrets</i> by Margaret Wiley Carolrhoda LAB, 2012, 288 pp., \$17.95</p> <p>It was a simple plan, really. But sometimes, the best-laid plans can go terribly wrong. After being tormented by golden boy Chase Dobson for so long, Kate, Nate, and Renata decide that they've finally had enough. Together, the three best friends create a plan to kidnap Chase. All they want to do is scare him a little so that he'll leave them and their secrets alone. At first, their plan seems to be working, but soon things take an unexpected turn, and they find themselves in way deeper with Chase than they ever thought they would be. Weaving together mysterious journal entries, vivid graphics, and fascinating characters, Margaret Wiley has created a riveting story that will have readers turning pages until the very end. <i>Four Secrets</i> is a unforgettable book that will leave readers questioning the fine line between well-deserved justice and cold-hearted revenge.</p> <p>Diana Liu Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Freakling</i> by Lana Krumwiede Candlewick Press, 2012, 309 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>In the great walled city of Deliverance, where everyone possesses telekinetic abilities called psi, being different is dangerous. Twelve-year-old Taemon possesses a unique form of telekinesis that allows him to send his mind into objects to see how they work. When Taemon gets into an unfortunate accident, he loses his psi. People without psi are banished to the Powerless Colony. So now Taemon must hide his lack of psi if he wishes to continue living with his family in Deliverance. But in a society where simple tasks such as eating and brushing your teeth are done using psi, hiding this secret will prove to be an impossible task.</p> <p>Krumwiede successfully incorporates the idea of telekinesis into her novel to make the fictional society appear to be realistic. She incorporates sports, family, conflict, and morality into a thought-provoking story that most readers will enjoy.</p> <p>Stephanie Gilbert Baton Rouge, LA</p>

<p>Henry Franks: A Novel by Peter Adam Salomon Flux, 2012, 288 pp., \$9.99</p> <p>Memory/Dreams/Past Events ISBN: 978-0-7387-3336-4</p> <p>Peter Adam Salomon's dark and suspenseful debut novel <i>Henry Franks: A Novel</i> depicts the journey of 16-year-old Henry Franks as he struggles to solve the mysteries of his past. He can't seem to discover who he truly is behind his thousands of scars caused by a near-fatal accident, or at least that's what his peculiarly distant father says. Having only a scrapbook filled with unfamiliar faces and events, Henry is forced to rely on the help of his therapist and his affectionate next-door neighbor to uncover the facts. Are Henry's disturbing dreams about murder and names he doesn't recognize in any way connected to the long list of serial murders on St. Simon's Island?</p> <p>While Henry doesn't let the other characters or the reader into the depths of his thoughts, he proves to be a likeable character through his simple conversations and struggle for self-discovery. Salomon creates a mysterious and creepy story with unexpected plot twists sure to keep the reader feeling uneasy and guessing until the last page.</p> <p>Renee Rochel Baton Rouge, LA</p>	<p>Ichiro by Ryan Inzana Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012, 288 pp., \$19.99</p> <p>Graphic Novel/Identity ISBN: 978-0-547-25269-8</p> <p>American-born Ichiro wants to be just like the soldier father he lost when he was young. He immerses himself in Brooklyn culture and shows little interest in his Japanese heritage. When Ichiro's mother takes him along on a business trip to Japan and leaves him to stay with his grandfather, Ichiro feels out of place. To him, his grandfather's stories of Japanese history and ancient shrines seem outdated.</p> <p>Ichiro gains a new perspective on his grandfather's culture when a monster drags him down a magic hole into the world of ancient Japanese gods. Through his experiences in their world, Ichiro learns how the past informs the present. Beautifully inked and colored, <i>Ichiro</i> tells the story of one boy's search for identity and the magical experience that helps him to respect the many parts of his past that contribute to who he is becoming.</p> <p>Laura Cockman Fishers, IN</p>
<p>Just One Day by Gayle Forman Dutton Books, 2013, 288 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Young Adult Fiction/Romance/Traveling ISBN: 978-0-525-42591-5</p> <p>After completing high school with an impeccable GPA, sheltered Allyson Healey goes on a European tour as a graduation gift. But Europe isn't what she's expecting. It's somewhat lackluster—that is, until she meets a charismatic actor, Willem, at an underground Shakespeare performance. When the two meet again by chance, Allyson becomes "Lulu" and decides to visit Paris for a day with this charming stranger. They spend an unforgettable 24 hours together, but the next morning, Willem is gone, leaving her questioning everything she knows about herself. As Allyson begins college, she finds herself embarking on a new kind of journey, one of self-discovery, evolving friendships, and ultimately, finding love. In <i>Just One Day</i>, Gayle Forman paints a breathtaking story filled with rich imagery and deeply flawed characters. After reading this stunning novel, readers will eagerly await <i>Just One Year</i>, its companion novel.</p> <p>Diana Liu Nashville, TN</p>	<p>Marching to the Mountaintop: How Poverty, Labor Fights, and Civil Rights Set the Stage for Martin Luther King Jr.'s Final Hours by Ann Bausum National Geographic Children's Books, 2012, 112 pp., \$19.95</p> <p>Civil Rights/History/ Poverty/Social Justice ISBN: 978-1-42630-939-7</p> <p>Although much has been written about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. while he was in Memphis, little has been written about the sanitation strike itself. This book provides intriguing, little-known details about the time period and how the city's mayor refused to budge from his practice of sending the sanitation workers home with little pay during bad weather or refusing to pay them overtime. In fact, he treated them like garbage, the collection of which was quite unpleasant in those days. The bleakness of poverty and lack of dignity as well as lives without hope made the strike almost inevitable.</p> <p>Readers will shake their head in dismay at the stubbornness, short-sightedness, and racism that resulted in costly expenditures for police overtime and weapons rather than paying \$44 for lost rainy-day wages. Archival photographs and reliance on primary sources lend a "you-are-here" element to the engaging narrative.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Pullman, WA</p>

<p><i>Memoirs of a Teenage Amnesiac</i> by Gabrielle Zevin Square Fish, 2007/2012 reprint, 271 pp., \$ 8.99 ISBN: 978-0-312-56128-4</p> <p>Relationships</p> <p>Sixteen-year old Naomi Porter suffers a traumatic head injury when she falls headfirst down her high school's front steps. Waking up in the hospital, Naomi realizes she does not remember anything after the sixth grade; four years of her life have been wiped clean. Naomi must get to know the person she was before her accident, and in the process, she is faced with reassessing every detail of her life. With no recent memories, we watch Naomi more easily rise above the expectations of others and follow her heart as she writes new lyrics to her life song.</p> <p><i>Memoirs of a Teenage Amnesiac</i> examines a teenage girl's second chance at four critical years of adolescence. This idea leaves the reader wondering if her injury and memory loss were just an unfortunate accident, or something more providential—something that has allowed her to redefine herself in ways otherwise impossible.</p> <p>Lauren Miller Raleigh, NC</p>	<p><i>Momentum</i> by Saci Lloyd Holiday House, 2012, 215 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 978-0-8234-2414-6</p> <p>Adventure/Dystopian</p> <p>In the near future, London becomes a city that faces frequent energy problems and is separated into two worlds. The privileged Citizens are rich in material possessions and live comfortable lives, but they are restrained by a strict ID censor system and are under the control of a military government and Kossak soldiers. The favela, home of the Outsiders, though lacking in possessions and safety, grants its residents freedom. Hunter Nash, a Citizen boy whose father works for the government, yearns for the freedom of the Outsiders and accidentally steps in their world because of an Outsider girl, Uma.</p> <p>In order to protect a package that contains important data about the Outsiders' revolutionary organization, Hunter and Uma venture around London to find the new Keeper. Though they endure a Kossak attack and suffer from the forced betrayal of friends, they manage to keep the data safe, and Hunter decides to become an Outsider.</p> <p>Ka Yuen Cheung Hong Kong</p>
<p><i>My Mixed-up Berry Blue Summer</i> by Jennifer Gennari Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2012, 119 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 978-0-547-57739-5</p> <p>Realistic Fiction</p> <p>June was supposed to have the perfect summer swimming in the lake, exploring the woods with her friend Luke, and entering her pie in the Champlain Valley Fair. If only her Mom weren't planning on marrying Eva right after the civil union law was passed. If only everyone in town wasn't making a huge deal out of everything. June just can't see how they can be nice to her and then hate her family. And Eva's upfront attitude isn't helping either—like any other parent, she puts June in awkward social situations.</p> <p>Amidst mixed feelings about Eva, friendship crises, and objections from the townspeople, June gains the courage to stand up for what is important. She is just a typical 12-year-old, trying to make sense of the world, be accepted by her friends, and spend some quality time with her Moms.</p> <p>Linda Sun Hong Kong</p>	<p><i>N.E.R.D.S.: The Villain Virus</i> by Michael Buckley Amulet Books, 2012, 259 pp., \$15.95 ISBN: 978-1-4197-0415-4</p> <p>Children's Espionage/Thriller</p> <p>Julio "Flinch" Escala is a student of Thomas Knowlton Middle School. He has to deal with his challenging double identity, teachers who always pick on him, and the unfriendly principal who labels him as a juvenile delinquent. Secretly, Flinch is an agent for N.E.R.D.S., the National Espionage, Rescue, and Defense Society, whose mission is to save the world. His superpower is hyperactivity, and he acquires it from candy bars and sugary sodas. Flinch and his teammates save Paris from bombing, Manhattan from shrinking, and Hollywood from extermination.</p> <p>They soon find out that the giant head of Heathcliff, a former member of NERDS who turned into a villain but was defeated, is the source of all the troubles: Heathcliff's nanobyte is the Villain Virus that changes everyone into villains. Flinch, the only agent who is immune to it, finally defeats Heathcliff with the help of a group of juvenile delinquents.</p> <p>Ka Yuen Cheung Hong Kong</p>

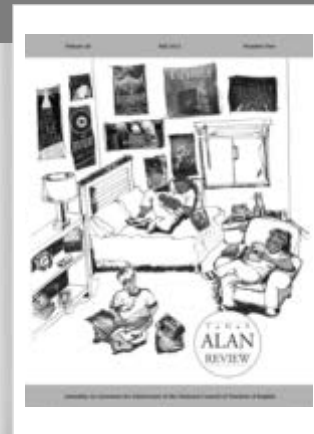
<p>October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard by Leslea Newman Candlewick, 2012, 128 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Poetry/Civil Rights/Bullying ISBN: 978-0-76365-807-6</p> <p>Back in 1998, Matthew Shepard was beaten and left for dead in a rural part of Wyoming, an event that received widespread media coverage. This collection of 68 poems from different perspectives offers up ruminations on that tragic October event. The author examines the thoughts of the fence where Matthew was tied, the rope with which he was tied, the pistol with which he was beaten, and the truck in which he was driven out of town. Although there are many lines that will make readers sigh and weep over the inhumanity of humans, there are also passages that celebrate the essential goodness of humankind, offering hope for the future.</p> <p>Back matter includes notes on each poem, an explanation of the poetic forms the author uses to tell Matthew's story, and a resource list. This is a stunning reminder of what is lost as the result of bigotry and hatred.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Pullman, WA</p>	<p>Return to Me by Justina Chen Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2013, 352 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Change/Relationships/Identity ISBN: 978-0-31610-255-1</p> <p>Newly graduated Rebecca Muir is ready to begin college in New York City, fulfilling her dreams of studying architecture and working for a large firm. As she dithers over those plans and her romantic relationship, her beloved father drops a bombshell. Although he just moved the family across country from their Puget Sound home to a New Jersey mansion, he is in love with another woman. Shaken by his betrayal, Reb questions everything she thought was true. When her maternal grandfather provides tickets to Hawaii, she and her family travel there to heal, and Reb realizes that she has been living out her father's dreams and not her own.</p> <p>Several of the passages are beautifully written, evoking a sense of place and establishing Reb as a protagonist who actually <i>does</i> something. This book is an excellent choice for many teens who are too reliant on their significant others for their own identities.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Pullman, WA</p>
<p>Skinny by Donna Cooner Point, 2012, 260 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Young Adult Fiction/Body Image ISBN: 978-0-545-42763-0</p> <p>Two things have been haunting Ever Davies since her mother's death five years ago: her weight and Skinny, a terrible voice that narrates all of her classmates' disgusted thoughts. After years of distancing herself from the world, Ever makes the choice to undergo a risky surgery in order to take back her life. It is a success, and encouraged by her newfound confidence, Ever decides to audition for the school musical. But soon, she finds herself being pulled back by Skinny's poisonous presence. It isn't until Ever remembers how much she loves singing that she realizes she must stand up against Skinny, once and for all, in order to break free from the vicious voice that has silenced her for so long. In her debut novel, Donna Cooner tells the powerful story of a young woman who adamantly fights for the right for her voice to be heard.</p> <p>Diana Liu Nashville, TN</p>	<p>Splintered by A. G. Howard Abrams/Amulet Books, 2013, 384 pp., \$17.95</p> <p>Fantasy/Romance/Inspired by Classics ISBN: 978-1-41970-428-4</p> <p>Hardly the typical teen, Alyssa Gardner can hear the thoughts of insects and plants just like her hospitalized mother can. Her father has finally given permission for shock treatment to help her mother recover from her delusions, but Alyssa realizes that the voices she hears aren't delusions at all. On the night of the school prom, desperate to prevent the shock treatments, she is lured through the looking glass by Morpheus, someone she remembers from her childhood. Amid confusion over who is friend and who is foe, Alyssa is expected to repair all the problems when her ancestor, the original Alice from the Lewis Carroll stories, entered the rabbit hole. The author has created a credible world through which Alyssa and hunky neighbor Jed move; it is by turns alluring and horrifying. Wonderland evokes more fear than wonder, and yet, it is there that Alyssa discovers romantic possibilities and her own true nature.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Pullman, WA</p>

<p><i>The Case of the Missing Dinosaur Egg</i> by Martha Freeman Holiday House, 2013, 115 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Children's Mystery ISBN: 978-0-8234-2523-5</p> <p>“First Kids” Cammie, Tessa, and their cousin Nate prove that life in the White House is never boring when they attend the Museum of Natural History’s grand opening of its new dinosaur exhibit, and a recently discovered dinosaur egg cracks open on the spot! When the egg reveals a baby ostrich instead of a dinosaur, the First Kids set off on a new adventure (with the help of their always energetic dog Hooligan) to find the missing dinosaur egg belonging to the exhibit.</p> <p>In this far-fetched but enjoyable tale, Cammie, Tessa, and Nate are launched into a political mystery as they investigate the goings-on at an Embassy of a certain nearby nation, visit an ostrich farm, and hunt for clues around the museum—all the while fulfilling their duties at the White House Easter Egg Roll.</p> <p>Rachel Morris Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>The Darkest Minds</i> by Alexandra Bracken Hyperion, 2012, 488 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Realistic Fiction ISBN: 978-1-4231-5737-3</p> <p>In the not-too-distant future, a disease known as Idiopathic Adolescent Acute Neurodegeneration, or IAAN, will wipe out a majority of America’s young adult population. The survivors will be labeled as the Psi—a generation endowed with uncontrollable and frightening powers of telekinesis. In response, the federal government develops rehabilitation camps for anyone exhibiting symptoms. After six years inside Thurmond, the most notorious of the rehab camps, Ruby escapes and joins a band of non-psi kids who are also on the run.</p> <p>Ruby is well aware of the dangers her gifts pose to her new friends and how valuable they are to the anti-government agencies still hunting her. Somehow Ruby must find a way to control her powers and learn who she can and cannot trust. Bracken tells a compelling story of friendship, betrayal, and survival inside a new community of American adolescents.</p> <p>Emily Mowry Nashville, Tennessee</p>
<p><i>Human.4: The Future We Left Behind</i> by Mike A. Lancaster Egmont USA, 2012, 368 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Science Fiction/Technology ISBN: 978-1-60684-410-6</p> <p>Set a thousand years after the end of Lancaster’s previous work, this is the story of Peter Vincent, the son of the man who invented the electric bee. Peter’s life is a perpetual flood of incoming data from the Link, which every human is hard-wired into at all times. Over the course of his tale, Peter encounters ghosts in pictures, altered memories, and a cult on the trail of an ancient conspiracy. All are in pursuit of the answer to a dangerous question: can the Link be trusted?</p> <p>Lancaster plays with some of the well-known tropes of the genre, but also uses some shockingly Lovcraftian storytelling. Along the way, he challenges our modern over-reliance on technology and what it means to be human in a world where the lines between technology and its users are blurred.</p> <p>Breon Guarino Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>The Icarus Project</i> by Laura Quimby Amulet Books, 2012, 304 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Fantasy Adventure/ Science Fiction ISBN: 978-1-4197-0402-4</p> <p>Maya Parson wants nothing else but to go on an expedition and be a part of history in the making, much like her anthropologist mother does. When a mysterious expedition coincides with Maya’s spring break, Maya accompanies her father on a paleontology dig to the Canadian Arctic. As chaos begins to break out on the expedition, Maya is forced to act on her own to fight for what she believes is right.</p> <p>Along with her friend Kyle, Maya schemes her way to uncovering the mystery surrounding the expedition and makes a choice that could jeopardize the entire trip. Throughout the adventure, Maya will learn lessons in responsibility, compassion, and human nature, all the while growing up. Who can you trust to do the right thing?</p> <p>Spencer Hoddeson Nashville, TN</p>

<p><i>The Impossible Rescue: The True Story of an Amazing Arctic Adventure</i> by Martin W. Sandler Candlewick, 2012, 176 pp., \$22.99</p> <p>When winter comes unexpectedly early in 1897, eight whaling ships and 300 sailors are stranded in the Arctic ice. Although a whaling station owner and some of the indigenous peoples provide shelter and food, there is little doubt that supplies will run out before warmer weather arrives. This engaging nonfiction title describes the journey of three men who traveled across the frozen Alaskan territory driving herds of reindeer ahead of them, a sort of Meals on Wheels (or Hooves) to bring food to the whalers. The courage of David Jarvis, Samuel Call, and Ellsworth Bertholf, the three stalwart men who risked their lives so that others might survive, will impress teen readers. Photographs and brief vignettes describing what happened to the men after the mission add to the story's appeal. Readers will marvel at the stoicism of the dog teams, while also pondering recent environmental changes in the Arctic region.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Pullman, WA</p>	<p><i>The Lunar Chronicles: Scarlet</i> by Marissa Meyer Feiwel and Friends, 2013, 464 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Fairy Tales/Science Fiction/ Romance ISBN: 978-0-31264-296-9</p> <p>The Lunar Chronicles surprisingly combine elements of fairy tales and science fiction, with this second installment introducing Scarlet Benoit, who lives in the rural part of France where she grows vegetables with her grandmother. The red-haired and red hoodie-wearing Scarlet is worried about her missing grandmother. When she meets a fierce street fighter named Wolf with a strange tattoo, she accepts his help despite her misgivings, and they set off for Paris. Meanwhile, Linh Cinder, a Cinderella-like character who happens to be a cyborg, manages to escape from prison and look for links to her past.</p> <p>Readers will race through the book's pages to find out how the paths of these two strong female characters intersect, and to see whether Emperor Kai can stymie the treacherous Queen Levana. Filled with fascinating characters and twists, turns, and romantic possibilities, this book will leave readers desperately awaiting the next two promised titles.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Pullman, WA</p>
<p><i>That Mad Game</i> edited by J. L. Powers Cinco Puntos Press, 2012, 231 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>This collection of personal narratives documents the effects of war on children. Spanning decades across the globe, firsthand accounts are told from the perspectives of sons, fathers, friends, and sisters. "A Talib in Love" humanizes a young Taliban member as he searches for identity in the context of genuine ignorance. "Half a Continent, Step by Step" details the courageous survival of a Rwandan teen escaping genocide, only to be faced with despair as he traverses African borders. From the streets of Nazi-occupied Holland, to the chaos of El Salvador's civil war, the sights and smells of death, resistance, and endurance come to life.</p> <p><i>That Mad Game</i> illuminates the astounding reach of war across generations. Themes of loneliness, doubt, and hope draw the reader closer to otherwise distant experiences. One cannot help but be transformed by these emotional journeys of survival, promoting dialogue that will empower peace for the future.</p> <p>Rebekah Capps Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>The New Normal</i> by Ashley Little Orca, 2013, 222 pp., \$12.95</p> <p>Teen Fiction ISBN: 978-1-4598-0074-8</p> <p>In addition to navigating life as a high school student, Tamar Robinson struggles to find her identity after losing her younger twin sisters in a tragic car accident. The grief affects each of her family members differently. Her dad begins to drink and becomes withdrawn, while her mom tries to make sense of the tragedy through yoga. How is Tamar dealing with the loss of two family members? She loses all her hair for no medical reason.</p> <p>This is the story of how a once-typical teenager deals with normal high school events such as finding a first job, participating in the school play, attending prom, and questioning feelings for a best guy friend—all while her family unit slowly unravels. Readers will find themselves enamored by Tamar's witty personality and her unwillingness to give up when faced with life's struggles.</p> <p>Anna Lee Minnestrista, MN</p>

<p><i>The Year of the Book</i> by Annabel Monaghan Houghton Mifflin, 2012, 146 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Juvenile Fiction/Friendship ISBN: 978-0-547-68463-5</p> <p>Fourth grade was supposed to be Anna Wang's best year yet, but when her best friend Laura shows up to school with a pair of new friends, things begin to go downhill. As if things weren't bad enough, her mother decides that this will be the year that Anna finally learns Chinese! Saddened by Laura's betrayal and frustrated by Chinese's way-too-complex characters, Anna retreats into her books. They are a cherished escape, leading her away from boredom and sadness to wonderful new worlds with adventures aplenty. But soon, tragedy strikes, and Anna must learn what it means to be a real friend. Interweaving multidimensional characters, familiar novels, and interesting bits of Chinese culture in <i>The Year of the Book</i>, Annabel Monaghan creates a wonderful story about a young girl navigating the ups and downs of friendship with a little help from some books.</p> <p>Diana Liu Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Wonder Show</i> by Hannah Barnaby Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012, 267 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Adventure ISBN: 978-0-547-59980-9</p> <p>Portia Remini loves nothing more than telling stories—especially to her father, Max. But when he goes away, just like her gypsy relatives, and leaves Portia with Aunt Sophia, Portia must adjust to a much less imaginative world. Aunt Sophia soon realizes that giving Portia a home is too great a challenge for her child-management skills, she resorts to an alternative method: the McGreavey Home for Wayward Girls, with its sinister director, Mister. If Portia ever wants to find Max, she knows she must escape Mister's eerie control. What better route than the circus?</p> <p><i>Wonder Show</i> blends fairy-tale charm, history, and the quirks of life into an unorthodox novel. A fantastic journey of myth and murder, eccentricity and empathy, Portia's adventures lead her in search of home. Portia may be a natural-born storyteller, but only by living her own story can she understand where she has been, and where she may go.</p> <p>Laura Cramer Nashville, TN</p>
<p><i>Yoko Ono: Collector of Skies</i> by Nell Beram & Carolyn Boriss-Kimsky Harry N. Abrams, 2013, 176 pp., \$24.95</p> <p>Art/Music/Fame/Relationships/Biography ISBN: 978-1-41970-444-4</p> <p>Perhaps most famous for her relationship with Beate John Lennon, Yoko Ono was also an artist and musician in her own right. As is often the case with celebrities, fans of her husband's band regarded her as a hanger-on, basking in reflected glory. Nothing could be further from the truth. The child of wealthy parents, Yoko led a privileged life in Japan where she attended the country's best schools. Her own creative spirit prompted musical and artistic experimentation. Readers will gain a new appreciation for this complicated, determined woman compelled to push boundaries. Filled with insight about Yoko's inspirations and acknowledgement of her character flaws, the text leaves readers curious and filled with admiration for how she faced down sexism, racism, and ageism. This biography must be savored while listening to some of her music and browsing through some of the book's photos of the artist and her original artwork.</p> <p>Barbara A. Ward Pullman, WA</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</p> <p><i>To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Melanie Hundley at melanie.hundley@vanderbilt.edu.</i></p>

Volume 40
 Number 3
 Summer 2013



<i>Steven Bickmore</i>	From the Editors	4
<i>Jacqueline Bach</i>	Call for Manuscripts	7
<i>Melanie Hundley</i>	Reminiscing: One Perspective on ALAN's Beginnings	8
<i>Alleen Pace Nilsen</i>	TAR Coeditor (with Ken Donelson) 1974–1979	
<i>Virginia Euwer Wolff</i>	What We Lose, What We Find	11
	ALAN Breakfast Speech 2002	
<i>Chris Crowe</i>	Reminiscing about Ken Donelson	18
	TAR Coeditor (with Alleen Pace Nilsen) 1974–1979	
<i>W. Geiger Ellis</i>	TAR @ 40	20
	TAR Editor 1979–1984	
<i>Arthea (Charlie) Reed</i>	A Happy Accident: YA Lit and Me	23
	TAR Editor 1984–1990	
<i>Robert Lipsyte</i>	Lighting the Fire	25
	ALAN Speech 1980	
<i>Leila Christenbury</i>	Anything but Peripheral: Coediting <i>The ALAN Review</i>	31
	TAR Coeditor (with Robert Small) 1990–1992	
<i>Patricia P. Kelly</i>	A Labor of Love: Coediting <i>The ALAN Review</i>	33
	TAR Coeditor (with Robert Small) 1992–1998	
<i>Pamela Sissi Carroll</i>	Walking Memory Lane with a Who's Who of ALAN	35
	TAR Editor 1998–2003	
<i>Jim Blasingame</i>	YA Authors: The Heart of <i>The ALAN Review</i>	38
	TAR Coeditor (with Lori Goodson) 2003–2009	
<i>Don Gallo</i>	ALAN Anniversary—My Take	40
<i>Joan Kaywell</i>	I Stand on the Shoulders of a Wonderful Mentor:	42
	2012 Winner of the Ted Hipple Service Award	

<i>Gary Salvner</i>	Once and Future ALAN: Where We've Been, Where We Might Go Executive Secretary 2000–2011	45
<i>Teri S. Lesesne</i>	Teach Your Children Well: What ALAN Means to Me Executive Secretary 2011–Present	48
<i>Melanie Hundley</i>	Clip and File	A1-A8
<i>M. E. Kerr</i>	Staying Gone	50
<i>Pamela K. Coke</i>	Developing Academic Kinship, Meeting Rock Stars: What ALAN and NCTE Offer English Educators	52
<i>James Brewbaker</i>	Of Kent State, Old Yeller, and Harlem Summer: Recalling the Beginnings of Young Adult Literature in Academe	58
<i>Jennifer Buehler</i> <i>Daria Plumb</i> <i>Jennifer Walsh</i>	Young Adult Literature Book Awards: A Guide for Newcomers to the Field	63
<i>Jennifer M. Miskec</i>	Young Adult Literary Adaptations of the Canon	75
<i>Angel Daniel Matos</i>	Writing through Growth, Growth through Writing: <i>The Perks of Being a Wallflower</i> and the Narrative of Development	86
<i>Cindy Pon</i>	Someone Like Me The Author's Connection	98
<i>Sonya Sones</i>	I Am Not Terrified of Writing This Article The Author's Connection	102
<i>Mike Mullin</i>	From Poop to Published: My Writing Journey The Author's Connection	107
<i>M. Jerry Weiss</i>	As Time Goes By The Publisher's Connection	112
<i>Katie Dredger</i>	Challenging Rebellious Adolescent Aliteracy The Classroom Connection	117
	Stories from the Field	123

Coeeditors **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*
Michael Cart, *Chico, California*
Beverly Chin, *University of Montana*
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 Parks Haas, *Johnson County Community College, 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*
Rob Lockhart, *Morehead State University*
Arlene Harris Mitchell, *University of Cincinnati*
Elaine O'Quinn, *Appalachian State*
Daria Plumb, *Riverside Academy, Michigan*
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*
Anna Soter, *Ohio State University, Columbus*
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 "Why Don't You Read?" was designed by Michelle Zoss, Assistant Professor of English Education at Georgia State University. Pictured are *The City's Son* by Tom Pollock. © 2012. Used by permission from Flux Books, www.fluxnow.com. *Henry Franks* by Peter Adam Salomon. © 2012. Used by permission from Flux Books, www.fluxnow.com. *The Peculiar* by Maureen Doyle McQuerry. © 2012. Used with permission from Amulet Books www.amuletbooks.com. *Explorer: The Mystery Boxes* edited by Kazu Kibuishi. © 2012. Used with permission of Amulet Books www.amuletbooks.com. *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews. © 2012. Used with permission of Amulet Books www.amuletbooks.com. *Welcome, Caller, This Is Chloe* by Shelley Coriell. © 2012. Used with permission of Amulet Books www.amuletbooks.com. *The Diviners* by Libba Bray. © 2012. Used with permission from Little, Brown. *Days of Blood and Starlight* by Laini Taylor. © 2012. Used with permission from Little, Brown. *Ask the Passengers* by A. S. King. © 2012. Used with permission from Little, Brown. *Come August, Come Freedom: The Bellows, the Gallows, and the Black General Gabriel* by Gigi Amateau. © 2012. Reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press. *Personal Effects* by E. M. Kokie. © 2012. Reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press. *Call the Shots* by Don Calame. © 2012. Reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press. *The Infected* by Sean Beaudoin. © 2012. Reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press. *Feed* by M. T. Anderson. © 2004/2012. Reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press. *The Piper's Son* by Melina Marchetta. © 2012. Reproduced by permission of Candlewick Press. *The Darkest Minds* by Alexandra Bracken. © 2012. Used with permission of Hyperion. *Beta* by Rachel Cohn. © 2012. Used with permission of Hyperion.



From the Editors

Editors' Note: *Kenneth L. Donelson, a founding member of ALAN (Assembly on Literature for Adolescents, NCTE), having served as its president and as founding editor (with Alleen Pace Nilsen) of The ALAN Review, died on April 30, 2013. He was a well-known professor of English and Director of ASU's English Education program throughout the 1990s until his retirement in 2002. He is also coauthor of Literature for Today's Young Adults, the leading textbook in the field for English teachers, school librarians, and reading teachers. You will see his name mentioned throughout this issue as he leaves a lasting legacy for our organization, this journal, and to those of us lucky enough to have spent time with him.*

Welcome to the 40th Anniversary Issue of *The ALAN Review*. You'll notice the larger size; in spite of being twice as long as our usual size, we still were unable to include everything an issue this special should contain. We hope that the additional pieces we would like to have included will find their way onto a digital archive hosted on ALAN's website. Please accept our apologies if there's something you really wanted to see as part of this issue—hold that thought for our 60th anniversary issue!

The first half of this issue contains fascinating pieces written by those members associated with ALAN and its creation. The former editors who put together this outstanding journal share their stories about editing the journal and what authors and trends shaped the field during their editorship. It seems a bit

early for Steve, Melanie, and me (Jackie) to share our stories about editing the journal before we've finished—other than how grateful we are for our editor at NCTE, Carol Schanche—so we're going to share with you our experiences with the ALAN Conference.

Jackie's Story

Many of the authors in this anniversary issue, myself included, found our way to our first ALAN conference through a suggestion made by a mentor, a colleague, or a teacher. In 1994, I was a junior at Florida State University and taking Dr. Pamela "Sissi" Carroll's "teaching middle school" English course. In class one day, she recommended that we consider attending the upcoming NCTE and ALAN conferences that were to be held in Orlando that year. I don't recall Dr. Carroll requiring us to go to the conference as part of her course. In fact, I'm not even sure exactly what she said to make me want to register and pay for the conference, drive to Orlando, and then attend sessions—all by myself. Maybe I was just eager to learn more about my profession. But I went.

At the NCTE Conference, I clumsily wandered in and out of rooms, trying to digest the vast number of sessions. I had a hard time understanding how to navigate my experience in a useful way. It wasn't until I attended an ALAN session with author Theodore Taylor (*Timothy of the Cay*) that I felt at home. While I don't recall the details of his talk, I do recall the passion with which he spoke about his craft and writing for adolescent readers. I was hooked. Young adult literature became a staple in all of my classrooms.

Of course, it also helped that John Simmons (a long-time advocate who recently passed away), Laurence Baines, Kathryn Kelly, and Gloria Pipkin—scholars who are all involved with young adult literature in one way or another—were also at FSU at this time, and I was fortunate to take courses with many of them. As two of the columns in the second half of this issue note, our entrance into the field often begins with a simple recommendation, such as attending a conference, reading a book, or listening to an adolescent.

Now as a teacher educator, I currently have graduate students who are studying young adult literature in various settings, undergraduates in my adolescent course who are engaged in partnerships with schools and public libraries, and colleagues to whom I recommend books for themselves or their children. I hope that my students join the ALAN community and share some of my experiences—from having to figure out how to get all of those books from the conference back home to reading the journal and becoming inspired to try something new. Here's to an organization that honors readers and their writers, and those who understand the power of a simple recommendation.

Steve's Story

As a new teacher in 1978, I was just smart enough to realize that I wasn't going to have every good idea that I needed by myself. During our English methods class at Brigham Young University, Joyce Nelson told us to always subscribe to the *English Journal*. I did. It helped. I stayed involved; I found my way to a few NCTE conferences, I applied and was accepted to some seminars and institutes of the National Endowment for the Humanities. I just wish she would have included *The ALAN Review*. I am not blaming Joyce; she did a great job and I promise I still hear her voice as I make teaching decisions. But as we have worked to gather information for our celebration of 40 years of *The ALAN Review*, I realize how much I missed during the first 25 years.

Just as Joyce's advice was essential in my success as a teacher, I believe our personal conversations and stories can be important guiding points for others. We grow as we share. I discovered *The Life of Pi* (Martel, 2001) because a student was caring it around. I was also introduced to Phillip K. Dick by a student.

I first read *The Giver* (Lowry, 1993) and *The Devil's Arithmetic* (Yolen, 2004) because my daughters were reading them. I also ventured back to Tolstoy because a student in a make-up English night school class was reading *War and Peace* (Tolstoy, Maude, Maude, & Gifford, 2008) for his silent sustained reading selection. Sharon Murphy first lent me a copy of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (Chbosky, 1999) as a first-year graduate student in 2002. I was teaching the YA literature class, and she couldn't imagine that I could teach the course without mentioning this book. She was right.

As I attended the ALAN workshops, my professional life took on a new dimension. Two of my favorite publishing projects began before the authors finished speaking. First, I was already reading *Inexcusable* (Lynch, 2005) when Chris Lynch began his talk. Before he was finished, I knew what the project would be and which students I should ask to read the book and discuss it with me (Bickmore, 2008). I revisited Lynch's books, reading everything that I had missed along the way. I have discussed his books in courses with preservice teachers and shared his books with teachers and colleagues. Should every class read *Inexcusable*? No. Are there students who will benefit from reading *Inexcusable* or many of his other books? Absolutely.

The second project began during another workshop. I listened carefully as Padma Venkatraman introduced her new novel, *Climbing the Stairs* (Venkatraman, 2008). The novel tells the story of a young girl, Vidya, in India during the turbulent days of World War II. I was intrigued with this well-crafted historical novel and found myself outlining a close reading based on craftsmanship, ideology, and its basic appeal to readers (Bickmore, 2011). *Climbing the Stairs* is rich in literary and historical allusions. Vidya's personal story outlines her quest for education and independence as she struggles with the loss of her father, who valued her individuality, and the new restraints placed on her by a less progressive uncle. Both the feminist and post-colonial themes of the novel offer a rich reading experience.

I know that many of you who are reading this have similar tales to tell. Well, I hope you tell them. I hope you share them. More important, I hope you use the influence you have on new teachers and colleagues to say: You should always subscribe to *The*

ALAN Review and attend workshops; it will enrich your life.

Melanie's Story

I've been attending the ALAN conferences for awhile now; each time I go, I am amazed and touched by the stories that surround us. From the books themselves to the stories the authors tell to the stories we tell each other at our table, I am overwhelmed by the ways in which books—good books—touch our lives and connect us to the world. Five years ago, I had my first opportunity to bring students with me to the conference. Three graduate students and three undergraduates walked into the large ballroom of the hotel, received their box of books, and made their way to seats at a table. They were wide-eyed, fascinated, and in awe of the books they received. Kayley asked, "These are ours? We don't have to give them back?" She and the other five students oohed and aahed over the books. If the conference had stopped there, they would have been content.

Then, the first author spoke, then the next, then the next. Panel after panel of authors stepped up and shared. The six young women sat mesmerized by the speakers and then ran to get in line for autographs. For the entire day, they listened to the authors they knew from their childhoods, to new authors, and to authors who were rising stars in the field. If the conference had stopped there, they would have been content.

As the day ended, Emily turned to me and said, "This is pretty much the best experience I've ever had." A librarian from a school in Minnesota turned and said, "It's like this every year." Another announced, "And we get to come back tomorrow." Others nodded. The teachers and librarians who sat near my six students also did something amazing—they talked and shared their experiences with authors and other ALAN attendees; they treated the six young women at the beginning of their teaching careers as colleagues. They bonded over books and a shared love of reading. They mentored the women into the world of ALAN in a way that made them feel as though they already belonged. Kayley described their interactions with the teachers and librarians as "the extra cherry on the perfect sundae of a day."

The six women are now teachers all over the country. Each year when it is time for ALAN, I hear

from them about whether or not they will see me at the conference. I introduce them to the students that have come with me this year and watch as they mentor them into our community.

In This Issue

In addition to these retrospective pieces, this issue features articles that showcase the then and now of the field of young adult literature. In our first two articles, Pamela C. Coke and James Brewbaker trace their entrance into the field of young adult literature and acknowledge those scholars who have had an influence on their careers.

Jennifer Buehler, Daria Plumb, and Jennifer Walsh, in their article "Young Adult Literature Book Awards: A Guide for Newcomers to the Field," help readers understand and navigate the works honored by various organizations. In "Young Adult Literary Adaptations of the Canon, Jennifer M. Miskec examines the different ways canonical texts are adapted into young adult novels. Angel Daniel Matos's "Writing through Growth, Growth through Writing: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* and the Narrative of Development" closely analyzes this masterful book that continues to attract readers.

We are delighted to include six pieces by seasoned and newer young adult authors: Virginia Euwer Wolff, Robert Lipsyte, M. E. Kerr, Sonya Sones, Cindy Pon, and Mike Mullin. ALAN has long been fortunate to have generous authors whose speeches, panels, writing, and interviews continually inspire and motivate us to use young adult literature with our students. M. Jerry Weiss, another longtime contributor whose columns introduce high-quality novels that make excellent recommendations for students and colleagues, shares artifacts from previous ALAN documents. Katie Dredger explores lessons and benefits of incorporating young adult literature into the classroom in ways we hope readers of ALAN and fans of young adult literature support.

One of the new features we brought to our editorship are the "Stories from the Field." These uplifting stories always wrap up the issue with powerful recountings of young adult literature; in this issue, Eisenbach's story offers another testimony to what those of us in ALAN have long experienced.

We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we do.

References

- Bickmore, S. T. (2008). It is inexcusable to deny *Inexcusable* a place in the classroom. *The ALAN Review*, 35(2), 75–83.
- Bickmore, S. T. (2011). Craftsmanship, ideology, and reader appeal in *Climbing the Stairs*. In A. Choubey (Ed.), *Women on women: Women writers' perspectives on women* (pp. 40–67). Jaipur, Rajasthan: Book Enclave.
- Chbosky, S. (1999). *The perks of being a wallflower*. New York, NY: Pocket Books.
- Lowry, L. (1993). *The giver*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Lynch, C. (2005). *Inexcusable* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.
- Martel, Y. (2001). *Life of Pi: A novel* (1st US ed.). New York, NY: Harcourt.
- Tolstoy, L., Maude, L. S., Maude, A., & Gifford, H. (2008). *War and peace*. Oxford, England, and New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Venkatraman, P. (2008). *Climbing the stairs*. New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Yolen, J. (2004). *The devil's arithmetic* (Puffin Modern Classics ed.). New York, NY: Puffin Books.

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/>.

Summer 2014 Theme: How to Teach Young Adult Literature in an Age of Censorship and Common Core

In a time of extreme criticism and scrutiny of texts that are being used in the classroom, what are proponents of young adult literature to do? This issue seeks to address that question with submissions that offer very practical ways of incorporating (or continuing to incorporate) young adult literature in the classroom. What ways are you teaching young adult literature? How are you using young adult literature to meet or exceed what is being required in the common core? What experiences have you had with censorship, and how have you dealt with them? How can beginning teachers approach the inclusion of YAL in their classrooms to take advantage of the power of young adult literature to improve reading skills and foster a lifelong love of reading? **Submission deadline: November 1, 2013.**

Fall 2014: Open Call

The last 40 years have seen an explosion of young adult literature novels. From vampires to zombies, biographies to poetry, video games to movies, YAL is a considerable force in the world of publishing and media. This issue is an open call, so we ask you to consider young adult literature writ large. What is it that we know and can say about this field? Who are the authors and texts that are shaping the current and next generations of readers? What has changed or stayed the same about young adult literature? What are the trends, themes, or topics that capture the attention or imagination of adolescent readers? 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: March 1, 2014.**

Stories from the Field

Editors' Note: *Stories from the Field* invites readers to share a story about young adult literature. This section features brief vignettes (approximately 300 words) from practicing teachers and librarians who would like to share their interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators around young adult literature. Please send your stories to: jbach@lsu.edu.

Reminiscing: One Perspective on ALAN's Beginnings

TAR Coeditor (with Ken Donelson) 1974–1979

My application back in 1974 to edit what we then called *The ALAN Newsletter* was not nearly as demanding as it was for later editors. It consisted of my showing up at the second organizational meeting of ALAN in New Orleans and confessing that I couldn't even keep my own checking account in order and so I wanted to resign as treasurer, but I would be happy to do something else—maybe edit the newsletter. When everyone agreed that this seemed like a fair trade, I went home to Arizona and asked Ken Donelson if he would be coeditor. I knew he was really smart, but also since I did not yet have a “real” job at ASU (I had gone there as a “trailing spouse”), I thought we needed a connection to a tenured professor so that we could take advantage of the university's printing facilities, along with its bulk mailing permit.

I had been appointed treasurer at the first organizational meeting held in Philadelphia when I followed the directions on a handwritten sign to come and talk about forming an NCTE Assembly. The idea of Council assemblies was fairly new, and the main obstacle we faced was that we needed 25 members. There weren't that many of us at the meeting, but since on my way to the convention, I had stopped at the University of Iowa and successfully defended my doctoral dissertation, I was in a celebratory mood and grandly pulled out money to pay the \$2.00 dues for people I knew would want to be involved. Such generosity resulted in my being appointed treasurer.

ALAN started out very much like a Women's

Club. At the ALAN breakfast where we installed the second set of officers, the outgoing officers solemnly handed lit candles to their successors. The few men in the audience—who apparently had never belonged to a sorority—were genuinely surprised, and did not carry on the “tradition.” And because we were such “nice ladies,” we operated under the adage that “If you can't say something nice about someone (or something, including a book), don't say anything at all.” This meant that from the beginning, we were more of a fan club of supporters and cheerleaders than we were a scholarly association of critics.

But to understand this mindset, you need to know that at the time, respected people were saying terrible things about adolescent literature. For example, a writer for the *Louisville Courier-Journal* quoted by Steven Dunning in the December 1964 *English Journal* described books for teens as “Flabby in content, mediocre in style, narrowly directed at the most trivial of adolescent interests, they pander to a vast debilitation of tastes, to intolerance for the demanding, rewarding and ennobling exercise which serious reading can be” (p. 702). In 1965, J. Donald Adams, editor of the “Speaking of Books” page in *The New York Times*, wrote in his *Speaking of Books—and Life* that teenage novels were “a phenomenon which belongs properly only to a society of morons” (p. 252). He had great respect for the writers of good books for children because their books can be “read with equal delight by their elders. But what person of mature years and reasonably mature understanding (for there is often a

wide disparity) can read without impatience a book written for adolescents?”

With statements like these being more common than any of us would wish, and with most of our fellow teachers strongly believing that everyone’s job was to immerse students in the “great stream of the English classics,” it is no wonder that those who joined ALAN wanted to praise, rather than condemn, YA books. But still, I sometimes wish that we had started out to be a little more critical and that, during our annual conferences, we had devoted as much time for our own members to develop and display their professional knowledge and skills as we did to showcasing new authors.

I realize that we are in a partnership with the publishers; without their help, ALAN would not have developed as it has. The popularity of our two-day post-conference workshops depends at least partially on the generosity of the publishers who send participants home with more books than they can carry—much less read and ponder. But even though publishers are our benefactors, we also have an obligation to our young readers.

When ALAN was founded in 1973, the book that came closest to being a YA phenomenon was *Go Ask Alice*, published by Prentice Hall in 1971. It was never as famous as today’s Harry Potter, Twilight, and Hunger Games series, but it was nevertheless *the* book that teens wanted to read and that adults wanted to censor. It was translated into 16 different languages and made into the ABC Movie of the Week, first broadcast January 24, 1973, with William Shatner starring as the girl’s father. Librarians told me that every time it was going to be shown (once or maybe twice a year), they would order 20 extra copies of the book because the follow-up demand would be so high.

Today, Simon and Schuster describes *Go Ask Alice* as “a contemporary classic” with “more than 5 million copies sold.” It was supposedly the diary of a 15-year-old girl from a “perfect” family who was tricked into becoming a “druggie.” Because of the circumstances, we “book critics” essentially gave it a free pass because we did not want to say anything negative about the dead. However, this was not true of censors, who felt the book did more to glorify sex and drugs than to frighten kids away from them. Even in the fourth decade after its publication, *Go Ask Alice*

was number 18 on the American Library Association’s list of most challenged books between 2000 and 2009.

In 1978, a previously unknown author named Beatrice Sparks brought out a new book entitled *Jay’s Journal*, which was advertised as a “shocking companion diary” brought to you by the author “who brought you *Go Ask Alice*.” Based on the success of the *Alice* book, Sparks went on to write several other books (*It Happened to Nancy*; *Treacherous Love*; *Annie’s Baby*; *Almost Lost*; *Kim, Empty Inside*; and *Finding Katie*) supposedly based on teens’ journals. None of these books captured readers as did *Go Ask Alice*, nor in my opinion did they contribute to the richness of YA literature, although at Sparks’s funeral in Provo, Utah (she died at age 95 in May of 2012), family members claimed that the books had kept many young readers from making poor life choices, which was Sparks’s purpose.

As the years have gone by, more and more thoughtful readers believe that Sparks, with help from others, “faked” Alice’s story. In 1998, when Linda Glovach published a new book, *Beauty Queen*, about a girl on drugs, she identified herself as “coauthor of

Recommended Online Reading about *Go Ask Alice*

Lina Goldberg, “Curiouser and Curiouser”: Fact, Fiction, and the Anonymous Author of *Go Ask Alice*. <http://www.linagoldberg.com/goaskalice.html>

Alleen Pace Nilsen, “The House That Alice Built: An Interview with the Author Who Brought You *Go Ask Alice*.” *School Library Journal*, 26(2) (Oct. 1979), pp. 109–112. Available for reading on Scribd; also, most libraries have archived copies of *SLJ*.

Mark Oppenheimer, “Just Say ‘Uh-Oh’: Two New Anti-Drug Novels and the Book That Established the Genre.” *The New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1998.

Snopes.com Rumor Has It. “*Go Ask Alice* Claim: The Book *Go Ask Alice* Was the Real-Life Diary of a Teenage Girl. Status: False” <http://www.snopes.com/language/literary/askalice.asp>

Go Ask Alice.” In Sparks’s book, the girl wasn’t even named Alice. The title, which did much to promote the book, was taken from a line in the popular “White Rabbit” song penned by Grace Slick and performed by Jefferson Airplane. Since the title clashes with incidents in the story, it was most likely added by someone in the publishing house who hadn’t carefully read the book. Other observations are that the book is filled with inconsistent “facts” and sentences that no 15-year-old, especially a girl on drugs, would have written in a private journal.

I feel sorry that we let kids down by not looking seriously at this book in the beginning. When famous “memoirs” written for adults have been found to be less than what was promised, as with James Frey’s *A Million Little Pieces* (Random House, 2003) and Greg Mortenson’s *Three Cups of Tea* (Viking Penguin, 2006), the news was made public and readers were alerted that they were reading fiction rather than fact. But when a book that is supposedly written for the purpose of educating young readers so that they can make sound moral judgments is found to be lacking in honesty, we haven’t been there to warn the readers or lead them to ask the kinds of questions that might help them see the difference between fact and fiction.

It is ironic that at first *Go Ask Alice* was exempt from our criticism because we did not want to say anything negative about the “dearly departed.” Now the book is exempt from critical reading and discussion because we teachers have time to read and ponder only what we are teaching. And because we don’t want to risk being challenged by censors, few of us would bring *Go Ask Alice* in for full-class readings.

My reasons for disliking the book are not the same as those of the censors, but it takes careful thinking to distinguish between the two. If I were still teaching young adult literature and assigning group projects, I would ask a group to make a careful study of *Go Ask Alice*, along with the criticism that is now available (see the list below), and to compare their judgment of the book’s honesty with the reasons censors give for banning the book. I think such an assignment would be good training for a new generation of YA lit scholars interested in not only promoting, but also evaluating, good books for young readers.

Alleen Pace Nilsen became “of the feminist persuasion” when she and her husband Don, a linguist earning his

PhD at the University of Michigan, took their three young children with them to work (as part of Don’s training) as USAID teachers in Afghanistan between 1967 and 1969. After seeing how women were treated in that country, Alleen decided that as soon as they got home and Don finished his degree, she too would earn a PhD. Her goal was to hold a valued place in society after her children were raised. When Don graduated from Michigan in 1971, he took a job at the University of Northern Iowa, and Alleen applied to the PhD program at the University of Iowa. She considers it one of the great good fortunes of her life that G. Robert Carlsen happened to be assigned as her advisor, and that a few years later, when Don took a job at Arizona State University, his office happened to be across the hall from Ken Donelson’s, another of Robert Carlsen’s students. These lucky coincidences led to her specializing in young adult literature and to working with Ken Donelson, first as coeditor of *The ALAN Newsletter*, which later became *The ALAN Review*, then as coeditor of *English Journal*, and finally as coauthor with Donelson of the first comprehensive college textbook in the field of young adult literature, published in 1980 by Scott Foresman. It is now in its ninth edition, published with Pearson. Because of Alleen’s conversion to feminism while living in Afghanistan, she convinced Ken Donelson that they should take turns on whose name came first on each of their projects. Alleen retired from ASU in May of 2011, but she and her husband, Don, remain an active part of the university through a newly founded Emeritus College.

References

- Adams, J. D. (1965). *Speaking of books—and life*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Dunning, S. (1964). Junior book roundup. *English Journal*, 53(8), 702–703.
- Frey, J. (2003). *A million little pieces*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Glovach, L. (1998). *Beauty queen*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Mortenson, G. (2006). *Three cups of tea*. New York, NY: Viking Penguin.
- Sparks, B. (1998/2005). *Annie’s baby: The diary of Anonymous, a pregnant teenager*. New York, NY: Avon Books.
- Sparks, B. (1996). *Almost lost: The true story of an anonymous teenager’s life on the streets*. New York, NY: Avon Flare.
- Sparks, B. (2002). *Kim, empty inside: The diary of an anonymous teenager*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Sparks, B. (2005). *Finding Katie: The diary of Anonymous, a teenager in foster care*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Sparks, B. (1979/ 1989). *Jay’s journal*. New York, NY: Pocket Books.
- Sparks, B. (1971). *Go ask Alice*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.



What We Lose, What We Find:

ALAN Breakfast Speech, November 23, 2002

One young widow of September 11 said a few months later, holding her baby: “We are more than our losses.” And just a couple of months ago, millions of us heard Sandy Dahl, widow of Jason Dahl, the pilot of United Flight 93, say, “Adversity doesn’t build character. Adversity reveals character.”

I’m sure we’ve all, during the past year, tried to imagine our way into the positions that these women and their husbands found themselves in. What would such a trading of places reveal about us?

We all remember those first few days, when the questions were coming at us with breakneck speed: Were we suddenly supposed to change our way of life so “they” wouldn’t “hate us so much”? Or cherish ever more deeply the way of life that our forebears worked so hard to build and preserve? A way of life that has such good intentions and goes so wretchedly askew?

And as we’ve gone along through the next months, with what Walt Whitman called “the fever of doubtful news” (*Song of Myself*), and as we’ve kept trying to find the right questions to ask, the kids themselves have gone along being kids, right under our noses, trying to cope with the perennial conflict between their dreams and reality, and the question of whether or not to feel guilty for worrying about a soccer goal or a prom dress when so many thousands had died. It doesn’t seem overblown to note that we are all at what Joseph Conrad called more than a hundred years ago—and this is certainly the meat and potatoes of the English teacher—“the heart of a vast enigma.”

Of course, we do have our national memory. *The New Yorker* cover by Art Spiegelman from September

24, 2001, is entirely black, but by tilting the page we can see the “ghost shadows” of the World Trade Center Towers within all that blackness. This is one of the pictures that won’t leave our minds.

Today we’ve gone from the profound shock and mournfulness of those images to giddy extremes of red, white, and blue, in attention-getting stripes and lights and sequins and stars on household objects and car decorations and wearing apparel of all kinds, as if we were a grieving nation of Radio City Rockettes. Now a year later, I find in *The New Yorker* that I can order a little silver pin for \$29.95 that has little tiny Twin Towers with a little tiny halo around them.

Just a few weeks ago, in October, the public elementary school that my grandchildren attend in Maryland operated for three weeks in Lockdown on Code Blue. This meant the children couldn’t go outdoors at recess because they might get shot by the killers who were on the loose in their neighborhoods, and the kids had to go to the bathroom in bunches. Here is what my seven-year-old granddaughter told me on the telephone at the end of the first week of Lockdown: “But here’s a good thing about it. It was a hard week, and we were so good on Code Blue that we got to make our own ice cream sundaes in school on Friday ’cause it was such a hard week.” We expect the kids to rise to the occasion. As we have learned to do, over and over and over again.

So we working stiffs who write books for young readers go to our desks and stare at our screens, considering the impossibility of writing the perfect book for kids in this confusing and scary time, and we have to keep wondering: What *is* it that’s needed most?

History has shown us repeatedly that we can't really know yet. Here's one deafening example: After the fire-bombing of Dresden in 1945, nearly two decades went by before the world got two particularly potent testimonials reflecting on it—Shostakovich's Eighth String Quartet in 1960 and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughter-*

House Five in 1966. And in a recent *New York Times Book Review*, Walter Kirn (2002) wrote: "When the floor is still heaving it's tough to take the long view" (p. 7).

Here is our own Katherine Paterson, speaking in the new book *911/The Book of Help*, edited by Michael Cart (2002): "Art takes the pain and chaos of our broken world and transforms it into something that brings forth life" (p. 12). That means art of

all kinds. What kinds of art do we need now?

For one thing, I think we need the richness of comedy. We need the therapy of belly laughter. We have always needed it. When Shakespeare wrote *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1600—I will gratuitously remind this room full of literature majors—Queen Elizabeth was still on the throne of England, political and religious corruption were mutilating Europe, and the bubonic plague had thrown a horrifying curve right across the plate of history, killing 25 million people. The intellectual climate of the times was such that within a very few years, Galileo would be forced to recant his scientific discoveries publicly, and be reduced to whispering, ". . . and yet the earth does move . . ." In that era of injustice, superstition, and plague, Shakespeare decided it was time to write a play in which we wake up and find ourselves in love with an ass. And that's just the beginning.

In the desolate climate of the first half of the 20th century, when the ghostly presence of The Great War still haunted America and the Crash of 1929 had sent millions of breadwinners into bread lines, Charlie Chaplin brought the Little Tramp to life. In dark theatres, for twenty cents, terrified and depressed people could double over with laughter at *City Lights* (1931)

and *Modern Times* (1936). (Of course, I always cry at *City Lights*, which is a comedy, but that's part of Chaplin's larger point, too.)

After two world wars, after Auschwitz and Buchenwald, after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the McCarthy trials, immigrant Billy Wilder came up with the idea of putting Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis in dresses, and giving them Marilyn Monroe and Joe E. Brown to work with, and we Americans laughed our heads off at *Some Like It Hot*. It was 1959.

And then President Kennedy was shot. Thirty-nine years ago yesterday. (And anyone of age 50 or older can, of course, tell you exactly where we were, what we were doing at that moment. I was feeding my baby daughter lunch in a high chair—a chair whose memory would resurface nearly 30 years later and unconsciously cause me to write a book called *Make Lemonade*. That baby grew up to become the mother of the seven-year-old who was so good on Code Blue that she got to make ice cream sundaes at school.)

But I digress. President Kennedy was shot. And the plague of assassinations came upon us. And trained dogs were sent to attack Freedom Marchers.

There could be no more comedy.

But of course there was. There was Dick Gregory.

And the very un-funny Cold War provoked Stanley Kubrick to bring us *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). And never after that would Americans really look at Sterling Hayden or George C. Scott with straight faces.

After Vietnam and before AIDS, Mel Brooks brought us *The Producers* as a movie in 1969. And that wasn't enough. Such a guy: he brought it to us again three decades later, on Broadway. We've probably all seen *The New Yorker's* cover from May 7, 2001, in which the entire theatre audience is laughing uncontrollably, except for a rigid, scowling Adolf Hitler, who has a very expensive seat for this play.

There's always somebody who knows how badly we need to laugh. And we never know where those generous minds will turn up next. Kierkegaard said that laughter is a kind of prayer. Roberto Benigni's *Life Is Beautiful* (1998) offended some of the more ruminative among us—not because we're just proud to be grouches, but because that film did not seem to comprehend or encompass the whole horror it attempted to cheer us up about.

What will happen now?

"Art takes the pain and chaos of our broken world and transforms it into something that brings forth life" (p. 12). That means art of all kinds. What kinds of art do we need now?

A year ago we were advised to wonder if there could ever be any more irony. But those who asked that question perhaps didn't notice, during these tragic and frightening months, that one of our chief gifts is that of perceptive distance: we seem to be wired so that we can't spend a day without irony. We look at the earliest texts, and they always contain the sense that death is leering around the corner, just as we're about to make the most decisive gestures of our lives.

During the Nixon era, someone wrote in *The Nation*, "Irony consists in a shared notion of the way the world should work." And there's some evidence to suggest that it may be the last thing we lose as a species, before we give the world over to the cockroaches.

Nearly a decade ago, *The New Yorker* published a cartoon featuring a booth, rather like the booths at a community fair. Its banner says "Marketplace of Ideas." One customer stands before the booth, and the man in the booth says, "Sorry, we're out of everything but irony."

At the core of comedy is this dictum: "Know not thyself." And perhaps that's where our own personal irony begins. As literature majors, we all know that the mirror that comedy forces us to look into is perhaps best used when we wake up and find ourselves in love with an ass. Intelligent comedy does not thumb its nose at the world's pain. Indeed, thoughtful laughter is based in the understanding that we are all hurting.

Nearly 30 years ago, someone wrote in the *New York Times*, "Comedy is interrogative." I've always remembered that. And a few weeks ago, in my town of Portland, Oregon, Lois Lowry said, "When we write for young readers, we don't provide answers. Rather, we re-ask the questions." And when young adult author Chris Lynch accepted the Michael Printz Honor for his novel *Free Will* in June of this year, he had this to say, "If one of my characters doesn't make me laugh pretty soon, I believe I am going to go berserk."

The sensitive point where laughter and tears converge seems to be where we are most intensely human. Finding out just who and what we are is both hilarious and tragic. A white-tailed deer and a Siberian iris are utterly gorgeous creations, but they cannot contemplate Brahms or Oscar Wilde. Or the Old Testament.

A couple of years ago, I attended a fine under-

graduate production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Only about a dozen people were in the audience. At several moments in the play, I was crying, but a woman directly behind me was laughing loudly at precisely the same moments. One of the things I loved about the evening was that the young college actors did not flinch. They were swayed from their appointed rounds neither by her laughter nor by my tears. We were all seeing our own play.

Ginny Moore Kruse of the Cooperative Children's Book Center in Madison, Wisconsin, has taught me much of what I know about kids' lit—although she is not to blame for the abysmal gaps in my knowledge. Ginny Moore Kruse says, "We each read our own book."

But I was talking about loss.

I'm sure many of you know Sven Birkerts' book, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. In the book, he has this to say about his own adolescent reading:

When Finny died at the end of John Knowles' *A Separate Peace* I cried scalding tears, unable to believe that the whole world did not grind to a sorrowful halt. (2006, p. 37)

And sorrowful halts are as good a place as any to begin saying a few things about my own work. First, I should explain that I really do fit in with this crowd this morning. I am a schoolteacher, just a lapsed one. I spent 30-plus years in classrooms: six years of little kids, ages five through eight; about three years of middle school kids; and 20-something years in high school English.

I've been to more faculty meetings than picnics in my life, have read more student essays than novels, have been to more parent conferences than editorial ones, have had more hall duty than hairdresser appointments; have been to nearly as many pep rallies

I've been to more faculty meetings than picnics in my life, have read more student essays than novels, have been to more parent conferences than editorial ones, have had more hall duty than hairdresser appointments.

as operas. I've written more lesson plans than book chapters, and I have been condescended to by more school administrators than celebrities.

Like every teacher, I spent all those years learning: learning how genuine are kids' responses to life, how naïve and candid are their opinions, how poignant are their disguises. How funny they can be. How various and amazing are their grammatical inventions, both by accident and by design. And how

efficient are their Geiger counters for hypocrisy. And in those 30-plus years, I learned just what every teacher learns—that no two kids are alike.

Bearing in mind that we must “only connect” (E. M. Forster, *Howards End*), certain notions are with me at all times as I do

my own writing. I'm going to cite five of them.

1. The first one comes from Ursula K. LeGuin, who has said, “Adolescence is exile.” We know it's usually not like the Dalai Lama's exile, or like that of the Old Testament Jews, but just try telling us that when we're actually going through it. The Irish poet Eavan Boland speaks of being in what she calls “the supremely inconvenient moment of 14 years . . . I felt awkward—and imposter, waiting for my differences and mistakes to be noticed.” Then she read the Yeats poem, “The Wild Swans at Coole.” In the poem, she found “a place where I might no longer be an imposter.” Isn't it often just luck? And the right English teacher at the right moment?

2. The second of my basic notions comes from my many years of violin lessons. They've taught me that a little bit of work will produce little bits of results. And about two-thirds of my life spent in orchestras have given me my basic lessons in teamwork and team play.

3. And the third notion that I hold dear. It was in the writing of *Make Lemonade* that I even discovered that I knew it. It's this: it's criminal for children to have to live surrounded by ugliness. I had to see the absence of beauty in order to learn it.

One night when I was a privileged college kid, I was dancing with a boy in a fraternity house somewhere in Connecticut. He asked me what I wanted

out of life. I said, “to seek beauty.” About a half-hour later, I heard a gathering of guys over near the beer keg, saying, “. . . to seek beauty,” and laughing their heads off. That has stayed with me. I have lost the dates of the Reign of Terror from my European history class notes, but I have retained the memory of a group of college boys laughing at what I wanted out of life.

4. When I was working on a book called *The Mozart Season*, I was quite mixed up—that is, more mixed up than usual. But realizing that I was on the wrong path taught me so much. And out of that confusion came a sort of guideline that I've tended to follow since then. I say it to myself and to each protagonist, but it's meant for the reader as well. Sententious but true:

Seeking what you want will surprise you. It will become far more complicated than you at first imagine. You will change. And—painful as it is—you'll grow into an expanded and deepened self. And what you want may turn out to be *not* what you want.

5. Then there's human myopia and William James, who said, “Many people think they are thinking, when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.” I watch my characters doing it, and I ponder our ability to live our lives that way. Here's Bertrand Russell's memorable conjugation of the verb “to be.” He said, “I am firm. You are stubborn. He is a pig-headed fool.”

The question of how we move from being children—open to new ideas, eager for colorful discoveries, delighted to find the unfamiliar, the exotic, the contradictory—to being adults who hold onto our prejudices as if they were life preservers: always fascinating, yes?

Certain literary precedents are always with me, too. They are: a song I learned before I could read; a novel I found at a rummage sale when I was 15; two plays—one I saw when I was 18, the other a few years later—and a short story I was introduced to in college.

First, the song. And *where* I learned it is important. My brother and I spent our childhood in the woods, not in a town, in the Pacific Northwest. It was a time that was dreadful, horrifying in the rest of the world, but not in our small nest of Douglas fir, Western red cedar trees, apple and pear orchard,

Sunday School, grandparents, summers in tall grass and winters in deep snow, a gas shortage, and rationing for some war that was going on somewhere, way far away. We lived in a large log house that our father had built before the days of the chainsaw. It had five bedrooms, two bathrooms, a grand piano, a massive stone fireplace, huge ceiling beams, and books and paintings all over the place. A lodge-like house. Just no electricity. Our mother was a very fine pianist, and between Beethoven and Rachmaninoff and Bach and Chopin, she taught us this song:

The North wind doth blow
and we shall have snow
and what will the robin do then, poor thing?
He'll sit in the barn
to keep himself warm
and hide his head under his wing.

This association of a little bird shivering in the cold appears in every book I've written, but it is never a bird. I caught this figure in my own work only just this year. (My mother had no idea that her daughter was going to turn into a writer, but she would not let me go through a day of my childhood without music.)

Next, the novel, which came along during my lopsided adolescence. (By this time, we had electricity in our house.) When I was 15—my worst year—I found *Catcher in the Rye* at a rummage sale. I took it home and it became my life. You know: the crush on a book. My older, college-student brother scorned the book for its banality, and my mother found out it had Those Words in it and hated it for its vulgarity, although she did not read it. I had in my hands, then, a perfect instrument of rebellion. That book became my armored car, in a way. I could go through the house or the orchard knowing that book by heart—I was one of *those* Salinger readers—and could make my mother and brother angry just by walking past them. I had this potent knowledge inside me, and they could not ignore it. It was perfect for alienation. Our dad had died several years before, so he had no vote in the matter. Can you imagine how many years I've wondered what his vote would have been? (My family didn't suspect that I was going through the painfully slow and sideways steps and missteps of becoming a writer. They wouldn't have believed it if anyone had told them. Nor would I.)

I began to use Holden Caulfield's criteria for making judgments about life and people. I think my gen-

eration was full of kids who did exactly that. Later, in college, I met them. So *many* things happened in my life because I had read *Catcher in the Rye*, and most of them are really not appropriate for this morning's breakfast gathering.

I had such a serious case of adolescence that my mother could barely tolerate being in the same room with me. In one of her never-ceasing attempts to cure me of it, she decided—the summer just before I would begin college—that she and I should lock ourselves inside the un-air-conditioned family car and drive ten hours together to a Shakespeare Festival. So on a balmy summer evening, in a stage storm of wind and rain, thunder and lightning, and a lot of haunting blue light,

King Lear (my very first *King Lear*), who had banished those who truly loved him and had been discarded by those he thought loved him—his Fool was the only one who had not abandoned him—looked into the raging weather and he commented on Man: “Is man no more than this? Consider him well Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal”

And something happened in me. Into what appeared to be the vacuum of my mind, King Lear and his Fool tumbled, trembling, windblown, and nearly naked.

Shakespeare had found *language* for the agony of living with one's own mistakes. There were *words* for finding yourself alone with your own failures, phrases in this play for discovering that you were wrong, all, all wrong, wrong, wrong. Looking back, I know my mind took a kind of Copernican leap that night toward finding some language of my own. Another 30 years would go by before I would actually begin to write a book for young readers.

So that's the first of the two plays.

In college, I met Nikolai Gogol's story, “The Overcoat.” Gogol finished this story in 1841, during the reign of Tsar Nicholas I. Its fusion of comedy and tragedy was perfect for my college years. I'm sure many of

So many things happened in my life because I had read *Catcher in the Rye*, and most of them are really not appropriate for this morning's breakfast gathering.

**Disequilibrium is our
stock in trade, and we can
reach our arms out wide
to embrace the laughter
and the tears and the
whole thing.**

you know the story, about pathetic Akaky Akakievich in the freezing-cold winter of St. Petersburg. A couple of years later, I saw Marcel Marceau pantomime this

story in New York. I had thought the overcoat was only in my mind, but it turned out to have been in Marcel Maceau's mind, too. Not only has Gogol remained one of my favorite authors—for his hilarity and his gloom—but in some of my more morose moments, I've wondered if everything I write is simply an attempt to make a kind

of companion piece for Gogol's "Overcoat."

And now the second play:

It was after college, and I was living in New York, and I saw Luigi Pirandello's play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Actors sat on stools and read from scripts. And I had an internal power surge: "I want to do that! Write for people to sit on stools and read from scripts!" And immediately the counterattack came from inside: "You can't do that. You don't know anything. You could never do that." The argument remained unresolved for decades. I could not have said then that I would ever actually write a book. Life itself was too overwhelming at the time; I can't remember whether I ever mentioned those yearnings to anyone or not.

I want to invoke Hazel Rochman here. She said a few weeks ago in Portland, Oregon: "Great books should make us think about what we thought we knew . . . Books open up what had seemed certain." All these things were working in me, somewhere so deep I don't even know where it is, during the years when I was getting ready to write. Several necessary decades intervened. I reared two children; I taught school. My first book for young readers was published when I was 51 years old. And, 31 years and 3000 miles away from Pirandello and New York, one day I began to write a story in funny-shaped lines about a 14-year-old babysitter, and within a few weeks, I realized I was making good on my old and passionate desire to write Readers' Theatre. And so I'm always delighted to hear that someone is staging a reading

from *Make Lemonade*. That was why I wrote it. And its companion, *True Believer*.

I began this morning by insisting that we need comedy, and then I've gone on to cite *King Lear* and poor Akaky Akakievich. Happily, we as literature students can include them in the same room, the same paragraph. Disequilibrium is our stock in trade, and we can reach our arms out wide to embrace the laughter and the tears and the whole thing. It's not by accident that the theatre (which is, after all, literature made visible) has not one symbol but two: the face in joy, the face in pain. The whole baffling paradox of being alive.

I'll read, if you don't mind, a short piece from each of two books of mine. One is about the need for tragedy and the other is about the need for comedy. First, from *True Believer* (2001), section 69, about a beetle on a sidewalk:

On my way up to The Children's Hospital
I stopped to watch a shiny beetle
creeping along the sidewalk, leg by leg.
It came to a big pebble in its way, stopped,
waited for something, some nerve impulse maybe,
adjusted its position and went around to the right.

I said the Greek name of its order: *Coleoptera*.
These are more highly evolved than cockroaches.
The beetle kept pacing along,
it came to one of those cracked-out places
that sidewalks have,
scraped and broken
like a small excavation. The beetle crept down into it,
pushing along, millimeter by millimeter,
and when it came to where it had to climb up again,
it paused for another moment,
and then it climbed.

I said to myself, LaVaughn, imagine if you were this
beetle,
with all the feet and bikes and skateboards
and in a few minutes it will try to cross the street
and along will come the Number 9 bus
and splat.
And then the whole tragedy came over me.
The whole thing. How life is so thin and fragile,
How you never know. One instant you're here
and then you're gone. (210-211)

But I'm getting a little bit tired of that kind of writing now. "I saw something by the side of the road

and now I'll suddenly make it into a metaphor for life" Maybe I've just been reading too much of that stuff lately.

I'll end by reading a bit from *Make Lemonade*, in which I spent most of my time thinking about people whose lives move from one threshold of pain to the next. Here's a section about an unruly TV set. I wrote this eight years earlier than the passage I've just read, and LaVaughn's language is a bit more primitive.

Jolly's TV set has got no vertical hold
and one night we turned the sound off and did our own.
Everything was rolling up the TV screen
and we said their words for them in different voices.

Jolly was the man with the weather map
and she reported with a bass voice,
"The whole world is rollin' up into the sky
with the high winds from the northeast
and there is increased speeds of everything
disappeared into space."

And I got on sports and reported,
"Everybody hit home runs today,
all the balls went up, none came down,
and be sure you buy this brand-new car,
no money down, don't pay nothing till—
till—"

And Jolly she finished it for me,
"Don't pay nothing till you want to,
we'll just keep adding a kazillion percent interest,
oh, there goes the new car,
oh, there goes my toupee,
up into the sky"

And we laughed like fools.
Jeremy and Jilly didn't wake up.
Little spinning spongies flew out of the sofa
and the whole world was helpless,

rolling up colorful into the sky,
out of control
like tossing silk, like steady flame, like a joke.

This is definitely not what I tell my Mom.
"You maybe got a point there," I tell her,
to make her ease up on me. "I'll be careful."
"That's my girl," my Mom says. "You got college to go to."
"I know. That's why I sit the kids," I say,
and eat my eggs with pepper.

That was so funny, that night we did the TV voices.
Maybe it was only a couple of minutes. But.
You ever laughed so hard
nobody in the world could hurt you for a minute,
no matter what they tried to do to you? (pp. 42-44)

And with that adolescent thought, I thank you so much for inviting me to join you this morning. It's a treat for me to be with you. Thank you.

Virginia Euwer Wolff is the winner of the 2011 Phoenix Award for her 1991 novel *The Mozart Season*. Her 2001 novel *True Believer* won the National Book Award, and her newest novel for young adults, *This Full House* (2009), is on the American Library Association's *Amelia Bloomer List*.

References

- Birkerts, S. (2006). *The Gutenberg elegies: The fate of reading in an electronic age*. New York, NY: Faber and Faber.
- Chrysler, J. (2002). *The Oregonian*, 8/27/02.
- Kirn, W. (2002, Sept. 8). Notes on *The darkest day*. *The New York Times Book Review*, Sect. 7, p. 7.
- Paterson, K. (2002). Repairing spirits in disarray. In M. Cart (Ed.), *911: The book of help: Authors respond to the tragedy*. (pp. 4-12). Chicago, IL: Cricket Books. pp. 4-12.

Reminiscing about Ken Donelson:

TAR Coeditor (with Alleen Pace Nilsen) 1974–1979

I knew of Ken Donelson long before I ever met the man.

As a brand new high school English teacher in Tempe, Arizona, I had read some of his work in the *Arizona English Bulletin* and *English Journal*. In fact, one of his *English Journal* articles appeared in the September 1977 issue, right when I started my teaching career in Arizona. That article, “Some Responsibilities for English Teachers Who Already Face an Impossible Job,” made clear not just that he understood the myriad challenges my colleagues and I faced, but also that he was incredibly well read and that he had high expectations for everyone who taught secondary English.

That article concluded with this:

English teachers have an absolutely impossible job. I've spent twenty-five years as an English teacher, the first thirteen teaching in Iowa high schools, the last twelve working with young people who want to be English teachers, and my own experience teaching high school English and training promising young English teachers proves to me daily that the job we want to do and must do is impossible. . . .

It's a frustrating and tiring life, but it's a life we must live if we care about literature, language, writing, non-print media, education, and above all the kids we face. Why do we stay in this impossible job? Simple answer—because we're English teachers and that's what our racket consists of. There isn't any other answer. (p. 32)

I admired his honest yet uncompromising take on our responsibilities as English teachers, and I was secretly happy that I wasn't a student of his. Based on what he had written, I assumed that his university courses would be overwhelmingly difficult if not impossible.

In addition to reading Dr. Donelson's work in professional journals during those first years, I also heard a lot about the famous professor over at ASU, the guy who had a national reputation in English education and especially in adolescent literature. He was also well known for being tough on graduate students and even tougher on censors.

My first encounters with him were distant and safe: I heard him speak a couple of times at the annual Arizona English Teachers Association convention, and from my seat in the audience, he appeared to be smart, well read, blunt, opinionated, and to a green high school English teacher like me, intimidating. When I started my career, Donelson was already a coeditor of *The ALAN Newsletter* with Alleen Pace Nilsen, and by the end of my second year of teaching, he and Alleen had handed off those duties to W. Geiger Ellis, the first editor of the new *ALAN Review* in 1978.

That was the year I started taking graduate courses at ASU, and for my first few years in the master's program there, I didn't have to take any classes from Donelson, and I have to admit I was kind of relieved. In fact, I managed to complete my master's at ASU without ever taking a class from him. When I graduated in 1980, he and Alleen published their first edition of *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, a textbook an *English Journal* reviewer called “a work whose stature so overshadows these ‘good’ [professional] books that to not read it is to be seriously uninformed” (Ellis, p. 79). My high school librarian acquired the book right away, and I was impressed—and stunned—by the depth and breadth of the work that had gone into

the book. At that point, I decided that if I were going to take an adolescent literature course in graduate school, I would take it from Donelson—and hope that somehow I'd be able to survive the crushing workload the gruff taskmaster would surely dump on me.

So there I was one evening in the spring semester of 1982, sitting in a classroom at ASU, waiting for English 591, Seminar in Literature and Adolescents, to begin. Donelson entered a few minutes early pushing a cart full of YA books, topped with a stack of mimeographed syllabi. His beard masked his expression, so I couldn't tell how he felt about teaching a night class; I just hoped that he had been in a good mood when he'd put together the reading and assignment list for our class.

After a brief introduction that included plugs for membership in NCTE and ALAN, he distributed the syllabi. I still have my copy, and I still remember the sinking feeling I had when I read it:

You'll read and write a hell of a lot. That doesn't just come with the territory. That *is* the territory. . . . The reading and the papers (weekly) may seem onerous, yea verily impossible. But others have survived and some have even enjoyed the work. So, I imagine, will you. But if you don't like to read and you don't read much, what are you doing in graduate school?

As I said, most of what you read will be aimed at young adults, and some books you select (or I select for you) *may* strike you as childish (some young adults are, you know) and immature (some adults are too, you know). You may be tempted to pontificate about the greatness of great literature and thus prove your snobbery. Don't. I've worked too long as an English teacher (and you have, too) to believe that all young people love to read and that all young adults would love to read the great books, preferably only the classics. . . .

Remember as you read old YA and new YA books that the audience was/is young people. That doesn't mean that I'll

expect you to play teenagers, only that you will need to remember that you're gauging the books from a somewhat different standard than you are most literature. That doesn't make your job more difficult, but it does make it different.

And so we began. Donelson's passion for literature was clear, as was the depth of reading he'd done in adolescent literature. I admired his blunt, honest approach to literature and reading, his keen awareness of the realities of the classroom, and his extensive knowledge of the field. I still dreaded the workload and the likely chance that he'd shred my shoddy work, but I started feeling excited for the class—and for the chance to learn more about books

for teenagers. Class went on, and it wasn't long before his sense of humor began to show. And it wasn't long after that that it became clear that he cared for his students just as much as he did for books.

He kept the promise he had made in his syllabus: we read and wrote a hell of a lot, and I haven't stopped since.

Chris Crowe teaches adolescent literature, English methods, and creative writing at Brigham Young University.

References

- Donelson, K. (1977). Some responsibilities for English teachers who already face an impossible job. *English Journal*, 66(6), 27–32.
- Ellis, W. G. (1980). Here's help. *English Journal*, 69(5), 79.

Donelson's passion for literature was clear, as was the depth of reading he'd done in adolescent literature.



TAR @ 40

TAR Editor 1979–1984

It has been over 21 years since my retirement from the academic world. I am now retired from my 20-year second career as a commercial fisherman. Hence, a bit of fog about an editorship running Spring 1978 to Winter 1984. However, in my attic was nearly every issue from Spring 1975 (Vol. 2, No. 2) to Spring 1991 (Vol. 18, No. 3). My memory thus bolstered, I can share some facts about the development of *TAR*.

No consideration of this subject can be complete without the knowledge of Alleen Pace Nilsen and Ken Donelson, the true founders who supported my efforts. Their work and spirit have always been an inspiration and a fine example of professionalism. If you really want to know something, there is your ultimate source.

Out of Arizona State in the fall of 1973 came the beginning known as “News from ALAN.” It was mimeographed sheets folded in half and stapled. The format was not what was important; it was the content, which was a gift to members who cared about our body of literature. By winter 1975 (Vol. 3, No. 2), the name changed to “The ALAN Newsletter.” With that change came an increase in format to 8½" x11" and “Clip and File” reviews. Ken and Alleen produced their last issue in spring of 1978 (Vol. 5, No. 2). After all the work of beginning a national publication, they were ready to pass the job along to some willing soul. Fortuitously, I was at hand and ready for confirmation by the ALAN Board of Directors.

That move was, for me, a wonderful challenge, but always with full support and encouragement from the former editors. The task of being editor was complex and multifaceted. Let me enumerate some of

what was involved. To begin, recall the world before personal computers. The entire job of physically producing and distributing was more cumbersome. Also, mine was a solo act, with the occasional exception of an enterprising graduate student.

I had to locate a print shop and secure quotes on the cost of printing. That required selection of three different paper stocks—cover, Clip and File pages, and regular content. Arrangements were made with the post office for a special postage rate. Production was a separate segment of effort, beginning with a typesetter. Remember this is before desktop publishing. Fonts had to be selected for the various segments of the newsletter. Sheets of content, sometimes typed and sometimes handwritten, were delivered to the typesetter. After waiting for a phone call telling me the proofs were ready to be picked up, these proof sheets had to be proofread and returned to the typesetter, who repeated the process until everything appeared publishable.

The approved proof sheets were then physically pasted onto blank sheets, each representing a page. The paste-up was carried to the printer who photographed each page and proceeded to printing and assembly. That resulted in the finished newsletter being loaded into cardboard boxes and carried to my office. Next, a printed address label was applied to each copy. (Mary Sucher labored for years maintaining ALAN’s mailing list and sent me a copy before each issue. Eventually, I was able to handle production of mailing labels on an Apple II, but the old large floppies had to be constantly updated.) Thus addressed, they had to be sorted and bundled by ZIP code, as



required by the post office. Finally, my pickup truck carried the load to the post office for mailing. Then it was time to head to my favored pub to relax and await feedback from members.

If you notice, so far I haven't mentioned much about editing. Such was the job at the time. Beginning with the Winter 1979 issue, our newsletter became *The ALAN Review*. A year later saw the first appearance of a logo for the cover. That entailed my finding a graphic artist who could embody something of our spirit—thus the circle of four symbolic readers. That issue, Winter 1980, was the first incorporating a review board, thus making it a referred journal.

Our desire to expand circulation and content required funding beyond what ALAN could provide. By then, I had well-established contacts among publishers. Drawing upon my earlier career as a traveling salesman (you didn't know that), I began selling our "product" as an excellent platform to advertise their wares. After checking similar publications, I established advertising rates and included the first ad from Scribner-Bantam in Fall 1979. By diverse means, I secured mailing lists of related publications and began sending fliers and subscription forms to hundreds of

potential readers/members. Particularly ripe prospects even received a sample copy of an earlier issue. Mary Sucher made substantial contributions through her frequent travel overseas. When I ended my editorship, we had paid circulation in twelve countries. I am proud of my hucksterism. I count it a unique talent within the profession, and I enjoyed using it for ALAN's benefit.

But what about actual editing? As you readily surmise, it constituted a relatively minor portion of my effort, but nonetheless important. As with every other aspect of my editorship, there were many facets. As mentioned earlier, I established working relations with many publishers. This resulted in their sending me approximately 2,000 books a year for possible review. Recognizing the advantage to publishers of having their books reviewed provided me leverage for securing advertising, and a productive cycle ensued.

Giving each of these arriving books a fair look/reading partially explains my preferring outdoor activities in retirement. (You have surely heard of burnout.) After selecting the proper number of books for review, I mailed each to a reviewer of my choice. I had to learn the various interests and strengths of these colleagues. Book selection followed two principles: either the author was well established and readers needed to have the new work brought to their attention or the new work did not measure up to the author's previous books, in which case readers would surely welcome guidance in managing their expectations—I believe that deserved negative reviews are important. Other books were selected for their apparent quality and the need for a relatively new author to receive recognition.

Each issue had an original article by an established author. That entailed contacting authors and/or their publishers to arrange for their article fitting my guidelines. Once received, these pieces of writing had to be edited, some more and some less. The varying quality among recognized authors proved to be eye opening. I am happy to say that the disappointments were few.

Other articles were usually of the over-the-tran-

When I ended my editorship, we had paid circulation in twelve countries. I am proud of my hucksterism.

som variety. I was happy to receive them, as in the early years good copy was sometimes scarce. Overall, members came through with worthy pieces. Then there were informational items, resulting in a portion of the issue serving as a bulletin board and honoring our publication's original intent. All articles, news items, and reviews received careful attention through the actual editing of my editorship.

There you have it—the inside view of my 1978 to

1984 editorship. I am sure I have missed some bits of the complete process, but this should serve to convey a feel for the job. As for my view of our field at that time, I recommend an article I published in *English Journal*: “Adolescent Literature: Changes, Cycles, and Constancy” (Vol. 74, No. 3, March 1985, pp. 94–98).

A Happy Accident: YA Lit and Me

TAR Editor 1984–1990

By chance, I discovered young adult literature as a first-year, 20-year-old high school English teacher in 1968. I was ready to give up on finding anything to motivate a classroom full of bored, rebellious high school freshmen until one day, I sat on the edge of my desk and began to read aloud S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders*. For the first time that year, the students were actually quiet and listening to me. They were hooked, and so was I.

I had accidentally found a way to motivate youngsters who had been turned off by schooling and discouraged by life. I never turned back. The classics were certainly important in my curriculum, but young adult books became my students’ bridge to understanding the more complex themes and language of the adult tomes.

ALAN and the educators, authors, publishers, and researchers who were its active members provided my most important teacher education. Already a member of NCTE, I began attending ALAN meetings, subscribed to and read *The ALAN Review*, and learned as much as possible about authors and books for young adults. By the late 1970s, I was teaching adolescent literature to future teachers. As a young assistant professor, I saw ALAN as a way to increase my knowledge of the field that had found me. When Guy Ellis, my predecessor as editor of *The ALAN Review*, suggested that I consider becoming editor, I jumped at the opportunity. What better way could I find to learn about young adult books and their authors?

For me, the best part of editing *The ALAN Review* was getting to know the authors personally. Many of the young adult writers of the 1980s became my

professional colleagues and friends. Through a grant received for a young authors’ project I directed, I was able to bring authors such as Sue Ellen Bridgers, Paula Danzinger, Norma Fox and Harry Mazer, Madeleine L’Engle, Katherine Paterson, and many others to my campus and to the schools of the local community.

Adolescent literature was very much an emerging field in the 1980s. Many authors, like Katherine Paterson and Madeleine L’Engle, were first considered to be authors of children’s books. But books like S. E. Hinton’s *The Outsiders* and Robert Cormier’s *The Chocolate War*, dealt with issues and themes that were too “adult” for young children. Hence, publishers began to establish a new market—books for young adults.

During those early years, there were no “blockbusters” that went viral, like the Harry Potter series or the Twilight books of later years, but there were foundation books that created a new market for those that would follow. My students loved Lois Duncan’s *Killing Mr. Griffin*, Katherine Paterson’s *Bridge to Terabithia*, Robert Lipsyte’s *The Contender*, Robert Cormier’s *I Am the Cheese*, Isabelle Holland’s *The Man without a Face*, Mildred Taylor’s *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Sue Ellen Bridgers’s *Home before Dark*, Paul Zindel’s *The Pigman*, and so many more.

As much as my teacher education students loved these books and saw their value in the curriculum (and not only in the English curriculum), there were many others who thought the books did not belong in the classrooms or in the libraries of the day. Censorship was one of the biggest issues of the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, we devoted an entire issue of *The*

Young adult books did not have a place in the literary canon, and many sought to remove them from classroom reading lists and library shelves.

ALAN Review to the topic of censorship in the spring of 1989. Young adult books did not have a place in the literary canon, and many sought to remove them from classroom reading lists and library shelves.

In that same issue of *The ALAN Review* (Spring, 1989), educator and scholar Donald Gallo reported

the results of a research study of “The Most Important YA Authors” of the day. Here, in order of number of first-place votes, are the top 33:

S. E. Hinton/Paul Zindel
Robert Cormier
Madeleine L’Engle/Richard Peck
Judy Blume/Sue Ellen Bridgers/Virginia Hamilton/
M.E. Kerr/Katherine Paterson
Robert Lipsyte
Ursula K. LeGuin/Norma Fox Mazer/Scott O’Dell/
Robert Newton Peck
Maureen Daly/Paula Danzinger/Norma Klein
Lloyd Alexander/Paula Fox/Harry Mazer/Zibby Oneal
Lois Duncan/Rosa Guy/Ouida Sebestyen/William
Sleater
Bette Greene
Mary Stolz/Laurence Yep
Robin F. Brancato/Isabelle Holland/Mildred D. Taylor/
Jane Yolen

It is important to note that the 1980s was also the decade when YA scholarship increased in reputation. Researchers and scholars such as Alleen Pace Nielsen, Kenneth L. Donelson, Robert C. Small, Jr., Jerry Weiss, Joan Kaywell, Hugh Agee, and many others brought credibility to a discipline that was still in its own adolescence. Related textbooks, anthologies, and literary biographies were finally being published, distributed, and utilized in university classrooms. It was a dynamic and exciting time to be in the field of young adult literature, and *ALAN* and *The ALAN Review* were critical players in the growth of the young adult book market and the depth of the literary and pedagogical scholarship.

Arthea J. S. (Charlie) Reed is Professor Emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Asheville. She is the author of *Reaching Adolescents: The Young Adult Book and the School* (Macmillan, 1994), *Comics to Classics: A Guide to Books for Teens and Preteens* (Penguin, 1994), *Presenting Norma Fox Mazer* (Scarecrow, 2000), and *Presenting Harry Mazer* (Twayne, 1996). In addition, she is the author or coauthor of numerous books in the fields of introduction to and foundations of education. Since leaving UNCA in 1996, she has been a financial planner with Northwestern Mutual and president and owner of Long Term Care Insurance Connection, Inc. She is currently working on a research study of successful female financial planners for Women in Insurance and Financial Services. Charlie and her husband Don split their time between Asheville, NC, and Hilton Head Island, SC.

Lighting the Fire:

ALAN Speech 1980

Thank you. I feel very privileged to be here today, to talk to you, because I think that the people who teach children to read are the real fire-givers of our time. To be able to read, intelligently, creatively, to be able to reach into the past for truths that have been obscured, to be able to let your mind loose, to imagine, to dream, is true liberation.

However, for me, someone who hides behind a typewriter in a basement all day long, the thought of standing up in front of all you Prometheans is sort of intimidating. The idea of giving a speech—my very first to an audience of teachers—makes my knees freeze and liver quiver.

So I've fallen back on an old journalist's trick to get me through without disaster—I'm going to interview myself. That way, I can be sure the questions are easy ones. Since they are also the questions that people tend to ask me, I hope they are the questions you might ask me: how I started writing young adult books, who I perceive as my audience, and exactly what I want to say to them.

My first book for young adults was a novel called *The Contender*. I like to think that it wasn't so much a young adult novel—people who package such things tend to make it into one word, like sugar-coated-cereal or made-for-TV-movie—but I like to think of *The Contender* as a novel that happened to find, for very intrinsic reasons, its most responsive audience among teenaged readers. I certainly hadn't consciously sat down to write for that audience. In fact, I hadn't consciously sat down to write at all.

Thirteen years ago, when I wrote *The Contender*, I was a reporter for *The New York Times*. Boxing was

my specialty that year; I was really a feature writer, but a very young man named Cassius Clay had just won the heavyweight title, and it was decided by *The Times* that he should be covered by a feature writer. At the time, I had written one book, Dick Gregory's autobiography, *Nigger*, and some magazine articles and short stories, but as much as I wanted to, I hadn't yet written a novel. The reason I hadn't written a novel was because I knew you couldn't write a novel unless you were enflamed. Unless the muse was holding a blowtorch to your toes. Unless you were absolutely engulfed in a passion that could only be expressed in complete sentences. I knew this because I had been an English major, because I had spent most of my life listening to reading teachers.

As a newspaper reporter, I got the usual vague letters that reporters, especially in New York, always get from book publishers:

Dear Sir or Madame: You should really write a novel some day, the same sort of thing you're doing for the paper, only with lots more sex.

I have even gotten a vague letter from the juvenile department of a publishing house:

Dear Sir: How about the same sort of thing you're doing for the paper, only with less sex?

But I was still waiting for that muse with a blowtorch. And then the fire got me.

In November of 1965, I was sent to Las Vegas to cover a heavyweight championship boxing match between Floyd Patterson and Muhammad Ali. The night before the fight, I took an old boxing manager

out to dinner. Once he had trained champions, but now he was down on his luck, going blind, shuffling through the scene. After dinner, we went back to the hotel where we were both staying. We sat by the pool. It was night, the pool was deserted except for us. In

I wondered what kind of boy would come up those steps? What would he be like? What would be happening in his life that was scarier than the dark steps?

the distance, through the darkness, we could see the lights of the hotel casino, we could even hear the rattling of coins when slot-machine jackpots hit, we could hear the screams of the winners—but otherwise we were very alone in the night. And the old boxing manager began to reminisce about a gymnasium he once owned, many, many years ago.

This gym had been in a tough immigrant neighborhood, the lower east side of Manhattan. It was at the top of three dark, narrow, twisting flights of stairs, and the old manager told me that he used to sit in the dark at the top of those stairs listening for the young man who would surely arrive some day to become his new champion.

I was fascinated. I asked him what he would look for in such a boy. His height, his weight, his shoulders and legs . . . and the old man shook his head, No, those weren't as important as what was inside the boy. And what was inside the boy he would know long before he ever saw him.

I asked him what he meant.

He said that the boy he wanted, the boy he was waiting for, the boy who would have a shot at becoming a champion, a boy who would surely be a contender, would come up those steps *alone* . . . at night . . . and *scared* . . . but he would conquer his fear, he would use his fear, to climb to the top.

I asked him what he meant by the word contender. I knew it strictly as a boxing term, someone who is considered a challenger for the championship, but the old manager seemed to be using it in a larger sense. He said that a contender, to him, was the man coming up, the man who knows there's a good chance that he might not get to the top, but who's willing to sweat and to bleed and to try . . . a man who will come to understand that it's the climbing that makes

one special. Getting to the top is an extra reward.

I stayed up most of the rest of the night thinking about what the old manager had said. I couldn't get the dark narrow twisting stairs out of my mind. I wondered what kind of boy would come up those steps? What would he be like? What would be happening in his life that was scarier than the dark steps?

When I got back to New York after the fight, there was another vague letter waiting, this one was from the juvenile department of a publishing house, Harper & Row. Dear Sir . . . How about . . . ?

Well, I answered that letter with a vague letter of my own:

How would you like a novel about a boy and three flights of dark twisting stairs? All I know at the moment is that I'd like to call it *The Contender*, and there won't be much sex.

The answer came right back, TERRIFIC, and I realized that my toes were on fire.

The Contender could only have been a novel for teenaged readers. It was short, it was structurally stable, the plot was linear, the leading character was an adolescent, and the overwhelming concern of the book was *becoming*. That's the main concern of young people, *Becoming*. I've gotten letters from white, suburban girls who find no trouble identifying with a black, urban, male high school drop-out. She . . . as well as he . . . wants to become somebody.

A contender.

And so did I. So *do* I . . . want to become somebody, want to become a contender. I had no trouble identifying with the hero of the book. Later on, teachers asked me about the metaphorical symbolism of the dark stairs—had I created them at the typewriter as symbols of stages in a life's journey? Although I had to admit that they started as real-life stairs, while I was writing the book I not only wondered if I would run up three flights of dark stairs, alone, at night and scared, and what would make me do it, but I also wondered what in my life was comparable to those stairs, and what I would consider a championship, how I would know if I were a contender. A best-seller? A critically acclaimed book? Some encouraging response from readers?

Writers tend to overdo the parallels between themselves and boxers—Hemingway and Mailer are good examples—but you can understand the writer thinking about working hard, alone, and then going

up on a platform, half-naked, to be judged. Or to get their brains knocked out by their critics.

You can't go too far identifying with your lead character, of course, unless you want to end up writing about yourself. So the writer has to answer questions about the hero. While I was writing *The Contender*, I was principally a journalist, and I learned the differences between journalism and fiction: In journalism, you get other people to answer your questions; in fiction, you're on your own. In journalism, you worry about the facts: Are the facts accurate? Did so-and-so actually say these words? You're not so worried about whether so-and-so is telling the truth. In fiction, you're concerned less with the facts than with the truth—does it all add up?

In juvenile fiction, the responsibility to the truth is even greater than in general adult fiction, where you are presumably dealing with people who have as much informational and judgmental background as you do. In juvenile fiction, the writer, the teacher, the librarian are obligated to the truth, no matter how difficult this makes their work.

I found juvenile fiction a lot harder, physically harder work, than journalism. That year, I interviewed Muhammad Ali and Mickey Mantle and President Johnson and Senator Hart and some Soviet weightlifters in Moscow, and my main concern was getting the facts right—being accurate about what they said to me. If they were lying, that was something else. But in the make-believe world I was creating in *The Contender*, everything had to be truthful. I had to be able to swear that the circumstances I had created—in which a black high school drop-out trying to become somebody without becoming a ghetto criminal rushed up those three flights of stairs in Harlem toward a darkness he could not have known—were absolutely true.

Although as far as I know, they never happened that way. Except for the old manager in the book, who was modeled after the old man in Las Vegas, no one in *The Contender* was specifically modeled after a real person. And I even changed neighborhoods and years. And as much as I enjoyed writing *The Contender*—the act itself was a very happy time for me—I never really expected to be writing any more books for young adults. *The Contender* had broken my block about longer fiction; I had been enflamed without being consumed. I was nicely cooked and ready to serve. And

I know that the money, the glamour, the attention was—it still is—in novels and journalism and television and movies for Old Adults. In the next ten years, my novels and my journalism and my screenwriting were for Old Adults. *Dear Sir: Just what you're writing for the papers, only a little more sex.*

During that time, as I spoke to schoolchildren reading *The Contender* or read their letters, I realized I was missing something. When you write for a general adult audience, you can hope to entertain, to enlighten perhaps, maybe to provoke an appreciative or angry response, but very, very rarely to actually change a reader's mind. To open a window. To point out a new direction.

Writers, like teachers and librarians, secretly lust for the power to control minds. Writers and teachers and librarians who work with young people have the best chance to be successful. Of course, the odds against success are incredibly bad—television, parents, and other kids get first crack—but the chance, however slim, really does exist. One student a term, one reader per ten thousand, and you not only feel you've got The Force on your side, but that you are The Force.

And it's true, you are The Force. You have real power.

Some of the most satisfying professional moments in my life have come from that sense I would get—not often, but just enough to make me want to taste it again—of having been able to reach out and put my hand on someone's head, someone who said that something had happened to his or her way of looking at things because of something I wrote. It was always the younger reader.

With all that, it took ten years and a literary accident for me to write another novel for that precious reader. And this time, I knew it was going to be harder. I was no longer an innocent enflamed by a midnight story. I had had a successful book in the field. I didn't want to disgrace it with a loser—Lipsyte wasn't a contender, they'd say, he was a bum.

You can't go too far identifying with your lead character, of course, unless you want to end up writing about yourself. So the writer has to answer questions about the hero.

I had to figure out the answer to that second question, *WHO am I writing for?*

The literary accident was this: In 1976, a friend of mine, the editor of a magazine called *Mother Jones*,

And I found out who my audience was.

It was me. Or was it I?

asked if I would write an article about books that had influenced me as a youngster. They were running a monthly feature about books and writers. I agreed, and I wrote the piece, and in the middle of a long sentence describing myself as a book-junkie at 14, there was the phrase “in the prison of my fat.” I couldn’t believe it when I saw it. Bells went off, sirens. I heard . . . The Click.

When I was 14 years old, I weighed more than 200 pounds. How much more than 200 pounds I don’t really know because whenever the number 200 rolled up on the bathroom scale, I bailed out. Two hundred was enough. My fourteenth summer, lying about my age, I got a job mowing the lawn of one of the worst human beings in the Western World. He got his kicks by cheating me out of my pay, by making me work extra for free, by finding new shades of meaning in the word *exploitation*. But in the end, I won—I lost—at least 45 pounds. How much I lost, of course, I’ll never know since I don’t know exactly what I weighed when I began that last fat summer.

I had a lot of adventures that summer (mostly in my head, of course) because I was in an incredible state of change. I was physically becoming something else, a new image to the world. By the end of that summer, I knew I wanted to write about it—I had already decided to become a writer—and one of the first pieces I did for English when I got back to school that fall was a poem, a parody of “Gunga Din,” all about my epic struggle with the lawn I was cutting, a heroic adventure about a boy armed only with a lawn mower against a sea of vicious chlorophyll. It was very fancy stuff, that poem, but nowhere did I mention the central issue of that summer—being fat.

That poem was the first of dozens of attempts to write about that summer in the next 24 years. Not one of those attempts dealt truthfully with the central issue—and if you think about it for a moment, why should they? After all, one of the main reasons I had decided early to become a writer was because I

was fat. If people laughed at you on the street, if you were too clumsy or slow to participate fully, if you hated the way you looked, what better way to become somebody than to put a typewriter between yourself and the world, hide behind the typewriter, use the typewriter as a weapon, control the destiny of the universe, create characters, kill them, involve them in love and hate and adventure, without ever having to expose yourself to ridicule?

Twenty-four years later, by accident or cosmic design or maybe just leakage, the phrase “in the prison of my fat” fell out on a page. Twenty-four years after I lost my weight in one summer, I was finally liberated from the prison of my fat. And two weeks later, I started writing *One Fat Summer*.

And I found out who my audience was.

It was me. Or was it I?

All the epic poems I had written about cutting grass and the science fiction about grass on Alpha Centauri and other planets, and the third-person narratives and adventure stories and fantasies had really been written for other people—for people who looked terrific when they were 14 years old, people who (I thought) didn’t have a care in the world. But this book was going to be for me. Not me at 38, of course, but me at 14.

I wanted to reach back through the years and put a hand on my own head and talk to myself. Somehow, I had the feeling that if I could do that, then I could talk to anybody, anywhere, *now*. And I think I was right. The nicest letter I’ve gotten so far on *One Fat Summer* was from a young woman who said she found the story positive yet painful; it touched her, she said, because at the age of 11 she was very, very skinny and nearly six feet tall.

Which brings me to the third question. Now that I’m writing books for teenaged readers, and now that I’ve zero’ed in on my audience, what is it . . . exactly . . . that I want to say?

I was afraid you’d ask . . . because I really don’t know.

I sense that young people today know far more answers than I did when I was fat, yet they still suffer from the basic problems—they don’t know the right questions. If I could reach back to put my hand on my own head at 14, it wouldn’t be to say, “Listen up, Bobby, this is good and this is bad, memorize and repeat after me. . . .” I’d want to say to myself, “. . .

Bobby, you've got to keep asking yourself, Is this good? Is this right? Do I really want to do it? Those are the good questions. As far as answers go, you're on your own."

And the books that help that process, help kids to start asking the right questions, are the books that present situations that are truthful, that present characters dealing with those situations in truthful ways. Such books become windows on the world, treasure chests of mind-blowing questions, bridges among divided people.

How do you find such books? They're out there, they're being written and published and distributed, but the problem is that they're being written and published and distributed in the same tonnage lots with books that deserve to be burned. And it's not so easy to separate the good books from the bad books—you've almost got to read them all . . .

And, believe it or not, you can't tell a book by its cover, especially, the current fad of sensational problem books—The Five Big D's, I call them—Death, Disease, Divorce, Dope, and Dee-sire. Such books often treat these very real, very important problems as superficially and sensationally as newspaper headlines. Often, a book that *seems* on the right track, that *seems* to be on the side of the angels, a book that from its cover and its blurb and its advance notices *seems* hip enough to grab those kids who don't read anything but *TV Guide*, may really be worse in this way than yet another seemingly dreary tale of a girl who spends her 16th summer on a dude ranch or two boys who find treasure in grandpa's backyard—old-timey books that might really have more insight and understanding, more believable characters, more truthful human confrontations than the latest chic of the week, this month's catalogue leader about a finger-snappin', disco-dancin', coke-snortin', foul-mouth lady who traces God to a UFO owned by Exxon, and in so doing, comes to terms with her parent's divorce.

Such books—clever, attractive, seductive—remind me of a birthday cake we once bought. It was for my son's fifth birthday. He was having a pile of 5-year-old boys over to help him celebrate, and we bought from a local bakery a very large, handsome cake with blue icing and the entire US Seventh Cavalry riding across the top. It was gorgeous. The five-year-olds were stunned. The most beautiful cake they had ever seen.

And probably the worst they had ever eaten. It

was stale. We were very angry because we realized what had happened. The bakery, figuring it was just a cake for five year olds, wasn't too concerned with the inside. Likewise, I'm afraid, in their rush to the market, many publishers have been churning out a lot of stale books for younger readers, books that look gorgeous but, in the long run, may turn them off reading for good.

Too often, for example, books dealing with sex fail to deal with the alternatives and the complications—like the choice of no sex, of gay sex, birth control, considerate sexual technique, abortions, and the possibility of loving relationships in which sex is an aspect rather than the critical center. Then there are books dealing with dope that can create "a

reefer madness" climate that kids laugh at; for every kid who has been led to stronger drugs or a ruined life by trying marijuana at a party, there are hundreds of kids for whom the experience was pleasant and not terribly significant—or at least not more significant than the Scotch overdose that once knocked out a 15-year-old former fat boy of my acquaintance.

One of the current themes in the Big D books is homosexuality, a long-time taboo that is finally being dealt with, often very well, with sensitivity and understanding. And just as often it's being presented as a stale cake, all flash and no substance. This happens to be an area I'm particularly interested in. When I was 14 years old, growing up in New York City in the 1950s, the killer word on the street was "fag." Call a boy a fag and he would have to fight or slink away. To avoid being called a fag, to avoid being considered less than a man—whatever that was—we talked tough and we practiced our spitting and we played sports (or at least paid fan lip-service to it). We talked about girls as objects, and we strategically denied those parts of our own nature that were sensitive and kind and compassionate.

In other words, not manly.

We allowed our psyches to be crippled because

I'm afraid, in their rush to the market, many publishers have been churning out a lot of stale books for younger readers, books that look gorgeous but, in the long run, may turn them off reading for good.

**I think I'd like to reach
back and tell myself that
nothing in life is either as
wonderful . . . or as ter-
rible . . . as it seems at 14.**

sports heroes, to movie stars, to singers, and to boys on the street who were better than we were at acting cool.

I guess things really haven't changed that much. Boys, more than ever, need books to help them find their way to manhood, to help them define that word, each for himself, just as girls must achieve womanhood, just as girls and boys must become persons, beyond any quick and easy labels or signs or handy-this-week-only-buy-200-and-get-your-teacher-guide-free-monogrammed-young-adult-novel-just-add-hot-blood-and-serve.

I think I'd like to reach back and tell myself that nothing in life is either as wonderful . . . or as terrible . . . as it seems at 14. But I know that I probably

we were scared—scared of not measuring up to someone else's standard (we were too young to have our own), scared of being left in the back of the pack, scared of not becoming a man, and scared because we had no idea of what it was that made you a man.

We looked for guidance to

wouldn't be believed. In a poem by Dylan Thomas, there's a line that goes:

The ball I threw while playing in the park
Has not yet reached the ground.

I think about these people we write for, we teach, these people that we feel we have so much to say to . . . but what, exactly? I think of them on the threshold of Personhood, poised, straining toward the sky, for that ball they hurled up.

Those of us who care about them, who are personally and professionally dedicated to them, can describe the shape and the size and the velocity of that ball, we can describe the dimensions of the park and the texture of the earth, we can relate the histories of centuries of other young people who have stood on this very spot. We should do this, it's our job to do this, and then to walk away, to stand in a shadow in the corner, hoping we have written well enough and taught well enough that the decision each reader . . . each student . . . each child will make—whether it is to run away or to catch the ball or just to stand there and do nothing—is the right decision . . . or at least good enough.

Thank you.

Anything but Peripheral: Coediting *The ALAN Review*

TAR Coeditor (with Robert Smalls) 1990–1992

From 1989 through the early 1990s (Vol. 17, No. 3 through Vol. 20, No. 3), I served as coeditor of *The ALAN Review* with Robert C. Small, Jr. During those years, Bob and I coedited 10 issues totaling 560 printed pages. Over that time, the Newbery Award was given to *Joyful Noise* (Paul Fleishman), *Number the Stars* (Lois Lowry), *Maniac Magee* (Jerry Spinelli), *Shiloh* (Phyllis Reynolds Naylor), and *Missing May* (Cynthia Rylant). The Donelson and Nilsen Honor list for those years included *Shabanu* (Suzanne Fisher Staples), *The Silver Kiss* (Annette Curtis Klause), *Lyddie* (Katherine Paterson), *Somewhere in the Darkness* (Walter Dean Myers), and *Missing Angel Juan* (Francesca Lia Block). The yearly ALAN workshop was held at the annual fall National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) convention, and we met in Baltimore, Atlanta, Seattle, Louisville, and Pittsburg. It was also, in the industry, an era when publishing companies were capitalizing on a renewed interest in horror, printing dozens of YA books in the genre; in English education, it was a time when debate over cultural literacy, thanks to E. D. Hirsch and fellow social conservatives, was loud and contentious. There was much going on in the field, and my selection as coeditor of *The ALAN Review* was, for me, a welcome one.

During my years as coeditor, Bob and I rather neatly divided the work, although the editing itself was always a joint venture. In the early 1990s, computers were not widely used nor were electronic files; computer-driven advances in the printing industry

were some years off. Odd as it may seem, Bob and I dealt with paper manuscripts, paper galley proofs, and hard copy letters to and from contributors. All manuscripts were re-keyboarded by an assistant who worked with Bob; I arranged the layout of the journal by hand using waxed galleys and art-board templates, and I sized and placed all photographs and drawings to indicate where they would be in the final issue. Because he was at Virginia Tech and I was across the state at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Bob and I also spent a great deal of time on the phone, and for occasional face-to-face consultations, I made the four-hour trip to Tech. At the time, support for this kind of scholarship/service was not forthcoming at VCU, and there was no editorial assistance, no release time, and no funding. From the administration's perspective, my work on the journal was largely unacknowledged and rather peripheral.

Peripheral it assuredly was not. Before our first issue was at press, I had handled the redesign of the journal's cover and interior, and as Bob and I started our editorial terms, I assumed the advertising correspondence, placement, and billing. The bulk of the work, of course, was the manuscript (columns, reviews, and articles) solicitation, acceptance, and editing, making *The ALAN Review* exciting, but also highly time-intensive. Bob and I wanted to be creative and responsive to the trends in the field; highlighting authors, issues, and dealing with perennial censorship battles were all part of our ongoing work.

What do I recall of those years? As I have writ-

ten in the NCTE volume, *Two Decades of The ALAN Review* (Kelly & Small, 1999), I have my own list of favorites:

Most Generous Authors: As I recall from those years, Norma Fox Mazer and Julian Thompson were tops, and the then-reclusive Judy Blume allowed an interview to be conducted and printed.

Funniest Article: To this day I still love Susan Beth Pfeffer's "Basic Rules of Teenage Life," which hilariously and accurately identified just who was the "one, true outsider" (hint: every teenager who ever lived).

Most Impressive Research: *The ALAN Review* showcased wonderful scholarship, and in my years as coeditor, favorites were Lois Stover's work on cultural diversity, Don Kenney's on references, and Suzanne Reid's essay on wood, music, and sailing in the novels of Cynthia Voigt.

Favorite Focus Issues: Bob's Sue Ellen Bridgers issue was wonderful, and mine on science fiction worked out well, also.

Articles That Influenced Me for Years to Come: Margaret Mackey's "Derek's Story" was my first close encounter with the topic of aliteracy, and Rickey Cotton's piece on religion has resonated over the years.

And, finally, **My Most Startling Moment:** The famed author Madeleine L'Engle was interviewed for one of our winter issues, and in that piece, L'Engle clearly and unmistakably cited her belief that she could, as a child, walk above the ground. I read the passage, reread it, and then, during one of Bob's and my marathon proofreading sessions over the phone, I just had to ask. The conversation, reproduced from memory, does not sound very erudite, but it's pretty much how it went:

"Uh, Bob, just one last thing."

"Sure. What is it?"

"Did you actually read *that part* of the L'Engle interview?"

"What part?"

"You know, *that part*."

"You mean the part where she recalls being able to walk above the ground?"

"Yes. Wow—do you think she really means it?"

"Yes. I think she really does."

"Wow."

L'Engle had written that her theory was that "whatever Jesus did while he was alive, we should be able to do too, but we've forgotten." Interviewer Gary D. Schmidt had prompted, "You speak of this also in one of your journals, when you recall that you used to be able to float down stairs as a very young child," and L'Engle had cheerfully responded: "Oh yes, and I cannot tell you how many letters I have had that say, 'I've never dared tell anybody this before. I did it, too'" (Winter 1991, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 13–14).

Coediting *The ALAN Review* was a privilege as well as an excellent preparation for work in the years to come. I went on to edit NCTE's secondary booklist, *Books for You* (Christenbury, 1995), and then for five years served as editor of *English Journal*. But I never dealt with advertising, never cut up galleys again, never did marathon proofreading sessions over the phone, and never had an editorial partner the equal of Bob Small. I also never, as a matter of fact, understood Madeleine L'Engle and floating above the ground, but surely some things are best left unquestioned.

Leila Christenbury is Commonwealth Professor of English Education at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond. A former president of NCTE, she is the recent recipient of the NCTE David H. Russell Award for Distinguished Research in the Teaching of English and the National Reading Conference Edward B. Fry Book Award. She has read and taught young adult literature for over 30 years and has served as a Director of ALAN. She can be reached at lchriste@vcu.edu.

References

- The ALAN Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Spring 1990.
The ALAN Review, Vol. 18, No. 1, Fall 1990.
The ALAN Review, Vol. 18, No. 2, Winter 1991.
The ALAN Review, Vol. 18, No. 3, Spring 1991.
The ALAN Review, Vol. 19, No. 1, Fall 1991.
The ALAN Review, Vol. 19, No. 2, Winter 1992.
The ALAN Review, Vol. 19, No. 3, Spring 1992.
The ALAN Review, Vol. 20, No. 1, Fall 1992.
The ALAN Review, Vol. 20, No. 2, Winter 1993.
The ALAN Review, Vol. 20, No. 3, Spring 1993.
Christenbury, L. (Ed.). (1995). *Books for you: An annotated booklist for senior high students*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.
Kelly, P., & Small, C. R., Jr. (Eds.). (1999). *Two decades of The ALAN Review*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

A Labor of Love: Coediting *The ALAN Review*

TAR Coeditor (with Robert Small) 1992–1998

When Leila Christenbury, Bob Small's coeditor of *TAR*, was selected as editor of *English Journal*, thus cutting short her term with *TAR*, Bob asked me to apply with him for another term, and we were fortunate to be selected. Our work over the next five years (volumes 21–25) was convenient because Bob and I were both at Virginia Tech with offices down the hall from each other. However, the process of putting the journal together during those years was still laborious. The journal continued to be published at Virginia Tech, where the print shop had switched to a computer publishing program, which meant we could do layout in a new way. We divided the duties: I did the layout and handled all the advertising; Bob communicated with authors; we both edited and proofread all copy. Articles were almost always submitted in hard copy for review and, once accepted, had to be input into a computer program. Then began the long hours of editing and proofing copy through every iteration. We even handled the mailing, with NCTE sending the labels to the Virginia Tech mail room for distribution. Our editorship covered five volumes from Fall 1993 to Spring 1998. In those 15 issues, we edited 714 printed pages.

The book reviews are a major section of each issue, and no *TAR* editor could do the job without someone to handle the many tasks involved with the book reviews. We were fortunate to have the services of two excellent editors during our term, Virginia Monseau and Gary Salvner. We could not have asked for two better people to assist us. And in order to focus on certain specific issues involving YA literature, Bob and I designated various column editors through-

out the five years, some with columns appearing in every issue, such as The Membership Connection, edited first by Kay Parks Bushman and later by Chris Crowe. Other columns were The Publisher Connection, with M. Jerry Weiss serving as editor; The Library Connection with Betty Carter; The Research Connection with Sissi Carroll; The Censorship Connection with Nancy McCracken; and The Diversity Connection with Ronn Hopkins.

For fun and to challenge our readers, Kay Parks Bushman wrote a YA Trivia column that appeared in most issues; Jim Brewbaker became editor of that column for the Spring 1996 issue and continued through our last two volumes. I always looked forward to what they were going to submit so that I could test my knowledge of YA literature, but I sometimes found myself lacking.

Every issue contained one or two articles by authors of YA literature in which they provided insights about the development of selected pieces, the influences on their work, or sometimes even an original work. For instance, our first issue (Vol. 21, No. 1) featured a short story about teaching by Sandy Asher; then, in a later issue, Sandy gave us a play about sadness and escape (Vol. 22, No. 3). In that same first issue, an article by Patricia Lee Gauch explored the writing of historical fiction. In the next issue (Vol. 21, No. 2), Paul Zindel told a story of his boyhood and the original Pigman, Will Hobbs described the story behind *The Big Wander*, and Graham Salisbury reflected on his own youth as a way of looking at how fiction fits the needs of boys. In succeeding issues, the authors who wrote for us were Marie G. Lee, Naomi

Shihab Nye, Sue Ellen Bridgers, Joan Bauer, Rodman Philbrick, Marc Talbert, Richard Peck, Shelley Stoehr, Theodore Taylor, Donna Jo Napoli, Erica Bauermeister, Richard Wallace, A. C. LeMieux, and Bette Greene.

The two-day ALAN Workshop at the NCTE Conventions continued to grow bigger year after year

People worried that YA literature canon was developing, and they fretted that perhaps newer writers and edgier themes might not get attention in the classroom.

and provided us with access to many writers who would later contribute to *TAR*. During our tenure, workshops were held in Orlando (1994), San Diego (1995), Chicago (1996), Detroit (1997), and Nashville (1998), and the presidents who put them together were Virginia Monseau, Diana Mitchell, Charlie Reed, Gary Salvner, and Lois Stover.

During those years, Bob received the ALAN Award, as did Chris Crutcher, Walter Dean Myers, Bill Morris, and Mildred Taylor.

During those years, people worried that a YA literature canon was developing, and they fretted that perhaps newer writers and edgier themes might not get attention in the classroom. But with Chris Crutcher leading the way for older readers and Gary Paulsen for younger readers, the YA scene as it is today began to emerge. We published articles on gay and lesbian experiences, multicultural themes, young adult problems (abortion, cutting, eating disorders, dating violence). The romance novels that so many of us feared would lead a generation of girls to become adult readers of nothing but romance gave way to YA literature that represented the lived-in world as teens knew it. Shelley Stoehr, Joan Bauer, Norma Mazer, and others dealt openly with problems facing many girls. It was a perceptible shift that influenced what has followed.

A major contribution of our editorship was having the journal become part of the e-journal initiative at Virginia Tech, which participates with other universities to develop and sustain a digital preservation network that securely stores copies of unique library

collections at dispersed sites around the world. *The ALAN Review* archive begins with the Winter 1994 issue and provides a way for researchers to access articles from *TAR* on an approximately two-year delayed basis. The archive is not intended to take the place of subscription and membership, but is a historical depository (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/>).

When our tenure ended, Bob and I submitted a proposal to NCTE to publish *Two Decades of the ALAN Review* (NCTE, 1999), a retrospective that would feature selections from *TAR* as it grew from a newsletter to a full-fledged journal. We knew there were excellent articles in those early years of the journal that were lost to scholars, and we wanted to make them accessible again. We read every article of every issue, made our selections independently, then discussed them, and decided on a cohesive arrangement. By design, the majority of the articles in the book came from the early years under the editorships of W. Guy Ellis and Arthea (Charlie) Reed. We asked Ted Hipple, Executive Secretary of ALAN, to write a brief history of ALAN. Former editors—Alleen Pace Nilsen, Guy Ellis, Charlie Reed, and Leila Christenbury—wrote about their years as editors of *TAR*.

I was Bob Small's doctoral student who "grew up" to become his colleague and friend. The years we spent editing not only *TAR* but also *Virginia English Bulletin* often found us doing our work during holidays because that was when we had time. One Christmas Eve, we worked until late into the night finishing a stack of articles that were in various stages of the review and editorial processes. I remember feeling happy to be working with someone on a task we both enjoyed. Neither of us had anywhere else we would rather be. Editing *The ALAN Review* was truly a labor of love for both of us.

Patricia P. Kelly is Professor Emerita of Teaching & Learning with the Center for Research & Development in International Education in the School of Education at Virginia Tech. Her projects have been located in Malawi, Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, and currently in South Sudan. All have involved improving the educational opportunities for women.

Walking Memory Lane with a Who's Who of ALAN

TAR Editor 1998–2003

Then: Associate Professor and Professor of English Education at Florida State University. Now: Dean and Stella V. Andersen Endowed Professor of Education, College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK

Looking back over my relationship with ALAN thus far, I have some very clear memories. I recall how eager I was to serve as editor of *The ALAN Review*; I had three main reasons: 1) I have loved young adult literature since I discovered, as a teacher of 8th, 9th, and 11th graders, the power of the right book at the right time for a particular reader; 2) I was a faculty member at Florida State University, in an English Education program that had a long history of leadership within NCTE (including Dwight L. Burton and John S. Simmons), and I wanted to continue that tradition, and to also pass forward the joy of YA literature that my Auburn University doctoral advisor and guardian angel mentor, Dr. Terry C. Ley, had introduced to me; 3) I wanted to participate fully with the group of scholars who were working with teachers, librarians, students, and authors to engage in serious study of YAL as an academic endeavor, and to encourage others to recognize YAL as a legitimate site for academic scholarship.

With the energetic help of my assistant editor and friend Gail Gregg and FSU graduate assistant Randall Withers, I assembled a team of colleagues from across the nation who served as a peer review board. We balanced articles to focus on classroom practices, research in YAL, author interviews, and always included

the popular Clip and File book reviews, staying true to the notecard format long after computer files made the format itself an anachronism. I determined that regardless of my other goals as editor, the focus of the journal must remain on the literature itself, the authors of YAL, and the relationship between teenagers and the literary works. That focus was communicated in the annual covers between Fall 1998 and Summer 2003: always a teen reader in an outdoors setting reading a recently published YA book—a subtle signal that the reader had chosen to read during a free moment.

My early memories of editing are not about victories but about terrible gaffes: misspelling “Newbery” in two places in volume number one, inexplicably misrepresenting my friend Joyce Stallworth’s name as “Jean” Stallworth in the byline of her article a few issues later, and other ugly errors. But no error was as daunting as the reality that, as editor, I would have to “work” every ALAN Workshop, tracking and approaching authors to ask them for an interview for the journal. That meant that I had to conquer my timidity and a life-long fear of imposing on someone’s time or privacy.

The saving grace for me was Sue Ellen Bridgers, whom I had met years earlier while completing my dissertation on her works as Southern literature for adolescents. We continued to communicate across the years, and, though she had won multiple awards as an author, she was gentle, witty, and human. I loved talking with her and hearing her speak with her soft North Carolina twists; I always felt immediately

soothed whenever in her presence. I asked her advice about my own writing. I told her about my wedding plans. We discussed food. Gail and I visited her at her home for an interview one summer. I knew that if I could talk with someone whose books were as beautiful as Sue Ellen's, I could talk with anyone. I had opportunities to exchange emails and cards, hold phone conversations, and conduct electronic interviews with wonderful authors who were making their mark at the time. A tiny sampling include these:

Laurie Halse Anderson, who surprised me with a handwritten note shortly after *Speak* was published and celebrated;

John H. Ritter, whose passion for writing and for kids was kinetic and joyous as he reached out in talks and in books;

David Klass, who made his mark as a Hollywood screen writer as well as in YAL, but who, in my book, is one of the kindest people on the planet;

Graham "Sandy" Salisbury, whose family grew to include a daughter from another country while we exchanged notes across a few years;

Nancy Garden, whose quiet grace compelled me to listen hard to her always wise and strong—but gentle—words;

Anne C. LeMieux, whose books of fairies and teen friends poured from an incredible intellect that I was privileged to know;

Helen Frost, whose elegant, beautiful poetry so stunned me with its intricacies that I found myself assuming she was only beginning to reach her stride;

Virginia Euwer Wolff, perhaps the most generous author of all, who invited a group of Oregon-area writers whom she mentored, and those of us who love books, to her music-filled home, and laughed when she told me that I looked nothing like the round-collared and dainty "Pamela" she had conjured;

T.A. Barron, who reminded me that writing is a vocation but life is broader even than written words, and we have an obligation to help others that extends beyond the farthest reaches of our perceived abilities;

Christopher Paul Curtis, tall, too handsome to be

anything but an actor on the big screen or television, spending time to talk about The Watsons, and how he sat in small chairs of an elementary school library to write his first book;

Will Hobbs, who, with his wife Jean, made writing seem as natural as taking a hike and finding stories on the trails, and who shares his imagination with children—and those of us who ask questions—with more patience than any teacher I have ever seen.

Who was the one person I would have liked to talk to whom I did not have the opportunity to meet during my time as editor of *The ALAN Review*? J. K. Rowling. During the early portion of my editorial tenure, she was just beginning to make many of us believe again: not in wizards, of course, but in the power of books to attract teens to print, to story, to fantasy. For some preteen and teen readers, she seems to have invented the written word. It was in June of 1997 that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published by Bloomsbury in the United Kingdom; in September of 1998, it was published by Scholastic as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in the United States. The novel was followed in June, 1999, by *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, and in September, 1999, by *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. In July, 2000, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* was published. To that point, the novels that told the story of the little wizard had sold approximately 200 million copies worldwide. Three more volumes remained: in June, 2003, the fifth novel, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* appeared, followed by *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* in July, 2005, and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* in July, 2007.

The books that started when she was a single mother on welfare have morphed into an industry that includes blockbuster movies, action figure toys, and even theme parks. To say that Harry Potter was the literary event of the period during which I served as editor of *The ALAN Review* is an understatement. Curiously, however, those of us who want to be open to the inclusion of YAL in order to encourage reading in classrooms, libraries, homes, and all places didn't have a lot to say, during that time, in *The ALAN Review*. Perhaps we were all busy reading the encyclopedic-length novels ourselves; more likely,

we just weren't sure what to do with books that were so clearly dominating our teens' and children's interests. Were we nervous about their popularity? Did they challenge our notions about what works for teen readers, in terms of length, theme, genre, age of protagonist, and so on? Why didn't those who write about YAL have much to say about Harry Potter in the classroom and in other educational settings? I don't know.

The other genre that began to appear as an important newcomer during my editorship was the graphic novel. Michael Cart, in an article in *Voices from the Middle* (2001), notes that Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith brought children's picturebooks to teen readers with *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (1989) and *The Stinky Cheese Man* (1992) (p. 95). It may be possible that their fun works set the stage for acceptance and the success of graphic novels, beginning perhaps with Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (Pantheon, 1993)—an incredible, troubling homage to his father, a survivor of the Holocaust. I recall rejecting a manuscript about a reader's response to a graphic novel early in my editorial tenure, primarily because I was not sure that many readers would find the focus on graphic novels interesting or useful. The fact that seven publishers rejected J. K. Rowling's first Potter novel before it was accepted by Bloomsbury doesn't make me feel any better about that poor choice!

As a nation, we watched planes crash into the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. None of us, even the most talented of our writers, could make sense of that day or predict the changes to the confidence and zestfulness of the United States that it would bring. It was a national trial that left us holding our terrified breath for days, years. We responded in *The ALAN Review*, as did other NCTE publications, that winter and in the spring that followed, but the best literary responses would come later, and continue to come.

Through all of the time of my editorship, there were people in the ALAN organization to whom I turned for advice and direction and help. I can still see some of them putting flyers on the table at 6 a.m. prior to the ALAN Breakfast: Connie Zitlow and Teri Lesesne, Kathy Kelly, and Rick Williams. In a class of her own, Leila Christenbury always told me the truth. There was, whenever I needed help, Joan Kaywell, whom I have called "The Bolt" for years, given her

propensity to be as bright and quick and powerful as lightning, and if Joan is yin, Virginia Ginger Monseau is yang: calm, quiet, graceful, and purposeful. Both are incredible leaders to whom I have looked in the organization. Mike Angelotti, one of ALAN's first leaders, gave me encouragement and confidence from the start. Don Gallo led us in developing a fund for young ALAN attendees, and he helped open up opportunities for expanding our group. Gary Salvner was a backbone who provided strength and certainty. Jim Blasingame carries strength with humor. And chocolate. Chris Crowe was integrity.

Outside of the organization, I was extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to work, while editor, with representatives from publishing houses, including Terry Borzumato and Adrienne Waintraub from Random House, Lucy Delpriore at Penguin, John Mason at Scholastic, Jeanne McDermott at Farrar Straus and Giroux, and Wendy Lamb of Delacourt.

And finally, there was Ted Hipple at the helm as Executive Secretary of ALAN, in all of his sartorial, exuberant glory. He showed me that we could pave the way for our students, and in doing that, we would ensure the future of ALAN and the progress of young adult literature. As editors, each of us carries on and passes forward the gifts of YAL that authors have given us. The joy of editing a journal like *The ALAN Review* is determining how to share the gifts.

Pamela Sissi Carroll became Dean of the Oklahoma State University College of Education and Stella V. Andersen Endowed Professor in the School of Teaching and Curriculum Leadership at Oklahoma State University in July, 2012. Before going to OSU, she spent 21 years as an administrator and faculty member in the College of Education at Florida State University, where she worked with many wonderful classroom teachers to introduce YA literature into classrooms. At FSU, she received four university teaching awards, including FSU's Distinguished University Teaching Award (2006). She credits her zest for YAL to the adolescents with whom she worked as a young teacher in middle and high school, and to her mentors: Terry C. Ley, at Auburn University, where she received her doctorate in English Education, and John S. Simmons, at Florida State, who welcomed her into the university faculty ranks.

Reference

Cart, M. (2001). From insider to outsider: The evolution of young adult literature. *Voices from the Middle*, 9(2), 95–99.

YA Authors: The Heart of *The ALAN Review*

TAR Coeditor (with Lori Goodson) 2003–2009

TAR: Why did you decide to apply to become an editor of *The ALAN Review*? What was the experience like for you?

Applying for the coeditorship was an act of faith and courage. I think most of the courage came from Lori Goodson. *The ALAN Review* is the biggest journal in YAL, and I was afraid I would be so very intimidated in an interview with the people on the search committee, including the chair, Chris Crowe, and other people I greatly admired, such as Sissi Carroll, Gary Salvner, and Virginia Monseau (just to name a few). As it turned out, they were all very welcoming and assuring, and we came out of the interview believing that we could successfully carry on the journal's tradition of excellence if they would give us a chance. Two days later, we were named the new coeditors. I will never forget Gary Salvner shaking my hand in the hotel lobby and saying "We would like you and Lori to be the next editors of *The ALAN Review*." It changed my life forever.

TAR: Looking back across your tenure as editors of *The ALAN Review*, what were the seminal young adult texts that came out during that time? Were there texts, genres, or themes that went viral? (For example, the Harry Potter series and Twilight trilogy certainly captured the country.)

Strangely enough, although the Twilight series experienced readership like no other YA book, and we were heavily involved with Stephenie Meyer, the Eclipse Prom, and Scarecrow's *Stephenie Meyer: Into the Twilight* locally in Arizona, this was not

a book series that the YAL community of teachers and scholars deeply engaged with, nor did the series seem to have an impact of social significance like some others that will always be memorable to us. Books that opened up new conversations about the diverse paths of the adolescent experience were much more notable.

Michael Cart was an amazing force for good over the years, advocating for LGBTQ youth and their equitable representation in literature. KaaVonia Hinton, Cicely Denean Cobb, and Kay Smith helped to cover issues and authors in African American and women's YA. Betsy Nies, Susan Carlisle, Alex Sanchez, Carmen Medina, and Francisco Jiménez helped with the Latino/a experience. Marinda White-Kaulaity, Kenan Metzgar, and Wendy Kelleher kept us abreast of Native American YA, and Virginia Loh showed there was much to learn about the problems created by the dearth of Asian American YA. James B. Carter taught us about Sequential Art Narration (graphic novels).

Some of the emerging voices we were fortunate enough to cover included Kevin Brooks, Christopher Paul Curtis, Clive Barker (new to YA), Laurie Halse Anderson, Jacqueline Woodson, Joseph Bruchac, Shannon Hale, Ellen Wittlinger, Jack Gantos, Chris Lynch, Jordan Sonnenblick, Cornelia Funke, T. A. Barron, Suzanne Collins, Patrick Jones, David Clement-Davies, Angela Johnson, John Ritter, Chris Crowe, Coe Booth, David Levithan, Sarah Dessen, Rachel Cohn, Alan Sitomer, and of course Sherman Alexie as he ventured into YA to win the National Book Award. Naturally,

we highlighted all the established stars, too: Gary Paulsen, Will Hobbs, Chris Crutcher, Joan Bauer, Jerry Spinelli, Walter Dean Myers, Harry Mazer, Marc Aronson, Jim Murphy, Julie Ann Peters, Jane Yolen, and Louis Sachar.

TAR: As an advocate for young adult literature, what key “battle” you were engaged in?

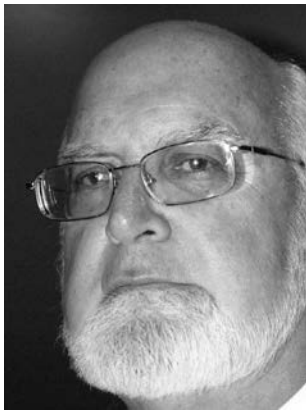
There were two major battles that we entered: The battle against censorship and the battle for equity for each and every cultural, ethnic, and gender identity—all the myriad ways to be an adolescent human being. We often gathered articles around themed issues, like “Borders and Bridges,” as a way to engage with these concerns in more depth.

TAR: Who do you feel contributed to the journal or the ALAN organization during your tenure (authors, scholars, presidents, teachers, educators)?

We want to thank Kay Smith, Jerry Weiss, Jeff Kaplan, Bill Broz, and Diane Tucillo for serving as editors of the various columns. Their influence on

the field is noteworthy, and all YAL community members are grateful to them. In an emergency, when we needed something important and fast, we could always turn to Teri Lesesne to produce a good piece of writing about an issue that was thrust upon us days before our deadline. Margaret Sacco was always available to help with the battle against censorship. Other stalwarts included Pam Cole, Jean Boreen, Wendy Glenn, Joan Kaywell, c. j. Bott, Gerrit and Barbara Bleeker, and Katie Mason.

James Blasingame is an associate professor of English at Arizona State University (2000–present) and director of ASU Secondary English Education. He is a past president of ALAN and was coeditor of The ALAN Review with Lori Atkins Goodson from 2003–2009. He is the editor of the Print-Based Texts pages of the International Reading Association’s Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy. Jim was a high school English teacher, coach, and administrator for 21 years in Iowa, Nebraska, Utah, and Kansas before completing his doctorate at the University of Kansas in 2000.



ALAN Anniversary—My Take

I am one of the few remaining active members of ALAN who were part of the organizational gathering in Philadelphia in 1973, I was merely an attendee at that meeting, not an organizer. But I was as enthusiastic as anybody else at that time and have remained so throughout my career. Being enthusiastic about young adult literature and about ALAN has been easy, because the literature has been so engaging and the growth of the field so amazing.

As part of a PhD program at Syracuse University in the late 1960s, I was actively seeking new reading experiences for teenagers at the very time that *The Outsiders* and *The Contender* were published (1967). Most of my former junior high school students had been avid readers, but I knew that the least-able and least-motivated students needed something more appealing than the curriculum included at that time. Moreover, the bestselling YA novels of those early years—Hinton's *The Outsiders*, Lipsyte's *The Contender*, Zindel's *The Pigman*, and later Cormier's *The Chocolate War*—were the kinds of stories that appealed to me and not just to teens; I think that was, at least in part, because they were the kinds of novels I might have read as a teenager who found books either boring or over my head. When I left my first university position at the University of Colorado and took a job at Central Connecticut State College in 1973, I decided to focus my career on young adult literature. Needless to say, that first meeting in Philadelphia was perfectly timed for me.

Over the years, my most cherished colleagues and some of my closest friends have been members and leaders of ALAN. We appreciate the same qualities in the literature; we fight the same battles for acceptance

of the kinds of books we know are valuable for teen readers; we value and celebrate the authors who write these books; and we enjoy each other's company. At the top of the list was Ted Hipple, whose leadership has been hard to replicate. But Gary Salvner kept the organization moving along, and most recently Teri Lesesne has helped us make giant strides into social media and improved communications. ALAN continues to grow.

In the beginning, ALAN was dominated by college and university educators. Not a bad thing, since I was one of them. But the gradual involvement of influential YA librarians such as Patty Campbell and Michael Cart, and more recently Diane Tuccillo, Mary Arnold, and Walter Mayes, has broadened and strengthened the organization. And while it is more difficult for classroom teachers than for university professors to find time to be actively involved in ALAN, I am pleased to see an increase in leadership from middle school and high school teachers in recent years, among them Daria Plumb, Shannon Collins, Ricki Ginsberg, Jeff Harr, Lori Atkins Goodson, *ALAN Newsletter* editor Anne McLeod, and the 2012 president (and my wife) cj Bott.

Being part of ALAN has given me the opportunities to meet and interact with numerous authors whose writings have made them famous among teen readers, teachers, and librarians. I've been more fortunate than most other colleagues in being able to interview dozens of those authors for the website Authors4Teens as well as edit short stories, plays, and essays that I have invited many of them to write over the years. I've even been invited to the homes of some of them—among them Richard Peck, Virginia

Euwer Wolff, Carolyn Meyer, David Klass, Caroline B. Cooney, and Will Hobbs—and have shared meals in my home and in restaurants with Paula Danziger, Robert Lipsyte, Gloria D. Miklowitz, David Lubar, William Sleator, Chris Crutcher, Norma Fox Mazer, Robert Cormier, Lensey Namioka, Walter Dean Myers, Ben Mikaelson, Graham Salisbury, Tamora Pierce, Will Weaver, and many others.

In the early 1980s, it became apparent to me that although every literature anthology and most secondary school English curriculums contained a unit on short stories, almost none of those stories were about teenagers and their concerns. Several editors had assembled short story anthologies aimed at teenagers, but all of those stories had been previously published in magazines such as *The New Yorker* for sophisticated adult readers. And while a handful of YA authors (e.g., Norma Fox Mazer and Robert Cormier) had recently published collections of their own short stories, there were no anthologies of stories for teenagers written by a variety of authors who had become known for their novels about teens.

Realizing the need, and because of my contacts with authors and with then-editor-in-chief of Viking, George Nicholson (recipient of the 2012 ALAN Award), I became the first person to compile and edit anthologies of original short stories for teenagers, starting with *Sixteen* in 1984, thereby adding a new dimension to the field of YA books. (To date, I have published 13 short story anthologies, and dozens of other editors have followed suit.) And because ALAN has been so important in my professional growth, a portion of the royalties of each of my anthologies published by Random House has, since 1984, been donated to the ALAN Foundation, which was established initially (with prompting from George Nicholson) for

the purpose of sponsoring research in young adult literature.

More recently, in order to involve more young classroom English teachers in ALAN, I started the Gallo Grants program that helps pay the expenses of two beginning teachers to attend the annual ALAN Workshop; over the past nine years, the program has sponsored 18 teachers from a dozen different states.

More than anything else, I love to read YA lit and recommend books to friends and colleagues; I have done so at many NCTE conferences, as editor of a column in the *English Journal* for five years, in numerous articles and several books (especially with Sarah Herz in *From Hinton to Hamlet*, 2005), in emails with colleagues, and as a member of a YA book discussion group that meets monthly at our home. It's a never-ending joy. Being able to lie on a couch and read books is the most enjoyable kind of job anyone can have. And seeing ALAN reach the age of 40 in such excellent health is extremely satisfying.

Happy anniversary to us!

A former junior high school English teacher and reading specialist, and Professor Emeritus from Central Connecticut State University, Don Gallo was president of ALAN in 1986, received the ALAN Award in 1992, and was the first recipient after Ted Hipple of the Ted Hipple Service Award in 2001 for exemplary service and dedication to ALAN.

Being able to lie on a couch and read books is the most enjoyable kind of job anyone can have.

I Stand on the Shoulders of a Wonderful Mentor:

2012 Winner of the Ted Hipple Service Award

NCTE and the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN) are definitely my professional homes, and I stand on the shoulders of a wonderful mentor: Theodore “Ted” Hipple.

The Ted Hipple Service Award is the most treasured award I have ever received in my life. Ted Hipple was the one who showed me the way life could be in a myriad of ways as he was the model professor, colleague, friend, and father figure. It is fitting that Ted Hipple passed away on Thanksgiving morning (Nov. 25, 2004) as his is a life that so many of us give thanks for, both knowingly and unknowingly. [Please stand if you knew Ted personally. Please stand if you have read a book or article written by him. Please stand if you have been taught by or read a piece written by anyone standing in this room.] Ted’s quick wit, jovial nature, loud ties and suspenders, great laugh, and dedication to the profession were infectious, and his service record humbling. Ted’s heart was at NCTE, his personality at ALAN, and the Florida Council of Teachers of English (FCTE) was his blood flow; he taught me well. He was active and instrumental in so many ways:

- Department chairperson and professor at the University of Florida, joining UF in the fall of 1968; he was colleagues with 1986 ALAN President Don Gallo and 1981 FCTE President Bob Wright for as many years as “the earth’s been cooling.”
- Recipient of the FCTE Honor Award in 1980, FCTE’s most prestigious award, for notable service to advance the teaching of the language arts in

Florida.

- One of the founders of ALAN, an organization for which he served for more years “than most of us have been teaching.”
- A prolific writer—having published numerous books, countless journal articles, and enough congratulatory and thank-you notes to surpass the net worth of Donald Trump and Bill Gates combined.
- Department chairperson and professor at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, joining UT in the fall of 1984, where he mentored his new colleague Lisa Scherff (FSU) and doctoral students David Gill (UNCW), Shannon Collins, (TTU), Melissa Comer (TTU), Marshall George (Fordham), Joellen Maples (St. John Fisher College), and Amy Maupin (Transylvania U.). He also helped to cultivate new YA authors Alan Gratz and David Gill, all while continuing to mentor his former doctoral students, the likes of this year’s ALAN President Jeff Kaplan (UCF) and me (USF) here in Florida.

My relationship with Ted goes back 30 years, though we got close beginning around 1983. It was Ted who introduced me to NCTE, and the next thing I know I am having dinner with my footnotes—the likes of Joe Milner, Tom McCracken, Charles Suhor, and Charles Duke. At the time, I felt like a Lilliputian and will never forget one aspect of our conversation. Joe and Tom asked about my professional goals and I—being young, naive, and ambitious—said something like I wanted to be NCTE president one day. They asked if I had plans to attend the NCTE Spring

Convention—at that time NCTE held two conferences a year—and I told them I could only afford one a year. I was told in no uncertain terms that if I wanted to be an instructional leader, then I needed to attend *all* NCTE conferences and ALAN workshops—PERIOD! I’m pleased to report that I listened, haven’t missed either one since but once, and am here to say it’s been the best investment I could ever have made in my professional career.

Ted Hipple invested in me, and I have been so blessed by having him as a mentor. I was fortunate to be able to attend his memorial service, which occurred on Thursday, December 2, 2004, in Knoxville, Tennessee. The service was a moving display of the far-reaching effects of a gifted teacher and an awesome human being. There were well over 200 people in attendance and so many more who sent cards and gave testimonials as to how their lives were so positively influenced by his passion for teaching, his integrity, life, and service. Here are some samples:

- The world of young adult literature has lost a giant. I’ll always be thankful to Ted for welcoming me, as he did so many others, into the ALAN family. (Bill Mollineaux, 2003 ALAN President)
- Shakespeare gave his highest praise to one of his characters, a person he wrote, for whom “age cannot wither, nor custom stale.” Such was true of Ted, vibrant, outgoing, always interested in life and in us, his colleagues and friends. He is irreplaceable, and he will be missed. (Leila Christenbury, 2002 NCTE President)
- He was a model for everything that was good and honorable and worthwhile in our lives and in our profession. . . . To paraphrase a line from Shakespeare: “We shall not soon see his like pass this way again.” (Jeff Golub, 2002 FCTE Honor Award recipient, USF Professor Emeritus, and author of *Activities for an Interactive Classroom* and *Making Learning Happen*)

He was a true advocate of professional service and practiced what he preached. In addition to serving as ALAN’s fourth president in 1976, Hipple was Executive Secretary of the group for nearly two decades and was the first recipient of ALAN’s service award—named in his honor—in 2000. Not only was he on the NCTE convention program every year for nearly 35 years, Ted’s was a familiar face at the ALAN Breakfast

and ALAN Workshop as well, where he recruited new people into the ALAN fold.

It is no accident that I stepped up to the plate to serve as ALAN’s Membership Secretary with Dr.

Gary Salvner serving as its Executive Secretary up until Teri Lesesne took over in 2011. Please notice that the position Ted held for almost two decades had to be split in two. And now I am deeply honored to join my mentor and 11 others who have served the ALAN family with the love, drive, commitment, and passion fitting an assembly that gives so much to others. Please stand and be recognized as I call your name:

- 2011 Gary Salvner, Youngstown State University, ALAN Past President (1996) & Executive Secretary
- 2010 Chris Crowe, Brigham Young University, ALAN Past President (2001)
- 2009 Wendy Lamb, Wendy Lamb Books, Random House
- 2008 Jeanne McDermott, Farrar, Straus & Giroux
- 2007 Patricia Kelly, ALAN Past President (1989) & *TAR* Coeditor
- 2006 Alleen Pace Nilson, ALAN Past President (1978)
- 2005 Bill Subick, National Council of Teachers of English
- 2004 John Mason, Scholastic
- 2003 M. Jerry Weiss, ALAN Past President (1974)
- 2002 Terry Borzumato, Random House Children’s Books
- 2001 Don Gallo, ALAN Past President (1986)
- 2000 Ted Hipple, ALAN Past President (1976) & Executive Secretary

These folks know the value of service, so now I encourage you to visit the NCTE website (www.ncte.org) for an article written by Hipple the year he received the Hipple Service Award. It’s titled, “Ask Not What NCTE Can Do for You” (<http://www.ncte.org/about/gov/cgrams/res/118813.htm?source=gs>). Ted writes,

Bob [Hogan] . . . said, “NCTE must have volunteers or it will collapse.” So it was then, so it is now. And not just, or even mainly, for the national outfit, but also for state and

He was a true advocate of professional service and practiced what he preached.

local affiliates. Look about you, please . . . [and] become a volunteer for NCTE or your state or local affiliate. Get involved; be a player. You don't have to run for elective office or give the luncheon address. Those jobs can come later. For now . . . ask to join a committee. And what's in it for you? In addition to helping out, you will find it personally and professionally among the most enriching experiences you can have. Trust me on that last point. I've been around the NCTE volunteer block a time or two and wouldn't have missed it for anything.

I hope you join me in honoring Ted Hipple and

[Serve] the profession in some way: recruit a new ALAN member, volunteer for an NCTE committee or commission, give a professional membership to a brand new teacher.

what he represents by serving the profession in some way: recruit a new ALAN member, volunteer for an NCTE committee or commission, give a professional membership to a brand new teacher, donate an autographed YA novel to the Ted Hipple Special Collection, give of yourself through NCTE's mentor program. "And what's in it for you?" In addition to helping out, you will

find it personally and professionally among the most enriching experiences you can have. *Trust me on that last point. I've been around the NCTE volunteer block a time or two and wouldn't have missed it for anything.*

Thanks NCTE. And thanks to my ALAN family. As Ted would say, "Be Well!"

Joan F. Kaywell is a full professor of English Education at the University of South Florida. She is past president of NCTE's Assembly on Literature for Adolescents (ALAN) and served as its membership secretary; she is a past president of FCTE (twice) and has an FCTE Book Award named after her. Dr. Kaywell has edited two series of textbooks and has written two books: *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics: Exploring Critical Issues in Today's Classrooms (2010)* and *Adolescents at Risk: A Guide to Fiction and Nonfiction for Young Adults, Parents, and Professionals (1993)*. *Letters of Hope (2007)* is her first trade book and is available from Philomel. Visit <http://www.lib.usf.edu/special-collections/childrens-young-adult-literature/hipple> for more information about the Ted Hipple Special Collection of Autographed Books or contact Joan at kaywell@usf.edu.

Note

For more testimonies about Ted Hipple, readers are encouraged to read:

Gallo, D. R., & Maples, J. (2005). In memoriam: Ted Hipple.

English Journal, 94(3), 10–12.

Gill, D. (2005). Remembering Ted Hipple: Thoughts and feelings from those whose lives were touched by a great man.

The ALAN Review, 32(2), 22–25. Retrieved from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v32n2/hipple.pdf>.

Kaywell, J. F. (2007). In memory of Ted Hipple (7/2/35–11/25/04): Survey results to a special collection in his name—USF, ALAN, and authors wish you well eternally! *The ALAN Review*, 35(1), 6–15. Retrieved from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v35n1/kaywell.html>.

Once and Future ALAN: Where We've Been, Where We Might Go

Executive Secretary 2000–2011

When I took over the position of ALAN Executive Secretary from Ted Hipple in 2000, he pulled me aside before my selection was announced and, in an exclamation as bright as his shirts and suspenders, said, “Congratulations, Gary! You’ll be good at this.”

Of course, I had no such confidence. Ted Hipple was the heart and face of ALAN, its first and only chief administrator. One didn’t replace a Ted Hipple; one only hoped not to muck things up too badly.

What I hadn’t fully realized as I stepped into Ted’s position is that his faith might have not merely been in me. He had seen the organization grow from a small group of NCTE members interested in adolescent literature (the term “junior books” was also used at that time to describe these works written for and about young readers) into a stable, resilient presence in the field. His trust certainly came as much from the membership and leadership of the organization as from me serving as its new administrator. He had seen the commitment of presidents and board members over most of ALAN’s first quarter-century, and he had faith that the organization would survive and even thrive for years to come.

ALAN had a unique relationship with its parent



organization, the National Council of Teachers of English, in most of its formative years. One reason was that an early treasurer of our organization showed less-than-desirable skill in managing finances, the result of which was that ALAN fell into significant debt. At our board’s request, NCTE stepped in, and its then-treasurer Bill Subick became ALAN’s treasurer also; for many years, he ensured that ALAN remained solvent and fiscally healthy. Several years after my becoming Executive Secretary, NCTE informed us that it was time for the

organization to separate from them and survive on its own financially; with guidance—especially from our current treasurer Marge Ford—we have done just that.

I learned during my 10 years as Executive Secretary to trust Ted’s faith in our members and leaders. An extraordinary parade of presidents has served the organization, and board members have joined us whose interest in young people and their literature kept board meetings buzzing with ideas and new opportunities. The membership has grown, in part due to longtime membership secretary Joan Kaywell’s establishment of state representatives and other recruitment efforts, and that membership has become further engaged through a vibrant new ALAN website

(see www.alan-ya.org), professional-grade publications, and larger-than-ever attendance at the ALAN Workshop.

Let me pause just a moment on that last item. Ted Hipple himself would be startled at the evolution of the ALAN Workshop. For its first 30 years, it was

a stable and comfortable gathering of colleagues and friends, originally counted in the dozens, later never exceeding 200. The energy of ALAN presidents over the past 10 years or so has transformed it. Now its enrollment regularly approaches 500, and author appearances have gone from maybe 20 at an event

to 50. Publishers have helped in this growth by investing their faith and funds in ALAN to bring authors to the workshop and provide hundreds of new books for donation to attendees. If you've never been to an ALAN workshop, you must find a way to do so. I'm thrilled when I see new teachers and librarians raise their hands at an ALAN workshop as first-time participants, many helped by the Gallo Grants established by ALAN patriarch Don Gallo to support workshop attendance by new teachers.

I'm also impressed by a new generation of leadership in the organization, including Executive Director Teri Lesesne, who leads with force and insight. When a group turns 40, its creators have likely moved on and/or retired, so this can be a critical time in a group's survival as the "torch is passed." ALAN has done so smoothly by encouraging new educators and professionals to serve on committees and the ALAN Board; our future stability requires that this continue.

I'm particularly proud of two ALAN Board initiatives that further enhanced the organization during my service as Executive Secretary. First, when I learned of a bequest from the estate of the children's writer Amelia Elizabeth Walden to establish a prize for a life-affirming book in our field each year, I contacted the estate's attorney, and after some negotiations, ALAN was successful in its bid to sponsor the new Walden Award, a prize that continues to grow in prestige as publishers and professionals in the field learn about it. The second accomplishment has been

more under-the-radar. Because of ALAN's status as an Assembly of NCTE, its workshop operated as a segment of NCTE's Annual Convention, and any resulting proceeds, once bills were paid, went directly to NCTE. As our workshop attendance more than doubled in recent years, I was able to renegotiate that arrangement, the result of which is that NCTE now shares workshop income with us. This has brought thousands in additional income to our treasury, money that can enhance and expand our mission.

To be sure, like many educational organizations today, ALAN faces challenges. Some are clearly visible to us—the nationwide mania for standardization that reduces school curricula to rote work and limits reading choice; the massive decline in the number of publishers and booksellers in the field, with the result that gradually decreasing numbers of corporate conglomerates are controlling the publication and distribution of books. Other challenges are visible but less tangible. For example, what will the impact of e-readers and new media be on the field of young adult literature and on ALAN? Are we witnessing the death of the book as we know it, and if so, are we prepared to join in the search for its replacement? Some challenges are mostly invisible, and here I imagine those thousands of young people in our schools and communities who remain invisible. Some of them are nonreaders, and we still haven't found ways to reach them. How can ALAN make a difference not only to those already captivated by YA lit, but also to those who have never experienced it?

ALAN has been around for most of the maybe 50 years that we've had a discrete body of literature that we call "adolescent" or "young adult." Another challenge might be for us to take the lead in further defining a critical theory for our relatively new field. Of course, we must be cautious in doing so. In her famous essay "Against Interpretation," the philosopher Sontag (1961) warned against letting the aesthetics of literature become bogged down in the intellectualism of literary interpretation. Still, there is a place for literary analysis in that it can help us consider what matters to readers and what distinguishes texts. YAL would benefit from a speculative frame for thinking about literature for the young. We still don't fully agree on what defines our genre or what distinguishes the best works in our field. Check the book reviews in our major publications, including our own *ALAN*

I'm thrilled when I see new teachers and librarians raise their hands at an ALAN workshop as first-time participants.

Review. We're not always looking at these texts in the same way, and though the point isn't to impose uniformity on our critical judgments, it might be that we're grown up enough now as a genre that we can begin to form sharpened perceptions about what makes young adult literature distinctive and what constitutes quality.

Yes, we face challenges today, but there is still good reason to choose optimism as ALAN heads into its next 40 years. Ted Hipple's 2000 compliment to me that "you'll be good at this" really belongs to all of us who lead and serve in the organization. While state and national testing and wrong-headed notions about both curriculum and students continue to push against our efforts to introduce young readers to the marvels and satisfactions of YA lit, more young adult novels,

encompassing broader territories than ever before, are being published and read each year.

Young adult literature, and ALAN, are healthy and vibrant. We continue to be "good at" making a difference in young people's educations and lives.

Gary Salvner is a past executive secretary and past president of ALAN. A former elementary and secondary teacher, he is professor emeritus in the Department of English, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio, where he teaches courses in children's and young adult literature and English education.

Reference

Sontag, S. (1961). *Against interpretation and other essays*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Teach Your Children Well: What ALAN Means to Me

Executive Secretary 2011–Present

Some will understand the reference to Crosby, Stills, and Nash in the title. Their song asks us to teach our children since we have experiences they have not yet had; the song goes on to ask children to teach their parents, too. I think that nicely sums up what ALAN has been and continues to be for me.

I joined ALAN the year that I had Dick Abrahamson for a children's literature course. He came into class the first night and talked about being professionally active, handed out the forms for membership, and offered to mail them in for us. I suspect we all joined that night. I know Kylee Beers did, since she and I were sitting together. Now I was a member of ALAN. It might have just ended there, with me paying dues while I was in the graduate program, except for two serendipitous incidents. First, I attended my first ALAN Workshop (again at the behest of Dick). If the lineup of authors I had the pleasure of listening to were not enough, Don Gallo invited workshop participants to hand him a proposal for a workshop breakout session. I summoned up the courage to do just that.

The next workshop found me presenting with session chair Bob Probst. Though I was so nervous I almost could not summon up words, I made it through the session and then got to sit and talk to Bob afterwards. I knew that this was an organization where I belonged. Here were my mentors, the scholars who wrote the articles about YA literature that helped form my classroom routines, that informed my reading in

the field, and that assured me I was helping to create lifelong readers. I was HOME.

There are so many seminal moments for me over the more than 30 years that I have been a member of ALAN. Meeting G. Robert Carlsen is one that touched me deeply. After he shook my hand and allowed me to babble like a fangirl, I walked around the rest of the day in a fog. After all, Carlsen wrote some of the most important pieces about reading and YA literature—articles I still have in a file and quote often. I also have wonderful memories of watching Gary Paulsen almost fall out of his chair laughing during Jack Gantos's ALAN breakfast speech one year, and listening to Laurie Halse Anderson sing during her keynote speech the year I was President of ALAN (right after 9/11), offering us hope in the midst of our fears. I recall, too, Christopher Paul Curtis offering to pay for anyone who was not a member of ALAN after he finished his ALAN breakfast speech one year. I worried for his safety when he was mobbed by people brandishing membership forms (thank you, Chris!). There are other memories, of course, too many to count, of conversations with authors while they autographed books or even as they sipped coffee during our breaks. Authors became colleagues in those brief but meaningful moments. I recall striking up a conversation with Paul Zindel about *Loch* at one of the ALAN cocktail parties. He was so pleased that I liked the book and often referred to me afterwards as “fab and brill.”

What I recall still and what is perhaps the most

important aspect of ALAN for me (and countless others) are the nuggets gleaned from the presentations at the annual workshop. Tobin Anderson spoke of the future of books and publishing; Ellen Hopkins addressed the chilling effect of censorship; Joan Bauer brought us to tears as she emphasized the need for hope. I have laughed uproariously as Gary Paulsen talked about the stupid things he did as a kid. I have also sobbed audibly while listening to author after author share letters from readers, letters that time and again told of how books save lives. In the age of Twitter, I can go back and look at the tidbits from my colleagues as they listened to the presentations as well. Educators not even in attendance at the workshop were able to gain insight through the feeds to social media.

Why does ALAN continue to thrive and to grow when so many professional organizations are struggling to maintain members? One of the things that has pushed and continues to push ALAN to the forefront is its single-minded determination to “spread the gospel” of YA literature. *The ALAN Review* and the workshop and the ALAN breakfast spurred the initial growth of membership. Now, ALAN is online through its website and its Twitter and Facebook presence. In addition, ALAN began to diversify in terms of its membership, especially when the library community began to join us. Leaders such as Betty Carter, Michael Cart, Patty Campbell, Diane Tuccillo, and Walter Mayes helped ALAN pull together two very important populations: educators and librarians. ALAN has also grown because educators are looking for that same corroboration I was all those decades ago: that bringing relevant and rich and (dare I say) rigorous contemporary literature into the classroom not only addressed the curriculum, it enriched the lives of readers.

I think ALAN has indeed fulfilled the first half of the quote “teach your children well.” And now it is time for the children to teach us, literally and figuratively. Just two years ago, I was selected to fill some rather large shoes (and suspenders) when I was named as the third Executive Secretary (now Executive Director) of ALAN and first female in this position. I knew the history of the two gentlemen who preceded me. The first, Ted Hipple, welcomed me as a visitor to my first ALAN Board meeting. (I had no

idea that no one outside of the leadership attended the meeting. It was open; I attended.) He encouraged me to run for the ALAN Board of Directors and to stand as a candidate for ALAN President. The second, Gary Salvner, more than held my hand as I stepped into his shoes. He continues to be someone I turn to with questions, and he always is happy to help. Under his leadership, ALAN undertook an overhaul of its Constitution last year. As I do the work of ALAN, Ted and Gary are always near me at least in spirit, whispering in my ear, offering sage advice.

In just a few short years, I have seen more and more young educators and librarians become actively involved in ALAN. They have been taught well. Now they are teaching us. They are teaching us about the need to have a strong presence online and to offer other services to ALAN members. Now we have an outstanding newsletter that allows us to stay in touch with our membership throughout the year. We have re-formed our committee that addresses issues of censorship under the leadership of Wendy Glenn. Our immediate past President cj Bott has developed a mentoring committee to ensure that our newest members, our children if you will, are made to feel welcome and are encouraged to become active participants in the organization. There are other plans in the works to keep ALAN vibrant and relevant. I for one cannot wait to see what our 50th birthday will bring.

In addition to serving as ALAN Executive Director, Teri Lesesne teaches classes in children's and YA literature for the Department of Library Science at Sam Houston State University in Texas. She is a past recipient of the ALAN Award and has served as President of the organization. Teri is the author of three professional books and is past chair of the Walden Committee. She maintains two blogs: www.ls5385blog.blogspot.com and <http://professornana.livejournal.com>.

Bringing relevant and rich and (dare I say) rigorous contemporary literature into the classroom not only addressed the curriculum, it enriched the lives of readers.

Staying Gone

When I first heard of ALAN, I was not M. E. Kerr to most people. I was a tough freelance dropout named Vin Packer from The University of Missouri School of Journalism. Vin wrote suspense and mystery for the new paperback originals; each one cost 25 cents, and I earned a penny for every copy printed, usually 2000 to 5000. I was also Edgar and Mamie Stone, an old married couple in their eighties, living in Vermont. Their forte was confession stories with titles like *I Lost My Baby at a Pot Party*. (The heroine was selling Tupperware to her neighbors while her youngster decided to investigate the neighborhood.) Laura Winston was my good girl who wrote about high school proms and the new boy in sixth grade for magazines like *Seventeen*, and *Compact*.

“Aren’t you young to be a literary agent?” some editors would ask. Then I would tell them how there were almost no publishers or agents who would take a chance on new writers, but that was what I had decided to do. “Except for the Stones,” I said, “all my writers are in their twenties.”

“And they believe these fibs?” asked my father, who could no more bring himself to call his daughter a liar than he could believe what she had undertaken. Unable to get a literary agent after a year trying, I decided to become one. An agent was a necessity for anyone foolish enough to set their sights on selling stories for a living. I had beautiful stationery printed: Marijane Meaker, Literary Agent, and already half a dozen clients: all me.

I lunched on hastily eaten peanut butter sandwiches during my lunch hour at Dutton Publishing. Then I took a subway to call on publishers. I was

making enough to pay a monthly telephone bill as Marijane Meaker, Literary Agent, and just a little more as a file clerk at Dutton. Employees there still punched a time clock recording their comings and goings. None of my colleagues dreamed I had this secret professional life.

Years went by before I created another new identity. I wanted to compete with my clients. Vin Packer was still hard at work on her paperback originals, the Stones were still knocking out confessions, and Winston was slowing up, though still earning two or three hundred dollars a story. M. E. Kerr, a pseudonym made from my real last name, Meaker, was Louise Fitzhugh’s idea. An old friend and fellow writer, she wanted me to write for children, as she did. But she thought I should write for kids a little older than her audience. She explained what Young Adult novels were and introduced me to Charlotte Zolotow at HarperCollins. Ultimately, Charlotte became my editor for two books.

Some years later, after I began writing young adult fiction, ALAN invited me to speak at their conference. Charlotte told me that it was an honor to be recognized by ALAN, so I went. I didn’t really know enough to be nervous, for I had done very little speaking anywhere, much less before such a distinguished organization of writers, editors, and publishers. I accepted the ALAN invitation and met Louise for dinner the night before my talk. After our dinner together, Louise confessed to being “tipsy” and asked if I was, too. I told her I was just plain exhausted, and I was. I’d left New York at six that night and suddenly it was eleven.

Just as I was dozing off, I heard a man shouting

through the walls of the modest motel where I was staying. I wasn't sure I heard him right. "Go! . . . And stay gone!" he snarled. Whoever he was shouting at either was not answering or was too terrified for a rebuttal. I imagined some poor, soft-voiced wife cowering under the sheets, terrified as he continued, "Do you hear me? Go! Go and stay gone!!"

He grew angrier and louder. I went into the bathroom for a glass that I put to the wall, hoping to hear more. A murder, maybe? Vin Packer was already imagining an opening. But Marijane Meaker had lost her interest in plotting, imagining a real homicide a wall away. There was no one I could or would call. Louise was staying with a friend from college. What a silly first impression I would make. I told myself I probably should not have had the third glass of wine at dinner.

There was no sleep for me that night. As it grew quiet and morning light showed itself, I heard the sounds of a radio or television, then a man singing in the shower. Again I got the glass from the bathroom and held it to the wall. Whatever this zealot was singing I couldn't make out the words.

I had breakfast in my room and so did the man next door. As they were taking his tray away, a new one arrived with my scrambled eggs. I could not believe my reflection in the mirror. I thought of the old Beatles song, something about a hard day's night. I also thought of how I would sound that noon. I had a speech written thanking ALAN for honoring me for my work as M. E. Kerr, but whenever I drank with dinner, the next day I sounded more like my brother than myself. Hoarse and harsh.

I decided to take advantage of the ALAN writers who were giving little seminars: this one on romance in YA literature, that one on nonfiction, another on the use of stories made from history: Civil War, World War II. I had heard about a man who was creating a YA mystery series. His name was Peter Pullman. Although I had never read anything by him, enough people had that they needed to fetch extra chairs. A lady beside me said he was well known as a writer for adolescent readers. He had bright red hair, big ears, and a lot of freckles. "He tells stories about rabbits, feral cats, that sort of thing," the lady whispered as he appeared to loud applause.

I was disappointed that he was going to read what he had to say. "When you write a series, and not ev-

ery writer can do one successfully, create a hero with an interesting name. Something like my name: Pullman. How about Pull? Call your first book that—Pull. Next, Pull Back. Pull Strings . . . get the idea? And end your series with Pull Over."

His series, he said, was about a kid who practiced magic and who had a younger sister who always got him into trouble. As he read from his new book, I recognized the voice. "Go! Do you hear me? Go and stay gone." (*Staying Gone* would be the title, he said). I don't think he was the first author to practice what he would read the night before, but I might have been the first to steal an idea. It didn't come to me then and there, but when it came, the voice was that of a policeman's teenage son. John Fell.

After *Fell* came *Fell Back*. Then *Fell Down*.

Robert O. Warren, my newest editor at HarperCollins, asked me to come into New York for lunch, just as I was toying with an end to the series. It would be called *Fell Over*, of course. I was bored writing about the same characters book after book.

"What are we going to do?" Robert O. Warren asked me as we ordered oysters at Le Perigord. Ursula Nordstrom, my regular editor, was gone by then. "Your Fell books aren't exactly falling off the shelves, Marijane," said Robert. "Can you bear to part with the idea?"

I could. I did. My Fell series turned out to have only three books. I never knew what became of red-headed Peter Pullman (was he writing under a new pseudonym, perhaps?). I have looked in vain online for a series called *Staying Gone*, but Mr. Pullman was right: not everyone is cut out to write a series.

The End.

M. E. Kerr is one of the pen names used by Marijane Meaker, born May 27, 1927, in Auburn, New York, to Ida T. and Ellis R. Meaker. Establishing her career as a writer under various pen names, most notably mystery thriller author Vin Packer, she was motivated and encouraged by her friend Louise Fitzhugh, author of Harriet the Spy, to embark on her career as M. E. Kerr. As M. E. Kerr, she has written numerous works of fiction for adolescents. She was also inspired to write young adult literature after reading Paul Zindel's The Pigman. Her first book as M. E. Kerr, Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack!, was published in 1972. Notably, in 1993, M. E. Kerr received a lifetime achievement award in the form of the Margaret A. Edwards Award from the Young Adult Library Services.

Developing Academic Kinship, Meeting Rock Stars:

What ALAN and NCTE Offer English Educators

Who was with you in the classroom 10 years ago, as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) turned 90 years old? I was fortunate enough to be a graduate student at the University of Iowa, where my adviser, Dr. Bonnie Sunstein, encouraged me to track what she called my “academic kinship.” Periodically, she asked me to answer the question, “When you go into the classroom, who are the co-teachers you take with you?” In other words, who informs your teaching? Ten years ago, I responded with the names of the teachers and researchers whose work I was studying: Donald Murray, Donald Graves, James Moffett. I included the names of the teachers who were instructing me in these works: Bonnie Sunstein, Anne DiPardo, James Marshall. As I looked over that list, I felt well-supported—and less isolated—in the classroom.

Ten years later, as a teacher educator, I ask my own students to ponder the same question: “As you prepare to go into the secondary English language arts classroom, who are the co-teachers you take with you?” When they include my name on that list, I am humbled. By the same token, it causes me to face the power that I have as a teacher. I am influencing their menu of options for co-teachers. This causes me to think about where I shop for mentors for my students. Who are the must-reads in English education? How do I know? What informs my professional acumen? Whenever I make a decision about whose work to include on a course syllabus, I am essentially telling my students, “This individual is a potentially influen-

tial co-teacher. This person has something important to teach you about English education.” As a teacher educator, I do not take these choices lightly. I need to think carefully about the process that informs my curriculum.

Today, as NCTE has recently turned 100 and as ALAN turns 40, I am grateful for the ways in which NCTE and its affiliates inform my work in English education. I would feel much less supported—and much more isolated—without the co-teachers I have met through multiple professional venues. It is not surprising how many of these venues are connected to NCTE, namely CLAS and ALAN, two of my key kindred souls of the national organization. CLAS, or the Colorado Language Arts Society, is a state affiliate of NCTE. ALAN, the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents, holds its annual meetings during the NCTE Annual Convention. Because of ALAN and NCTE workshops and publications, I am able to provide new generations of teachers with high-caliber mentors. I am able to help future teachers develop their own academic kinships.

Describing and Developing Academic Kinship

An academic kinship is how an individual describes who and what influences that person’s teaching. It includes the intersections of the what and the how, the content and the pedagogy. For example, in my adolescents’ literature course, the texts I include on the

syllabus are the what: Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*, Angela Johnson's *The First Part Last*, and Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. The themes we address in class are the what: rape, pregnancy, and sexuality. Anderson is part of my academic kinship because I am affected by her writing style, by how she does and does not use dialogue. I am affected by how she weaves the impact of rape into adolescent identity. Johnson is part of my academic kinship because I am struck by how she puts a twist on stereotypes. I am struck by how she weaves the concept of responsibility into adolescent identity. Chbosky is part of my academic kinship because I am influenced by how he gives a voice to those who might not otherwise have one. I am influenced by how he infuses the importance of perspective into adolescent identity. That is why these authors and these texts are a part of my adolescents' literature course. They all have something significant to offer teachers and readers of adolescent literature. That is why they are a part of my academic kinship.

In addition to the content, academic kinship includes the pedagogy, or the how. When I teach Anderson's *Speak*, I introduce Rosenblatt's ideas about reader response. Rosenblatt is definitely a part of my academic kinship; she influences why I choose to teach students about the differences between New Criticism (the meaning is in the text) and Reader Response (the meaning is a transaction between the reader and the text). When I teach Johnson's *The First Part Last*, I teach deconstruction theory, so the students and I can examine how Johnson breaks down binary constructions, such as what it means to "be a man." Jacques Derrida and Warren Hedges are my co-teachers as I guide students through an examination of binary oppositions in the story, such as male/female, child/parent, teenager/adult. When I teach Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, I call upon Mary Klages's work with queer theory as I encourage students to explore how identity is a social construct. Each of these pedagogical approaches has something meaningful to offer teachers and students. That is why they are a part of my academic kinship.

Academic kinship is kinesthetic, always in motion, always intersecting. It is influenced by the students I teach, the conference presentations I attend, and the journal articles I read. I might include one set of texts this semester, and I might teach the content

a particular way. By the next time I teach that same course, I might have attended a conference where I learned about a different text that meets my goals. I might have read a journal article that described a new teaching technique that helps me meet the students' needs in that course. That conference presenter and that author have the potential to be co-teachers in my classroom.

If I use their work or apply their ideas, they are part of my academic kinship.

The important part of applying academic kinship in the classroom is that my decisions need to be intentional. I need to have a rationale for why I am leaving one author in or leaving another text out. I need to understand what influences my decisions. When I ask *What informs my teaching?*, I answer *ALAN and NCTE*. They have much to offer English educators. *ALAN* and *NCTE* help me to teach deliberately.

Academic kinship is kinesthetic, always in motion, always intersecting.

Professional Conferences: Meeting the Sage on the Stage

As I work with preservice teachers, I try to model the importance of staying active in professional organizations. For me, this is one of the best ways to fight off burnout and to expand academic kinships. I describe attending a conference like summer camp for teachers: filled with fun activities to help you be a well-rounded person. Each year, I try to attend at least one state and one national conference, and I always try to take a group of graduate and undergraduate students as presenters and participants. For me, there is no greater joy than introducing a student to someone whose work we have been reading in class, or watching a student discover a potential co-teacher at a session. Professional conferences are one way to meet the rock stars of English education, the sages on the stage. They are also a way to interview potential co-teachers.

In my school context, we are fortunate to have the Colorado Language Arts Society, a wonderfully vibrant state affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English. In the fall of 2010, I had the distinct pleasure of hearing Teri Lesesne, "the Goddess of YA Literature" and the Executive Secretary of *ALAN*,

speak at the Colorado Language Arts Society Fall Conference. Before her keynote speech, I was familiar with her name, but not her work. Early in the session,

I had one of those magical moments where I was able to introduce one of my students to one of my mentors.

she posed two important questions to the audience: 1) What could someone do *before* you read to make you want/hate to read? 2) What could someone do *after* you read to make you want/hate to read? As I sat there, completely caught up in Lesesne's ideas about how to encourage reading for enjoyment—pure enjoyment—I couldn't help but think about my students, future teachers, who not only grapple with the questions Lesesne asked, but who are also trying to discover ways to answer their own questions, questions all teachers ask, such as, "What can I do to help students *want* to read?"

The light bulb went on: my students would definitely benefit from reading Lesesne's work. She would make an excellent candidate for a co-teacher in my teaching reading course. In my conference program, I made notes about how her work could inform the course curriculum. I jotted down titles she recommended for creating and sustaining engaged readers, including Jacobson & Colón's *Anne Frank: The Anne Frank House Authorized Graphic Biography* (2010), Yang's *The Eternal Smile* (2009), and Benoit's *You* (2010). I annotated her explanation of T-A-R-G-E-T, outlining the importance of Trust, Access, Response, Guidance, Enthusiasm, and Tween and Teen Appeal for adolescent readers.

In my teaching reading course, I often use Pennac's "Reader's Bill of Rights" (1999, pp. 170–171) as an introduction to how to use fishbowl discussion as a way to engage students in conversation about what they have read. Lesesne offered new rules for readers, such as "You have the right to read the last chapter first." I brainstormed ways Lesesne's work could complement Pennac's work in my classroom. I was mapping out a revised academic kinship, one where Pennac intersects with Lesesne, who intersects with me, and ultimately with a new generation of teacher

candidates. In that moment, Teri Lesesne became one of my co-teachers and a potential mentor for students back at Colorado State University. In that moment, I was reminded that academic kinship is all about intersections.

The CLAS Fall Conference increased my excitement for attending the 2010 NCTE Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida, one month later. At the CLAS Conference, I met new co-teachers; at NCTE, I was reunited with past co-teachers. I attended a Conference on English Education (CEE) session explaining composition's roots in English education. The presenters were NCTE Past President Sheridan Blau, then NCTE President Keith Gilyard, and my graduate adviser, Bonnie Sunstein. Past co-teachers mingled with the possibility of new mentors as I prepared to listen to these talented, invested English educators read excerpts of their upcoming work in Patricia Lambert Stock's *Composition's Roots in English Education* (Heinemann, 2011).

My "rock star" moment came before the presentation even started. I walked into the room and sat down next to one of my current graduate advisees, Serena Dietze, who was then president of NCTE@CSU, the CSU student affiliate of NCTE. We chatted briefly, and I explained that Bonnie had been my adviser, as I am Serena's adviser. We walked up to Bonnie, and I had one of those magical moments where I was able to introduce one of my students to one of my mentors. In that moment, I experienced a profound connection between Iowa and CSU, between CLAS and NCTE, between past and present. I saw my academic kinship come full circle.

I had been recommending that Serena read some of Bonnie's work, coauthored with Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater (1996), in preparation for her master's thesis. Now, I was having one of those treasured moments where I was introducing a student to someone whose work she had read. But this was even more than that. I was introducing two people who have profoundly affected my own academic kinship. I was introducing two people who have, at some point in my professional career, helped me to feel more supported and less isolated. This is the power of academic kinship; this is the potential that ALAN and NCTE offer to English educators.

Academic Journals: Meeting the Sage on the Page

As teachers, we do not always have the time, the money, or the opportunity to attend a professional conference. That does not mean we are limited in ways to expand our academic kinship. ALAN and NCTE both offer high-quality journals where we can meet new co-teachers in our own homes, on our own schedules. Many of these journals feature work written by the same people who are presenting at state and national conferences. Two of the most influential journals for my academic kinship have been *The ALAN Review* and *English Journal*.

Teaching the adolescents' literature course at CSU is one of my favorite yet most daunting challenges when it comes to selecting potential co-teachers for students. In the course of a 16-week semester, the students and I will read a minimum of 11 core texts. In addition, we each read 3,000 pages of adolescents' literature of our own choosing. In terms of volume, that sounds like a lot of reading. However, for those of us who understand the importance of adolescents' literature in the secondary English language arts classroom, we know that it is not nearly enough to expose students to the amazing range of authors and titles available.

As I prepare to order texts for the next semester's course, I ask current students, "What do you think are important topics to address in the adolescents' literature course?" Recurring suggestions include teen suicide, peer pressure, and mental illness. One semester, the students recommended that we address body image. As I thought about the range of texts I had read on that subject, from Wally Lamb's *She's Come Undone* (1992) to Mary Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia* (1994), I needed to think about which resources would best inform my text selections. Luckily, I knew where to turn.

I knew that if I was looking for which authors to take with me into the classroom, I could trust *The ALAN Review* for solid recommendations. I knew I could search the ALAN website for resources related to the topic of body image, and that is how I came across articles like Peterson's "Teens, Literature, and the Web" (2004), which called my attention to Carolyn Mackler's *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things* (2005). As I researched the author and

the text, I started to see how this book could have a place in the adolescents' literature course. I started to see how Mackler could be a potential co-teacher in the classroom.

My next step was to think about what I wanted to accomplish with the text. I wanted students to do more than read about body image; I wanted them to be affected by the reading, and to be able to apply what they learned in their own classrooms. Since the adolescents' literature course meets three times per week, I organize the syllabus into three components: theme, theory, and issue. On day one (Monday), we examine theme, such as body image. On day two (Wednesday), we apply literary theory, such as feminist theory. On day three (Friday), we explore a larger issue related to teaching, such as censorship. Once I read Mackler's book, I was hooked. I knew her work definitely fulfilled students' wants and curricular needs.

As I planned how to address censorship related to the book, I consulted *The ALAN Review* once again, and I read Quick's "'Meant to Be Huge': Obesity and Body Image in Young Adult Novels" (2008). Quick's work helped me to select other journal articles and newspaper clippings to inform our examination of the relationship between censorship and Mackler's work.

At the end of the semester, I asked students to evaluate each of the required texts we had read. I asked them, in writing, to tell me which texts they thought I should keep in the curriculum and which I should replace. Male and female students alike praised *The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things* as one of the most important reads of the semester. Some of those students have gone on to teach Mackler in their own classrooms. Thanks to *The ALAN Review*, the students forged a significant academic kinship with that text and with that author.

As luck would have it, I was able to meet Carolyn Mackler at the 2010 NCTE Annual Convention in Orlando. I had the opportunity to tell her, in person, how much her work had meant to me and to the students in that course. I was able to shake hands with yet another co-teacher.

I knew where to turn. . . .
I could trust *The ALAN Review* for solid recommendations.

We do not always get to meet the authors who have meant the most to us. Sometimes we have to be content to worship our English education rock stars from afar, perhaps forming our own informal fan clubs at our schools, in our classrooms. For example, I had never met Ken Donelson, Alleen Pace Nilsen, or

We do not always get to meet the authors who have meant the most to us. Sometimes we have to be content to worship our English education rock stars from afar.

James Blasingame, yet they were a part of my academic kinship. (I was finally able to meet James Blasingame at the CLAS conference this past fall.) I seek out their articles in *The ALAN Review* and in *English Journal* to help inform my work as an English educator. I trust and appreciate their annual recommendations in articles such as “The 2005 Honor List: A Wealth of Books to Compare”

(2006). And I still enjoy reading Nilsen’s assertion that Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* should come with a warning label: “Read and enjoy—but please do not think you are a failure if your boyfriend is not as wonderful as Edward Cullen” (p. 95). This is sound advice, and this is why Nilsen and Meyer are co-teachers in my classroom.

Other times, we are fortunate enough to call the authors we meet on the pages of our professional journals colleagues, or even friends. I consider myself fortunate to work with former *English Journal* editor Louann Reid, alongside fellow *English Journal* authors Cindy O’Donnell-Allen and Tobi Jacobi. I have been honored to present with all three of these women at state and national conferences. They are an intricate part of my academic kinship, and our connections to CLAS and NCTE strengthen those bonds.

Sometimes, when we are truly fortunate, we get to share our academic kinship with others in a venue such as a professional journal. Sometimes, we get to introduce others to the sages on the stage in our own lives, immortalizing them as the sages on the page. Through my work with classroom teachers in Colorado, I became interested in how teachers meet educational mandates while staying true to what they know is best for their students. I wanted to take an active role in a conversation about how secondary

English language arts teachers can be vital contributors to how we, as a profession, use multiple assessments to more accurately measure students’ growth and achievement.

Two high school English teachers, Hillary Pfeiffer and Dee Hurston, opened their classroom doors to me so that I could research how they were using innovative strategies such as Socratic seminar and sticky notes alongside other assessment tools to assess what their students knew and were able to do. They allowed me to publish their approaches in *English Journal*. In doing so, they allowed me to preserve, in writing, how they had become a part of my academic kinship. In my own courses, I model their approaches to new generations of teachers. In my conclusion, I observed, “Most of all, however, [Hillary and Dee] are fighting the good fight, fighting to ensure that students become less like sponges and more like the active questioners and critical thinkers we all need them to be in the twenty-first century” (Coke, 2008, p. 33). Because I had a venue such as *English Journal*, I was able to share why it is important for students to be active questioners and critical thinkers. Because of *English Journal*, a publication of NCTE, I was able to share how Hillary and Dee informed my teaching. In turn, they likely had an impact on other *English Journal* readers as well. As that occurred, my academic kinship intersected with the kinship of other readers, helping us to feel more supported and less isolated.

Looking Ahead: Where the Stage Intersects with the Page

In 2007, Thomas Newkirk had the daunting task of writing an “In Memoriam” column in *English Journal* about Donald Murray, a man who had been his friend and mentor. Newkirk described how, as often as Murray had tried to describe his writing process, it was always the elusive, unexpectedness of the process that captured his interest. “Writing was something that was not ‘controlled’ by a plan, an intention, a genre, a rubric; rather he saw the evolving text as an animate partner in a dialogue” (p. 14). The emphasis was on the animate quality—“expecting the unexpected.”

It seems only fitting that I should close where I opened, with Donald Murray. His philosophy holds equally true for academic kinship as it does for writing process. Finding a co-teacher cannot be controlled by

a plan. I cannot attend a conference or read an article and state, “From this source, I am going to find a co-teacher.” Academic kinship evolves. It stems from developing an animate partnership in a dialogue.

Alas, I am not going to ask, “Ten years from now, whom do you see with you in the classroom?” You have no way of knowing. Life is not controlled by a plan. However, I can offer you this gem of advice. If you are seeking to develop your academic kinship, and you want some safe bets about where to meet high-quality mentors, you can examine the intersections of ALAN and NCTE. If you are looking to meet the rock stars of English education—or if you want to be one of the rock stars of English education—attend or present at an ALAN workshop or NCTE convention; read or publish an article in *The ALAN Review* or *English Journal*. I will be watching for your work. If you want to feel more supported and less isolated in your classroom, sit down and answer the question, “Who informs my teaching?” For the length of my career thus far, I have been fortunate to have ALAN and NCTE informing my teaching. I am honored to have these resources at my disposal as I help future teachers develop their own academic kinship.

Pam Coke is an associate professor of English Education at Colorado State University. She teaches courses in adolescents’ literature, teaching reading, teaching composition, and teaching methods. She is faculty sponsor of NCTE@CSU, a student affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.

References

- Anderson, L. H. (1999). *Speak*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Benoit, C. (2010). *You*. New York, NY: HarperTeen.
- Chbosky, S. (1999). *The perks of being a wallflower*. New York, NY: Pocket Books.
- Chiseri-Strater, E., & Susteian, B. S. (1996). *FieldWorking: Reading and writing research* (1st ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Coke, P. K. (2008). Uniting the disparate: Connecting best practices and educational mandates. *English Journal*, 97(5): 28–33.
- Derrida, J., & Caputo, J. D. (Eds.). (1996). *Deconstruction in a nutshell: A conversation with Jacques Derrida*. Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press.
- Donelson, K., Blasingame, J., & Nilsen, A. P. (2006). The 2005 honor list: A wealth of books to compare. *English Journal*, 96(1): 90–96.
- Hedges, W. (2006, January 25). *Derrida and deconstruction: Key points*. Retrieved from <http://www.sou.edu/english/Hedges/Sodashop/Rcenter/Theory/People/derdakey.htm>.
- Jacobson, S., & Colón, E. (2010). *Anne Frank: The Anne Frank house authorized graphic biography*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.
- Johnson, A. (2003). *The first part last*. New York, NY: Simon Pulse.
- Klages, M. (2006). *Literary theory: A guide for the perplexed*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Lamb, W. (1992). *She’s come undone*. New York, NY: Pocket Books.
- Lesesne, T. (2010). Naked reading: Discovering how to motivate students to read. *The goddess of YA literature: Pearls from the goddess*. Retrieved from <http://professornana.livejournal.com>.
- Mackler, C. (2005). *The earth, my butt and other big round things*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.
- Newkirk, T. (2007). In memoriam: Donald Murray. *English Journal*, 96(4): 14–15.
- Pennac, D. (1999). *Better than life*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Peterson, K. (2004). Teens, literature, and the web. *The ALAN Review*, 31(3): 7–10.
- Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Quick, C. S. (2008). “Meant to be huge”: Obesity and body image in young adult novels. *The ALAN Review*, 35(2): 54–61.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1996). *Literature as exploration*. New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America.
- Stock, P. L. (2011). *Composition’s roots in English education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Yang, G. L. (2009). *The eternal smile*. New York, NY: First Second.

Of Kent State, *Old Yeller*, and *Harlem Summer*:

Recalling the Beginnings of Young Adult Literature in Academe

Spring, 1970. Forever this will be Kent State Spring to me, the spring when on May 4, National Guardsmen shot and killed four protesting undergraduates at the Ohio university, the spring when, at my own alma mater, faculty allowed students to wrap up their courses independently rather than attend class for the final ten days.

But alongside my Kent State Spring is my adolescent lit spring. In January, I—a post-master's-degree student at the University of Virginia—and 20 or 25 others, mostly undergraduates, enrolled in Bob Small's EDUC 144: Literature for Adolescents. Small, a doctoral student, was in the latter stages of writing his dissertation (1970), which I learned was a qualitative analysis of young adult literature.

Small's study, adopting in some respects the methods and instruments used by Stephen Dunning (*A Definition of the Role of the Junior Novel Based on Analyses of Thirty Selected Novels*, 1959), was designed to distinguish between the excellent, the okay, and the not-so-hot books for adolescents of the era featuring major African American characters. Books such as Lipsyte's *The Contender* (1967) earned high ratings in his study, while Newell's *A Cap for Mary Ellis* (1953) did not.

My own dissertation (1972), which examined how the race of characters in a short story affected the responses of teenage readers, was inspired by Bob Small's study on the one hand and by my rapidly developing interest in response theory on the other. Bob Small convinced me and others that it was important

to get more quality books by and about Black Americans into classrooms, while James R. Squire (*The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories*, NCTE, 1964) made it clear that both reader characteristics and textual characteristics shaped reader responses.

At the time, you should know, no one used the term *African American*.

Four years earlier, alongside Biscayne Bay at Miami Military Academy (MMA), I had taught English for the first time. I was an under-trained, under-licensed beginner, a graduate of a flagship university with a mediocre GPA. For the next three years, slowly but surely, I found my sea legs as a teacher.

In October 1966, the MMA librarian, aware that I was teaching an abridged version of *Great Expectations* to three classes of freshmen, lent me a copy of *English Journal* with, of all things, an article on how to engage kids with Dickens and his works. Things started looking up, though I still wasn't exactly turning kids onto reading as I had hoped.

Later that year, I scraped together enough money to supply my lone junior class with copies of *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1964). We closed our anthologies once and for all on the Fireside Poets and Southwest Humorists. From that class of juniors, I had the jaw-dropping experience of speaking with a bright kid who confided in me that *Catcher in the Rye* was, indeed, the first book—maybe he said *real* book—that he had ever read all the way through.

For the next two years, I taught seventh and

eighth grades at the selective Ransom School in Coconut Grove southwest of downtown Miami. It merged some years later with Everglades School for Girls, and today, as Ransom-Everglades, it is one of the top independent schools in the Southeast. In 1967, Ransom's small English department had become part of what we now call the Paperback Revolution. We realized that we might assign books, specific titles we wanted to teach our kids, rather than depend on Scott-Foresman or other publishers to put our curriculum together for us. For my first year at Ransom, I went along happily with what was in place for seventh and eighth grade—*The Call of the Wild* (London, 1963), *Captains Courageous* (Kipling, 1964), and others. The following year, my third as a teacher, I added *Born Free* (Adamson, 1960) to the seventh-grade booklist and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Twain, 1964) to the eighth. For my seventh-graders, I paired *Call of the Wild* and *Born Free* in order to teach some basic differences between fiction and nonfiction. The result, a two-week exploration of the two books, was an instructional unit, though I'm not sure I knew to call it that.

Along the way, I discovered Scholastic's book clubs. My kids bought these books by the bunch, it seemed, but I didn't regard such reading as part of my curriculum. I'm sure my students didn't either. I also used, in both grades, a radical new poetry anthology, *Reflections on a Gift of Watermelon Pickle and Other Modern Verse* (Dunning, Lueders, & Smith, 1966). My savvy department chair Dan Bowden liked what my own students called "the pickle book" so much that he decided to use it with his seniors. What attracted him, I believe, was the fact that the editors had selected modern poems, many by living poets, and that each poem had room to breathe on the page, sometimes alongside appealing photographs, rather than being crammed four to a page, a common arrangement in anthologies then.

During my first year at Ransom, I had another breakthrough. Visiting a used bookstore in South Miami, I stumbled onto a well-used copy of Hook and Evans's *The Teaching of High School English*, its third edition (1965; currently available in its 5th edition from 1982). Until then, I was only vaguely aware that there was such a thing as *method* or, better yet, that someone had written *methods* (plural) down.

Early in 1970, a full-time graduate student now, I

was primed for learning more about books written for teenagers and for the keen professional insights provided by Bob Small directly or by way of the professional readings he assigned—G. Robert Carlsen (*Books and the Teenage Reader*, 1967), Daniel Fader (*Hooked on Books: Program and Proof*, 1968), and Dwight Burton (*Literature Study in the High School*, 1965). *Hooked on Books*, in particular, was as compelling to me as any page-turner on the bestseller list.

It recounted Fader's experiences in introducing trade paperbacks to teachers and students in a Washington, D.C. junior high school. (Haven't read it? Now is the time. Be sure to follow up with *The Naked Children* (1971), an intimate account of Fader's relationship with a group of teenagers at the school.)

The books we bought for class ranged in price from 45 cents to \$1.25, with most under a dollar. I read, in no particular order, *Street Rod* (Felsen, 1963), *The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou* (Hunter, 1968), *Harlem Summer* (Vroman, 1968), *Old Yeller* (Gipson, 1956), *Shane* (Schaefer, 1949), *Trappers of the West* (Reinfeld, 1964; and yes, 45 cents!), *Up a Road Slowly* (Hunt, 1956), *Seventeenth Summer* (Daly, 1942), *The Contender* (Lipsyte, 1967), *A Separate Peace* (Knowles, 1961), *His Enemy, His Friend* (Tunis, 1967), and, of course, *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967) and *The Pigman* (Zindel, 1968).

On Monday, May 4, though, everything academic—adolescent lit, 19th-century Russian literature in translation, contemporary drama, you name it—lurched to an angry halt. At UVA, term papers and final exams were swept aside by demonstrations over peace and war, Kent State, the draft, and body bags.

By the following spring, a somewhat calmer time, I was a doctoral candidate myself under the sage tutelage of Richard Meade. My dissertation data were in hand, I was interviewing for higher education positions in English education, and—in my capacity as a graduate assistant—I taught my first adolescent literature class for UVA at its Northern Virginia Center in Fairfax.

That was early in 1971. I have taught adolescent literature courses, now at Columbus State University,

Hooked on Books, in particular, was as compelling to me as any page-turner on the bestseller list.

ever since. I became an ALAN member as soon as I knew of its existence, probably in 1974. Recalling my personal experiences in discovering and then teaching others about the novels of Judy Blume, Paul Zindel, Katherine Paterson, and—in the 1980s—a new generation of writers (Chris Crutcher, Lois Lowry, Norma Fox Mazer, Walter Dean Myers), I realized that others with *emeritus* after their names were soon to wrap up careers as YAL specialists experienced the field “from the bottom up,” one might say. We were not its true pioneers, but we were at least their sons and daughters.

In the mid-sixties, UVA had no adolescent literature course. By 1967, however, [Guy] Ellis had designed and offered one.

I discussed those 1960s–1970s experiences with four long-term acquaintances: Guy Ellis, editor of the *ALAN Review* (1977–1982), now retired from the University of Georgia; Terry Ley, former member of the ALAN Board of Directors, retired from Auburn University; Mike Angelotti, English education professor at the University of Oklahoma and the chair of the Fountain of the Muse poetry reading at NCTE conventions; and Don Gallo, whose well-known contributions to ALAN I will touch on below.¹

First, I called W. Geiger (Guy) Ellis, another University of Virginia product who retired from the University of Georgia in 1991. Ellis taught my first methods course in 1967, and I met my wife of 44 years in his class. When I moved to Georgia in 1971, he became my cross-state mentor and, in 1978 when he became editor of *The ALAN Review*, he involved me as a Clip-and-File book reviewer. Ellis became interested in “junior novels” (a common term for adolescent literature in the 1960s) as a graduate student. UVA’s English education icon Richard Meade

had already introduced him to Florida State professor Dwight Burton at an NCTE conference, and Meade encouraged Ellis to pursue the subject as an independent study. Ellis did so with characteristic energy, framing his readings around the work of Burton.

In the mid-sixties, UVA had no adolescent literature course. By 1967, however, Ellis had designed and offered one. Among those who enrolled was Robert C. (Bob) Small, Jr., a teacher at Lane High School in Charlottesville, a future ALAN president (1982), ALAN Award honoree (1995), and *ALAN Review* coeditor (1990–1998 with Patricia Kelly of Virginia Tech). Small started doctoral studies soon thereafter and took over the adolescent literature slot at Virginia from Ellis when he relocated to Georgia in 1967. When Ellis arrived in Athens, he proposed and then taught UGA’s first YAL course.

I also spoke with retired Auburn University professor Terry Ley. Early in the 1960s, Ley was a student at the University of Northern Iowa. As a teenager, he had purchased books through Scholastic’s Teenage Book Club (TAB); he explained recently that, in Cedar Falls, no bookstore sold the kind of books he found appealing. Following graduation in 1961, Ley began his teaching career at Jefferson High School in Cedar Rapids. A future colleague, Ken Donelson (ALAN president, 1979; ALAN award honoree, 1983), had taken a year off to work on his dissertation at the University of Iowa. (Ley, in fact, taught in what had been Donelson’s classroom.) On Donelson’s return to Cedar Rapids in 1962, he promoted what was then a decidedly fresh instructional strategy, Directed Individualized Reading (DIR). Before long, Ley reports, DIR was a mainstay of the English curriculum locally and elsewhere in Iowa. At Jefferson High School in Cedar Rapids, Ley told me, he “never had to overcome the snootiness about YA literature” others have experienced. So-called junior novels and popular adult fiction were an integral part of the reading/literature program he worked with.

Ley completed his graduate work at the University of Iowa in 1974 under G. Robert Carlsen (recipient, along with Stephen Judy, of the first ALAN Award), who also directed Donelson’s dissertation. Ley then joined the faculty at Auburn University, designed its first adolescent lit course (“The Reading of Adolescents”), and taught there until retiring in 2001. Among Ley’s students were Jim Blasingame (in Cedar Rap-

1. I had hoped to interview Bob Small and Hugh Agee for this piece. Sadly, I learned in 2010 that Hugh, who introduced me to ALAN, was afflicted with Alzheimer’s disease; he passed away in March, 2011. I also tried to correspond with Bob Small for several months, but my efforts to reach him were unsuccessful. He too, I understand, is in poor health.

ids), Pamela (Sissi) Carroll at Auburn, and Steve Bickmore through an NEH Summer Institute at Auburn. Blasingame and Carroll have each served as ALAN president. All three have been editors or coeditors of *The ALAN Review*.

Next I spoke with Don Gallo (ALAN president, 1986; ALAN Award recipient, 1992), who says he was a reluctant reader as a teenager until, at Hope College, he became captivated by *The Old Man and the Sea* (Hemingway, 1968). Don recalls that he disliked Hemingway's short novel in high school, along with just about everything else involving books. Scouting and athletics were much more to his liking.

Bachelor's and master's degrees in hand in the 1960s, Gallo starting teaching in Westport, Connecticut, public schools, where he became increasingly fascinated by teenagers and their reading—or the lack thereof. During doctoral study at Syracuse University, he took Margaret Early's children's literature course. Aware of his interest in books for teenagers, Early encouraged him to concentrate on recent Newbery winners and writers who were, seemingly out of the blue, ignoring the old taboos and formulas of the prototypical junior novel. Of the body of adolescent literature he discovered in Early's class, Gallo told me, "I jumped on it, and it became a career for me."

Indeed he did, and indeed it did.

Gallo joined the Central Connecticut State University faculty in 1973, where he remained until retiring a quarter-century later. Beginning in the 1980s, Gallo edited a series of short story anthologies. *Sixteen* (1984) was the first. In its introduction, he explained what made the collection unique: it featured never-before-published stories by writers who made their living by writing for teenage readers. Following *Sixteen*, Gallo edited more than a dozen "unique" short-story collections and a collection of one-act plays, each with a different thematic twist. He donates a significant portion of his royalties for these books to ALAN.

Finally, I talked to Mike Angelotti (ALAN president, 1983), whom I met in 1981 at the NCTE convention in Boston. One evening, after a circuitous cab ride, a group of NCTE folks—I among them—found themselves standing in a slow-moving line outside what was known as the no-name seafood restaurant. We were cold and sober, in contrast to the locals, who drank beer from six-packs they kept at their feet and pushed forward as the line inched toward the door.

With Mike Angelotti were Dwight Burton (ALAN Award honoree, 1980) and John Simmons, all from Florida State. Burton was one of my YAL rock stars from my 1970 class with Bob Small at Virginia. I was dazzled to be in his presence.

Mike Angelotti, I was surprised to learn, preceded me by a year or possibly two at Miami Military Academy, where he, too, taught for a year before moving on. Like me, he had not completed a teacher education major as an undergraduate. At MMA, he taught on a temporary Florida certificate.

In graduate study at FSU in the late 1960s, Angelotti enrolled in existing adolescent literature courses while teaching at the campus high school, virtually across the street. Burton, who had shaped his own ideas about reader response alongside Louise Rosenblatt, stressed the necessity of "imaginative entry" into literature. From Burton, Angelotti told me, he learned that teachers must develop "a way of thinking about the importance of the reader in response to literature, whether we call it imaginative entry or *transaction*."

Bingo!

Angelotti put Burton's theories into practice "immediately and often . . . for my high school and junior high students, whether via *The Contender* or *The Outsiders* or *Watermelon Pickle* or, for that matter, *Wuthering Heights* [Brontë, 1965] and *Heart of Darkness* [Conrad, 1961]. . . . Teaching how to teach YAL at Texas Tech a year or two later was natural and exciting." When he and I first crossed paths in 1981, Angelotti was on the faculty at Texas Tech University. He moved to the University of Oklahoma in 1987 as Coordinator of Teacher Education and continues to serve on the graduate faculty there.

Beginnings matter. Beginnings are worth recalling.

My account of how adolescent literature entered my world as a young teacher and graduate student is idiosyncratic. In no way does it pinpoint its birthing and early development at the university level, although I did find out that Terry Ley and Guy Ellis

Of the body of adolescent literature he discovered in [Margaret] Early's class, Gallo told me, "I jumped on it, and it became a career for me."

designed their universities' first courses in YAL—Ley at Auburn, Ellis at both Virginia and Georgia. This mirrored my own experience at Columbus State University.

So what readers find here are my skewed memories balanced by those of four professionals who, in the past 40 years, contributed greatly to both the discipline of adolescent literature and to ALAN itself. It goes without saying that others—Jeff Kaplan, Louann

Reid, Terry Lesesne, and Joan Kaywell come to mind—found adolescent literature in their own ways in different parts of the country and at different stages of their own growth as teachers and scholars.

ALAN, formed early in the 1970s, connected me with these smart, passionate, and energetic men and women—and many others. It also connected (and continues to connect) them with one another. Each November, ALAN intro-

duces me to the writers, the books, and the perspectives that, back on my own turf, give me what I need to welcome twenty-first century English and language arts teachers to the genre in all its diversity, complexity, and respect for the world of adolescents and those who tell their stories.

References

- Brewbaker, J. (1971). *The relationship between the race of characters in a literary selection and the literary responses of Negro and white adolescent readers* (Unpublished manuscript). School of Education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- Burton, D. (1965). *Literature study in the high school*. Chicago, IL: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Carlsen, G. R. (1967). *Books and the teen-age reader: A guide for teachers, librarians, and parents*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Dunning, A. S. (1959). *A definition of the role of the junior novel based on analyses of thirty selected novels* (Unpublished manuscript). Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.
- Fader, D. (1971). *The naked children*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Fader, D., & Shaeritz, M. H. (1966). *Hooked on books: Program and proof*. New York, NY: Berkley.
- Hook, J. N., & Evans, W. H. (1982). *The teaching of high school*

English. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

- Small, R. C. (1970). *An analysis and evaluation of widely read junior novels with major Negro characters* (Unpublished manuscript). School of Education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- Squire, J. R. (1964). *The responses of adolescents while reading four short stories*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Literature Cited

- Adamson, J. (1960). *Born free*. London, England: Collins Harvill.
- Bronte, E. (1965). *Wuthering heights*. New York, NY: Grolier.
- Conrad, J. (1961). *Heart of darkness*. New York, NY: Dell.
- Daly, M. (1942). *Seventeenth summer*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Dunning, S., Lueders, E., & Smith, H. (Eds.). (1966). *Reflections on a gift of watermelon pickle and other modern verse*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.
- Felsen, H. G. (1963). *Street rod*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Gallo, D. R. (Ed.). (1984). *Sixteen: Short stories by outstanding writers for young adults*. New York, NY: Perfection Learning.
- Gipson, F. (1956). *Old Yeller*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Hemingway, E. (1968). *The old man and the sea*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Hinton, S. E. (1967). *The outsiders*. New York, NY: Viking Press.
- Hunt, I. (1966). *Up a road slowly*. New York, NY: Tempo.
- Hunter, K. (1968). *The soul brothers and Sister Lou*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Kipling, R. (1964). *Captains courageous*. New York, NY: Signet.
- Knowles, J. (1961). *A separate peace*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Lipsyte, R. (1967). *The contender*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- London, J. (1963). *The call of the wild*. New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap.
- Newell, H. (1953). *A cap for Mary Ellis*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Reinfeld, F. (1964). *Trappers of the west*. New York, NY: Dell.
- Salinger, J. D. (1964). *The catcher in the rye*. New York, NY: Bantam.
- Schaefer, J. (1949). *Shane*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.
- Tunis, J. (1967). *His enemy, his friend*. New York, NY: Morrow.
- Twain, M. (1964). *A Connecticut yankee in King Arthur's court*. New York, NY: Washington Square.
- Vroman, M. E. (1968). *Harlem summer*. New York, NY: Berkley.
- Zindel, P. (1968). *The pigman*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

James Brewbaker, professor of English Education (emeritus) at Columbus State University, has been a member of ALAN since the mid-1970s. He has served The ALAN Review as trivia column editor ("So You Think You Know Young Adult Literature," 1996–1997) and interdisciplinary connections editor (1998–2001). An ALAN research grant in 1997 made possible the publication of Poems by Adolescents and Adults (NCTE, 2002) which, with Dawnelle Hyland, he coedited. He was also poetry editor for English Journal (2002–2008).

Young Adult Literature Book Awards:

A Guide for Newcomers to the Field

With more books being published annually for teens than ever before, adults who are new to young adult literature often wonder where to begin in their reading. Bookstore displays and bestseller lists acquaint readers with the most popular titles, but discovering the great range of books published each year for teens—and finding the very best books—can be more difficult. Readers are more likely to become interested in young adult literature and motivated to read it if they have a way to see just how many high-quality books are available to them.

Young adult literature book awards, presented annually by librarians, bloggers, newspapers, review journals, foundations, and professional organizations, help to make the breadth and depth of young adult literature visible. Because book awards honor the year's best books across a host of different categories, they expose readers to the diversity and richness of young adult literature and to individual titles they probably wouldn't read or hear about otherwise. Book awards help readers to navigate the field, stay current in their reading choices, and regularly renew their thinking about what constitutes excellence in books for young people.

The most well-known book awards honor titles considered to be the best literary works of the year. But book awards can also help readers to discover exemplary books across a variety of genres and formats, from mysteries to graphic novels, nonfiction to audiobooks. Book awards can introduce readers to texts by and about people from diverse backgrounds as well as texts that take a thoughtful look at various social issues. Beyond books deemed the best in

literary terms across various categories, book awards can help readers identify titles that stand out for their literary merit combined with their appeal to teens, or for teen appeal alone. The sheer number of young adult literature book awards reflects the vast range of reading options available to teens.

It's important to point out that book award committees cannot recognize every good YA book published in a given year. The choices made by award committees are sometimes hotly contested, and deserving books may be passed over. Just because a book wins an award does not mean it is the right book for a particular reader. Despite these caveats, however, being familiar with a range of YA book awards and staying abreast of winning titles provides newcomers to the field with a reliable way to discover many of the best books young adult literature has to offer.

In the sections that follow, the three of us—a college professor, a high school teacher, and a middle school teacher, all avid readers of young adult literature—offer an overview of young adult literature book awards. We begin with awards for general literary merit, followed by awards that honor excellence in particular genres or formats. We then move to awards that celebrate various forms of diversity, and we end with awards that recognize the intersection of literary merit and teen appeal. (For a summary of awards in each category, see Figure 1.) Our goal is to provide readers who are new to young adult literature with a systematic way to explore the field. By tracking annual winners of teen book awards, readers can continually expand their knowledge of quality books for teens.

Awards for General Literary Excellence

Michael L. Printz Award <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/printz-award>

William C. Morris Award <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/morris-award>

Boston Globe–Horn Book Award <http://www.hbook.com/resources/boston-globe-horn-book-awards/>

National Book Award <http://www.nationalbook.org/nba2012.html>

Los Angeles Times Book Prize <http://events.latimes.com/bookprizes/>

Genre- and Format-Specific Awards

YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction Award <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/nonfiction-award>

Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/sibertmedal>

Scott O’Dell Award <http://www.scottodell.com/pages/ScottO’DellAwardforHistoricalFiction.aspx>

Edgar Award <http://www.theedgars.com/>

Andre Norton Award <http://www.sfga.org/tag/andre-norton-award/>

Eisner Award <http://www.comic-con.org/awards/eisners-current-info>

Great Graphic Novels for Teens <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/great-graphic-novels-teens>

Odyssey Award <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/odysseyaward>

Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/amazing-audiobooks-young-adults>

Batchelder Award <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/batchelderaward>

Awards That Celebrate Diversity

Coretta Scott King Award <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/coretta-scott-king-book-awards>

Pura Belpré Award <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal>

Sydney Taylor Book Award <http://www.jewishlibraries.org/main/Awards/SydneyTaylorBookAward.aspx>

Schneider Family Book Award <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/schneider-family-book-award>

Stonewall Book Award <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/stonewall-book-awards>

Rainbow List <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/rainbow-project-book-list>

Lambda Literary Award <http://www.lambdaliterary.org/complete-list-of-award-recipients/>

Amelia Bloomer List <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/amelia-bloomer-book-list>

Jane Addams Children’s Book Awards http://www.janeaddamspace.org/jacba/index_jacba.shtml

Awards for Literary Merit and Teen Appeal

Best Fiction for Young Adults <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/best-fiction-young-adults>

Cybils Awards <http://www.cybils.com/>

Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award <http://www.alan-ya.org/page/walden-award>

Awards for Popularity and Teen Appeal

Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/quick-picks-reluctant-young-adult-readers>

Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/popular-paperbacks-young-adults>

YALSA’s Teens’ Top Ten <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/teens-top-ten>

Alex Awards <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/alex-awards>

Indies Choice Book Awards <http://www.bookweb.org/btw/awards/ICBA.html>

Figure 1. Book awards across categories

Awards for General Literary Excellence

The most important and well-known award for young adult literature is the **Michael L. Printz Award**. Introduced in 2000 and administered by YALSA, the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association, the Printz honors the book that best exemplifies literary excellence in young adult literature. As the first book award given solely for literary merit and solely to books published for teens, the Printz helped to usher in a new era of innovation and artistry in YA writing and publishing. (For background on the creation of the Printz, see Aronson, 2001a and Cart, 2007; for an overview of winning titles in its first decade, see Hunt, 2009.) Books that win the Printz tend to be the most talked about and celebrated of all YA award winners. They also tend to be the most debated. (For a discussion of titles that evoked considerable controversy and debate in the early years of the award, such as An Na's *A Step from Heaven* and Aidan Chambers's *Postcards from No Man's Land*, see Campbell, 2003 and Cart, 2010.)

While several other organizations give annual awards for literary excellence, the Printz is the most influential. Like the Newbery Award, given for distinguished contribution to literature for children, the Printz Award is helping to create a new canon of young adult literature classics. It is also helping to raise the profile of winning authors. John Green has been viewed as a major talent ever since his first novel, *Looking for Alaska*, won the Printz, and his second novel, *An Abundance of Katherines*, was named a Printz Honor book one year later. David Almond, M. T. Anderson, Margo Lanagan, and Markus Zusak have also been lauded as two-time Printz honorees.

A newer ALA award for literary excellence in young adult literature showcases the talent of debut authors. Introduced in 2009 and also administered by YALSA, the **William C. Morris Award** honors the best book written for young adults by a first-time, previously unpublished author. Like the Printz, the Morris is a high-profile award. Each year it draws new YA authors into the spotlight and provides readers with an easy way to discover new talent in the field. Kristin Cashore, the highly-acclaimed author of ambitious YA fantasy novels, was honored by the first Morris Committee with *Graceling*. John Corey Whaley made an even bigger splash when he won the Morris and the

Printz in the same year with his debut novel *Where Things Come Back*.

Other awards for literary merit in books for young people are given by committees representing newspapers, review journals, and foundations. Of these, the **Boston Globe–Horn Book Award** has been around the longest. Administered by *Horn Book Magazine* since 1967, the Boston Globe–Horn Book Awards recognize excellence in children's and young adult literature across three categories: picture book, fiction, and nonfiction. Winners in the fiction and nonfiction categories *can* be books published for teens, such as Tim Wynne-Jones's *Blink and Caution* or Steve Sheinkin's *The Notorious Benedict Arnold: A True Story of Adventure, Heroism, and Treachery*, but

the committee often skews toward younger readers by honoring middle-grade titles such as Rebecca Stead's *When You Reach Me* and Elizabeth Partridge's *Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Grow Weary*.

The same age group variability occurs with the **National Book Award for Young People's Literature**, which was added to the list of literary awards given by the National Book Foundation in 1996. Winning titles tend to alternate between works of fiction written for older teens, like Judy Blundell's *What I Saw and How I Lied*, and middle-grade books such as Katherine Erskine's *Mockingbird*. Occasionally nonfiction and graphic novels are honored, such as Albert Marrin's *Flesh and Blood So Cheap: The Triangle Fire and Its Legacy* and David Small's *Stitches: A Memoir*. The most decorated graphic novel in recent years, Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese*, was named a finalist for the National Book Award and went on to win the Printz. In general, however, the list of National Book Award winners has been dominated by works of contemporary realistic fiction.

In 1998, the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize Program also added a category for young adult literature to its existing repertoire of awards. More often than

As the first book award given solely for literary merit and solely to books published for teens, the Printz helped to usher in a new era of innovation and artistry in YA writing and publishing.

the National Book Award for Young People's Literature, the **Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Young Adult Literature** tends to go to a work of fiction for older teens—past winners include M. T. Anderson's *Feed*, Melvin Burgess's *Doing It*, and Coe Booth's *Tyrell*—but middle-grade books like Patrick Ness's *A*

Monster Calls and nonfiction titles like Marc Aronson and Marina Budhos's *Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magic, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science* have also been recognized.

Having multiple awards for literary excellence is important. Literary merit is a subjective concept, and different com-

mittees may come to wildly different decisions on the year's best books. Often there is no agreement among committees at all. A title that wins one award can be ignored by another, as was the case with Sherman Alexie's *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which won both the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and the *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* but was passed over by the Printz Committee. There are benefits to this pattern of disagreement: readers get to hear multiple opinions on the year's best books, and ultimately a greater number of quality titles receive recognition.

Genre- and Format-Specific Awards

As our discussion has shown, YA award committees that focus on literary excellence typically gravitate toward works of contemporary realistic fiction. Thus, book awards focused on excellence in specific genres and formats provide an invaluable complement to awards for general literary excellence. Awards given to outstanding works of nonfiction, historical fiction, mystery, science fiction, and fantasy encourage readers to broaden their knowledge of young adult literature across a range of genres. Awards given to graphic novels and audiobooks encourage readers to explore books published in what may be unfamiliar formats. Through an award honoring a work of children's or young adult literature published in translation, readers

can also discover titles written by authors from other countries.

Of these awards, the **YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction Award** is the newest. Introduced in 2010, it honors the most outstanding YA nonfiction book of the year. Because past committees for this award have recognized such a diverse array of titles—including Ann Angel's biography, *Janis Joplin: Rise Up Singing*; Susan Campbell Bartoletti's social and cultural history, *They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group*; and Sally M. Walker's introduction to forensic anthropology, *Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland*—readers of these books will find themselves exploring topics that stretch across an impressive variety of subject areas and disciplines.

Another nonfiction award that's good for readers of young adult literature to know about is the **Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal**, awarded since 2001 by the ALSC (Association of Library Service to Children, a division of the ALA) to the most distinguished informational book for children. Typically the Sibert honors informational books for younger readers, but some years a title published for teens is honored with both the Sibert and the YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction Award. When Tanya Lee Stone's *Almost Astronauts: Thirteen Women Who Dared to Dream* won the Sibert, it was also named a YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction Honor Book. Phillip Hoose's *Claudette Colvin: Twice toward Justice* was named an honor book by both committees that same year. In fact, one of the most acclaimed books for young people published in years, *Claudette Colvin* also won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and was named a Newbery Honor Book, a Jane Addams Honor Book, and an ALA Best Book for Young Adults.

Several awards highlight excellent works of genre fiction. The **Scott O'Dell Award**, given by the O'Dell Award Committee since 1982, honors a meritorious work of historical fiction published in the previous year for children or young adults. Winning titles span historical periods from the recent to distant past. Rita Williams-Garcia's *One Crazy Summer* looks at the Black Panther Party in the 1960s, Laurie Halse Anderson's *Chains* offers an account of slavery at the time of the American Revolution, and Matt Phelan's *The Storm in the Barn* presents a portrait of life during the Dust Bowl years.

Book awards focused on excellence in specific genres and formats provide an invaluable complement to awards for general literary excellence.

The **Edgar Award for Best Young Adult Mystery**, presented since 1989 by the Mystery Writers of America, has honored the best mystery for teens written in the past year. The **Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy**, introduced in 2006 by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America as part of their Nebula Awards, recognizes outstanding science fiction and fantasy novels written for the young adult market. Like the National Book Award and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize, both the Edgar Award and the Andre Norton Award recognize young adult literature as one category within a larger set of awards. This act of inclusion helps draw attention to books for teenagers within the wider landscape of publishing. Genre awards also help readers of young adult literature to see titles that have been honored by other committees as genre exemplars in their own right. The Edgar committee honored A. S. King's *Please Ignore Vera Dietz* as an outstanding mystery, while the Andre Norton committee honored Paolo Bacigalupi's *Ship Breaker* as a compelling work of science fiction. These genre honors came after each book had already been recognized for general literary excellence by the Printz Committee.

Awards for graphic novels have helped to raise awareness of the many high-quality books written in this visual format. The **Eisner Awards**, administered by the San Diego Comic Convention since 1988, honor graphic novels in many different categories. A category for Best Publication for Teens was added in 2008. In recognition of the quality and popularity of graphic novels among young people, YALSA began compiling an annual list of **Great Graphic Novels for Teens** in 2007. The list, which ranges from 40 to 70 titles per year deemed both good-quality literature and appealing reading for teens, includes works of both fiction and nonfiction. To help readers find the very best works among all the honorees, the Great Graphic Novels committee also publishes an annual Top Ten list. Through the Eisner Award and the Great Graphic Novels list, readers will discover memoirs like Raina Telgemeier's *Smile*, works of documentary nonfiction like G. Neri's *Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty*, and stories of political history like Nick Abadzis's *Laika*.

Another award that recognizes excellence in a particular book format is the **Odyssey Award**, introduced in 2008 to honor the best audiobook

produced for children or young adults. Because the Odyssey Award is administered by both ALSC and YALSA, winning titles run the gamut from children's picturebooks to young adult literature. A number of teen novels celebrated for their general literary excellence have been honored by the Odyssey Committee, including Patrick Ness's *The Knife of Never Letting Go*, Maggie Stiefvater's *The Scorpio Races*, and Jennifer Donnelly's *Revolution*. Nonfiction books for younger teen readers have also been honored, such as Kadir Nelson's *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball*.

Before the Odyssey Award, YALSA produced an annual list of quality audiobooks. Introduced in 1999, the list was originally called Selected Audio-books for Young Adults; in 2009, it was renamed

Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults. In 2011, the committee also began producing a Top Ten list to identify members' favorite audio titles of the year drawn from the longer list of 20 to 30 titles. Through the Amazing Audiobooks lists, readers will encounter quality audio versions of popular young adult novels like *Beauty Queens* by Libba Bray and *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson* by John Green and David Levithan.

Finally, since 1968 the ALSC has presented the **Mildred L. Batchelder Award** to the publisher of the best children's book in translation. Batchelder winners and honorees are books that were originally published in a language other than English in a country other than the United States and subsequently translated into English for publication in the United States. Most Batchelder titles are books for younger readers, but occasionally the Batchelder committee honors a book published for teens. Two recent examples are *Nothing*, written by Janne Teller and translated from Danish, and *Tiger Moon*, written by Antonia Michaelis and translated from German.

Awards That Celebrate Diversity

Awards for general literary quality and genre excellence do not necessarily foreground or even include

Genre awards also help readers of young adult literature to see titles that have been honored by other committees as genre exemplars in their own right.

titles that represent the diversity of human experience. The fact that no African American had won a major children's literature award by 1969 led to the creation of the **Coretta Scott King Awards**. Administered by EMIERT (Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table of the American Library

[Diversity] awards do guarantee that every year, titles depicting the life experiences and literary contributions of African American and Latino people will be noticed and celebrated.

Association), the Coretta Scott King Awards are presented to African American authors and illustrators of outstanding books for children and young adults that reflect the African American experience. To recognize literary merit in works by and about Latino people, the ALSC established the **Pura Belpré Award** in 1996 to honor Latino and Latina writers and illustrators whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the

Latino cultural experience in literature for children and youth.

Though critics like Marc Aronson have decried the proliferation of awards that are tied to the author's identity (see Aronson, 2001b, a widely discussed article in *Horn Book Magazine*), these awards do guarantee that every year, titles depicting the life experiences and literary contributions of African American and Latino people will be noticed and celebrated. The Coretta Scott King Awards have honored some African American authors multiple times. Repeat recognition by CSK committees has added to the literary stature and fame of already-distinguished African American authors such as Christopher Paul Curtis, Sharon Draper, Sharon Flake, Nikki Grimes, Angela Johnson, Walter Dean Myers, Kadir Nelson, Rita Williams-Garcia, and Jacqueline Woodson. At the same time, the Belpré Award has helped introduce readers to talented Latina authors who write for teens, such as Guadalupe Garcia McCall, author of *Under the Mesquite*; Margarita Engle, author of *The Surrender Tree: Poems of Cuba's Struggle*; and Judith Ortiz Cofer, author of *An Island Like You: Stories of the Barrio*.

On a similar note, the **Sydney Taylor Book Award**, presented annually since 1968 by the Associa-

tion of Jewish Libraries, recognizes outstanding books for children and teens that authentically portray the Jewish experience. Unlike the Coretta Scott King and Pura Belpré Awards, however, authors do not have to be Jewish to win. Awards are presented to books for younger readers and older readers. In 2007 a category was added to honor books for teen readers. While each winning book explores Jewish identity in some way, the Sydney Taylor Award leads readers to titles that explore this identity directly, such as Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* and Eishes Chayil's *Hush*, as well as indirectly, such as Dana Reinhardt's *The Things a Brother Knows*.

Other ALA awards recognize books that represent a particular kind of life experience. The **Schneider Family Book Award**, administered by ALA and introduced in 2004, goes to books that embody an artistic expression of the disability experience. Awarded each year to a middle school novel as well as a book for teens, the Schneider Award honors stories of teens with a host of disabilities, including deafness (*Five Flavors of Dumb* by Antony John), autism (*Marcelo in the Real World* by Francisco X. Stork), and stuttering (*Tending to Grace* by Kimberly Newton Fusco).

The **Stonewall Children's and Young Adult Literature Award**, administered by

ALA's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table and first given in 2010, honors books of exceptional merit relating to the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered experience. Stonewall Award winners and honorees illuminate the lives of gay teens (*Putting Makeup on the Fat Boy* by Bil Wright) as well as transgender teens (*Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher) and teens who are questioning (*Pink* by Lili Wilkinson). Another source for quality LGBTQ literature is the ALA's **Rainbow List**, an annual book list of recommended LGBTQ fiction and nonfiction titles for young readers created in 2008 by the ALA's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table. Like other ALA lists, the longer set of approximately 30 recommended Rainbow List titles is anchored by a Top Ten List that highlights particularly noteworthy LGBTQ books, such as Chris Beam's *I Am J* and Lauren Myracle's *Shine*.

Outside of ALA, the **Lambda Award for Literary Excellence in LGBT Children's/Young Adult Literature** has celebrated young adult literature about the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered experience

since 1990. Books now considered classics in the LG-BTQ YA canon have been honored with the Lambda Award, including David Levithan's *Boy Meets Boy* and Julie Anne Peters's *Luna*. However, in 2010, Lambda changed its award criteria, and now only books written by authors who self-identify as gay, bisexual, or transgender are eligible for consideration. (Ellen Wittlinger, a Lambda Award Winner for *Hard Love*, discussed her disappointment with the policy change in a 2010 essay written for *Horn Book Magazine*, "Too Gay or Not Gay Enough?")

In order to promote the best feminist books for young readers ages birth through 18, the ALA also produces the **Amelia Bloomer List**. Introduced in 2002 and administered by the Feminist Task Force of the ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table, the Amelia Bloomer List includes both fiction and nonfiction and is divided into books for younger readers, middle readers, and older readers. With its focus on feminist content, the Amelia Bloomer list often honors quality books for teens that have not been recognized by any other YA award committee, such as Eve Ensler's *I Am an Emotional Creature: The Secret Life of Girls around the World* and Susan Kim and Elissa Stein's *Flow: The Cultural Story of Menstruation*.

One last set of book awards promotes the cause of peace, social justice, world community, and equality of the sexes and all races: the **Jane Addams Children's Book Awards**. Presented annually since 1953 by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Jane Addams Peace Association, the Jane Addams Awards honor books for older children as well as younger children. Sometimes the Jane Addams Awards honor titles that have been recognized by other committees, such as Thanhha Lai's *Inside Out and Back Again*, which won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature and was later named a Newbery Honor Book. Other times the winning titles are less well known but still deeply deserving, such as Karen Blumenthal's *Let Me Play: The Story of Title IX, the Law That Changed the Future of Girls in America*.

Awards for Literary Merit and Teen Appeal

Discussions of book awards focused on literary merit frequently circle back to the question of whether or

not teens will actually read the books being honored. Some teen advocates insist that award committees have a responsibility to consider teen appeal as part of their criteria. The Printz Committee, among others, has held firm to the principle that literary merit is and must remain its sole focus in award deliberations. (For a thoughtful and provocative discussion of the debate over quality versus popularity, see Aronson, 2001a.)

However, there are several options available to those in search of book lists and book awards that do take teen appeal into account. Since 1966, the ALA has produced an annual list of books that offer quality literature as well as reading appeal for teens. For many years, this list was called Best Books for Young Adults. Titles included books published for teens in a variety of genres and formats, including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, short story anthologies, and graphic novels. In addition, the committee considered books published for adults.

Due to the exponential growth in YA publishing (according to the *Library and Book Trade Almanac* [Bogart, 2012], 4,905 YA titles were published in 2011) and the creation of many new ALA awards for YA titles in recent years, the BBYA committee was restructured in 2010 and renamed **Best Fiction for Young Adults**, though the decision was met with protest by many YA advocates and ALA members. Now the annual BFYA list provides recommendations of approximately 90–120 works of young adult fiction that stand out for their literary merit and their proven or potential appeal to teens. A Top Ten list helps readers to identify titles that committee members felt were most distinguished in the previous year. Once again, such lists ensure that readers will encounter quality novels that may not have been recognized by other award committees, such as Shawn Goodman's *Something Like Hope* and Sara Zarr's *How to Save a Life*.

Another source for books that combine literary merit and teen appeal is the **Cybils Awards**, given annually since 2005 by the children's and young

Discussions of book awards focused on literary merit frequently circle back to the question of whether or not teens will actually read the books being honored.

adult book blogging community. Cybils committees offer their picks of the year's best books for both middle-grade and older teen readers in a whole host of categories, including general fiction, nonfiction,

fantasy and science fiction, and graphic novels.

Because the Cybils Awards recognize excellence across so many categories, they offer readers in search of high-quality genre fiction another valuable source of book recommendations. Most relevant for teens are the Cybils Awards for young adult fiction, young adult fantasy and science fiction, young adult graphic novels, and nonfic-

tion for middle-grade and young adult readers. The Cybils Awards sometimes recognize books that have been included on other award lists, such as Candace Fleming's *Amelia Lost: The Life and Disappearance of Amelia Earhart*, which made the Amelia Bloomer List, and A. S. King's *Everybody Sees the Ants*, which was chosen as a Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults. But the Cybils also do a good job of finding and celebrating lesser-known works, such as Sophie Flack's *Bunheads* and Suzanne Jermain's *The Secret of the Yellow Death: A True Story of Medical Sleuthing*.

One last award that considers literary merit alongside teen appeal is the **Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award**. First given in 2009 and administered by ALAN, the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE, the Walden Award stands out from other awards in this section because in addition to literary quality and teen appeal, winning titles must demonstrate a positive approach to life. Readers looking for an alternative to darker young adult literature will find a diverse array of offerings on the list of Walden winners and honor books. Past Walden committees have recognized works of contemporary realistic fiction such as Steve Kluger's *My Most Excellent Year: A Novel of Love, Mary Poppins, and Fenway Park*, horror novels such as Rick Yancey's *The Monstrumologist*, and works of fantasy such as Kristin Cashore's *Fire*.

Awards for Popularity and Teen Appeal

Because some teens need help connecting with books of any sort, the ALA devised a final set of awards that honor books solely for their popularity and teen appeal. Adults who work with struggling readers or non-readers will want to take a special look at the awards and lists featured in this section.

Working from the premise that teens who do not see themselves as readers *might* read if they found material that appealed to them, in 1996 the ALA created a list of **Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers**. Selected on behalf of teens who do not like to read, titles included on the Quick Picks list are presented as works that teens will pick up on their own and read for pleasure. The Quick Picks list is the most creative and varied of all ALA award lists, featuring works of fiction and nonfiction about gangs, zombies, sports heroes, ghost hunters, fairy tales, and gross facts, among many other topics. Coming of age stories such as Walter Dean Myers's *Dope Sick* are included along with series books, graphic novels, memoirs, and beauty guides. Like most other ALA committees that produce award lists, the Quick Picks committee creates a Top Ten list of the most highly recommended titles drawn from the 80–120 books it typically recommends.

In addition to Quick Picks, since 1997 the ALA has also produced an annual list of **Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults**. These backlist titles—that is, works that have already been published in hardcover but are now widely available in paperback—represent a broad variety of accessible themes and genres and are recommended for teen pleasure reading. Popular Paperbacks are presented in four themed lists that change from year to year. Examples of previous lists include *Zombies, Werewolves & Things with Wings* (2011), *Books That Don't Make You Blush* (2006), and *Flights of Fantasy: Beyond Harry and Frodo* (2003).

One award that involves teens directly in honoring works of young adult literature is **YALSA's Teens' Top Ten Award**. Presented since 2003, this award begins with teens nominating their favorite books of the year and then voting online for the winners several months later. YALSA archives each year's list of 25 nominees as well as the ten winning titles. The Teens' Top Ten is a great place to find books that developed

Because some teens need help connecting with books of any sort, the ALA devised a final set of awards that honor books solely for their popularity and teen appeal.

a strong following among teens but might not have appeared on bestseller or other award lists. Some winners are works written by new authors such as Lauren Oliver's *Before I Fall*, Allie Condie's *Matched*, and Gayle Forman's *If I Stay*, while others are novels by well-loved YA veterans such as Sarah Dessen's *Along for the Ride*, Laurie Halse Anderson's *Wintergirls*, and John Green's *Paper Towns*. Occasionally a book that has received one or more major YA literary awards is also selected for the Teens' Top Ten. E. Lockhart's *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* was named a finalist for the National Book Award, a Printz Honor Book, and the winner of the Cybils Award for best young adult novel before it made the Teens' Top Ten list. In addition to the Teens' Top Ten, a number of states run their own teen book award voting programs, such as the Thumbs Up! Award in Michigan and the Bluegrass Award in Kentucky.

Because many teens have reading interests that extend beyond young adult fiction and nonfiction, in 1998 the ALA created a special set of awards to honor books written for adults that have special appeal to young adults ages 12 to 18. The **Alex Awards** are given annually to ten books selected from the previous year's publishing. Past Alex Awards have gone to memoirs such as Liz Murray's *Breaking Night: A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, and My Journey from Homeless to Harvard*, novels like Emma Donoghue's *Room*, and works of narrative journalism like Brooke Hauser's *The New Kids: Big Dreams and Brave Journeys at a High School for Immigrant Teens*.

Outside of ALA, the American Booksellers Association also gives an award for works of young adult literature with strong popular appeal. Known during the 1990s as the American Booksellers' Book of the Year (ABBY) Award and in the early 2000s as the Book Sense Book of the Year Award, since 2009 the **Indies Choice Book Awards** have honored books in a variety of categories—including young adult literature—that independent booksellers most enjoyed handselling in the past year. Like the YALSA Teens' Top Ten, booksellers across the country vote on a list of nominees in order to arrive at a winning title in each category. Past young adult literature Indies winners include Ruta Sepetys's *Between Shades of Gray* and Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*.

<p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cybils Award finalists announced • Scott O'Dell Award announced • Edgar Award finalists announced • Sydney Taylor Book Awards announced • Amelia Bloomer List announced • American Library Association awards and lists announced (Printz, Morris, YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction, Sibert, Odyssey, Batchelder, Alex, Coretta Scott King, Pura Belpré, Schneider, Stonewall, Rainbow List, Best Fiction for Young Adults, Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, Great Graphic Novels for Teens, Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults, Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults) <p>February</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cybils Award winners announced • <i>Los Angeles Times</i> Book Prize finalists announced <p>April</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Los Angeles Times</i> Book Prize winner announced • Indies Choice Book Awards announced • YALSA Teens' Top Ten nominations announced • Edgar Award winners announced • Jane Addams Book Award winners announced <p>May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lambda Literary Awards announced • Andre Norton Award announced <p>June</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Boston Globe-Horn Book Awards</i> announced <p>July</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eisner Awards announced • Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award announced <p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Book Award finalists announced • YALSA Teens' Top Ten announced <p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Book Award winner announced <p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction Award finalists announced • William C. Morris Award finalists announced

Figure 2. Award year calendar

Conclusion

Young adult literature book awards provide readers with a systematic way to discover exemplary books for teens. Unlike traditional book lists that fall out

Book awards do not provide the final word on the best young adult books of the year, but they do motivate people to discuss, debate, and read books they might not encounter otherwise.

of date almost as soon as they are created, annual lists of young adult literature award winners allow readers to continually refresh their knowledge of quality titles. (For a calendar that lists book awards according to the month they are announced, see Figure 2.) Because there are so many different kinds of awards, readers can take a purposeful approach to building their knowledge, seeking books that represent certain genres,

reflect particular life experiences, and meet the needs of specific teens.

Readers can develop more nuanced knowledge by looking for books that cross award lists. For example, a handful of books each year are named both Best Fiction for Young Adults and Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers. These books, such as Matt de la Peña's *We Were Here* and Coe Booth's *Bronxwood*, stand out as quality literature that is particularly well suited for teens who don't like to read. The same goes for books that are recognized by award committees focused on different age groups, such as the Newbery and the Printz Committees. Books such as Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion* and Virginia Euwer Wolff's *True Believer*, honored by both committees, serve as valuable reading options for tweens. And when a book is recognized for literary excellence by multiple award committees—such as Deborah Heiligman's *Charles and Emma: The Darwins' Leap of Faith*—it deserves special notice for being one of the best our field has to offer.

Just a little over ten years ago, few awards existed to recognize literary excellence in young adult literature. Since the introduction of the Michael L. Printz Award in 2000, YA publishing has exploded, as has the number of YA book awards. Book awards do not

provide the final word on the best young adult books of the year, but they do motivate people to discuss, debate, and read books they might not encounter otherwise. Discussions of book awards push readers to mount arguments about the merits of their favorite titles and to read those titles more critically. On awards day, any book can win, and any author's life can be changed. Our lives as readers can be changed as well when we discover some of the most artful books young adult literature has to offer.

Jennifer Buehler is an assistant professor of English Education at Saint Louis University and the host of Text Messages, a monthly podcast on young adult literature produced for www.readwritethink.org. A former member of the ALAN Board of Directors, she served on the first Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Committee and chaired the 2012 ALAN Award Committee.

Daria Plumb teaches English and social studies at Riverside Academy in Dundee, Michigan. She has served on the ALAN Board of Directors, the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Formation Committee, the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Committee, and is currently chairing the ALAN Merchandising Committee. Her book, Commando Classics: A Field Manual for Helping Teens Understand (and Maybe Even Enjoy) Classic Literature, was published by VOYA Press in 2012.

Jennifer Walsh teaches middle school language arts at Forsythe Middle School in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In addition to serving as department chair, she is a past member of the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Committee and the ALAN Elections Committee. Jennifer reviews young adult literature on her blog, Eclectic Reader. Her book, They Still Can't Spell? Understanding and Supporting Challenged Spellers in Middle and High School, was published in 2003 by Heinemann.

Works Cited

- Aronson, M. (2001a). Calling all ye Printz and printzesses. In *Exploding the myths: The truth about teenagers and reading* (pp. 109–122). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Aronson, M. (2001b). Slippery slopes and proliferating prizes. *Horn Book Magazine*, 77, 272–297.
- Bogart, D. (2012). *Library and book trade almanac* (57th ed.). New York, NY: Information Today.
- Campbell, P. (2003). Prizes and paradoxes. *Horn Book Magazine*, 79, 501–505.
- Cart, M. (2007). Creating the Michael L. Printz award: A new book prize for a new millennium. In *Passions and pleasures: Essays and speeches about literature and libraries* (2nd ed.) (pp. 33–39). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

- Cart, M. (2010). A new literature for a new millennium? The renaissance continues. In *Young adult literature: From romance to realism* (pp. 75–87). Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Hunt, J. (2009). A Printz retrospective. *Horn Book Magazine*, 85, 395–403.
- Wittlinger, E. (2010). Too gay or not gay enough? *Horn Book Magazine*, 86, 146–151.

YA Literature Mentioned

- Abadzis, N. (2007). *Laika*. New York, NY: First Second.
- Alexie, S. (2007). *The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian*. New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Anderson, L. H. (2008). *Chains*. New York, NY: Atheneum.
- Anderson, L. H. (2009). *Wintergirls*. New York, NY: Viking.
- Anderson, M. T. (2002). *Feed*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Angel, A. (2010). *Janis Joplin: Rise up singing*. New York, NY: Amulet.
- Aronson, M., & Budhos, M. (2010). *Sugar changed the world: A story of magic, spice, slavery, freedom, and science*. Boston, MA: Clarion.
- Bacigalupi, P. (2010). *Ship breaker*. New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Bartoletti, S. C. (2010). *They called themselves the KKK: The birth of an American terrorist group*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.
- Beam, C. (2011). *I am J*. New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Blumenthal, K. (2005). *Let me play: The story of Title IX, the law that changed the future of girls in America*. New York, NY: Atheneum.
- Blundell, J. (2008). *What I saw and how I lied*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Booth, C. (2011). *Bronxwood*. New York, NY: PUSH.
- Booth, C. (2006). *Tyrell*. New York, NY: PUSH.
- Bray, L. (2011). *Beauty queens*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Burgess, M. (2004). *Doing it*. New York, NY: Henry Holt.
- Cashore, K. (2008). *Graceling*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Cashore, K. (2009). *Fire*. New York, NY: Dial.
- Chambers, A. (2002). *Postcards from no man's land*. New York, NY: Dutton.
- Chayil, E. (2010). *Hush*. New York, NY: Walker.
- Cofer, J. O. (1995). *An island like you: Stories of the barrio*. New York, NY: Orchard.
- Condie, A. (2010). *Matched*. New York, NY: Dutton.
- de la Peña, M. (2009). *We were here*. New York, NY: Delacorte.
- Dessen, S. (2009). *Along for the ride*. New York, NY: Viking.
- Donnelly, J. (2010). *Revolution*. New York, NY: Delacorte.
- Donoghue, E. (2010). *Room*. New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Engle, M. (2008). *The surrender tree: Poems of Cuba's struggle*. New York, NY: Henry Holt.
- Enslar, E. (2010). *I am an emotional creature: The secret life of girls around the world*. New York, NY: Villard.
- Erskine, K. (2010). *Mockingbird*. New York, NY: Philomel.
- Farmer, N. (2002). *The house of the scorpion*. New York, NY: Atheneum.
- Flack, S. (2011). *Bunheads*. New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Fleming, C. (2011). *Amelia lost: The life and disappearance of Amelia Earhart*. New York, NY: Schwartz & Wade Books.
- Fusco, K. N. (2004). *Tending to grace*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- Forman, G. (2009). *If I stay*. New York, NY: Dutton.
- Gaiman, N. (2008). *The graveyard book*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Goodman, S. (2011). *Something like hope*. New York, NY: Delacorte.
- Green, J. (2006). *An abundance of Katherines*. New York, NY: Dutton.
- Green, J. (2005). *Looking for Alaska*. New York, NY: Dutton.
- Green, J. (2008). *Paper towns*. New York, NY: Dutton.
- Green, J., & Levithan, D. (2010). *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*. New York, NY: Dutton.
- Hauser, B. (2011). *The new kids: Big dreams and brave journeys at a high school for immigrant teens*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Heiligman, D. (2009). *Charles and Emma: The Darwins' leap of faith*. New York, NY: Henry Holt.
- Hoose, P. (2009). *Claudette Colvin: Twice toward justice*. New York, NY: Melanie Kroupa Books.
- Jermain, S. (2009). *The secret of the yellow death: A true story of medical sleuthing*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- John, A. (2010). *Five flavors of dumb*. New York, NY: Dial.
- Katcher, B. (2009). *Almost perfect*. New York, NY: Delacorte.
- Kim, S., & Stein, E. (2009). *Flow: The cultural story of menstruation*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin.
- King, A. S. (2011). *Everybody sees the ants*. New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- King, A. S. (2010). *Please ignore Vera Dietz*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Kluger, S. (2008). *My most excellent year: A novel of love, Mary Poppins, and Fenway Park*. New York, NY: Dial.
- Lai, T. (2011). *Inside out and back again*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Levithan, D. (2003). *Boy meets boy*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Lockhart, E. (2008). *The disreputable history of Frankie Landau-Banks*. New York, NY: Hyperion.
- Marrin, A. (2011). *Flesh and blood so cheap: The Triangle Fire and its legacy*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.
- McCall, G. G. (2011). *Under the mesquite*. New York, NY: Lee & Low.
- Michaelis, A. (2008). *Tiger moon*. New York, NY: Amulet.
- Murray, L. (2010). *Breaking night: A memoir of forgiveness, survival, and my journey from homeless to Harvard*. New York, NY: Hyperion.
- Myers, W. D. (2009). *Dope sick*. New York, NY: Amistad.
- Myracle, L. (2011). *Shine*. New York, NY: Amulet.
- Na, A. (2000). *A step from heaven*. Asheville, NC: Front Street.
- Nelson, K. (2008). *We are the ship: The story of Negro league baseball*. New York, NY: Jump at the Sun/Hyperion.
- Neri, G. (2010). *Yummy: The last days of a Southside shorty*. New York, NY: Lee & Low.
- Ness, P. (2008). *The knife of never letting go*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.
- Ness, P. (2011). *A monster calls*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Oliver, L. (2010). *Before I fall*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Partridge, E. (2009). *Marching for freedom: Walk together*,

- children, and don't you grow weary.* New York, NY: Viking.
- Peters, J. A. (2004). *Luna.* New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Phelan, M. (2009). *The storm in the barn.* Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Reinhardt, D. (2010). *The things a brother knows.* New York, NY: Wendy Lamb.
- Sepetys, R. (2011). *Between shades of gray.* New York, NY: Philomel.
- Sheinkin, S. (2010). *The notorious Benedict Arnold: A true story of adventure, heroism, and treachery.* New York, NY: Roaring Brook.
- Small, D. (2009). *Stitches: A memoir.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton.
- Stead, R. (2009). *When you reach me.* New York, NY: Wendy Lamb.
- Stiefvater, M. (2011). *The scorpia races.* New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Stone, T. L. (2009). *Almost astronauts: Thirteen women who dared to dream.* Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Stork, F. X. (2009). *Marcelo in the real world.* New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine.
- Telgemeier, R. (2010). *Smile.* New York, NY: Graphix.
- Teller, J. (2010). *Nothing.* New York, NY: Atheneum.
- Walker, S. M. (2009). *Written in bone: Buried lives of Jamestown and colonial Maryland.* Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books.
- Whaley, J. C. (2011). *Where things come back.* New York, NY: Atheneum.
- Wilkinson, L. (2011). *Pink.* New York, NY: HarperTeen.
- Williams-Garcia, R. (2010). *One crazy summer.* New York, NY: Amistad.
- Wittlinger, E. (1999). *Hard love.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Wolff, V. E. (2001). *True believer.* New York, NY: Atheneum.
- Wright, B. (2011). *Putting makeup on the fat boy.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Wynne-Jones, T. (2011). *Blink and caution.* Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Yancey, R. (2009). *The Monstrumologist.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Yang, G. L. (2006). *American born Chinese.* New York, NY: First Second.
- Zarr, S. (2011). *How to save a life.* New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Zusak, M. (2006). *The book thief.* New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Young Adult Literary Adaptations of the Canon

Young adult (YA) literature and canonical literature occupy different cultural spaces, one the realm of teenagers, melodrama, and inexperience, the other of adulthood, seriousness, and cultural privilege. Adaptations of canonical literature for teen readers—novels such as *Little Brother* (Doctorow, 2008), *Romiette and Julio* (Draper, 1999), and *Young Man and the Sea* (Philbrick, 2004)—are an interesting convergence of these two spaces. Where adaptation is “[a]n acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works; a creative *and* an interpretive act of appropriation/salvaging; an extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 8), more and more interesting examples of YA adaptations—and provocative low brow/high brow unions—are being published.

Despite the potential literary quality of YA adaptations—I am thinking of the exceptional *Exposure* (Peet, 2009) or the wry *King Dork* (Portman, 2006)—there remains a distinct hierarchy in how we treat YA adaptations. More often than not, the value of a YA literature adaptation is not its own literary moves, but rather its usability in the classroom, how close the adaptation is to the source text, and how readily the adaptation leads the teen reader to the canonical text. If we are to advocate for greater respect and work to find space for YA literature in the English classroom, we must reframe how we treat YA adaptations.

Most current discussions of adaptations of canonical literature for teen readers are about their use as a pedagogical tool, namely how the adaptation assists in teaching a canonical text. In a review of *Romiette and*

Julio, Halsall (1999) asserts that while heavy handed in parts, “*Romiette and Julio* would be a wonderful curriculum tie-in book” (p. 222). Similarly, Hastings (2004) touts *Young Man and the Sea* as “a natural for classroom use” (p. 152). In both cases, the novel’s usefulness is not only critical to their positive evaluation but also represents the reviewer’s conception of what the novel’s purpose is: a vehicle for transitioning readers toward the actual literary destination.

In fact, a variety of resources exist for the specific purpose of using YA adaptations in the classroom as support for teaching the canon. For example, Kaywell (2000) edited a collection of essays in which eight different authors offer ideas for integrating young adult literature for the explicit purpose of helping high school students read canonical works such as *Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare, 1597/1993), *Death of a Salesman* (Miller, 1949/1976), and *Great Expectations* (Dickens, 1861/2001). She posits: “For many students, the enjoyable and relatively easy experience with an adolescent novel will lead to an easier understanding of the core novel, as well as richer responses to it” (p. 1). The resource *From Hinton to Hamlet: Building Bridges between Young Adult Literature and the Classics* by Herz (1996) offers similar ideas—that YA literature in the classroom makes reading fun so that the student will like reading enough to read the classics “when they are more mature readers” (p. 6). Both books take the position that adaptations of canonical literature are important if they make reading the canon easier. Even Santoli and Wagner (2004), authors of “Promoting Young Adult Literature: The

Other ‘Real’ Literature,” who suggest a respect for YA literature in their title, still fall back on the idea that young adult literature is merely a stepping stone. They note, “In addition, young adult literature can better prepare students for the appreciation and understanding of classic literature” (p. 65).

The desire to use YA literature and YA adaptations of canonical literature in this way is a fine

In fact, teaching YA adaptations without their canonical inspiration can add a layer of ownership and resistance rather than a forced appreciation of the classic narrative.

enough goal; YA adaptations can serve as an interesting partner for teaching the canon. Unfortunately, this technique supports the idea that canonical literature is somehow the host and the adaptation parasitic. While most of us agree that YA literature can be used to reach students and draw them into literary conversation, and that there exists a whole body of YA literature that can stand up to

serious critical inquiry, the typical treatment of the YA adaptation of canonical literature as a ladder upwards still lures us into a space that privileges the canonical (adult) text.

Adaptation theorists—I use mostly Hutcheon and Stam here, though there are more—offer a decidedly postmodern way of thinking about adaptations that might lead us toward a more nuanced approach to using YA adaptations in the classroom. Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007) remind us, “When we shift from ‘fidelity’ concerns . . . new analytic opportunities present” (p. 444). According to Stam (2000), the first step in this shift is to resist the “moralistic” notion that unfaithful adaptations betray, deform, or violate the original (p. 54); YA adaptations are their own work of art and should be critiqued accordingly. Judging a YA adaptation on its own terms respects it as a work of art and serves to disconnect the adaptation from its prior text.

In fact, teaching YA adaptations without their canonical inspiration can add a layer of ownership and resistance rather than a forced appreciation of the classic narrative. Whereas the latter decrees the importance of the canon from the start—this exists

before you, you need to know it, you have no say in whether or not it’s good . . . it just is—the adaptation asks the reader to reconsider the story in a new context. It allows the teen reader to enjoy (or not) the author’s engagement with a former story, resulting in, perhaps, a translation, a new perspective, a unique outcome. From translation to condensation to parody to sequels to multimedia hybrids to fan fiction and toys, adaptations take a number of forms. The further away from faithful, the more a text engages in a “demystificatory critique” (Stam, 2000, p. 63) that can be liberating in the high school classroom.

Our Biggest Challenge: The Deliberate Adaptation

When we reframe our approach to reading, teaching, and discussing the YA adaptation, we might find that our biggest struggles involve those texts that are the most faithful to their source. In fact, many YA adaptations exist due to the deliberate intention that the text will be used in the classroom. Kephart (2013), author of *Undercover*, a YA adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Rostand, 2006), states outright: “I had always hoped that classroom teachers would discover *Undercover* and make it part of a broader curricula” (par. 5).

As Hutcheon (2006) points out, there will always be a doubled or palimpsestuous relationship between a source text and an adaptation. When the source text is obvious, it will be, on some level, the frame by which assessors process the adaptation. The cultural weight of *1984* (Orwell, 1983), for example, bears down as a standard to which *Little Brother* will always, on some level, be compared. That is not to say that one cannot consider an adaptation on its own terms, but that an adapted text is always somehow connected to its prior text, some more explicitly than others, and the more explicit the adaptation, the more difficult it is to get out from under fidelity criticism. A real challenge for us is to get beyond the ostensible purpose that a YA adaptation seems to express: YA adaptations are designed to be used in the classroom and are successful because they are useful in the classroom. Attitudes such as this are typical but problematic; this type of praise is both limited and pejorative; this type of book is in need of the most creativity when it comes to critical conversation because we must combat the attitude that the text is actually only

“good” because it is derivative.

Draper’s *Romiette and Julio* (*Romeo and Juliet*) is the perfect text to consider with these critical challenges in mind. According to Stam (2000), “[A]rt renews itself through creative mistranslation . . . a whole constellation of tropes—translation, reading, dialogization, cannibalism, transmutation, transfiguration, and signifying” (p. 62). *Romiette and Julio*, though, is, more than anything, a generic translation (Draper tells her story in prose), repackaged to reflect familiar (though not necessarily favorable) YA literature conventions, such as heightened didacticism, a happy ending for the protagonists, simplified language, and heavy-handed symbolism. Despite the fact that Draper works hard to supplant the central conflict of long-time feuding families with more contemporary conversations of deep-seated racial prejudice, Draper’s modernization—late 1990s Ohio—is only superficially reworking its source. In fact, Draper maintains the familiar structure of star-crossed lovers of feuding families whose death (in Draper’s text, it is actually the couple’s near-death) brings the families together.

Draper also maintains characterizations and names. For instance, while Romiette’s same-aged sidekick, Destiny, is not her former wet nurse, Destiny is described as Romiette’s lifelong confidante, and Julio’s best friend is appropriately named Ben. Draper frequently references Shakespeare’s play throughout the story, one character articulating, for example, “I am sure glad that this story of the Montagues and Cappelles [sic] did not end as Shakespeare’s tale did” (p. 316). Complete with a reader’s guide and a section called “Activities and Research Possibilities,” it is hard to ignore Draper’s workmanlike commitment to the prior story and her desire to lead readers to *Romeo and Juliet* via *Romiette and Julio*. A heavy-handed message against racism and gang violence is the “added bonus”; in the final scene, Julio tells Romiette, “I don’t care what color you are, or what color your daddy is, or the color of your car or your dog. I just care about you, and the person you are. I am so glad that we are both alive so that I can tell you that” (Draper, 1999, p. 320). Draper’s text, despite its repurposing, nods at the target audience (contemporary teens), but remains rooted in Shakespeare’s details.

It is difficult for a YA adaptation to exist without a sort of repurposing of the prior story to fit with the conventions of the literary category and the expected

repertoire of the intended audience. In this way, *Romiette and Julio* is an example of how adaptation of canonical literature most often manifests in young adult literature. In choosing to lean heavily on Shakespeare’s surface plot to create instant cultural capital and then diverge into didactic, problem-novel-like conflicts, *Romiette and Julio* is not challenging or complicating the prior story, and merely uses Shakespeare as a brand that will earn the text value from being faithful. While the idea of rejecting Shakespeare’s lessons does have the potential to create a sophisticated, empowered adaptation, disappointingly, *Romiette and Julio* is more invested in privileging the canonical text and then relying on formulaic, adult-centered didacticism. Existing in a feedback loop with *Romeo and Juliet* does not particularly invite critical movement.

Hateley (2008), for one, would criticize Draper’s novel for being a document merely dedicated to training readers to read Shakespeare by working the same literary muscles, not asking readers to resee the original text in critical ways, or taking them in surprising directions. As Hateley (2008) points out in *Shakespeare in Children’s Literature: Gender and Cultural Capital*,

When children’s literature is Shakespeared it not only rewards cultural capital, but also inscribes gendered juvenile readers who are made subject to a literary culture within which the Bard functions as a father figure to sons or daughters, rendering the expansion of “Shakespeare” an emphatically political act. (p. 1)

This is perhaps the greatest challenge for critics of YA adaptations: to resist the role typical YA adaptations invite us to inhabit and instead see the critical value of infidelity.

We might consider in what ways a text engages with the prior story without inherently privileging the source, or as Hutcheon (2006) suggests, to see adaptations as a “derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary” (p. 9). Instead, we might consider *why* this text, *why* now, *why*

This is perhaps the greatest challenge for critics of YA adaptations: to resist the role typical YA adaptations invite us to inhabit and instead see the critical value of infidelity.

this way? “What has made [a particular] story thrive in occupying a particular cultural space? What roles have adaptations played in this propagation?” (Bortolotti & Hutcheon, 2007, p. 444). What stories are being told and retold in order to “assert the basic ideology of our culture” (Miller, qtd. in Hutcheon, 2006, p. 176),

How might we position a particular adaptation in both the cultural context of its creation—“why and how certain stories are told and retold in our culture”—and in the web of other adaptations in which it exists?

and *how*? In other words, how might we position a particular adaptation in both the cultural context of its creation—“*why* and *how* certain stories are told and retold in our culture” (Bortolotti & Hutcheon, 2007, p. 444)—and in the web of other adaptations in which it exists? How might we promote the idea that literary conversations acknowledge multiple truths instead of one dominant truth?

This endeavor is further complicated when we consider how adaptations are often marketed to teen readers. As seen in adaptations such as *Young Man and the Sea* (for *Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway, 1952/1996), *Little Brother* (for 1984), and *The Girls* (Shaw, 2009, for *The Women*, Luce, 1998), the title alone can call attention to the “immature” qualities of the text, setting up the book itself to be an inherently lesser or a (quite literally) minor version of the source text—the playful puppy that will lead readers to the noble dog. Sometimes, the title is a line from the source text, like *Something Rotten* (Gratz, 2007) and its sequel *Something Wicked* (Gratz, 2008, for *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*) or *Wondrous Strange* (Livingston, 2009, for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), which suggests that one small part of the original encapsulates the entirety of the adaptation.

On the one hand, these texts are calling attention to themselves as adaptations, pointing to their source text and themselves as *something like* the source text, but not the source text at the same time. This calls attention to the adaptation as plural rather than singular in meaning and has the potential to be a more complex discussion, something that adaptation theory asks critics to consider. But when we simplify this

significance as the offspring being inherently inferior, at best a straight line to the “true” text, we miss out on a potentially sophisticated consideration of the YA adaptation as a part of a web of meaning.

Assisted by Intention: Alfred Kropp

Romiette and Julio is at its best a bridge text and thus presents assessors the critical challenge of having to choose to get away from fidelity criticism. Comparatively, *The Extraordinary Adventures of Alfred Kropp* (Yancey, 2005) positions its readers in very different ways. Here Yancey creates an interesting meta-textual space for the Arthurian legend to be reimagined. Fifteen-year-old Alfred struggles with the whirlwind of information he is being asked to comprehend. When Alfred is told that the sword that he has tried to steal (and subsequently loses) is Excalibur, he at first rejects the information as “just a legend, a story” (Yancey, 2005, p. 77). Later, Alfred begins to draw from his knowledge of the movie *Excalibur* (Boorman, 1981), which he has seen “about fifty times” (Yancey, 2005, p. 116), always aware that it is fantasy, to fill in the blanks.

Here, the merging of reality and fiction is interestingly meta-textual, since Alfred is positioned as a descendant of Lancelot who this story asserts was real. Alfred is forced to resee as truth a fictional story with which he is already familiar. Things get even more complicated when Alfred is told he is wrong about the sword and the Lady of the Lake, and that Excalibur “is a movie, Kropp” (Yancey, 2005, p. 116), and therefore unreliable. From fiction to reality to fiction again, Alfred Kropp’s grasp of what is real and what is legend is being challenged at every turn. At the same time, Yancey is taking liberties with the story, too, bending it to fill his needs while asking readers to buy into the fantasy of Arthurian legend. If a person doesn’t know the story of King Arthur, he or she may still know the social significance of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table (equality), Camelot (chivalry and romance), and the sword in the stone imagery (truth and the restoration of order), just like Alfred Kropp who didn’t know the “real” version but who had a working knowledge of the hypotext through popular culture references. (Stam [2000] defines *hypotext* in terms of Genette’s five types of transtextualities as the established anterior text [p. 65].) Disney’s *The Sword*

in the Stone, Forstater's *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, Broadway's *Spamalot*, and a multitude of eponymous stories and service providers—hypertexts—keep the imagery popular and alive. Genotypically, there is a sense of openness to this text that encourages perpetual retelling. Furthermore, *The Extraordinary Adventures of Alfred Kropp* offers the opportunity to consider the often-fantastical versions of the past that postmodernity recognizes and critiques, and the counter-myth that Yancey (2005) constructs.

Some might argue that a retelling of a retelling of a retelling in which there is no concrete referent text, set 1500 years after legend says the Knights of the Round Table would have walked the earth, *The Extraordinary Adventures of Alfred Kropp* is a sequel of sorts, and as such a weaker type of adaptation because “[w]ith adaptations, we seem to desire the repetition as much as the change” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 9), and sequels are about repetition and not so much the change. As Garber notes in Hutcheon (2006), merely not wanting the story to end is a different conversation altogether (p. 9). Or, one may argue that this is more of a spin-off or an expansion that does, in fact, offer “overt and critical commentary” on Arthurian Legend (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 171). Even sequels and prequels engage in a sort of doubled experience that privileges repetition and change, and a text like Yancey's announces itself as being in the web of Arthurian legend, complicating notions of linearity and authority. While still a part of YA literature and still playing with a canonical text, we see both how Yancey's novel lends itself to a different conversation than does Draper's (1999), and also how adaptation theory gives us the language to consider these differences.

Badmouth Betty

Confessions of a Triple Shot Betty by Gehrman (2008) places the reader in a third, different critical position. Like *Romiette and Julio*, *Confessions of a Triple Shot Betty* is a somewhat structurally faithful retelling of Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*, but in a contemporary setting (Sonoma Valley) and cast with modernized versions of the characters (in this case, skater girl baristas). What's interesting is that while it is no secret that this story is playing with *Much Ado about Nothing*—anyone who is familiar with the play will recognize the character names and story

structure—*Confessions of a Triple Shot Betty* does not depend on readers to recognize it as an adaptation, nor does it explicitly announce itself as such, which is a wholly different response to the prior text than Draper's (1999) or Yancey's (2005) novels. In fact, if read by someone with *Much Ado about Nothing* in her repertoire, this novel takes on a parodic quality.

Gehrman takes her responsibilities as an ironist seriously. Her approach is unlike many YA literature authors who imagine teen readers as future readers of the canon, readers without prior exposure to the play who will find the adaptation a bridge to the canonical text. In fact, many YA adaptations, as seen in both *Romiette and Julio* and *The Extraordinary Adventures of Alfred*

Kropp, explicitly invoke the canonical text within the plot. Another example of this is *Undercover*, billed as a modern day *Cyrano de Bergerac*, where protagonist Elisa's English class is reading *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and, with a little twist in the tale, Elisa is writing notes on behalf of a male friend with whom she is falling in love. At one point she realizes, “I am your *Cyrano*, Theo, not your friend” (Kephart, 2007, p. 88). Thus, the connections between the new and prior stories are made for the reader, demanding that the canonical text is recognized, both pointing to and depending on the source. In this way, YA adaptations often lean too heavily on the economy of acknowledgement and recognition and too little on the extended intertextual engagement.

There is a distinct difference in Gehrman's strategy. It's true, Gehrman names her characters similarly to Shakespeare's play and inserts a few metatextual moments for the reader to consider. Early in the novel, for example, an exchange between two characters calls attention to Hero's name and establishes that both protagonist Beatrice's and Hero's mothers were “totally crazy about Shakespeare” (p. 7). Gehrman also integrates a line from *Much Ado about Nothing*—“In mine eye she is the sweetest lady that ever I looked on” (p. 29)—though there is never an explicit statement that the line or these names are

YA adaptations often lean too heavily on the economy of acknowledgement and recognition and too little on the extended intertextual engagement.

from *Much Ado about Nothing*, just that they reference Shakespeare.

The association between *Confessions of a Triple Shot Betty* and *Much Ado about Nothing* is not explicitly announced, nor is it required to understand the

plot of the story, though such knowledge may make reading Gehrman's text richer. *Confessions of a Triple Shot Betty* is not exciting because it is parodic. (In fact, Hutcheon [2000] argues that parodies are no longer merely to ridicule and can instead be seen as "extended ironic structures that replay and recontextualize previous

works of art" that "implicitly reinforce even as [they] ironically debunk" [p. xii]). Instead, *Confessions of a Triple Shot Betty* as parody is exciting because Gehrman constructs a knowing audience, positioning the imagined teen reader as an assessor, relocating the reason this book exists from filling up the empty reader with things they didn't know to acknowledging the possibility of a reader with a wide repertoire, a person who reads the old and the new, the YA literature and the "adult," the popular and the privileged.

Within the story, too, Gehrman's world is one in which the teen characters are familiar with Shakespeare. John quotes to Beatrice, "I hear you're quite a brainiac . . . Here's your quote of the day, 'Lord, what fools these mortals be,'" which Beatrice easily identifies as from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (p. 86). Here is where Gehrman's irreverence for the canonical prior text is made clear. Beatrice is familiar with Shakespeare, and this knowledge is linked to her intelligence, but it's a trivial sort of knowledge that she gets because her mom was a fan and she lives in Sonoma, host to a summer Shakespeare festival. In other words, within the text, knowing Shakespeare will help Beatrice win valedictorian and a full-ride scholarship to an Ivy League college (p. 23), but it is not indicative of Beatrice's morality or how cultured she is.

In Gehrman's text, we follow Beatrice's exploits from butt clinching to exercise her gluteus muscles, to

explosive diarrhea, to the vindictive humiliation of the shallow and predatory John who she strips and handcuffs to a tree. Likewise, John knows Shakespeare only because he is a part of the Sonoma summer Shakespeare festival, a feather in his cap toward fame and fortune. In other words, even when reminiscent of Shakespearian bawdiness, Shakespeare is only a vehicle for both characters' future plans, not the end game. In addition, with lines like, "I know you're behind this, you stupid cunt" (p. 236) and frequent usage of other choice phrases like "Fuck off, bitch!" (p. 249) and "I wouldn't touch you if you were the last skanky, disease-ridden whore in the world" (p. 236), this book does not explicitly lend itself to classroom discussion.

The "why" of this adaptation feels decidedly different than *Romiette and Julio*. While Gehrman's story depends on Shakespeare's for its plot structure and characterizations, it lacks the reverence that other adaptations seem intent on perpetuating. Even though a knowing audience might have a richer experience with this text doesn't seem to detract from what makes Gehrman's novel interesting. Hutcheon (2008) notes: "We can always read these new versions without knowing the adapted work, but we would read them differently. There is a whole other, extra dimension that comes with knowing the adapted work, a dimension that makes the experience of reading a richly "palimpsestuous" one, as we oscillate between the version of the story we already know and the one we are reading now" (p. 173).

King Dork seems to operate similarly—"Oedipally envious and worshipful at the same time" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 7). Certainly, having read *The Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 2003) will add a layer of meaning to Portman's novel, and yet Portman, like Gehrman, does not demand reverence to the prior text. In fact, Portman's protagonist explicitly challenges "the Holden cult" (Portman, 2006, p. 12). Protagonist Tom Henderson explains his frustration: "*The Catcher in the Rye* . . . is every teacher's favorite book . . . They all want to have sex with [Holden], and with the book's author, too, and they'd probably even try to do it with the book itself if they could figure out a way to go about it" (p. 12). While Tom has read the book "like three-hundred times," he still thinks it "sucks" (p. 12). Tom's attitude toward *The Catcher in the Rye* and its institutional acceptance seems wholly irrever-

What's interesting is that Portman's novel hinges upon a reader's familiarity with the reputation of the novel more than the text itself.

ent, and he is playing with the idea that he has to explain this text to the reader.

What's interesting is that Portman's novel hinges upon a reader's familiarity with the reputation of the novel more than the text itself, so that Tom's seeming rejection of the novel plays out as both funny and unexpected. Portman does not depend on the structure of *The Catcher in the Rye* to plot his story, and like *Confessions of a Triple Shot Betty*, *King Dork* includes sex, swearing, and body jokes. This places both books decidedly outside of typical teaching environments, contrary to the reason so many YA adaptations seem to exist and how they are often discussed critically. This problematizes the frequently perceived purpose of YA adaptations as they so often seem to be written as a companion to the canon; it also adds another element to this conversation: how do we consider texts that are written with a knowing audience in mind and are constructed in such a way that a teen audience will have to come to the text on their own?

Categorical Pressures

The YA text that is an adaptation is its own work of art, but it is always in the middle of a dialogical conversation with its fellow hypertexts. And as YA literature, it is also always in conversation with the categorical conventions/pressures of YA literature. Because of certain expectations of what YA literature does and doesn't do (such as not condoning suicide and thus keeping Romiette and Julio alive), an author's reconstruction of a canonical adult story for a teen audience adds into the mix a critical context. Even when a text is faithful to its hypertext, we might take on the critical endeavor to consider the *when* and *where* of the text, it's new life as YA literature.

Recast with teens, set in contemporary high schools, and manipulated to fit publishing trends and the needs and interests of the contemporary reader (and often remediated, from play to novel, for example), what makes canonical literature fit into the YA literature mold can be read as a step toward what already makes the text a failure at fidelity. Beyond attitudes about the canon, YA adaptations have their own patterns that must also be considered, for it seems that even more telling than how an author's attitude toward the canon colors the construction of the adaptation is the author's attitudes about teens—both

the imagined readers and the created characters.

Generic translations are perhaps the most common in YA adaptations. *Something Rotten* is an example of this, holding very tightly to plot structure and characters, even borrowing names from *Hamlet*. But while Gratz (2007) holds tight to Shakespeare structurally—much like Draper (1999) does—he can't help but conform to certain categorical pressures. While protagonist Horatio is not in the country of Denmark, he is in Denmark, Tennessee, and what's rotten is quite literally the river polluted by the Elsinore Paper Plant. There is also a fair amount of intertextual playfulness throughout, from the Denmark community theater performing *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Stoppard, 1994) to the entrance of Ford N. Branff later in the novel.

But the changes to the story in YA adaptations aren't just superficial name and setting changes. The course of events and final outcomes often must be stretched and altered to fit within YA literature publishing trends, too. For instance, characters are less likely to die when the story is reimaged and recast with teens. Note, for example, that usual victims—Romiette, Julio, Jake Garrett (Jay Gatsby), Hamilton Prince (Hamlet), his mother, Olivia (Ophelia)—do not die at the end of Draper's *Romiette and Julio*, Korman's *Jake, Reinvented*, or Gratz's *Something Rotten*. True, Romiette and Julio almost drown, Jake is arrested and avoids prosecution only if he leaves town, and Olivia makes herself very sick by drinking polluted water, but the star-crossed lovers are saved, their families no longer at odds; Jake is out of the picture; and Olivia is out of the hospital and walking around, happily coupled with Hamilton Prince by the end of the novel. Indeed, teenagers are often a protected class, able to repopulate adaptations but only to a point. Although Roscoe and Gilbert (Rosencrantz and Guildenstern) do die in *Something Rotten*, they are constructed beforehand as "Dumb and Dumber," good ole boys with tobacco-stained teeth and a penchant for alcohol, muscle cars, and freeloading (Gratz, 2007,

How do we consider texts that are written with a knowing audience in mind and are constructed in such a way that a teen audience will have to come to the text on their own?

p. 51). If a teen has to die, following the logic of the least original YA literature, it will be the outsiders, unwilling or unable to conform to mainstream adult values.

Furthermore, few of these adaptations miss a chance for a didactic moment, especially about “teen

problems” like drinking, drugs, and sex. In *King Dork*, for example, unlike his best friend Sam, protagonist Tom posits that he is “the only member of the Hillmont High student body who wasn’t experimenting with anything. Other than love, literature, rock and roll, and cryptography” (Portman, 2006, p. 158). Protagonist Peggy and her best friend Mary from *The Girls* are both

virgins, and the girls who are not virgins are used and humiliated by the end. While her sisters Ellie and Georgie don’t drink at all, Abby (the Marianne character from *Sense and Sensibility* [Austen, 1811/ 1995]) in *The Dashwood Sisters’ Secrets of Love* (Rushton, 2006) wrecks a friend’s car and is injured when she drinks at a party, thus suffering a punishment for her “bad” actions.

Alcohol is also bad for Rick, the protagonist in *Jake, Reinvented* (*The Great Gatsby* [Fitzgerald, 1925/1999]), who thinks “beer tastes like sand” (Korman, 2003, p. 11). Things are more complicated in *Confessions of a Triple Shot Betty* in which Hero’s father owns a vineyard, as per the source text, and the girls are offered wine while at the dinner table with Hero’s father; this goes unpunished. Still, one shot of whiskey makes Geena (Beatrice) feel like she is “going to yuke” (Gehrman, 2008, p. 150) and the Benedict character, Ben, pointedly expresses that he drinks only water. When Amber (Margaret) drinks liquor, she is involved in a sexy photo shoot, which results in a mistaken identity that nearly wrecks Amber’s reputation and friendships.

Similarly, even though Marcus (AKA w1n5t0n) in *Little Brother* ends up taking a drink in one scene, he grabs a Bud Light because “it was the least alcoholic in the ice chest,” for, as he articulates earlier, he

doesn’t really like to drink (Doctorow, 2008, p. 158). Finally, *Something Rotten*’s protagonist Horatio makes a point of discussing how he doesn’t drink alcohol, preferring root beer instead—a fitting metaphor for *Something Rotten* and *Hamlet*: one the sweeter, less adult version of the other. Instead, the teens in these novels drink coffee as a metaphor for their maturity—on the sly in novels like *Little Brother*, obsessively in *Confessions of a Triple Shot Betty* and *The Girls*. In this way, these books seem “safer” than their referents, which says a lot about what we believe to be true about what teen readers need. As the discussion moves further away from just seeing these adaptations in comparison to the original and instead seeing them as YA fiction first—adhering more to YA literature concerns than the concerns of fidelity to the source text—the power of the original is explicitly weakened. This doesn’t say much for YA literature publishing trends, perhaps, but it offers yet another place to see these adaptations failing at fidelity and thus, at least on some level, challenging the priority and authority of the original.

From Shakespeare-inspired stories (such as *Wondrous Strange* and *Something Rotten*) to an Austen revision (*The Dashwood Sisters’ Secrets of Love*) to a reimagined Hemingway novel (*Young Man and the Sea*), YA adaptation (like any adaptation) is often burdened by its dependence on its parent text, even given its success as its own entity. On a more literal level, this same parent/child tension is a common trope in young adult literature as teen characters struggle against their oppressive parents. Not surprisingly (but doubly meaningful), in YA retellings of canonical literature, the tension between teen protagonists and their fathers is a common conflict. Sometimes the father/child tension in the adapted text points directly back to the source text, faithfully maintaining plot points. *The Dashwood Sisters’ Secrets of Love*, for example, follows the Dashwood sisters when they are forced to leave their family home after their father suddenly dies, much like the premise in *Sense and Sensibility*. Likewise, in *Romiette and Julio*, African American Romiette’s and Mexican American Julio’s fathers’ racism nods to the deep-seated feud between the Montagues and Capulets in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Even when authors take liberties with their stories, this trend surfaces. In *Wondrous Strange*, a continuation (of sorts) of *A Midsummer Night’s*

But it offers yet another place to see these adaptations failing at fidelity and thus, at least on some level, challenging the priority and authority of the original.

Dream, 17-year-old Kelly Winslow discovers that she is the daughter of dictatorial King Auberon and the dangerous Queen Mab, rulers of the Unseelie court and contemporaries to Titania and Oberon of the Seelie Court. Raised as a human, Kelly must navigate the two worlds to which she belongs. She must also work to come to an understanding with her feuding fairy parents and the human woman who kidnapped and then lovingly raised her before her fairy parents' fury endangers all of the human world. In that same category, Philbrick's (2004) *Young Man and the Sea*, an homage to Hemingway's classic, adds the storyline of the titular young man's father as a depressed alcoholic whose inability to earn money is what inspires 12-year-old Skiff to catch a lucrative tuna. Another example is with Elisa in *Undercover*, a loose revisitation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, who worries about her crumbling family and pines for her workaholic father.

The father of Jake (the Jay Gatsby character in *Jake, Reinvented*) is also so distant that Jake can throw extravagant parties without him ever knowing, which results in Jake avoiding prosecution if he agrees to live with his mother. Hamilton Prince in *Something Rotten*, Tom Henderson in *King Dork*, and Alfred Kropp in *The Extraordinary Adventures of Alfred Kropp* are all motivated by the mystery of who their fathers were and how they died. Even Marcus's father in *Little Brother* is clueless to the civil liberty violations of the police state of future San Francisco, which leaves Marcus to fight oppression unsupported. On top of that, Marcus reports, "[Dad] made me feel like he'd stopped thinking of me as a person and switched to thinking of me as a kind of half-formed larva that needed to be guided out of adolescence" (Doctorow, 2008, p. 217).

Like the "half-formed larva" of the original that an adaptation is often considered to be, the parental tensions in adaptations written for teens take on a special significance. On the one hand, this very literal anxiety of influence, as Bloom (1973) might call it, is a tension that young adult literature authors by and large cannot get beyond, which often results in a missed opportunity to tell a story the way it could have or might have been told to a different audience or during a different era. However, as these texts struggle so explicitly against the canonical source text, it could be argued that in doing so, they fail to explicitly further the source text's cultural capital—a common expecta-

tion many have of adaptations in general. In certain ways, this "failure" is potentially subversive and generative.

Adaptations that are not explicitly designed as bridges or with fidelity critique in mind do lend themselves to more interesting conversations, but that doesn't mean that texts that stray further away from the hypotext are not without their own problems, nor are they necessarily without traditional hierarchical values. Hutcheon (2006) argues, "An adaptation is not vampiric; it does not draw the life-blood from its source and leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep the prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise" (p. 176). She makes this assertion as something positive, but we must remember that she is discussing horizontal power relationships between source text and adaptation that are both written for adult audiences. This is, of course, a more fraught scenario when discussing canonical texts revised for a teen audience because the adaptation is done with a sense of what teens should be reading, should know, should value; this also privileges the referent text as inherently important.

Despite the fact that the situation considered here is a bit more fraught than what Hutcheon (2006) is talking about, the desire to "salvage" a story that is feared to be losing popularity with today's teen readers is often the motivation for an adaptation. *Wuthering High* (Lockwood, 2006), for example, seems to be invested in giving an "afterlife" to *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1847/1996) by recreating the characters in a more familiar narrative style and setting: when Miranda starts at Bard Academy, she can't help but notice the unusual people who are her teachers and classmates. Eventually, she realizes that the handsome and brooding guy who has been following her around and calling her Catherine is a living Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights*. Furthermore, her klutzy chemistry teacher, Ms. S, is Mary Shelley; Coach H is Ernest

The adaptation is done with a sense of what teens should be reading, should know, should value; this also privileges the referent text as inherently important.

Hemingway; and Mrs. Rochester is going around campus setting fires. The school itself is situated atop “a special vault below the library [that has] the power to bring fictional characters to life” (Lockwood, 2006,

One does not have to be an expert in adaptation theories to adopt the attitude suggested here, to seek to understand the *how* and the *why* of a prior story’s adaptation, and how the adaptation exists as hypertext.

p. 191). But the characters can only move between worlds as long as people read their books. Heathcliff tells Miranda, “Cathy lives in you, and so does my soul. So long as you exist, so do I” (Lockwood, 2006, p. 256). Coming back from the dead as teachers, canonical authors such as Shelley and Hemingway are depicted as having much to teach the youth of today.

Lockwood (2006) can never be accused of writing a story that is faithful to its referent text, nor will

the plot structure of *Wuthering High* prepare readers for future encounters with Emily Brontë, but Lockwood’s (2006) literary mash-up comes from a decidedly fearful place that privileges the canon most of all: when people turn their backs on canonized authors and their characters, much is lost, Western culture is threatened. *Wuthering High*, then, reflects a different kind of reverence for the canon that even *Romiette and Julio* does not achieve, one that seeks to inscribe a value system more than specific comprehension skills.

In Conclusion

Attitudes toward the canon and toward teens demand our critical attention when we consider YA adaptations of canonical literature, and adaptation theorists give us language and perspectives to consider these texts. Adaptation theory is of course much more complicated than I have presented here; numerous articles and books exist to offer ways of assessing the adapted text. One does not have to be an expert in adaptation theories to adopt the attitude suggested here, to seek to understand the *how* and the *why* of a prior story’s adaptation, and how the adaptation exists as hypertext.

In “Charlotte’s Website: Media Transformation and the Intertextual Web of Children’s Culture,” Martin (2009) makes this point, “Each text builds on the central radial hub but adds additional threads, part and parcel of creating the larger web, or ur-text” (p. 90). If there is true subversive power within adaptations of canonical literature for teens, this would be it. To get to this text, this adaptation, this parody, before the original or after, seems to poke holes in the privileged place of the canonical text. Martin also posits that, “In the mind of the consumer there may not be a clear division between the original and adaptation, depending on which version the consumer was exposed to first” (p. 87). Marketed to teens, the YA adaptations may, in fact, be the first engagement a young reader has with a certain story—*Macbeth* in the form of *Something Wicked*, for example. Or it might be the *only* experience a reader has with this story.

While in most cases the source text of a YA adaptation cannot be ignored, the cultural power of the canon does not have to overshadow the YA adaptation; how likely an adaptation is to get readers to the canonical text should not be the only reason these books exist, nor should it be the only way these texts are evaluated. Although being a skilled reader of the canon carries with it cultural power, if we continue to treat YA adaptations of canonical literature as nothing more than training wheels for “real” literature, we perpetuate the same traditional literary attitudes that work to categorically delegitimize YA literature. It also systematically excludes teens from authentic literary discussion. In certain ways, when a YA adaptation fails to bridge, to socialize, to remain faithful to its canonical referent, the YA text succeeds as literature in its own right and allows teen voices into the conversation in generative ways.

Knowing the language of adaptation theory allows us to consider the complex web of meaning in which the YA adaptation exists side by side and not beneath the canonical piece. When we do reframe our conversations—to consider adaptations for teens as multilayered, context based, and most certainly legitimate on their own terms—we begin to see how YA adaptations of canonical texts are important parts of an ongoing text that started sometimes hundreds of years prior, and how we all have a say in how a story will continue.

Jennifer M. Miskec is an associate professor of Children's and Young Adult Literature at Longwood University, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in children's and YA literature. Much of her scholarly work involves contemporary young adult literature—images of cutting and the uses of technology in YA literature, for example—and she is currently co-writing a book on early readers.

References

- Austen, J. (1811/1995). *Sense and sensibility*. New York, NY: Dover.
- Bloom, H. (1973). *Anxiety of influence: A theory of poetry*. Oxford, England: Oxford University.
- Boorman, J. (Producer & Director). (1981). *Excalibur* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom: Warner Home Video.
- Bortolotti, G., & Hutcheon, L. (2007). On the origin of adaptations: Rethinking fidelity discourse and "success"—biologically. *New Literary History*, 38, 443–458.
- Brontë, E. (1847/1996). *Wuthering heights*. New York, NY: Dover.
- Dickens, C. (1860/2001). *Great expectations*. New York, NY: Dover.
- Disney, W. (Producer), & Reitherman, W. (Director). (1963). *The sword and the stone* [Motion picture]. United States: Buena Vista Distribution.
- Draper, S. (1999). *Romiette and Julio*. New York, NY: Simon Pulse.
- Doctorow, C. (2008). *Little brother*. New York, NY: TOR.
- Fitzgerald, F. S. (1925/1999). *The great Gatsby*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Forstater, M., & White, M. (Producers), & Gilliam, T. (Director). (1975). *Monty Python and the holy grail* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom: Ambassador Films.
- Gehrman, J. (2008). *Confessions of a triple shot Betty*. New York, NY: Speak.
- Gratz, A. (2007). *Something rotten*. New York, NY: Dial.
- Gratz, A. (2008). *Something wicked*. New York, NY: Dial.
- Halsall, J. (1999). Rev. of *Romiette and Julio* by Sharon Draper. *School Library Journal* 45(9), 222.
- Hastings, J. (2004). Rev. of *Young man and the sea* by Rodman Philbrick. *School Library Journal*, 50(2), 152.
- Hateley, E. (2008). *Shakespeare and children's literature: Gender and cultural capitalism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hemingway, E. (1952/1996). *Old man and the sea*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Herz, S. K., with Gallo, D. (1996). *From Hinton to Hamlet: Building bridges between young adult literature and the classics*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Hutcheon, L. (2006). *A theory of adaptation*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hutcheon, L. (2000). *A theory of parody: The teachings of twentieth-century art forms*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois.
- Hutcheon, L. (2008). Harry Potter and the novice's confession. *The Lion and the Unicorn* 32, 169–179.
- Kaywell, J. (2000). *Adolescent literature as a complement to the classics*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Kephart, B. (2007). *Undercover*. New York, NY: Harper Teen.
- Kephart, B. (2013). *Undercover* remembered in "Classics outside the Classroom" story in VOYA. Beth Kephart Books Blog. Retrieved from <http://beth-kephart.blogspot.com/2013/01/undercover-remembered-in-classics.html>.
- Korman, G. (2003). *Jake reinvented*. New York, NY: Hyperion.
- Livingston, L. (2009). *Wondrous strange*. New York, NY: Harper Teen.
- Lockwood, C. (2006). *Wuthering high*. New York, NY: MTV Books.
- Luce, C. B. (1998). *The women*. New York, NY: Dramatists Play Service.
- Martin, C. (2009). Charlotte's website: Media transformation and the intertextual web of children's culture. In R. Carroll (Ed.), *Adaptation in contemporary culture: Textual infidelities* (pp. 85–95). London, England: Continuum.
- Miller, A. (1976). *Death of a salesman*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Nichols, M. (Director). (2005). *Spamalot* [Broadway musical]. United States: Broadway.
- Orwell, G. (1983). *1984*. New York, NY: Plume.
- Peet, M. (2009). *Exposure*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Philbrick, R. (2004). *Young man and the sea*. New York, NY: Blue Sky.
- Portman, F. (2006). *King Dork*. New York, NY: Delacorte.
- Rostand, E. (2006). *Cyrano de Bergerac* (C. Clark, Trans.). New York, NY: Penguin.
- Rushton, R. (2006). *Dashwood sisters' secrets of love*. New York, NY: Hyperion.
- Salinger, J. D. (2003). *The catcher in the rye*. Boston, MA: Back Bay Books.
- Santoli, S. P., & Wagner, M. E. (2004). Promoting young adult literature: The other "real" literature. *American Secondary Education* 33(1), 65.
- Shakespeare, W. (2012a). *A midsummer night's dream*. New York, NY: Empire.
- Shakespeare, W. (2011a). *Hamlet*. New York, NY: Simon & Brown.
- Shakespeare, W. (2011b). *Macbeth*. New York, NY: Simon & Brown.
- Shakespeare, W. (1998). *Much ado about nothing*. New York, NY: Signet.
- Shakespeare, W. (1993). *Romeo and Juliet*. New York, NY: Dover.
- Shaw, T. (2009). *The girls*. New York, NY: Amulet Books.
- Stam, R. (2000). Beyond fidelity: The dialogics of adaptation. In J. Naremore (Ed.), *Film adaptation* (pp. 54–76). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers.
- Stoppard, T. (1994). *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead*. New York, NY: Grove.
- Yancey, R. (2005). *The extraordinary adventures of Alfred Kropp*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

Writing through Growth, Growth through Writing:

The Perks of Being a Wallflower and the Narrative of Development

Along with celebrated novels such as J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (henceforth *Perks*) is approached by many as one of the most honest literary portrayals of teenage life within the last decades. Since its original publication in 1999, it is considered an influential text for young readers across the country due to its sincere and candid depiction of contemporary American teenage life. However, it has also gained infamy for being one of the most banned books in recent times (according to the American Library Association¹) because of its depiction of controversial themes and issues such as sexual abuse, drug use, and homosexuality, among others. Despite this notoriety, the popularity of *Perks* and the fascination it has exerted upon contemporary readers is undisputed.

It is thus somewhat foreseeable that *Perks* is commonly found within the top ten books in the "Classic literature and fiction" section in Amazon.com, often surpassing eminent texts such as William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954/ 2003) and even Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939/2002). Hence, despite the fact that the book's protagonist is a teenager, and despite the fact that the text is primarily approached by readers in a high school context, the quality of the writing, the novel's realistic tone, and the depth of the

issues discussed in its pages have assured its position as a contemporary young adult *and* literary classic.

This discussion will call attention to the issue of social and personal development in *Perks*, focusing on how the novel appropriates and transmutes the conventions of the formation novel, formally known as the Bildungsroman², through the process and configuration of letter writing. Although the novel is written in an epistolary fashion, focusing on a series of letters sent to an undisclosed recipient, the overarching themes of these musings create a social space in which the protagonist can record, evaluate, and

1. *Perks* is number 10 in the top 100 most banned books between 2000–2009 according to www.ala.org.

2. Within literary criticism, a coming-of-age novel is typically referred to as a *Bildungsroman* (plural *Bildungsromane*), which literally translates into "novels of education." The label is typically applied to novels that focus most of their attention on the moral and/or psychological growth of the main character throughout a span of time. The birth of the genre is typically said to be during the late 18th century with the publication of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. The coming-of-age novel developed momentum in Germany during the 19th century, and the popularity of the genre quickly spread across Europe. One of the aims of this paper is to illustrate how novels within the Young Adult genre can be linked genealogically to classic novels written in historically rich genres of so-called "adult" fiction. In other words, I'd like to demonstrate how it would be interesting and worthwhile to think of the Bildungsroman genre as an ancestor of contemporary young adult coming-of-age novels.

deliberate his own position within his social context. These epistles also provide clarification about the pains and tribulations of achieving reconciliation between personal desire and social demand. Furthermore, a significant number of these letters are focused on the execution and development of the act of writing, and more important, how writing influences and shapes the world of the protagonist.

“You see things. You keep quiet about them. And you understand” (Chbosky, 1999, p. 37). These three sentences manage to encapsulate how Charlie—the protagonist from Chbosky’s celebrated novel—approaches his world. He is a wallflower: a passive participant in his environment who observes and learns from the people around him, yet who avoids becoming an active member of his community. To further emphasize the inactive role that Charlie assumes, he typically describes himself as a writer and as a reader, focusing on the development of internal thoughts and ideas while executing no direct action that affects the exterior world. Thus, Charlie’s attempts to adapt to his world, and to eventually understand it, are limited to the analytical capabilities of his awareness rather than on pragmatic experiences and interventions. He is a person of thought, not of action.

The novel traces the letters that Charlie writes to an anonymous and unidentified recipient throughout his first year in high school. In his first letter, Charlie writes that he changes the names of people he writes about, and soon after, the reader finds out that even the name “Charlie” is a pseudonym that he uses to protect his identity. Since his letters are written anonymously, and since Charlie makes it clear that the recipient of the letters does not know him, Charlie is quite candid and unrestricted with the content of his writing, discussing everything from rape, drug use, sexual abuse, and psychological trauma. Nevertheless, rather than simply narrating the account of a teenager trying to deal with these intense issues as he assimilates within the context of 1990s America, Charlie’s brutally honest letters manage to convey the story of an adolescent trying to evolve from a passive observer of life to an active participant. Throughout this attempt at transformation, the reader is immersed in the heartbreaking tale of a young boy who is attempting to create a metaphorical jigsaw puzzle without possessing all the necessary pieces.

Charlie constantly faces occurrences and issues

that force him to leave behind the ideologies and viewpoints that he held as a child. Between his first experiences with masturbation, his drug experimentation with marijuana and LSD, and the suicide of his close friend Michael, Charlie definitely begins to realize that the world is not as innocent or easy as he initially thought it was. But rather than tackling external issues directly, he focuses on the internalization of his problems, turning to writing as a therapeutic way of soothing the tension between the pressures of the outside

world and his inability to cope with them. Charlie’s letters are extremely effective in invoking sympathy, depicting the events and people that he encounters with an astounding sense of realism, coated with the honesty and naiveté of a teenager who does not completely understand society or the people living in it. The letters are not peppered with the angst usually found in teenage prose, in which writers complain about the difficulties of life. Quite contrarily, Charlie avoids complaining even when he *clearly* has the right to do so. More than anything, the book as a whole offers a vivid and illustrative written record of the protagonist’s mind, leaving the readers, as the recipients of his letters, to assess the value and meaning of his words.

Charlie’s first epistle opens with his reasoning behind sending the letters: he heard that the recipient is a good listener, is capable of understanding the complexities of life, and more important, the recipient is in a position such that he/she cannot take advantage of the information depicted in the letters (Chbosky, 1999, p. 2). The reader of the novel is expected to assume the position of this recipient, and by engaging with the narrative, he/she is expected to listen, understand, and not jump into judgment. Much like a patient visiting a psychologist’s office, Charlie is expected to speak and the reader is expected to listen and assess his accounts. After the discussion of this reasoning, Charlie discusses the purpose of writing these letters:

I just need to know that someone out there listens and understands and doesn’t try to sleep with people even if

Charlie’s brutally honest letters manage to convey the story of an adolescent trying to evolve from a passive observer of life to an active participant.

they could have. I need to know that these people exist. [. . .] So, this is my life. And I want you to know that I am both happy and sad and I'm still trying to figure out how that could be. (Chbosky, 1999, p. 2)

The passage above illustrates Charlie's overall aims for his writing: not only does he want to affirm

Different people have diverging conceptions of what *does* or *does not* constitute literary "quality."

that there are people in the world who are willing to understand him without taking advantage of the events he shares, but he is also writing in an attempt to understand who he is and what he desires. Nevertheless, by refusing to attach his real name in

any of his letters, and by refusing to divulge his fears and tensions to a person who actually knows him, he is further perpetuating the sense of detachment that characterizes him throughout the entire narrative.

It is precisely this sense of impartiality that provides Charlie with the opportunities to understand and evaluate his own growth and identity, but this sense of detachment also becomes a hurdle that he must overcome in order to trigger mental and social growth. Metaphorically speaking, the letters are the records of his various attempts to transform from a wallflower into a full-fledged rose. As Wasserman (2003) discusses in her intervention on the epistolary young adult novel:

Charlie's letters provide him with a space in which he can reflect and construct his own way of thinking, a space necessary for human development. It is in these letters where he confronts his particular demons. [. . .] the letters do not allow Charlie to repossess anything he has written because he cannot reclaim his words after they have been sent. (p. 50)

Charlie explicitly states that he mails the letters that he writes as soon as he can in order to assure that he cannot take back what is written, further cementing the sense of unrestricted candor prevalent within his prose. Although Chbosky's work is typically approached as an epistolary novel, Wasserman emphasizes that the letters function as a way for Charlie to construct the mental space needed for his development as a human being. However, does the fact that the novel is written in an epistolary form prevent it in any way from being approached as a Bildungsroman?

The Perks of the Bildungsroman Tradition

The element of mental development, formally known as *Bildung*, is looming within *Perks*. Yet, one must question whether or not the presence of this element allows one to approach the text as a Bildungsroman. After all, what novel that depicts teenage life does *not* depict a coming-of-age process to some extent? Can it be argued that *Perks* is a contemporary embodiment of the Bildungsroman genre, and if so, how is *Bildung* approached by it?

At first glance, *Perks* seems to be anything but a novel of formation, especially when compared to classical texts such as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-6/1989), Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (1830/2002), and Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1860/1999). First and foremost, the epistolary structure of *Perks* is problematic because the protagonist makes deliberate choices about what to tell the reader or what to hold back, thus leading to the possibility of omitting moments that depict *Bildung* or social assimilation. Furthermore, this structure leads to the depiction of the narrative in fragmented and uneven pieces—a fresh take on the "series of steps" that protagonists follow in traditional Bildungsromane—that are characterized as ostensibly smooth and linear in terms of narration and the character's development. Whereas traditional Bildungsromane depict an individual's development from childhood into adulthood, the duration of *Perks* takes place within a one-year span.

Furthermore, the novel is typically approached by readers and critics as a young adult novel, a problematic genre of literature that inhabits the grey area between children's fiction and full-fledged "adult" literature. This leads to further apprehensions in terms of placing this book within the same category as the works created by "great" or canonical authors. The position of young adult literature within this categorical limbo could partially be attributed to the fact that different people have diverging conceptions of what *does* or *does not* constitute literary "quality." As pointed out by Miller and Slifkin (2010):

Unlike librarians who considered literary merit based on prestige, grammar and writing style, English professors stressed the importance of layered texts that allowed for various levels of interpretation [. . .]. The only level of consensus amongst these voices was that literary merit means that texts must be layered—including multiple narratives, themes, and levels of interpretation. (p. 7)

Unfortunately, many assume that young adult literature lacks an aesthetically pleasing style or layers of complexity simply because they are targeted primarily at teenagers. However, as argued by Soter and Connors (2009) in their discussion of the “literary” nature of young adult literature, there are many eminent young adult novels, such as Cormier’s *The Chocolate War* (1974), that demonstrate an exceptional prowess in terms of style and content that is up to par with many titles classified as canonical texts. This leads the authors to believe “that young adult literature has the kind of literary merit that canonical literature demonstrates” (p.66). As will be demonstrated later in this discussion, *Perks* definitely possesses characteristics that highlight its literary quality under most standards, for not only does it possess interesting features in terms of style, but it also presents complex and multifaceted themes that ultimately offer many venues for interpretation.

Despite the aforementioned discrepancies, approaching *Perks* as a Bildungsroman becomes an effective manner of facilitating a critical assessment of the developmental issues that this novel ultimately provides. The question, however, is whether or not the notion of the Bildungsroman is flexible enough to embrace this epistolary classic, or whether this embrace is impossible or ineffective. This question is difficult due to the formulaic harshness that is many times imposed upon the Bildungsroman label. A particularly illuminating instance of this rigidity can be seen in a response to David Miles’s interpretations of the Bildungsroman genre, in which Hirsch (1976) argues that the Bildungsroman’s defining characteristic is that it “maintains a peculiar balance between the social and the personal and explores their interaction” (p. 122). She goes on to contest Miles’s “loose and conflating” (p. 122) perspective of the Bildungsroman with other literary genres, such as the picaresque novel.

Miles (1974) claims that the difficulty with Hirsch’s views and rigidity is that she approaches the Bildungsroman as a stable and unchanging form, and that this view demonstrates her “general unwillingness to concede historical shifts in the development of the Bildungsroman [. . .] and its relation to other branches of fiction” (Hirsch & Miles, 1976, p. 123). It is interesting to note that the claim that caused so much debate is present in Miles’s discussion, “The Picaro’s Journey to the Confessional: The Changing

Image of the Hero in the German Bildungsroman,” which focuses on three different German novels to demonstrate that the *Bildung* process in the nineteenth century was no longer taking place as a formal or exterior educational process in an actual society. Miles (1974) argues that *Bildung* within the nineteenth century was now taking place within the protagonist’s mind. Miles points out that this historical shift in the Bildungsroman was inevitable due to the fact that novelists were trying to remain constant with the developments, perspectives, and values that were outstanding during the creation of their literary works:

. . . the novelist, in order to remain mimetically true to such an increasingly inner order of reality, had to create heroes with corresponding energies of sensibility, self-consciousness, and inwardness; to borrow Stendhal’s metaphor, the novelist no longer wandered down life’s road with his magic mirror, but returned to his cell, where he hung it directly above the writing desk, to catch every distortion of the world as mirrored first in his own consciousness. (p. 989)

What Miles demonstrates is that unlike many other genres of literature, the Bildungsroman seems to exhibit a striking degree of flexibility, which is sensitive to temporal and literary changes and to the motifs that are favored by readers as well. Additionally, the classification of a novel as a Bildungsroman can be quite difficult simply because the coming-of-age process can vary according to the ideologies of the author and those of the reader or literary critic. In other words, it is arguably difficult to pinpoint what *Bildung* is, seeing as the term adopts different shades of meaning and significance not only across genres, but also across cultures (see “Different Shades of Development” sidebar).

As exemplified in Hirsch’s and Miles’s arguments, the flexibility that exists in the established parameters for the Bildungsroman genre eventually leads to disagreements about what should and should not be classified as a formation novel. Many scholars argue that there are countless novels that are categorized

It is arguably difficult to pinpoint what *Bildung* is, seeing as the term adopts different shades of meaning and significance not only across genres, but also across cultures.

Different Shades of Development

The processes of self-cultivation and self-formation can vary across cultures, times, genres, and authors. Ultimately, there is no recipe for the coming-of-age process, and the experience of personal growth is very subjective and idiosyncratic. Although it is virtually impossible to standardize coming-of-age processes, as teachers, we can use quality young adult novels that follow Bildungsroman conventions in order to help students develop an awareness of the cultural and social differences that exist when approaching the themes of growth and development in literature and society. Here is a short list of novels that are structurally similar to *Perks* in that they explore the notions of self-cultivation and development, albeit through different temporal, social, and cultural lenses:

- J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)—Considered by many to be the progenitor of the contemporary young adult novel, Salinger's work traces 17-year-old Holden Caulfield's brief escape from a boarding school during 1949. Throughout the development of the novel, Holden reflects upon the pains of growth and the loss of innocence in a fragmented society.
- S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* (1967)—Although typically approached by scholars as a "problem novel," it can also be approached as a formation novel because it highlights the socioeconomic tensions that are involved with the notions of maturity and adulthood. Similar to *Perks*, the novel's narrator, Ponyboy, also resorts to the act of writing as a therapeutic tool for growth and cultivation.
- J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series (1997–2007)—The celebrated fantasy series, as a whole, definitely alludes to characteristics of the Bildungsroman, for it follows the growth and development of the eponymous character and his friends over a seven-year span. Throughout the series, we witness the evolution of characters in terms of their values, their morals, and even their relationships with non-magical cultures.
- Sue Monk Kid's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002)—Set during the year of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, Kid's novel focuses on the moral, cultural, and civil development of Lily Melissa Owens as she tries to make sense of her past. Her journey is laced with loss and betrayal, and it even deals with charged complexities such as interracial relationships.
- Alex Sanchez's *The God Box* (2007)—Sanchez's novel tells the story of Paul, a Mexican American teenager who engages in a moral and spiritual journey to find conciliation between his religious beliefs, his ethnic background, and his sexual orientation.
- Nick Burd's *The Vast Fields of Ordinary* (2009)—Burd's novel, which takes place in the Midwest, traces Dale's journey of self-discovery through the process of coming-out. Although to some extent it follows similar tropes to other coming-out novels, Burd's gripping work is characterized by its depth of description and its believable characters.
- John Corey Whaley's *Where Things Come Back* (2011)—Taking place in the South, Whaley's novel, similar to *Perks*, focuses on the sentimental development of a male protagonist. The notions of family, brotherhood, and love are central themes that are intertwined with the main character's self-cultivation.

within this genre even though they do not comply with the formula or the stipulations that are deemed necessary for its categorical classification. As a matter of fact, even the novel that is usually designated as the prototypical Bildungsroman deviates from these stipulations, as pointed out by Krimmer (2004) in her discussion of paternity and formation in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. She suggests that

even though the text under discussion is considered to be the foundational text of the Bildungsroman genre, many scholars have argued that Wilhelm Meister shows no indications of maturity by the novel's conclusion. In other words, successful assimilation was not the goal of Goethe's novel, but rather, it was the representation of the tragic outcome of a dreamer who collides with a harsh reality. *Wilhelm Meister's Leh-*

rjahre thus lacks one of the central characteristics that scholars typically deem to be crucial in the Bildungsroman genre, which in due course, highlights the possibility that the genre is not as rigid and unbending as many believe it to be.

However, the problem with the Bildungsroman being flexible and encompassing is that there exists the possibility of the label becoming too broad, and perhaps utterly meaningless. What then characterizes novels that we approach as fictions of development? Scholars such as Sammons (1991), in his attempt to clarify the definition of the formation novel, argue that in essence, a novel designated as a Bildungsroman should have an involvement with the concept of self-cultivation and the process of negotiating personal desire with the demands of society:

I think that the Bildungsroman should have something to do with *Bildung*, that is, with the early bourgeois, humanistic concept of the shaping of the individual self from its innate potentialities through acculturation and social experience to the threshold of maturity. [. . .] A novel designated as a Bildungsroman should, it seems to me, be in some degree in contact with this concept. It does not much matter whether the process of *Bildung* succeeds or fails, whether the protagonist achieves an accommodation with life and society or not. (p. 41)

Undoubtedly, *Perks* comes into contact with the concept of *Bildung*. Furthermore, it embraces many characteristics attributed to the Bildungsroman genre, such as an emphasis on the transition from an undeveloped to a mature mentality, the portrayal of said transition through a period of time, a focus on the protagonist as the central gravitational force of the novel's plot, the grounding of the plot in a specific historical time, an emphasis on the role of literature in personal formation, and the tribulations of social assimilation. Thus, rather than thinking of the Bildungsroman as a genre *per se*, the remainder of this discussion will approach the Bildungsroman as a *function* assigned to texts that depict and negotiate development in their content and structure. But, how does the Bildungsroman function manifest in *Perks*?

The Links between Writing and Formation

Although *Perks* is certainly considered an epistolary novel in terms of its form and delivery, its content and function are definitely attuned toward the aims of developmental fiction. Given that the protagonist depicts

his own mental cultivation through his writing, and given that the novel is written via a series of letters, it is imperative that the reader become attuned to how the process of writing and the process of *Bildung* work together to fulfill and challenge the nuances of the formation novel. The process of writing in *Perks* manifests primarily in two ways: through the letters that Charlie writes to the anonymous recipient and through the assignments and tasks

that he completes for his English class in high school. It is fascinating to observe how Charlie's writing is a strong reflection of his own development as a person; the writing that we encounter in the first letters of the book is more scrambled, disorganized, and "immature" when compared to the prose found in his final letters.

I offer an example of Charlie's writing at the beginning of the novel: "Aunt Helen told my father not to hit me in front of her ever again and my father said this was his house and he would do what he wanted and my mom was quiet and so were my brother and sister" (Chbosky, 1999, p. 6). This sentence exemplifies the writing style that is predominant during the first letters of the novel: the prose is peppered with run-on sentences, he has not mastered the art of punctuation, and his ideas often lack coherence and cohesion. But we see that his writing style, and even the topics that he discusses in his letters, begin to evolve and mature as Charlie gains more experience with the art of writing, and as he begins to delve—with increasingly complicated effort—into understanding himself and the people around him. Charlie's English teacher, Bill, assumes the role of Charlie's mentor, not only from an educational standpoint, but also from a formational one. Charlie takes Bill's advice and suggestions quite seriously, and although Bill always gives Charlie an A on his report card, he always writes a lower grade on his essays as a way of challenging him:

First of all, Bill gave me a C on my *To Kill a Mockingbird* essay because he said that I run my sentences together. I am trying now to practice not to do that. He also said that

It is fascinating to observe how Charlie's writing is a strong reflection of his own development as a person.

A Note on Theory and Its Application to Young Adult Literature

When writing this article, I constantly thought about the role of theory and literary criticism as applied to the realm of young adult fiction. Soter and Connors (2009) do an outstanding job of defending young adult literature's merits as literature proper, but in the context of classroom teaching. I personally consider *some* critical interventions of young adult fiction restrictive in that their discussion is usually tied to their pedagogical applications. This restriction, in and of itself, is not a bad thing. I deem the pedagogical applications of young adult fiction to be crucial in terms of fighting for the inclusion of young adult texts in academia, in the canon, and in the curriculum. However, if we want to demonstrate to the world that young adult literature *can* and *should* be approached as "Literature," we have to look beyond the scope of the classroom and demonstrate that it is interesting and productive to approach the genre using prominent critical, literary, and cultural theories.

I'm sure that my intervention of *Perks* using a critical and genre-based approach in conjunction with close readings might have seemed baffling and confusing to some of my readers, especially those who are new to theoretical applications of literature. I do not blame you for this: theory and criticism are difficult by nature, and even as a scholar in English literature, I find myself constantly struggling with many theories and literary approaches. This does not mean, however, that theory is not worthy of our time. As feminist scholar bell hooks (2013) posits in her discussion of theory as a liberatory practice: "By reinforcing the idea that there is a split between theory and practice or by creating such a split, both groups deny the power of liberatory education for critical consciousness, thereby perpetuating conditions that reinforce our collective exploitation and repression" (p. 41).

Although her views pertain to feminist criticism, I believe that they do shed some light on the status of young adult literature as an intermediary force between theory and practice. If we want to push young adult fiction beyond its repressed state in the curriculum and in academia, we have to embrace both practice (teaching) and theory (critical literary analysis). Only then will we be able to demonstrate how traditional literary concepts (such as the Bildungsroman function) can be stretched and used as a heuristic tool in discussions of young adult fiction. Simultaneously, we will be able to challenge the erroneous assumption that Bickmore (2008) once highlighted, in which teachers and scholars assume that "young adult (YA) literature simply isn't rich enough to compete with the entrenched works of the canon as quality literature" (p. 76).

I should use the vocabulary words that I learn in class like "corpulent" and "jaundice." I would use them here, but I really don't think they are appropriate in this format. (Chbosky, 1999, p. 14)

After Bill's recommendations, Charlie's letters increasingly avoid the use of run-on sentences, and his prose becomes much clearer and more efficient, saying more with fewer words. It is also interesting to note that when Charlie writes about the books that Bill assigns to him, he manages to use writing as a way of evaluating the actions of the characters as he tries to establish parallels between his own life and the "life" portrayed in the books.

This notion of comparing and contrasting be-

comes important in terms of the content depicted in Charlie's letters, for it is in this instance that he begins to situate himself more prominently in the actions that are represented in the letters. At first, most of what he writes concerns his observations of his family. This notion of writing "empirical" observations of the people he observes becomes the main focus of Charlie's letters until Bill begins to notice that Charlie constantly stares at people and scrutinizes them obsessively. He then asks Charlie what he thinks about when he observes people. After Charlie tells Bill everything he thinks about, the teacher remarks that although thinking a lot is not necessarily a bad thing, "sometimes people use thoughts to not participate

in life” (Chbosky, 1999, p. 24). This remark pushes Charlie to further assess his own life and the degree to which he participates in events, talks with other people, and tries to make friends. However, the very process of writing down his thoughts obliges him to become introverted and pensive, and he continues to write letters as a way of assessing his own life: “[W]hen I write letters, I spend the next two days thinking about what I figured out in my letters. I do not know if this is good or bad” (Chbosky, 1999, p. 28). The effort that Charlie puts into trying to understand his meditations is a clear indicator that Bill was right to some extent. So much effort is invested trying to understand life that there is little room to actually live and enjoy it.

Despite the mental effort and time required in the crafting of his letters, there seems to be a radical shift in terms of the content being portrayed after Bill warns Charlie about the perils of overthinking. The focus of the letters shifts from family to Charlie’s efforts to socialize and make friends. In due course, Charlie becomes very close to some seniors at his school, though they are a relatively unpopular group. The first friend he makes in high school is Patrick, a gay senior with a penchant for jokes and mischief, who introduces Charlie into the world of drinking, smoking, and the unwritten rules of sexual behavior. He also befriends Sam (short for Samantha), who is Patrick’s stepsister and on whom Charlie develops an obsessive crush. The bulk of the letters depicted after this point discuss the differences that exist between Patrick, Samantha, other friends, and himself, and his strivings to understand the motivations behind their thoughts and actions. More important, the remaining letters depict the arduous process of becoming an active agent in society.

Charlie develops a clearer sense of the world through this difficult process of integration and through his immersion in new experiences such as drug use, masturbation, visits to the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, and exposure to different literatures. His analysis of the content of his letters and the feedback he gets from his essays at school demonstrate that Charlie is developing the ability to make his writing more concrete and understandable because he is undergoing experiences that provide him with a substantial analytical platform. In addition, Charlie’s development of his writing prowess leads him to the

discovery of the craft he wants to hone as a professional endeavor: “I have decided that maybe I want to write when I grow up. I just don’t know what I would write” (Chbosky, 1999, p. 46). At first, letter writing—itsself an isolating endeavor—and his obsessive introspection prevent him from participating fully in his own life. However, when Charlie combines his writing skills with his recent experiences, he develops a richer image of who he is and who he wants to be. It is interesting to realize that the more Charlie writes, the more he understands himself, and the easier it is for the recipient of the letters to develop a more defined snapshot of Charlie’s mind. In other words, the more Charlie begins to understand himself, the more others also begin to understand him.

It is unclear whether Charlie keeps copies of the letters for himself; however, he consistently makes reference to past epistles. Charlie compares and contrasts experiences illustrated in his letters, and he also revisits previous points of discussion in order to reevaluate his thoughts using the knowledge that his experiences have thrust upon him. For instance, Charlie once reads a poem to his friends titled, “A Person/ A Paper/ A Promise Remembered,” written by Patrick Comeaux (1999) and given to him by Michael (the friend who committed suicide). This poem portrays the growth of a boy into a man, and concludes with the speaker’s suicide due to his disillusionment with life. At first, Charlie is unable to understand the poem clearly, and he is unwilling to understand why a person would commit suicide. But, during New Year’s Eve, Charlie writes a letter in which he confesses that a particular experience has unfortunately helped him to grasp the intended meaning of the poem:

I just remembered what made me think of all this. I’m going to write it down because maybe if I do I won’t have to think about it. And I won’t get upset. But the thing is that I can hear Sam and Craig having sex, and for the first time in my life, I understand the end of that poem. And I never wanted to. You have to believe me. (Chbosky, 1999, p. 96)

Charlie writes, the more he understands himself, and the easier it is for the recipient of the letters to develop a more defined snapshot of Charlie’s mind.

It is important to note that in this instance, Charlie is using writing for a new purpose: rather than using the letters as a means of interpreting himself and his world, he uses writing as a way of distancing himself from his thoughts, as if writing were a way of draining his worries away from his mind. Even more

The parallels between emotional and mental development, or *Bildung*, become increasingly tied to the act of writing throughout the progression of the novel.

poignant, by looking back at his own writing, he is able to comprehend how he loses innocence and how he is able to understand concepts that used to escape his cognizance. It is after this point that Charlie becomes a “rebel” in many aspects: he begins to smoke and drink more than ever; he begins to explore his sexual identity by hanging out more often with Patrick and kissing him every so

often, and he secretly offers his sister assistance when she believes she is pregnant. Charlie begins to realize that life does not have to be lived according to others’ expectations, and if he is to achieve any degree of happiness, he has to find a way to balance his desires with social demand. This deviance from society’s parameters also manifests within Charlie’s writing, seeing as he begins to experiment with different styles of writing and of conveying ideas: “I wrote a paper about *Walden* for Bill, but this time I did it differently. I didn’t write a book report. I wrote a report pretending that I was by myself near a lake for two years. I pretended that I lived off the land and had insights. To tell you the truth, I kind of like the idea of doing that right now” (Chbosky, 1999, p. 128). Thus, rather than complying with a formula or a set of rules on how to tackle his literary interventions through writing, he delves into an experimental endeavor in which he filters the information he decodes in the book through his own set of experiences. Rather than simply being a sponge that absorbs and regurgitates ideas, Charlie begins to view the act of writing as a conversion taking place, turning him into an active writer rather than a passive one. Thus, the parallels between emotional and mental development, or *Bildung*, become increasingly tied to the act of writing

throughout the progression of the novel. Furthermore, notice that Charlie seems rather pleased about taking this new direction.

A Blooming Wallflower

Charlie’s progression from a passive to an active participant is not an overnight change, but rather a very difficult and gradual process. Despite his attempts and small victories, Charlie still remains a wallflower in the later letters of the novel. However, in the climactic letter, Samantha confronts Charlie and obliges him to face the consequences of his lack of action. Sam has broken up with her boyfriend because he cheated on her, yet Charlie *never* makes an attempt to date her now that she is single. In a fit of frustration, Sam confronts Charlie with the truth after he confesses that he did not take action because he was more concerned with her sadness than with trying to be with her:

It’s great that you can listen and be a shoulder to someone, but what about when someone doesn’t need a shoulder. What if they need the arms or something like that? You can’t just sit there and put everybody’s lives ahead of yours and think that counts as love. You just can’t. You have to do things. (Chbosky, 1999, p. 200)

And rather than replying to her accusations with words, Charlie approaches Sam and starts to kiss her. They soon end up on the bed, kissing passionately, but just as they are about to go all the way, Charlie begins to have a nervous breakdown. To make a long story short, Charlie slowly but surely remembers the fact that he was sexually abused as a child by his deceased aunt Helen, which explains why he was so repressed and had difficulties participating in life. After a few months in the hospital after his breakdown, Charlie begins to come to grips with his repressed past, and he proposes to move on and change the direction of his life.

According to *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (Buckley, 1974), a prominent motif within the Bildungsroman function is when the protagonist of the novel experiences a moment of insight in which “the reality of things breaks through the fog of delusion. And [the protagonist] feels a responsibility for change of heart and conduct” (p. 23). Indeed, the surprising and unprecedented moment in which Charlie reawakens his repressed past is heart-breaking and difficult to tolerate emotionally, but it is

Writing as a Therapeutic Tool

As *Perks* effectively illustrates, writing can be a very effective therapeutic tool that can help students come to terms with the difficulties of adjusting to the norms and expectations of the “adult” world. Similar to the case of Charlie, I believe that writing helps students to define and develop their own identities. It is no coincidence that introspective teenagers are typically known for keeping journals or diaries to record their personal thoughts and in order to reflect on everyday occurrences. According to Feldman (2011) in her discussion of writing as therapy, although writing is primarily approached as a tool used for academic and communicative purposes, it also has the potential to help individuals to come to grips with personal problems, stress, and arguably, certain degrees of mental illness: “[W]riting draws attention to the sources of stress and the associated emotions by making sense out of life experience” (p. 94). With this in mind, it might prove useful to incorporate writing exercises in the classroom that push students toward self-discovery, contemplation, and self-reflection. Here are some suggestions for activities that can be used in conjunction with *Perks* to approach writing as therapy within the classroom context:

- While reading the novel, ask students to write a set series of letters (addressed to an anonymous recipient) in which they discuss problems or difficulties that they are currently facing, similar to what Charlie does in *Perks*.
- Ask students to create an online blog in which they discuss situations they have faced that resemble the experiences of the characters in the literary texts that are discussed in your class.
- After reading *Perks*, ask students to create an audio-narrative essay or a video blog in which they share and analyze a past experience that has shaped who they are.
- Ask students to keep a weekly diary or journal in which they record their thoughts and interpretations of the texts and assignments given in class. Toward the end of the semester, ask students to analyze their journal entries in order to write an analysis essay on how the texts and assignments have transformed their lives.

the moment in which Charlie truly begins to feel free from the unbearable burden of trying to figure out why he is the way he is, and why he so desperately craves to understand the world around him. And although action leads him to achieve his moment of breakthrough, it is the act of writing that helps him put his life into perspective and provides the missing puzzle pieces that complete the image of the self.

Charlie’s final letter, which is arguably his most powerful and emotionally charged piece, commences the conclusion of the novel by placing his past and his development *vis a vis* one another: “I guess we are who we are for a lot of reasons. And maybe we’ll never know most of them. But even if we don’t have the power to choose where we come from, we can still choose where we go from there” (Chbosky, 1999, p. 211). These words are perhaps the most resounding ones to be found in this last letter, and arguably

the entire novel, for it is at this moment that Charlie begins to come to grips with the fact that he has been molested as a child by his aunt.

Throughout the entire novel, Charlie’s unwillingness to be active in life and his desire to remain in the background as a passive observer were ostensibly fueled by this repressed childhood memory. Although he spends most of his time and effort trying to understand who he is and how people’s personalities are shaped, he finally comes to the realization that people are not bound to the past and that they eventually have the authority to break away from these binds. In other words, Charlie becomes conscious of the fact that although he is not directly responsible for the person he is, he has the power of *choice*, and the power to steer his life in another direction if he so desires. But the passage above does more than encapsulate a lesson learned by Charlie; it indicates a *shift* within

his perspectives—the way that he used to view the world no longer dictates the way he will view it from that moment forward.

This affirmation on behalf of the protagonist indicates that a negotiation has been achieved between social demand and personal desire, a negotiation that has led the character to a greater understanding of

who he is and what he wants. In other words, the passage marks a moment in which Charlie develops an awareness of his own *Bildung* process. This once again is reminiscent of ideas posited by Buckley (1974), in which he argues that once the protagonist of the Bildungsroman reaches maturity, he will feel the cultural and social restrictions that are often encountered though the process of growing and

maturing. However, the protagonist's journey—whether successful or not—will lead him/her to realize that the freedoms that are lost could still be recovered to some extent.

Although action leads Charlie to have an epiphany, it is the act of writing that ultimately helps him come to terms with his life, his past, and his future; through the passive act of reflecting and inscribing his own story, he is able to develop a better understanding of his own identity. Going back to the first letter he penned, he finally figures out why he is both happy and sad, and more important, he realizes that there are indeed perks that go hand-in-hand with being a wallflower. He concludes his final letter by stating that he will stop sending letters, and that he hopes the recipient believes that everything will turn out alright for him.

Thus concludes a journey into maturity and an effort toward self-cultivation. Although the reader experiences the development of a human being, this development is depicted, deliberated, and assessed through the act of writing—a nod to the Bildungsroman's long-running association with self-reflection and metaliterary trickery. Although the novel is definitely epistolary in structure, its aims, or rather its

function, is to portray *Bildung*, though from a voice and a method that is not usually seen in canonical texts that can also be approached as fictions of development. But rather than simply embracing aspects of the Bildungsroman genre, the epistolary structure and role of writing letters in *Perks* actively serves as a transformational agent that extends the scope of possibility within coming-of-age fiction. This transformation becomes apparent when focusing on the fact that the reader of Chbosky's novel is put in the place of the recipient of Charlie's letters, who in turn occupies the place of the assumed "wiser" narrator that is so typical of traditional Bildungsroman prose. Given the fact that young adult literature implicitly always strives to educate the reader in some fashion—and keeping in mind the role of the reader as a recipient of Charlie's letters—the novel ultimately attempts to depict a formation process while deliberately taking advantage of the formative nature of the epistolary form. Just as Charlie is pushed to become an active participant in his cultural and social setting, the reader is encouraged to become an active participant in the narrative.

Charlie's mental development fuses with the development of the letters themselves, to the point that the character, his writing, and the reader ostensibly come of age. Although Charlie points out that he will most likely discontinue sending letters to the "unknown" recipient, this does not necessarily imply that his development has ceased. Rather, writing has gotten him to the point that he needed to reach: the harmonization of the self within a respective social context. Thus, his desire to stop writing letters is not a halt of the development process; rather, it is an indication that his original aims for writing have been fulfilled. The evolution of Charlie's writing mimicked and replicated his own mental and spiritual growth; he wrote through the process of growth, he grew through the process of writing. And through his writing, we develop as readers: we indeed become people who are not only capable of listening to Charlie, but are also capable of understanding him.

Angel Daniel Matos is a doctoral student in English at the University of Notre Dame, where he also teaches a course on Multimedia Writing and Rhetoric. He is primarily interested in representations of social ostracism, race, gender, and sexuality in contemporary American novels and young adult fiction.

Just as Charlie is pushed to become an active participant in his cultural and social setting, the reader is encouraged to become an active participant in the narrative.

References

- Bickmore, S. T. (2008). It is inexcusable to deny *Inexcusable* a place in the classroom. *The ALAN Review*, 35(2), 75–83. Retrieved from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/>.
- Buckley, J. H. (1974). *Season of youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burd, N. (2009). *The vast fields of ordinary*. New York, NY: Dial Books.
- Chbosky, S. (1999). *The perks of being a wallflower*. New York, NY: MTV Pocket Books.
- Comeaux, P. (1999). A person/a paper/a promise remembered. In S. Chbosky, *The perks of being a wallflower* (70–73). New York, NY: MTV Pocket Books.
- Cormier, R. (1974). *The chocolate war*. New York, NY: Dell Laurel-Leaf.
- Dickens, C. (1860/1999). *Great expectations*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Feldman, D. (2011). Beyond the classroom: Writing as therapy. *Journal of Poetry Therapy: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Practice, Theory, Research, and Education*, 24(2), 93–104.
- Goethe, J. W. (1795-96/1989). *Wilhelm Meister's apprenticeship* (E.A. Blackall, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Golding, W. (1954/2003). *Lord of the flies*. New York, NY: Perigee Books.
- Hinton, S. E. (1967). *The outsiders*. New York, NY: The Penguin Group.
- Hirsch, M., & Miles, D. H. (1976). Defining Bildungsroman as a genre. *PMLA*, 91, 122–123. Retrieved from *JSTOR*.
- hooks, b. (2013). Theory as liberatory practice. In W. K. Kolmar & F. Bartkowski (Eds.), *Feminist theory: A reader* (pp. 37–42). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Kid, S. M. (2003). *The secret life of bees*. New York, NY: The Penguin Group.
- Krimmer, E. (2004). Mama's baby, papa's maybe: Paternity and *bildung* in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. *The German Quarterly*, 77, 257–277. Retrieved from *JSTOR*.
- Miles, D. H. (1974). The picaro's journey to the confessional: The changing image of the hero in the German Bildungsroman. *PMLA*, 89, 980–992. Retrieved from *JSTOR*.
- Miller, sj, & Slifkin, J. M. (2010). "Similar literary quality": Demystifying the AP English literature and composition open question. *The ALAN Review*, 37(2), 6–16. Retrieved from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/>.
- Salinger, J. D. (1951). *The catcher in the rye*. New York, NY: Little, Brown.
- Sammons, J. L. (1991). The Bildungsroman for non-specialists: An attempt at a clarification. In J. N. Hardin (Ed.), *Reflection and action: Essays on the Bildungsroman* (pp. 26–45). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Sanchez, A. (2007). *The God box*. New York, NY: Simon Pulse.
- Soter, A. O., & Connors, S. P. (2009). Beyond relevance to literary merit: Young adult literature as "literature." *The ALAN Review*, 37(1), 62–67. Retrieved from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/>.
- Steinbeck, J. (1939/2002). *The grapes of wrath*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Stendhal. (1830/2002). *The red and the black* (R. Gard, Trans.). New York, NY: The Penguin Group.
- Wasserman, E. (2003). The epistolary in young adult literature. *The ALAN Review*, 30(3), 48–51. Retrieved from <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/>.
- Whaley, J. C. (2011). *Where things come back*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.



Someone Like Me

I play “Spot the Asian” when I watch movies. I remember doing this for *The Avengers* recently, and feeling disheartened near the end of the film when I had yet to see an Asian American face on the big screen. The movie redeemed itself in a montage of post-conquering-the-bad-guys scenes in New York City, where I saw Asian faces as extras in the background and even a brief cameo of an excited Asian American boy with actual lines to speak. For those who are not people of color (PoC), this might seem an odd ritual, but imagine growing up and rarely seeing someone who looked like you in the media—not even in commercials, much less on television shows, in films, or in magazines. I was a voracious reader as a child, but it was only as an adult, looking back, when I realized that I had never read a book with a character who looked like me.

Imagine if you were a woman, and the television shows and commercials you saw only had men in them, that all the models in the magazines you read were men, that if you actually saw a woman reflected back at you from the screen or the page, it stood out so much

that you’d make a mental note of it. You would feel surprised and pleased. *Look*, you would think, *someone like me*. You would remember the television show or the product being sold as something positive, something you should keep an eye out for.

Because everywhere else in the media, you were rendered invisible.

Malinda Lo and I set up the Diversity in YA tour back in May of 2011 because both of our Asian-inspired YA fantasies were published within weeks of each other. We wanted it to be a celebration of diversity in young adult books and to continue the dialogue that had already been brewing among readers, librarians, educators, and those who worked in publishing. I remember quite vividly our panel at the Cambridge Public Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts, moderated by Roger Sutton from *The Horn Book Magazine*, when a woman raised her hand during the Q&A portion and asked why diversity mattered. Her children, she said, were half white and half Chinese, and they read books with no Chinese characters in them and loved them. It wasn’t their ethnicity or backgrounds that mattered, she

asserted. A good book was a good book.

There was a moment of stunned silence. We were at a Diversity in Young Adult books panel, after all. I was the only one who responded to her question, saying that it was true that if an author did her job, readers should be able to relate to the character no matter how dissimilar their backgrounds or experiences might be. However, I had *no choice* in the fact that I only saw white characters in books while I was growing up. Of course, it was only after the panel that the response I wished I had given came to me. (Isn’t it always like that?!) If a character’s background and ethnicity did not matter, if only good books mattered, then *why didn’t* we have stories featuring more non-white characters out there on the shelves?

Reading about white characters was the norm for me as a child. Should it remain the norm, given the increasingly diverse populations in the United States today? Shouldn’t the bookshelves be reflective of the multicultural populations that make us who we are?

Almost two years after the Diversity in YA tour, it is quite

clear to me that the topic is still very much on people's minds. In December 2012, the *New York Times* published an article titled "For Young Latino Readers, an Image Is Missing" about the lack of representation in children's books with Latino characters. I would say this issue extends to all children of color. In the same month, YALSA's The Hub published a blog post lamenting the lack of characters of color on young adult book covers. This was not the first of such blog posts to crop up in recent years.

My intention is certainly not to make light of the issues of whitewashing in young adult book covers (when a character of color's ethnicity is changed to white or obscured), but the issues are deeper and more problematic than at first glance. The fact of the matter is that the number of young adult books published each year featuring a main protagonist of color is still very low. As the only YA novel that came out in 2009 showcasing an Asian heroine boldly on its cover, my debut *Silver Phoenix* was *different*, simply by virtue of that fact. The novel stood out because there were so few young adult Asian-inspired fantasies or books with main Asian protagonists. Period. Even now, I can count the number on one hand.

And for all the talk about seeking different and original stories in publishing, it only takes one glance at the monochromatic covers on the young adult shelves to see the truth of the matter. Whitewashing book covers is never okay, but it is easier to do when it is only happening to a few books—because the vast majority of other books feature no characters of color. It is something that, despite causing an uproar

online in pockets of certain communities, can still be swept under the rug and soon be forgotten.

There is also the rather sad notion that when you feature a protagonist of color on the cover, the majority of white readers will bypass the book, thinking it isn't "for them." Is this conjecture or fact? I have no easy answers, but I will say that for every reader I've had who told me she picked up my novel because she loved Asian culture or manga or anime, there has been one who expressed surprise that she loved *Silver Phoenix*—because she wasn't at all "into" Asian culture.

As an author who just wanted to tell a good story, these types of responses are frustrating. Because my books are the rarity rather than the norm, and because I am also in the minority as a published Asian American author in the field, my books and I are forced to *represent* whether we want to or not. I am left to navigate the very difficult task of promoting diversity in books (and yes, this obviously is very important to me) while also trying to get the message across that what I write is *fun*. What I write are stories filled with magical adventures, and monsters, and cute boys, and falling in love for the first time.

For me, *story* matters most. And when we get to the tipping point where a non-western fantasy on the YA shelves isn't automatically seen as different because there are a dozen more to choose from, because it isn't so unusual to have a young adult novel that features a PoC main character, that is when representation on book covers won't be so crucial any longer. Because there will be actual repre-

sentation in the stories--there will be diversity in points of view and voices and experiences. And including characters of color on covers, too, will eventually become the norm rather than the exception.

At the *School and Library Journal's* Day of Dialogue in 2011, author Rita Williams-Garcia said that she wanted to see children's genre books featuring characters of color—mysteries and science fiction and thrillers. Books that aren't necessarily dealing with identity or identity crisis, but feature PoC characters simply being teens while saving the world, falling in love, and solving impossible mysteries. I think we are slowly moving toward this reality, although it often feels like painful baby steps.

What can you do as educators, librarians, or simply fans and readers of young adult books? How can you help to ensure a more diverse set of books published for our tweens and teens as we move forward? First, you need to actively seek out these novels to read. Books featuring a main protagonist of color are almost never lead titles, which means that they are less buzzed about by publishers, receive less marketing, and are less often carried in bookstores. Even as a reader who actively wants to support diversity, I have to keep my eyes and ears open for diverse reads.

It is also important to know when to talk about diversity and when to talk about good stories. You might be pitching the same book different ways, depending on what your reader wants and needs. It is a matter of understanding your audience and not just grabbing a book featuring a black protagonist and recommending it only to your

black readers. Or thinking the fairy tale that has a lesbian romance is only for LGBTQ or questioning teens. It is true that in retrospect, I realize that I wrote *Silver Phoenix* because it is a book I wish I could have read as a teen, being a huge fantasy lover. And I appreciate all the Asian American teens who wrote to me to say that they loved my stories. But I didn't write my novels solely for Asian American readers or those "into" Asian culture. I wrote novels that I hoped any fantasy reader would love.

So, to those of you who want to help diversify young adult books, I ask you to speak about the importance of diversity in novels, about reading widely from your own experiences, then reading widely beyond that. But also recommend diverse books because they are fun and enjoyable books to read, not for their message or lessons or because you believe it would be "good" for the teen reader. You don't have to wait until Black History Month to talk up or include books with black characters. And please do include diverse titles on lists beyond those focused on diversity so they are not relegated to that singular label.

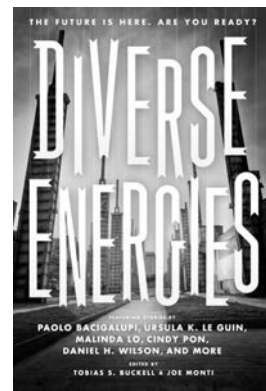
Resources and Recommendations

The Children's Book Council Diversity Committee formed last year and is part of the Children's Book Council. Their focus is on advocating for an inclusive and representative children's publishing industry and increasing the diversity of voices and experiences in children's and young adult literature. You can find them at cbcdiversity.com. Members include editors Alvina

But I didn't write my novels solely for Asian American readers or those "into" Asian culture. I wrote novels that I hoped any fantasy reader would love.

Ling from Little, Brown Books for Young Readers and Cheryl Klein from Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic.

I also wanted to mention Lee and Low Books (leeandlow.com), a publisher that focuses entirely on acquiring and publishing multicultural children's books, from picture-books through young adult novels. They recently added Tu Books as an imprint. Tu publishes middle grade and young adult fantasy, science fiction, and mystery with protagonists of color; this imprint is headed by Stacy Whitman (who was a founding member of the CBC Diversity committee). Recently, Tu Books released *Diverse Energies*, a multicultural YA dystopian anthology. It contains my first published short story, "Blue Skies," which is set in a future Taipei. The two editors, Joe Monti and Tobias Buckell, were inspired to put this anthology together in direct response to the recent surge in popularity of young adult dystopians that often feature a very white and straight future. After reading the contributions by authors such as Ursula K. Le Guin, Paolo Bacigalupi, and Ken Liu, I believe the anthology is wonderful in bringing together points of view beyond the norm.



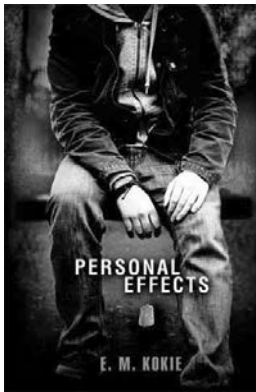
Diverse Energies edited by Tobias Buckell and Joe Monti

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts and speak on a subject that is close to my heart. Before I close, I would like to share a short list of young adult books that I have truly enjoyed and that are also inclusive of diverse characters.



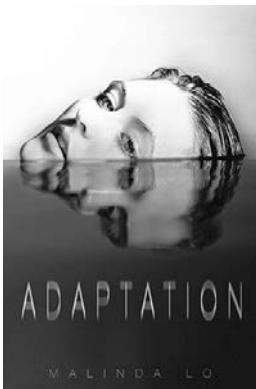
Beautiful Music for Ugly Children by Kirstin Cronn-Mills

Gabe was born as Elizabeth, but has always felt like a boy his entire life. Now, he tries to navigate actually living as a boy, much to the confusion and resistance of his family and friends. He finds solace in music and the liberty of being himself on his own radio show each week.



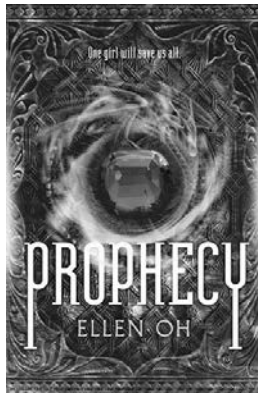
Personal Effects
by E. M. Kokie

Matt goes on a road trip after his older brother T. J. is killed in Iraq. He hopes to find T. J.'s secret girlfriend and possible child. Instead, it is a journey of self-discovery, hard truths, and ultimately love.



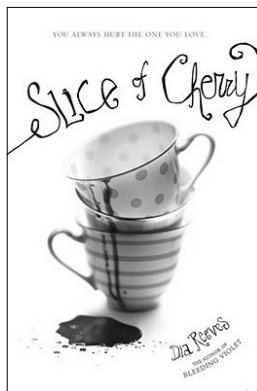
Adaptation
by Malinda Lo

Reese hasn't felt like herself ever since her car accident outside of Area 51. And she has the feeling that she is being followed, being watched. What really happened the day that birds flew into airplanes, causing them to crash? And how is Reese connected with it?



Prophecy
by Ellen Oh

An exciting new Korean-inspired young adult fantasy features Kira, demon hunter, as the only female in the king's army and the prince's bodyguard. What lengths will she have to go to to protect the young prince from treachery and to fulfill an age-old prophecy?



Slice of Cherry
by Dia Reeves

Kit and Fancy are sisters and best friends. Their father also happens to be the famous Bonesaw Killer, and the girls' basement is unlike any other teenager's. So what happens when the sisters decide that they, too, have a desire to kill?

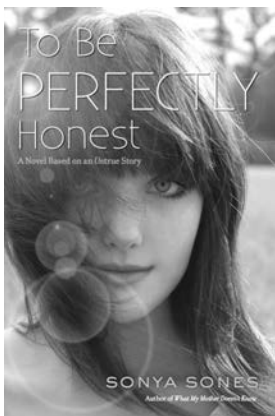
Cindy Pon is the author of *Silver Phoenix* (*Greenwillow*, 2009), which was named one of the Top Ten Fantasy and Science Fiction Books for Youth by the American Library Association's Booklist, and one of 2009's best Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Horror by VOYA. The sequel to *Silver Phoenix*, titled *Fury of the Phoenix*, was released in April 2011. Her first published short story is featured in *Diverse Energies*, a multicultural YA dystopian anthology from Tu Books (October 2012). Cindy is also a Chinese brush-painting student of over a decade. Visit her website at www.cindypon.com.



I Am Not Terrified of Writing This Article

I am not terrified of writing this article. My fingers aren't trembling as they hover over the keys of my smirking laptop. My throat isn't drier than dust. I don't feel like I'm heading into a pitch black tunnel. Full of rats. And bats. And bulgy black spiders. All by myself. Without a flashlight. This is going to be easy. A piece of cake . . .

When Melanie Hundley kindly offered me the opportunity to write this piece for *The ALAN Review* about my new novel in verse, *To Be Perfectly Honest (A Novel Based on an Untrue Story)*, I leapt at the chance. And when she told me



that the article should be 3,000 words long, I thought nothing of it. But that's because, being a verse novelist, I don't think in terms of word count. Word count doesn't even enter my mind. I don't write

every day until I knock out 1,000 words, like so many prolific prose writers do. I just write every day until I've finished at least one poem, striving to achieve the maximum emotional impact using the minimum number of words.

The thing is, when I so cavalierly said yes to Melanie, I didn't realize how much work I was actually committing to. And now that it's come to my attention that 3,000 words translates roughly into 10 double-spaced pages, I'm not hyperventilating, I'm not biting my nails down to their nubs, and I'm certainly not gorging on gummy worms. I can *do* this thing . . . right?

I mean, I just did a word count and found out that I've already written 250 words. Not including that last sentence, even. Or *this* one—which brings it up to 282. Why, I'm already almost one tenth of the way there! All I have to do now is come up with 2,718 more scintillating, intelligent, thought-provoking, illuminating, brilliant words and I'll be done.

Oh my *God!* What have I gotten myself into?

This is a question I am not

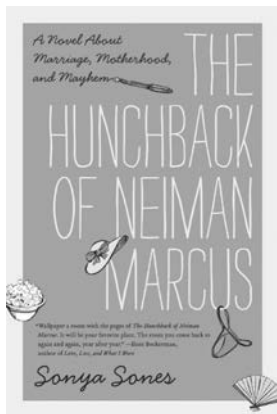
unfamiliar with. A few years ago, I found myself standing on the deck of a boat that had just embarked on a whale-watching cruise. Moments after we headed off, I noticed that the water felt choppier than it had looked from the shore. Infinitely choppier. As we chugged out of the harbor, plowing into even more wildly churning water, I could feel myself turning greener, and greener still. But I knew that there could be no turning back—that for the next three hours, I would just have to ride it out. I gazed longingly at the dock, clutched my stomach, and thought to myself, "Oh my *God!* What have I gotten myself into?"

And to be perfectly honest, that's exactly how I felt, two years ago, when I was just beginning to write *To Be Perfectly Honest*—like I was stuck on a boat that was heading into a storm-tossed sea, and there could be no turning back.

Actually, that's how I feel *every* time I start a new novel. And I had owed Simon & Schuster *this* one for many moons. But whenever I sat down to work on it, I found myself wanting to write about how it felt to be approaching middle age, and to be facing an imminent empty nest, and to be taking care of my

sick mother—not exactly subjects that teens would find enthralling.

I fought this dastardly urge for awhile, but eventually I gave in and let myself write my first novel in



verse for grown-ups, *The Hunchback of Neiman Marcus*. (I say it's for grown-ups because if I say “my first

adult book,” it sounds too much like porn.) It's a coming-of-middle-age story about learning to grow old disgracefully. Writing in the voice of an adult was the perfect palette cleanser for me, after having written my first four novels in the voices of teens. Though now I was so late delivering my manuscript to the spectacularly patient people at Simon & Schuster that I was riddled with guilt, and I was determined to complete my new book for them in record time, using whatever means necessary to make that happen. I even considered hiring a ghostwriter. But I'm too terrified of ghosts.

Usually, I begin my novels by noodling around, writing a handful of poems exploring a certain theme that has risen to the forefront of my consciousness. And after a few weeks or months of this, there's an “aha!” moment when my character introduces herself to me, and I begin hearing her voice in my head. At this point, if I listen very carefully, she'll start telling me her story, and then all I have to do is write it

down. Which I know sounds kind of hokey and mystical, but that's how it actually happens.

When I began writing *To Be Perfectly Honest*, I knew I wanted to explore the theme of dishonesty—the effect that lies have on the people who tell them, and the effect that lies have on the people who are told them. I've been the victim of some pretty huge lies in my lifetime, and I hoped that writing this novel would help me come to terms with that.

But I was in a hurry. I didn't have time to sit around and wait until my character introduced herself to me. And when I began thinking about whom she might be, I realized that Colette, a minor character from my novel *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies*, would be the perfect unreliable narrator for my new story. And since she already existed, I wouldn't have to spend any valuable time figuring out who she was. Colette hadn't told any lies in that book (at least not any that I was aware of), but I knew that she'd be the sort of girl who'd have an excellent reason to lie a lot. She explains why with heartwrenching clarity in the poem to the right.

(Melanie, dear, if I include the occasional poem in this article, doesn't that take up lots of extra space? And doesn't that mean that I don't have to write quite so many words? Say yes, Melanie. For the love of God, please say yes!)

Now where was I? Oh, yes. I was about to say that now that I'd chosen Colette as my main character, I didn't have time to noodle around and wait until she was ready to tell me her story. Which

is why I decided to do something I had never done before. I decided to write an outline. Although I had no clue how to *do* this, and felt, in a word, daunted.

So I did what any other author in my shoes would have done: I Googled “outlining your novel.” This eventually led me to reading about The Hero's Journey, Joseph Campbell's twelve-step theory of

My mother
is Marissa Shawn.
Yes. *That* Marissa Shawn.

The one who starred in all those blockbusters
with George Clooney and Johnny Depp
and Brad Pitt,

the one who's got
three Golden Globes
and two Oscars displayed on the mantel,

the one who's more talented,
more beautiful, more just plain awesome
than I will *ever* be.

That's why I'm always making stuff up—
to try to make myself seem
more fascinating than I actually am.

At least that's what my shrink says.
Because the problem with being
Marissa Shawn's daughter

is that no one
is interested in *me*.
And I mean *no* one.

Once people find out
who my mother is,
they all want to be my best friend.

But after that,
I'm never really sure if it's *me* they like
or just the fact that *she's* my mother.

Oh, wait.
I *am* sure—
it's just the fact that she's my mother.

storytelling that follows the odyssey of the archetype known as The Hero while he achieves wondrous deeds on behalf of his tribe. But trying to hang my outline on Campbell's twelve steps, with headings like "call to adventure," "meeting the mentor," and "crossing the threshold," felt a tad too complicated. Okay—*way* too complicated.

So, after a brief detour to watch some YouTube videos of kittens teaching babies how to snuggle puppies, I continued on my quest, and ended up at Syd Field's site. Field, author of *Screenplay* and *The Screen Writer's Workbook*, has identified a paradigm that most screenplays follow—a simple three-act structure that holds the story together: setup, confrontation, and resolution. And although I was writing a novel, and not a screenplay, I figured I could adapt his paradigm for my purposes.

According to Field, these three acts are separated by two plot points. A plot point is an event that pushes the story in a whole new direction, leading into the next act. There's even a handy little chart: So all I had to do was fill in this chart and I'd be good to go. Here is how Act One of my outline looked:

Act One

Setup:

Colette, a self-identified liar, and her little brother Will are being dragged out of town for the summer by their movie star mother to go on location with her to San Luis Obispo, "the armpit of the universe."

Inciting Incident:

When Colette arrives in this new town, she meets and falls madly in love with Connor, a sexy guy who rides a motorcycle. Suddenly San Luis Obispo doesn't seem like an armpit. It seems like Paradise.

Plot Point #1:

Colette learns that Connor has cancer.

I won't show you how I filled out the rest of this chart, or I'd be giving too much away. But you get the idea. And fortunately, I did, too. Working from this simple outline, knowing where this obsessive love story was heading, and knowing the shocking twist that was coming, made my work much, much easier. I still felt as if I was stuck on a boat that was heading into a storm-tossed sea, but at least now

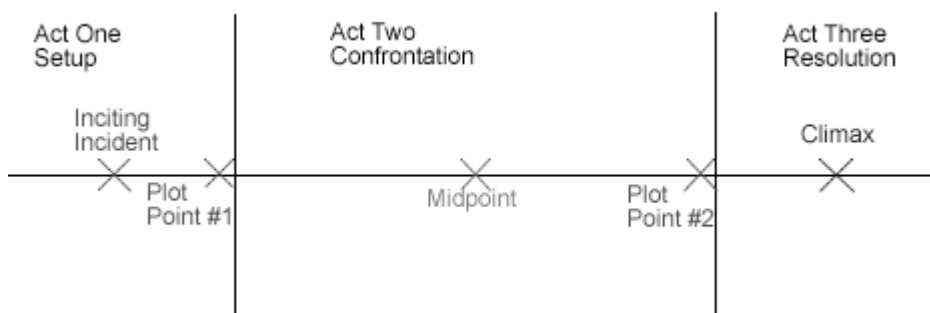
I had a good supply of Dramamine with me.

I began writing every day and making a fair amount of progress. On the good days, I felt like a writing goddess. On the bad days, I felt like I was in writing prison, serving a life sentence. I soon found that working at home, as lovely as my home-office was, provided me with far too many temptations—too many episodes of *Downton Abbey* begging to be watched, too much popcorn crying out to be popped, too many floors clamoring to be scrubbed

Yes, folks, it's true. When I hit a snag in my writing, when I simply couldn't come up with yet another way to describe how Colette's heart felt when she was gazing into Connor's amber eyes, I would rather have scrubbed floors than just sit there staring at my computer screen for one more agonizing instant. Clearly, if I was to write this book at warp speed, I would have to get out of my freakin' house.

And then, the universe presented me with an incredible gift. I went on a bicycle ride to clear my head one afternoon, and discovered a public place that had a comfortable chair, a plug, and a view of the ocean. And for reasons I could not fathom, it was completely deserted. So I tricked out my bicycle with a basket on the front for my computer and another basket on the back for the entire contents of my desk. Then, I pedaled off every morning to spend the day at what I had dubbed "my secret office." I kept its location a secret because I was afraid that if word got out about this spot, I'd soon be standing in a

The Three-Act Paradigm:





Sones's "getaway" vehicle when writing got tough

very long line waiting for my turn to use that one precious plug.

The days at my heavenly secret office rolled on, and just as you might expect, I began getting lots more work done, only pausing now and then to glance up at the sparkling Pacific for delicious gulps of inspiration. Had anyone been there to observe me, they might have thought me a little mad, sitting there cackling to myself over one of Colette's more clever lies, swooning over Connor's irresistible charm,

or giggling over some wisecrack Colette's little brother Will had tossed off.

I never had a little brother of my own, so creating Will was the next best thing. Being seven years old, he's lost several of his front teeth, which makes him lisp. So to temper what might have become a cutesy-wootsy affectation, I've given him a real foul mouth. When Colette promises to be home soon, he tells her, "You better be. Or your ath will be grath." And he's



The view from Sones's "secret office"

always asking embarrassing questions. When he notices a fan ogling his movie star mother, he says, "Mommy, why ith that man thtaring at your boobth?" Will provides some much-needed comic relief during some of the heavier parts of the story.

When October came, I was right on schedule to reach page 200 and finish *To Be Perfectly Honest* by December. But then I made a horrifying discovery—my secret office had free wireless Internet. Noooooooo! Now, whenever I hit a snag in my writing, I could click over to the Huffington Post and read about Siamese quadruplets, or check out photos of celebrities looking hideous in their bikinis. In other words, I was doomed.

But fortunately, a friend told me about Freedom—this ridiculously inexpensive software (a mere \$10!) that blocks the Internet from your computer for as many minutes as you ask it to. I usually ask it for 90 minutes, and by the time those 90 minutes are over, I've made terrific progress on my manuscript. Seriously. You should buy Freedom, too. It'll change your life. Or, you could just exercise a modicum of self-control and save yourself the 10 bucks.

(I've just taken a break from writing, in order to do a word count. And I see that I'm all the way up to 2,334 words. How did I accomplish this miraculous feat? 90 minutes of Freedom, baby!)

But this is no time to celebrate—I've got 666 more words to go before I sleep.

So, as I was about to tell you, by November I was working seven days a week, eight or ten hours a day. I was a lean, mean writing

machine. With the emphasis on “mean.” All work and no play was making Sonya a dull shrew. My poor husband. My poor children. My poor, poor Colette . . . The more miserable I became, the more miserable her circumstances seemed to get. Though at least I was able to *use* my misery—letting my own angst inform the descriptions of Colette’s angst.

Then, finally, December arrived and I did indeed reach page 200, right on schedule. But, alas and alack, page 200 turned out to be just past the halfway mark of my story. Never had I misjudged so dismally the number of pages it would take to tell a tale. My holidays were not happy. Though my husband and I did manage to enjoy New Year’s Eve, sharing a bottle of champagne while I jotted down notes for a scene where Connor plies Colette with bubbly:

We turn to face each other,
lock eyes,
and take our first frothy sip—

so foamy
and tingly and creamy
all at once,

like a tiny wave
breaking on the shore
of my tongue.

Then we take another sip.
And another
and another and another . . .

And soon we’re giggling like little
kids
till I can feel the bubbles
bubbling all through me like soap-
suds . . .

and we’re rolling around on the
comforter
and tickling each other and laughing
and the room’s spinning into a dizzy
blur

and everything’s
glowing and floating
and we’re kissing and laughing

and kissing
and kissing
and kissing . . .

Research can be fun. And so can writing. And so can writing about writing. And it is my fondest wish that reading about the writing of *To Be Perfectly Honest* has provided you, my dear readers, with some fun, too.

Eventually, I managed to finish my manuscript. The enormous burden of guilt was lifted, and I felt as though an elephant had stepped off of my chest. The book will be coming out in August and I’ll be embarking on a tour in September. So all’s well that ended well.

And now, the time has come for me to begin writing a *new* novel. But I don’t feel like I’m stuck on a boat that’s heading into a storm-tossed sea. I’m not hyperventilating. I’m not biting my nails down to their nubs. And I’m certainly not gorging on gummy worms. My fingers aren’t trembling as they hover over the keys of my smirking laptop. My throat isn’t drier than dust. I don’t feel as if I’m heading into a pitch black tunnel. Full of rats. And bats. And bulgy black spiders. All by myself. Without a flashlight. This is going to be easy. A piece of cake . . .

Oh my *God!* What have I gotten myself into?

(Okay—that’s 2,853 words. Close enough.)



From Poop to Published: My Writing Journey

Until the end of fifth grade, I attended a brick box of a school, sterile and anti-septically clean. We formed lines outside the doors in the morning, marched through the halls in lines, sat in lines, and thought in lines. Occasionally a teacher would read a tiny excerpt from some book out loud, and then we would do a craft project that was perhaps tangentially related to the book. After hearing a bit of *Frog and Toad* (Lobel, 1970), I drew green blobs meant to represent Frog after an eighteen-wheeler smushed him. (Yes, I was *that* kind of child.)

My parents took me out of that intellectual wasteland and put me in a noisy, chaotic, dirty school—The Children's House—where the kids were in charge. Literally. For example, I had to go to Math and Reading five times each week—but I could go anytime I wanted to. If I got my ten class sessions done Monday and Tuesday, I could goof off for the rest of the week and no one cared. More often, I goofed off on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, tried to cram all ten class sessions into Thursday and Friday, and got in big trouble when I failed to complete my commitment for the

week.

But the most glorious part of this school wasn't the unorthodox schedule—it was the fact that we were expected to write. Every day. And read. Every day. And we could write about anything we wanted to and read absolutely anything we wanted to. In my three years at The Children's House, I never was given a writing prompt. Or an essay test. Instead, I was expected to write at least a page every morning before I was allowed to leave Morning Work.

When I mention that I was allowed to write about anything, I mean exactly that. One day, a girl in my class bet me that she knew more dirty words than I did. So we spent the next three days in Morning Work doing nothing but writing lists of dirty words, and the teacher let us! I'm still a little bitter, though, because she beat me—she knew more than 180 dirty words, and I could only think of 147.

But most of my time in Morning Work was spent writing my first novel—an epic work of pure, distilled genius titled *Captain Poopy's Sewer Adventures*. I wrote a page per day for three years. I even illustrated this opus, although I can

only draw two things: poop and hot dogs. So I drew them both in the margins.

Unfortunately, The Children's House was only a K–8 school. (Otherwise, I'd still be a student there. I'd be in 38th grade now.) I went to a traditional high school and quit writing for a long time. Now I wish I'd kept it up, because nine years after I quit, Dav Pilkey (1997) published *Captain Underpants*. And now he's rich and famous. But there's still one thing I do better than Mr. Pilkey—I spell better than he does. He forgets the silent “e” on the end of his name on the front cover of *every single one* of his books. You don't see me typing Mik Mullin, do you? So I'm a better speller than he is, and you can tell him I said so.

The Children's House's kid-centered philosophy extended to reading as well. I was never once assigned a book to read. Or told to choose from a list of books I could read. Or asked to select my books based on the length of the words and sentences they contained. I mostly brought books from home to read, because the collection at school was sadly lacking in adult science fiction.

My reading interests broadened but I never gave up my first love, young adult literature.

I can hear the protests already: that kind of kid-centered education could never work in today's test-obsessed, common-core world. And while I question both the validity and usefulness of standardized testing, my own test results were illustrative of the power of freedom in education. At the end of 5th grade, I took the California Achievement Test and scored a 4.9 grade-level equivalent in math. In sixth grade, after a year of studying at my own pace, I took the exact same test and scored a 12.9 grade-level equivalent. (My reading scores were 12.9 both years.)

High school, with its stultifying press of assignments, ended my personal writing life. In 9th and 10th grades, I played the school game, loading my schedule with the toughest classes offered, dutifully turning in every assignment, slanting everything I wrote to fit whatever I believed the teacher wanted to hear. My report cards gleamed like a state-fair-winning apple.

Early in 11th grade, I quit. The combination of social stress and intellectual monotony overwhelmed my limited coping skills: I skipped school whenever I could get away with it, left in the middle of the day several times, and didn't do any of the assigned work. Needless to say, I quickly went from a straight-A

student to a straight-F student.

I'm not sure I would have survived high school without an escape hatch; luckily, I already had one. With my squeakily perfect 9th- and 10th-grade record, I had applied to be a Rotary Youth Exchange student. Early in my junior year, I was informed that they had an opening—not in my first choice country, Costa Rica. Or my second choice, Argentina. But in the 14th country I'd listed on the application: Brazil. Did I still want to go? Does a drowning man want a life ring? I went.

High school in Portuguese—a language I'd never studied—was challenging enough to interest me. And in Brazil, many of the high schools focus on trades. I studied construction engineering, learning to plan and draw structural, electrical, and plumbing systems for schools, high-rise apartments, and office buildings. Forty-three hundred miles of physical distance equated to about forty-three thousand miles in social standing. I went from being one of the lepers in my ritzy high school to being something akin to a rock star in the backwater city of Cuiabá. It was a great year.

When I returned, I couldn't face the prospect of another semester in high school, so I trooped down to the Educational Services Center to take the G.E.D. It was astonishingly easy. Perhaps my biggest regret from my high school years is that I didn't take the G.E.D. immediately after 8th grade. I'm certain I would have passed, and thereby saved myself from a starring role in the four-year horror movie titled *Mike Mullin Goes to High School*.

I did well in the freer environment of college and graduate school, racking up near-perfect GPAs and earning an undergraduate degree in Political Science and a Master's in Business Administration. I was young and foolish, believing that the size of my bank account would somehow correlate with my happiness, and so I entered the corporate world, working in marketing for many years after finishing my MBA.

But underneath the executive veneer I wore, my heartwood still coursed with the sap of a writer. An MBA classmate once read part of my contribution to a group paper out loud. "Too much?" I asked. "Should I take it out?" "No," he replied. "I'm just amazed. I wouldn't have come up with that phrase in a million years." At Procter & Gamble, where I worked on the Pampers brand, my memos were famous for their brevity, persuasiveness, and humor. Within my first month there, I'd written one—an analysis of a particular type of coupon—that landed on the CEO's desk.

And I never quit reading. I had been reading young adult fiction since I was ten and adult science fiction and fantasy since I was twelve. A large portion of the substantial checks I was earning went to buy books—many of the more than 5,000 volumes my wife and I have amassed were acquired during that period. My reading interests broadened—I read more nonfiction, literary fiction, and poetry—but I never gave up my first love, young adult literature.

When I returned to writing after my long and ultimately miserable sojourn in corporate America,

it was natural that I'd write young adult fiction. My first attempt, a horror novel titled *Heart's Blood*, was so awful that two of the three literary agents who read it quit the publishing business forever. My second novel was *Ashfall*, which has won numerous awards and sold more than 30,000 copies to date.



Ashen Winter is book 2 in Mullin's *Ashfall* series.

I'm well aware that my experience isn't typical, and that it isn't possible to generalize from a sample size of one. But I do believe that my literacy history illustrates some of the grievous wrong turns that policymakers are forcing on educators today.

Teaching is difficult enough without interference from policymakers. They seem determined to make teachers' jobs more challenging, what with high-stakes tests, bizarre evaluation systems, and ever-more-complicated voucher schemes. Here's the simple, core idea that the policymakers are missing: humans get better at whatever activities they practice (Gladwell,

2002). If you read a lot, you become a better reader. If you write a lot, you become a better writer. If you spend a lot of time taking tests, you become a better test taker.

Test taking isn't a particularly valuable skill in today's job market. I've held more than a dozen jobs in seven different industries over the last 30 years, and I've taken a grand total of two tests during that time. Both were pre-employment tests, and both were quite a bit easier than the tests my wife administers to her fourth-grade students.

Test taking not only isn't a useful skill; it's also harming our students' ability to perform in the workplace. The emphasis on testing is one of the factors contributing to the decline in creativity among America's youth (Kim, 2011). And what's the most important job skill according to a 2010 survey of 1,500 CEOs? Creativity (IBM, 2010).

This makes perfect sense if you think about it a moment. All the noncreative jobs are being replaced by automation. Three million truck drivers will soon lose their jobs in the US as we transition to computer-driven vehicles. Cashiers are being replaced with self-check-out lanes, and the widespread adoption of RFID tags will only accelerate that process. Who will stop to

This is why top-down education—like Common Core—is tragically misguided. Humans learn best when they are intrinsically motivated.

wait for a cashier when it becomes possible to wave your phone at a terminal as you drive your whole cart of groceries through a scanner that tallies them all instantly? Factory workers in the US quit doing tasks like screwing caps on toothpaste tubes more than 50 years ago. Today, they're largely problem solvers who monitor and maintain millions of dollars in high-tech machinery—tasks that require analytical skill and mental flexibility. Skill in memorization and completing rote tasks—like test taking—is worse than useless in these careers; it retards development of the essential 21st-century job skill: creativity. The jobs of the future will go to writers, actors, engineers, architects, artists, designers, scientists, teachers, and managers—jobs that can't be automated.

Other skills that will continue to matter include reading, writing, and mathematical literacy. I define mathematical literacy as the ability to analyze and use numbers and statistics. What we spend the most time teaching our students and testing—how to do mathematical operations—is utterly irrelevant. The next time someone needs to solve a quadratic equation by hand in a business setting will be the first time that's happened in well over 50 years. Testing does nothing to improve students' ability to read, write, and use math. What does work? Practice. That's why the top predictor of reading competence is students' enjoyment of reading (Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, & Wigfield, 2012). Students who love to read are the ones who read more and get better at it. Students who love to write are the ones who write more and get better at it.

If [students] enjoy reading, they read more. And if they read more, they get better at it.

Let's try a thought experiment. Imagine that I told one group of people that they had to read my novel *Ashfall* as part of their job—that it contained important concepts relating to geology and the monomyth, and that they would be given a comprehension test when they finished. A second group, the control group, will be comprised of people who happened across *Ashfall* in a library or bookstore, thought it looked interesting, and picked it up to read. Which group do you suppose will enjoy the novel more? Which group will be more motivated to read?

This is why top-down education—like Common Core—is tragically misguided. Humans learn best when they are intrinsically motivated. Freedom is so powerful as a motivational force that it takes very little of it to have a huge impact on students' lives. I was only enrolled at The Children's House for three years, yet that brief period dramatically altered the trajectory of my life. I'm a successful writer now largely due to those three years.

When I entered sixth grade, I was struggling with basic math. When I left eighth grade, I had mastered mathematical concepts that I didn't see again until my second semester of calculus in college.

Another manifestation of the current mania for top-down education is Lexiles and their ilk. Here's a multiple-choice test: when selecting a book to read for enjoyment, do you check its reading level? A. Yes, B. No. Students are no different. And guess what, if they enjoy reading, they read more. And if they read more, they get better at it (Stanovich, 1986). By limiting students' reading choices, Lexiles and similar systems make it more difficult for teachers to inspire proficient readers. For a more thorough discussion of the deficiencies of the Lexile system (and lo, they are legion), see my blog post on the subject at <http://mikemullin.blogspot.com/2012/10/how-lexiles-harm-students.html>.

What can be done? I take heart from the example of the courageous teachers in Seattle boycotting some of their district's standardized testing (Kaminsky, 2013). I know many teachers are creating space within their classrooms for student-centered learning, and many parents are seeking alternative schools or homeschooling rather than subjecting their children to a one-size-fits-all, sausage-grinder educational system. Even small steps can have

a big impact on students' lives. Three years was enough to turn my educational career around and ultimately, to lead me to a satisfying and fulfilling profession. I hope all our students will be afforded the same kinds of opportunities I had. If they are, our economy, and our democracy, will be better for it.

References

- Gladwell, M. (2002). *The tipping point*. Boston, MA: Little Brown.
- IBM. (2010). *Global CEO study: Creativity selected as most crucial factor for future success*. Retrieved from <http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/press-release/31670.wss>.
- Kaminsky, J. (2013). *Teachers at Seattle school boycott standardized test*. Retrieved from <http://news.msn.com/us/teachers-at-seattle-school-boycott-standardized-test-3>.
- Kim, K. (2011). The creativity crisis: The decrease in creative thinking scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. *Creativity Research Journal*, 23, 285–295.
- Lobel, A. (1970). *Frog and Toad are friends*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Pilkey, D. (1997). *The adventures of Captain Underpants*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Schiefele, U., Schaffner, E., Möller, J., & Wigfield, A. (2012). Dimensions of reading motivation and their relation to reading behavior and competence. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47, 427–463.
- Stanovich, K. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 21, 360–407.

Harvey Daniels: 2012 CEL Exemplary Leader Award Recipient

Harvey “Smokey” Daniels is an extraordinary teacher leader whose writing, presentations, and professional development work define a model for teaching and leadership development based on research, best practice, common sense, trust, and respect. An author, editor, and consultant, he is a professor of Education at National Louis University in Chicago, Illinois (currently on leave). Smokey served as Co-director of the Illinois Writing Project for 26 years. A prolific writer, he has authored or coauthored 17 books, beginning with *Best Practice: Bringing Standards to Life in America’s Classrooms*, now in its fourth edition. In addition to books, he has contributed numerous articles and essays in professional journals. A common thread runs through his writings: literacy is accessible to all, and it should offer joy to all. In 1989, Smokey founded a summer residential retreat, the Walloon Institute. During Walloon’s two decades, thousands of teachers from across the country were renewed and inspired, helping them to create classrooms that are experiential and active through increased levels of choice and responsibility, which in turn leads to higher student achievement. Smokey’s commitment to exceptional teaching led him to spearhead the creation of Best Practice High School in Chicago in 1966. In addition, his belief in the leadership capacity of committed teachers launched the Center for City Schools, a dozen interrelated projects that supported teachers and parents in restructuring schools around Chicago and the Midwest. In his numerous workshops and presentations, Smokey connects theory and practice in a way that embodies the kind of learning we envision for our students and ourselves. Smokey Daniels has initiated work that is visionary, and his impact on the profession is of lasting significance.

Search for New Editor of *English Education*

The Conference on English Education is seeking a new editor for *English Education*. The term of the present editors, Lisa Scherff and Leslie Rush, will end in July 2015. Applicants for the editorship should be tenured (or have completed the tenure process with a reasonable certainty that tenure will be granted) and should have published in *English Education* or a national journal of similar quality.

Applicants should send a letter of application to be received **no later than August 31, 2013**. Letters should be accompanied by the applicant’s vita, one published writing sample (article or chapter), a onepage statement of the applicant’s vision for the future of the journal, and letter(s) specifying financial support from appropriate administrators at the applicant’s institution. Applicants are urged to consult with administrators on the question of time, resources, and other institutional support that may be required for the editorship of this journal.

Applications should be submitted via email in PDF form to kaustin@ncte.org; please include “EE Editor Application” in the subject line. Direct queries to Kurt Austin, NCTE Senior Developer for Publications, at the email address above or call 217-328-3870, extension 3619.

Finalists will be interviewed by the search committee at the NCTE Annual Convention in Boston in November 2013. The applicant appointed by the CEE Executive Committee will effect a transition, preparing for his or her first issue to be published in October 2015. The appointment is for five years, nonrenewable.



As Time Goes By

From Maryann Haddock, Highlights of the Preconvention Institute

(ALAN Newsletter [Coeditors Alleen Pace Nilsen and Ken Donelson], Winter 1977)

The 1975 workshop with Ray Bradbury as the keynote speaker would have been almost impossible to top, and those expecting this year's workshop to be as eventful were disappointed. There were, however, some memorable moments: Ken Donelson read a paper which was full of important and exciting information, much of which was lost because of the delivery at warp-10 speeds. He listed his ten favorite writers of honest and real books: Nathaniel Benchley, Bill and Vera Cleaver, Susan Cooper, John Donovan, Rosa Guy, Isabelle Holland, M. E. Kerr, Patricia McKillop, Mary Stolz.

Jean Craighead George delighted the workshop with bits of information about her research for her various books. (She said that biting a wolf [dog] on the nose would show it who was boss, but so far this hasn't worked with my adolescent boxer.) Nicolasa Mohr

read some of her book *El Bronx Remembered*, the purpose of which she said was to "touch and make aware without browbeating . . ."

Virginia Hamilton and Jay Bennett were on the same panel, a juxtaposition I found as incongruous as a panel composed of a Picasso and a hack producer of "original" oil paintings (20 cable cars or Golden Gate Bridges a day), sitting down to discuss with an audience how they create.

My absolute favorite presentation of all was the panel with Winifred Rosen (*Cruisin for a Bruisin*), Richard Peck (*Are You in the House Alone?*), and Rosa Guy (*Ruby*) who were discussing three new books which are controversial in that they deal with aspects of sexuality which may not have been presented as frankly in previous adolescent literature. Richard Peck always makes things interesting because he never fails to infuriate every woman in the audience. Wilfred Rosen, for example, had just finished reading a few passages of her book (she read them beautifully—moving the audience to both hilarity and tears), and had noted that the book was indeed based on her own experiences. She said she had concluded

that one person's experience, if it is honest, will reflect everyone's experience. Richard Peck immediately got up and said that he *never* put anything of himself into *any* of his books—in fact, if something interested him, he said he ran from it. Considering the topic of his latest book (rape) and the fact that most of the protagonists are adolescent girls, perhaps this is the only comment he could make. Rosa Guy defended her inclusion of a lesbian relationship in *Ruby* as part of the human condition—people reaching out to people. However, most of the comments of others about the book seemed to focus on this incidental part.

The book that I heard criticized most often was Judy Blume's *Forever*, most people commenting that they couldn't remember any name except the one given to the penis (Ralph). The book that was praised most was Judith Guest's *Ordinary People*.

The workshop continues to be one of the most revitalizing forces for teachers that NCTE offers. The opportunity to interact with the authors and to hear about new books is invaluable.

From Ken Donelson, “Of Gangs and Pigs and Pregnant Girls, of Trees and Trials and Barbarians: Recommended Adolescent and Adult Novels”

(*Arizona English Bulletin* [Editor Ken Donelson], April 1972)

What are the most popular books worth recommending to junior or senior high school students? If a recent poll of junior-senior high school English teachers and professors of English education can be trusted, the three adolescent novels most widely recommended to young people (or teachers trying to stay alert to new and good books) are Susan Hinton’s *The Outsiders*, Paul Zindel’s *The Pigman*, and Ann Head’s *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones*. The three adult novels most widely recommended were John Knowles’ *A Separate Peace*, Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*. (p. 65)

From Robert Small, “The Essentials of Education and the Young Adult Novel with a Look at What Thomas Jefferson Might Have Thought of It All”

(*Connecticut English Journal* [Editor Donald R. Gallo], Fall 1980)

The great works of literature tempt us to teach them to children and teenagers. Still, we know that they were not written for children and teenagers. George Eliot surely did not have fifteen-year-olds in mind when she wrote *Silas Marner*; nor did Dickens when he wrote *A Tale of Two Cities*. Hawthorne certainly was not envisioning a sixteen-year-

old reader when he wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, and Steven Crane clearly did not have in mind a high school junior when he completed *The Red Badge of Courage*. But we insist on teaching those books to those inappropriate readers

If, however, there is an emphasis on people, ideas, and insights in the study of literature in the high school, surely it must concern itself with the books that students *can* read and understand, books that they can find meaningful, books that they can discuss with other students and with adults. . . . The best books to challenge the ideas of teenage readers, the evidence is clear, are young adult novels like *A Hero Ain’t Nothin’ but a Sandwich* (Childress) and *Are You There, God? It’s Me, Margaret* (Blume). Students respond to books by authors like Judy Blume, Alice Childress, Katie Lyle, and M. E. Kerr. Young adult novelists, like the great writers for adults such as Tolstoy and Dickens, emphasize people first, then events. Behind all their works lie insights and profound ideas. . . . (p. 9)

From David Almond, *The Ultimate Teen Book Guide: More than 700 Great Books*

(edited by Daniel Hahn, Leonie Flynn, and associate editor Susan Reuben [Walker, 2008], p. vii)

Books. There they are lined up on shelves or stacked on a table. There they are wrapped in their jackets, lines of neat print on nicely bound pages. They look like such orderly, static things. Then you, the reader, come along. You open the book jacket, and it can be like opening

the gates into an unknown city, or opening the lid on a treasure chest. You read the first word and you’re off on a journey of exploration and discovery. When you find your own best books, which might be nothing like the best books for other readers, a kind of magic occurs. The language and the story and your own imagination blend and react and fizz with life and probability. Sometimes it’s like the book was written just for you, as if it’s been waiting just for you, the perfect reader. . . .

From Anita Silvey, *500 Great Books for Teens*

(Houghton Mifflin, 2006, p. xii)

Great teenage literature has always addressed the fundamental questions of the teenage years. Who am I? Do I matter? How do I relate to others? In that literature, teens get blown off course by their hormones, just as they do in the real world. Teenage angst and ennui shape many of the characters. All young adult literature explores the problems of separation and empowerment. Sometimes that process can have terrible results—as Robert Cormier demonstrated in *The Chocolate War*—but usually in coming-of-age stories the movement from childhood to adulthood is inevitable and necessary. Through their angst, the protagonists become adults, separate from parents, and exercise independent judgment from the adults around them.

Hence the very content of this literature sometimes threatens adults; young adult books are the most challenged and censored books in the United States.

**From Donald R. Gallo,
*Speaking for Ourselves:
Autobiographical Sketches
by Notable Authors of
Books for Young Adults***

(NCTE, 1990, p. xiii)

How did Richard Peck get started as a writer? What motivated Anne McCaffrey to write science fiction? How has M. E. Kerr's writing been influenced by her mother? How is Sue Ellen Bridgers' life reflected in the settings of her novels? Was Paul Zindel's teenage life as bizarre as the lives of the teenage characters in his novels? . . .

This collection is an effort to provide both students and teachers with an inexpensive, readable, and convenient-size collection of information about the most notable authors of books for young adults that can be kept in the classroom or used at home for easy reference. This collection no doubt will be used by librarians who have an interest in young adult fiction. (Some of the authors whose autobiographical remarks are included are: Joan Aiken, Lloyd Alexander, Sandy Asher, Avi, Jay Bennett, Judy Blume, Robin Brancato, Bruce Brooks, Eve Bunting, Alice Childress, Vera Cleaver, James Lincoln Collier, Susan Cooper, Robert Cormier, Chris Crutcher, Maureen Daly, Paula Danziger, Lois Duncan, Paula Fox, Jean Craighead George, Bette Greene, Rosa Guy, Lynn Hall, Virginia Hamilton, S. E. Hinton, Isabelle Holland, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Norma Klein, Godon Korman, Madeleine L'Engle, Robert Lipsyte, Sharon Bell Mathis, Harry Mazer, Norma Fox Mazer, Nicholasa Mohr, Walter Dean Myers, Joan Lowery Nixon, Scott O'Dell, Gary Paulsen,

Susan Beth Pfeffer, Kin Platt, William Sleator, Jerry Spinelli, Todd Strasser, Cynthia Voigt, Laurence Yep, Jane Yolen.)

Titles for Themes for Today

Special Problems

- Anonymous. *Lucy in the Sky*. Simon Pulse, 2012.
- Cooner, Donna. *Skinny*. Point, 2012.
- Galloway, Greg. *The 39 Deaths of Adam Strand*. Dutton, 2013.
- Halpern, Julie. *Have a Nice Day*. Feiwel, 2012.
- Lascarso, Laura. *Counting Backwards*. Atheneum, 2012.
- Leavitt, Martine. *My Book of Life by Angel*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.
- Luedeke, Lisa. *Smashed*. McElderry, 2012.
- Newman, Leslea. *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*. Candlewick, 2012.
- Palacio, R. J. *Wonder*. Knopf, 2012.
- Rapp, Adam. *Children and the Wolves*. Candlewick, 2012.
- Scott, Elizabeth. *Miracle*. Simon Pulse, 2012.
- Stahler, David Jr. *Spinning Out*. Chronicle, 2011.
- Trueman, Terry. *Life Happens Next*. Harper, 2012.
- Zhang, Kat. *What's Left of Me*. Harper, 2012.

Family Matters

- Arcos, Carrie. *Out of Reach*. Simon Pulse, 2012.
- Cochrane, Mick. *Fitz*. Knopf, 2012.
- Davis, Tanita S. *Happy Families*. Knopf, 2012.
- Knowles, Jo. *See You at Harry's*. Candlewick, 2012.
- Kokie, Em. *Personal Effects*. Candlewick, 2012.

- Lynch, Chris. *Kill Switch*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.
- Patterson, Janci. *Chasing the Skip*. Holt, 2012.

Historical Fiction

- Avi. *City of Orphans*. Atheneum, 2011.
- Amateau, Gigi. *Come August, Come Freedom*. Candlewick, 2012.
- Coats, J. Anderson. *The Wicked and the Just*. Harcourt, 2012.
- Gratz, Alan. *Prisoner B-3087*. Scholastic, 2013.
- Gregory, Philippa. *Changeling*. Simon Pulse, 2012.
- Lorenzi, Ntalie Dias. *Flying the Dragon*. Charlesbridge, 2012.
- MacColl, Michaela. *Prisoners in the Palace*. Chronicle, 2010.
- Manzano, Sonia. *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano*. Scholastic, 2012.
- Marsden, Carolyn. *My Own Revolution*. Candlewick, 2012.
- McCormick, Patricia. *Never Fall Down*. Balzer & Bray, 2012.
- McMillan, Frank N. III. *The Young Healer*. Charlesbridge, 2012.
- Meyer, Carolyn. *Victoria Rivals*. Simon & Schuster, 2013.
- Meyer, Carolyn. *The Wild Queen: The Days and Nights of Mary Queen of Scots*. Harcourt, 2012.
- Pearsall, Shelley. *Jump into the Sky*. Knopf, 2012.
- Rasheed, Leila. *Cinders and Sapphires: At Somerton*. Hyperion, 2013.
- Rubens, Michael. *Sons of the 613*. Clarion, 2012.
- Tregay, Sarah. *Love & Leftovers*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2012.
- Voorhoeve, Anne C. *My Family for the War*. Dial, 2012.
- Mystery and Suspense**
- Barnaby, Hannah. *Wonder Show*. Houghton Mifflin, 2012.

Brennan, Sarah Rees. *Unspoken*. Random House, 2012.

Brian, Kate. *Shadow Lands*. Hyperion, 2012.

Burak, Kathryn. *Emily's Dress and Other Missing Things*. Roaring Brook, 2012.

Carter, Ally. *Perfect Scoundrels*. Hyperion, 2013.

Cassidy, Anne. *Dead Time*. Walker, 2012.

Damico, Gina. *Croak*. Graphia, 2012.

Elston, Ashley. *The Rules for Disappearing*. Hyperion, 2013.

Gagnon, Michelle. *Don't Turn Around*. Harper, 2012.

Henry, April. *The Night She Disappeared*. Holt, 2012.

Leonard, Niall. *Crusher*. Delacorte, 2012.

Littlefield, Sophie. *Hanging by a Thread*. Delacorte, 2012.

McMann, Lisa. *Dad to You*. Simon Pulse, 2012.

McNeil, Gretchen. *Ten*. Balzer & Bray, 2012.

Price, Charlie. *Dead Girl Moon*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.

Rosenfield, Kat. *Amelia Anne Is Dead and Gone*. Dutton, 2012.

Sepetys, Ruta. *Out of the Easy*. Philomel, 2013.

Warman, Jessica. *Beautiful Lies*. Walker, 2012.

Nonfiction

Abel, Jessica, and Matt Madden. *Mastering Comics*. :01, 2012.

Adler, David. *Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad*. Holiday House, 2013.

Ali-Karamali, Sumbul. *Growing Up Muslim*. Delacorte, 2012

Cheng, Andrea. *Etched in Clay*. Lee & Low, 2013.

Fradin, Dennis Brindell, and Judith Bloom Fradin. *Zora! The Life*

of Zora Neal Hurston. Clarion, 2012.

Greiten, Eric. *The Warrior's Heart*. Houghton Mifflin, 2012.

Hunter, Ryan Ann. *In Disguise! Undercover with Real Women Spies*. Aladdin, 2013.

Jenks, Andrew. *My Adventures as a Young Filmmaker*. Scholastic, 2013.

Lipsyte, Robert. *An Accidental Sportswriter*. Ecco, 2011.

Marcus, Eric. *What if? Answers to Questions about What It Means to Be Gay and Lesbian*. Simon Pulse, 2013.

O'Brien, Anne Sibley, and Perry Edmond O'Brien. *After Gandhi: One Hundred Years of Nonviolent Resistance*. Charlesbridge, 2009.

Reef, Catherine. *The Brontë Sisters: The Brief Lives of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne*. Clarion, 2012.

Sandler, Martin W. *The Impossible Rescue: The True Story of an Amazing Arctic Adventure*. Candlewick, 2012.

Sandler, Martin. *Kennedy through the Lens: How Photograph and Televisions Shaped an Extraordinary Leader*. Walker, 2011.

Sheinkin, Steve. *Bomb*. Roaring Brook, 2012.

Romance

Caletti, Deb. *The Story of Us*. Simon Pulse, 2012.

Coulombis, Audrey. *Not Exactly a Love Story*. Random House, 2012.

Doller, Trish. *Something like Normal*. Bloomsbury, 2012.

Eulberg, Elizabeth. *Revenge of the Girl with the Great Personality*. Point, 2013.

Gobersen, Anna. *The Lucky One*. Harper, 2012.

Halls, Kelly Milner, ed. *Girl Meets Boy*. Chronicle, 2012.

Hautman, Pete. *The Big Crunch*. Scholastic, 2011.

Hubbard, Mandy. *Dangerous Boy*. Razorbill, 2012.

Walker, Kristin. *7 Clues to Winning You*. Razorbill, 2012.

School Matters

Altenbrando, Tara. *The Best Night of Your (Pathetic) Life*. Dutton, 2012.

Amato, Mary. *Guitar Notes*. Egmont, 2012.

Backes, M. Molly. *The Princess of Iowa*. Candlewick, 2012.

Bloor, Edward. *A Plague Year*. Knopf, 2012.

Colosanti, Susane. *Keep Holding On*. Viking, 2012.

Erlings, Fridrik. *Fish in the Sky*. Candlewick, 2012.

George, Madeleine. *The Difference between You and Me*. Viking, 2012.

Scott, Kieran. *This Is So Not Happening*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.

Voorhees, Coert. *Lucky Fools*. Hyperion, 2012.

Science Fiction & Fantasy

Bodeen, S. A. *The Raft*. Feiwel, 2012.

Black, Holly. *Black Heart*. McElderry, 2012.

Bracken, Alexandria. *The Darkest Minds*. Hyperion, 2012.

Cohn, Rachel. *Beta*. Hyperion, 2012.

Fisher, Catherine. *Obsidian Mirror*. Dial, 2013.

Gier, Kersten. *Sapphire Blue*. Holt, 2012.

Ghislain, Gary. *How I Stole Johnny Depp's Alien Girlfriend*. Chronicle, 2011.

Knutson, Catherine. *Shadows Cast*

by Stars. Atheneum, 2012.

Krumweide, Lana. *Freaking*.
Candlewick, 2012.

Lipsyte, Robert. *The Twining Project*.
Clarion, 2012.

Lore, Pittacus. *The Rise of Nine*.
Harper, 2012.

Lowry, Lois. *Son*. Houghton Mifflin,
2012.

Maas, Sarah J. *Throne of Glass*.
Bloomsbury, 2012.

Moriarty, Jaclyn. *The Color of
White*. Scholastic, 2013.

Roth, Veronica. *Insurgent*. Katherine
Tegen Books, 2012.

Rutkoski, Marie. *The Shadow Society*.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux,
2012.

Stiefvater, Maggie. *The Raven Boys*.
Scholastic, 2012.

Vande, Vivian Velde. *Deadly Pink*.
Harcourt, 2012

Vizzini, Ned. *The Other Normals*.
Balzer & Bray, 2012.

Zevin, Gabrielelee. *Because It Is My
Blood*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux,
2012.

Friendships

Bjorkman, Lauren. *Miss Fortune
Cookie*. Holt, 2012.

Flake, Sharon G. *Pinned*. Scholas-
tic, 2012.

Graham, Hilary Weisman. *Reunit-
ed*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.

Grossman, Nancy. *A World Away*.
Hyperion, 2012.

Johnson, Angela. *A Certain Octo-
ber*. Simon & Schuster, 2012.

Oates, Joyce Carol. *Two or Three
Things I Forgot to Tell You*.
Harper, 2012.

Challenging Rebellious Adolescent Aliteracy

Teachers of adolescents know the power of rebellion. Middle and high school students choose to place themselves on opposing ends of a success versus rebellion spectrum and choose to alienate themselves from socially present authorities (Beers, 2003; Stinchcombe, 1964). Socrates implored students to think, to challenge, long before the publication of *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (Postman & Weingartner, 1971). “These kids today,” as some may call them, are just like they have always been, and great teachers harness adolescent rebellion through young adult literature (Atwell, 2007; Lesesne, 2010).

The Fault in Our Stars (Green, 2012), *Wonder* (Palacio, 2011), *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* (Alexie, 2009), and *I am a Genius of Unspeakable Evil and I Want to Be Your Class President* (Lieb, 2009) are books that rock for rebellious adolescents. When teachers allow titles such as these in their classrooms, passion for reading and the discussion ignites teacher joy; student talk about books read for pleasure is too rare in many secondary English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms.

In contrast to class as usual, these may not be whole class novels, these may not be books that the teachers choose; this is NOT English class as usual.

Adolescents are intrigued by content that some find objectionable.

What are seen as taboo topics are realistic to today’s youth (Lesesne, 2008). The world has changed, but the reality that adults only get a glimpse into the lives of adolescents is not new. Lesesne contrasts selection, the decision to include books, with censorship, the decision to exclude them (Lesesne, 2008). Teachers are often bound by limited selection—a slim district approved list or inadequate school libraries. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Smith, 1943), a perennial favorite of adolescent girls is still considered a classic, but has objectionable content: Francie’s Aunt Sissy is promiscuous, her father is an alcoholic, and her mother expresses bigoted views.

On the American Library Association’s (ALA) list of Top 100 Banned / Challenged Books from 2000-2009, *Harry Potter (series)*, a student favorite, ranks as the #1 most challenged book, for its

themes of witchcraft (American Library Association, 2013). School board members in Georgia defeated one challenge and stated, “The books are good tools to encourage children to read and to spark creativity and imagination” (Doyle, 2008). The ALA is on to something when they advertise banned books to adolescents just to entice students to read. Great teachers of adolescents know to allow a little rebellion, to give students the sweet taste of forbidden fruit. When middle school students were asked to review the Potter series, Kyle Freeman, a 5th grader wrote that he never liked reading until this book came out (Ford, 2008). Eighth grader Issa Basco loves that Harry is “angry, temperamental, and dark in [*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*], and his angst as a 15-year-old is similar to ours” (Ford, 2008, p.51). Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* was recently challenged but retained on a summer reading list in Illinois (Doyle, 2010). Instead of imagining that our students need to come to middle and high school as capable readers of all text, we need to consider reading as a skill that continues to develop in all people.

Teachers can motivate and encourage reading, and can provide supports for new text. These supports allow for reading growth.

Reading begets better reading.

Aliteracy, the decision *not* to read when capable (Harris and Hodges, 1995), is the ultimate rebellion in the English classroom. The Matthew Effect in reading is based on the parable, “For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” We know that as reading skills improve, greater learning results. As these skills atrophy, adolescents’ subsequent “cognitive, behavioral, and motivational consequences” (Stanovich, 1986) delay academic progress. We have to think hard about the consequences when we regulate reading like we may regulate TV, movies, and song lyrics. Motivation and literacy are inextricably linked; adolescents won’t read when not motivated to do so. Some believe that as students become more aware of extrinsic rewards for reading, like grades, the less they enjoy reading for pleasure (Sweet & Guthrie, 1996). “A low-cost way to increase the interest of students in what they like to read is to permit them to choose for themselves what they will read” (Pressley, 1998, p. 246). Even the best readers are less inclined to read with each subsequent year in school (McKenna, Ellsworth, & Kear, 1995). If keeping students reading is our goal as it should be, luring rebellious readers to great books with themes that may be objectionable is certainly better than allowing for aliteracy.

When parents and teachers use

Aliteracy, the decision *not* to read when capable, is the ultimate rebellion in the English classroom.

the rating systems offered by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to censor visual and auditory media, they aren’t risking that student’s rebel and never watch TV or listen to music again. They are suggesting that a student, still a child, isn’t ready *at this time*. We may question whether a seventh grader should watch *Law & Order* (Wolf, 2008), but we accept that as each child matures, and grows into adulthood, he or she will make personal choices. When we regulate TV and movies, we allow adolescents to give us signals as to when they are ready for a more mature rating.

But we do the opposite when it comes to books. As soon as students master a level of difficulty, we are anxious to push them to the next level. If capable readers still love the *Sweet Valley High* series (Paschal, 2008), perhaps we should not ask them to move beyond their comfort level too quickly. Maybe matching readers to text is most successful when erring on the side of the reader’s comfort; it’s part of loving our students. But we must strike a balance between mandated reading content and student individual preferences. This leaves parents and teachers in a position where they feel that they must weigh the benefits of encouraging reading against the risks of stu-

dents discovering the questionable content that is found in some of the texts that students like to read. This quandary is clearly painted at the young adult level in Glenn’s (2008) study of three popular novels marketed to adolescents. The researcher examined the themes of entitlement, disparity of class and race, empty relationships, and conspicuous consumption, and contextualized her analysis that these texts are written and marketed for the purpose of making money, and not for the purpose of creating better citizens nor better readers. They are alluring to adolescents, and we know that discretionary spending of this age group is a market worth tapping (Alhabeeb, 1996). Glenn argues that students *should* read these texts, despite questionable themes, because they may engage adolescents in “discussions that encourage the development of a critical stance” p. 40. Schanoes (2003) would agree, stating that the *Harry Potter* novels challenge readers to think critically, especially when text purports to “contain truth” p. 144. We know that text choice can foster motivation (Allington, 2007; Alvermann, 2002; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Lesesne, 2003; Moje, 2006).

Still, an educated guide in the form of a mentor or teacher in literary criticism is necessary for most students to come away with these deeper layers of thinking. Teachers fear that when students read individually, without guidance, that there is no mechanism for assessment of learning, assessment that is valuable for suggesting further reading and later instruction. Many teachers require paired reading at times. Local and global community members via online chats can act

as reading mentors. When teacher's instructional objectives are that students acquire the reading **skills** instead of text content, matching readers to text is imperative. Maya Angelou said, "Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him" (as quoted in Mesmer, 2008, p. viii). The key is finding the right book at the right time.

Expanding students' reading choices.

Students can't read *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* forever; we want students to be competent readers of college-level material some day. Like a young athlete in a gymnastics class, who, with overt prodding from her coaches and more subtle pressure from her parents and peers, progresses to a higher class in competition, readers need support to venture into more difficult text. Certainly, there are many child athletes who do rebel and refuse the competition, despite their talents. Most good coaches know when to push and when to back off, constantly negotiating with the adolescent in reaching a common goal. Teachers, as coaches of reading, create a shared goal of improved reading competency, and guide student choices with various texts and motivations to reach that goal.

Teacher Identity in Adolescent Centered Reading Classrooms

When teachers identify as coaches in developing students' reading skills, skills that are multifaceted, layered, nuanced, and individual, they continue to be experts of the great literature that is dear to their profession. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines literacy as "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society" ("Literacy," 2008, Definition). Surely all teachers today recognize that our charge is far greater

Others may, more rebelliously, exercise the only power they feel that they have; they simply refuse to read.

than familiarizing our students with the lessons of our culture's favorite stories.

Elementary school teachers have effectively balanced multiple texts for decades (Smith, 1963), with Vacca and Vacca (1974) suggesting individualized reading stations in middle schools more than thirty years ago. Still, teachers ask: What is it that makes a novel drive the instruction for all students in a classroom? The argument from middle and high school teachers is that the content of novels such as *The Yearling*, *The Giver*, and *Wuthering Heights* may be too difficult for students to read without substantial teacher support. We know that, with peer conversa-

tion and teacher support in the areas of vocabulary, text structure, and comprehension strategies like summarizing and questioning (Billman, Hillden, & Halliday, 2008), students do a better job of navigating text that is at the high end of their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). When the whole class novel is well above this zone, it frustrates reluctant readers. Teacher support, even in the best of situations, will not be enough for a student in this case. This support is usually delivered to students during whole-class novel lessons. While this is a common approach in English classrooms, it does not differentiate between the many types of readers, and leaves too many adolescent students attempting to read books that are not appropriate for them. Some readers then draw the conclusion that "reading isn't for me." Others may, more rebelliously, exercise the only power they feel that they have; they simply refuse to read.

Another argument for whole class novels seems to be that, unless it is assigned, students will not choose it, and will never be exposed to the traditional canon. Teachers want to expose students to literature that offers students a window into a world different than their own instead of just a mirror into their own narrow existence. Nancy Schnog, an English teacher and parent, was disappointed when her 14 year-old son did not complete his summer reading text, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (Alvarez, 2005). She explained that he could not relate to "four culturally displaced sisters who search for identity through therapists and mental illness, men and sex, drugs

Letting students challenge texts may shake some of our own beliefs as well.

and alcohol” (Schnog, 2008). The tension between what students want to read and what we think they should read is exemplified in this example. We want reading to broaden the minds of students. We want books to show them how others live. Literature has the great potential to teach about humanity, to teach the great lesson that one can’t judge another, as *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) teaches, until he or she has walked miles in his or her shoes (Muse, 1997; Wilhelm, 2006). We can introduce students to these texts by striking a balance between full student autonomy in text choice, offering limited choice (Dredger, 2008) within each teacher’s comfort level, and using literature circles (Daniels, 2006).

The other pull is teachers’ desire to share the love of reading. Class novel choices focus on the teacher’s choice; individualized reading choices are more learner-centered. Differentiating novel choices may be one of the easiest ways to match readers to text that is appropriate in readability, length, concept, and affect (Curtis, 2008; Deschler, Palincsar, Biancarosa, & Nair, 2007; Mesmer, 2008). Teachers don’t have to give up the life lessons of great literature; they just have to trust that students are ready for different lessons at different times (Fisher & Ivey, 2007).

It shouldn’t just be about books that the teacher likes.

Teaching literature should be about loving the student more than the content we teach (Kindig, 2012). It is wonderful when we find the student who is as committed to reading as we are. It is fulfilling when past students honor our profession by joining it. We all know a librarian or English teacher who loves books more than kids. Without an understanding and acceptance that most students won’t love a certain text the way they do, those teachers are then in a place of perpetual frustration. This frustration is at times manifested in resentment toward students who do not respect the art that is great literature. This resentment is cancerous and makes for an unhealthy English classroom. This can lead to aliteracy—or, the student exercising the power they have in this situation: the power to refuse to read. Teachers may push kids even further away from doing something they may already resist by being rigid about specific mandated titles.

I love Jane Austen, but all of my students will not. Before my epiphany that students can thrive with multiple texts, I was teaching *Pride and Prejudice* to 12th graders as a whole class novel. A Socratic circle quickly escalated to near mutiny. Some boys began playfully throwing the great novel on the floor and began a mock burning. I felt proud that I had created an environment wherein students felt comfortable being honest, but I blamed myself (Had I been a better teacher, they would see the merits in the text!). I was relieved when some came to the text’s rescue. Nina challenged, “Just because no one’s arm or head gets ripped off, you don’t like it?” (We’d recently

read *Beowulf* and *Macbeth*.) Sean retorted, “No, I don’t like it because it’s just about a bunch of girls who want to get married.” Silence. We were proud of our strong feminist readings of texts. We’d passionately defended both Ophelia and the wife of Bath. So why **did** we love *Pride and Prejudice*? I asked myself, was I still a romantic looking for Mr. Darcy, despite my education and perceived personal bent toward feminism? Or was it the irony, humor, and character development that are Austen hallmarks? Letting students challenge texts may shake some of our own beliefs as well.

Not English class as usual.

Students engage when we break from mandated analysis. Readers should be free to NOT discuss themes, imagery, or characters’ motivations. Analysis and discussions happen; people want to talk about books that inspire them. Students reading *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* do not miss the symbol that Francie is a tree surviving, if not thriving, in the middle of oppressive urban poverty. Phillip’s original bigotry, like Huckleberry Finn’s, is mitigated by a close relationship with another in Taylor’s *The Cay*. The students love this message, and convince others to read. The palindrome that is Stanley Yelnats’ name in *Holes* (Sachar, 2000) rarely remains under students’ radar (Stanley himself explains it; we as teachers don’t have to as well). Still, this awareness can be directed and constructed by the students, distributing the expertise in classrooms beyond that of the teacher. If students are engaged in literature that is right for them, they may not ask, “Is there a test on this?” Students read when they

are able to choose books that fit their ability, maturity, and interest. Students don't dislike reading; they dislike books that are too hard or on topics of which they either cannot relate or about which they have little prior knowledge. They need to be intrinsically motivated to read.

Classrooms and libraries can be stocked with books of myriad levels. Students may struggle at first in a reading workshop environment, constantly attempting the first fifty pages of a new book. Remain patient and sincere. Work conscientiously with those struggling readers to find the right fit for them. Successful text to reader matching takes into account reader factors such as abilities, motivation, and knowledge, and text factors such as surface features, text concepts, and format (Alvermann, 2011; Miller, 2009). Making the attempt to find books that work for adolescent readers keeps them reading; together, this continued reading becomes classroom success.

Finding an effective balance between mandated texts and allowing for student choice is one that requires teachers to know each student as well as they know the symbols, characters, settings, and plots in a variety of appropriate novels. This delicate balance employs knowing the nature of the adolescents as rebellious, mercurial, and diverse. As teachers, we do not have to be expert on all texts, we do not have to lead each discussion; we do not have to see one certain text as the measure of a marking period. Instead, we need to search for a comfortable balance, one that may see personal compromise. Perhaps we cannot let go of *Hamlet*. Refusing to let go of Jen-

Students read when they are able to choose books that fit their ability, maturity, and interest.

nifer, Ricardo, Shakira, and Minstead as developing readers is our greater call.

Katie Dredger taught middle and high school English for 13 years in Calvert County, Maryland. She is an assistant professor at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

References

- Alhabeed, M.J. (1996). Teenagers' money, discretionary spending, and saving. *Financial Consulting and Planning*, 7, 123-132.
- Allington, R. L. (2007) Effective teachers, effective instruction. In K. Beers, L. Reif, & R. Probst, (Eds.), *Adolescent literacy: Turning promise into practice*. (pp. 273-288). Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Alexie, S. (2009). *The absolutely true diary of a part time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Alvarez, J. (2005). *How the Garcia girls lost their accents*. New York: Plume.
- Alvermann, D. (2002). Effective literacy instruction for adolescents. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 34, 189-208.
- Alvermann, D. E., Phelps, S. F., & Gillis, V. R. (2010). *Content area reading and literacy: Succeeding in today's diverse classrooms* (6th ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon.
- American Library Association. (2013). *Banned books week: Celebrating the freedom to read*. Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/challengedbydecade/2000_2009.
- Ansary, T. (2006). The muddle machine: Confessions of a textbook editor. In F. W. Parkay, E. J. Anctil, & G. Hass. (Eds.), *Curriculum Planning: A contemporary approach* (pp. 258-264). New York: Pearson.
- Atwell, N. (2007). *The reading zone*. New York: Scholastic.
- Beers, K. (2003). *When kids can't read: What teachers can do*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Billman, A. K., Hillden, K. & Halliday, J. L. 2008. When the right texts are difficult for struggling readers. In D. H. Hiebert & M. Sailors (Eds.), *Finding the right texts: What works for beginning and struggling readers*. New York: Guilford.
- Curtis, M. (2008). Teaching adolescents who struggle with text: Research and practice. In *Finding the right texts: What works for beginning and struggling readers*. D. H. Hiebert, & M. Sailors, (Eds.) New York: Guilford.
- Daniels, H. (2006). What's the next big thing with literature circles? *Voices from the Middle*, 13(4), 10-15.
- Deshler, D. D., Palincsar, A.S., Biancarosa, G., & Nair, M. (2007). *Informed choices for struggling adolescent readers*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Doyle, R.P. (2010). *Think for yourself and let others do the same: Books challenged or banned in 2009-2010*.
- Fisher, D., & Ivey, G. (2007). Farewell to *A farewell to arms*: Deemphasizing the whole-class novel. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(7), 494-497.
- Ford, K. (2008). Student to student: Harry Potter and the avid readers. *Voices from the Middle*, 16(1), 50-51.
- Glenn, W. (2008). Gossiping girls, insider boys, a-list achievement: Examining and exposing young adult novels consumed by conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52(1), 34-42.
- Green, J. (2012). *The fault in our stars*. New York: Dutton.
- Guthrie, J.T. & Wigfield, A. (2000). Engagement and motivation in reading. In M. L. Kamil, (Ed.) *Handbook of reading research*, Vol. 3 (pp. 403-422). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Harris, T.L. & Hodges, R.E. (1995). *The literacy dictionary*, Newark: International Reading Association.
- Kindig, J.S. (2012). *Choosing to read*. Portsmouth, Heinemann.
- Kinney, J. (2007). *Diary of a wimpy kid*. New York: Scholastic.

- Lee, H. (1960). *To kill a mockingbird*. Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Lesesne, T. (2003). *Making the match*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Lesesne, T. (2008). Of times, teens, and books. In G.K. Beers, R. E. Probst, & L. Reif (Eds.), *Adolescent literacy: Turning promise into practice* (pp. 61-79). Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Lesesne, T. (2010). *Reading ladders: Leading students from where they are to where we'd like them to be*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Lieb, J. (2009). *I am a genius of unspeakable evil and I want to be your class president*. New York: Penguin.
- Literacy. (2008, November 9). In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved November 11, 2008, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/literacy>.
- McKenna, M.C., Ellsworth, R.A., & Kear, D.J. (1995). Children's attitudes toward reading: A national survey. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30, 934-956.
- Mesmer, H.A.E. (2008). *Tools for matching readers to texts: Research-based practices*. New York: Guilford.
- Miller, D. (2009). *The book whisperer: Awakening the inner reader in every child*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Moje, E.B. (2006). Motivating texts, motivating contexts, motivating adolescents: An examination of the role of motivation in adolescent literacy practices and development. *Perspectives* 32(3), 10-14.
- Muse, D. (Ed.). (1997). *The New Press guide to multicultural resources for young readers*. New York: The New Press.
- Palacio, R.F. (2012). *Wonder*. New York: Knoff.
- Paschal, F. (2008). *Sweet valley high*. New York: Laurel Leaf.
- Pennac, D., 1996. *Better than life*. Toronto. Coach House Press.
- Postman, N. & Weingartner, C. (1971). *Teaching as subversive activity*. New York: Delta.
- Pressley, M. (1998). *Reading instruction that works: The case for balanced teaching*. New York: Guilford.
- Rowling, J.K. (1998.) *Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone*. New York: Scholastic.
- Rowling, J.K. (2003). *Harry Potter and the order of the phoenix*. New York: Scholastic.
- Rowling, J.K. (2007). *Harry Potter and the deathly hallows*. New York: Scholastic.
- Rosenblatt R. (1938). *Literature as exploration*. New York: Modern Language Association.
- Sachar, L. (2000). *Holes*. St. Louis: Bloomsbury.
- Schanoes, V.L. (2003). Cruel heroes and treacherous texts: Educating the reader in moral complexity and critical reading in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books. In G. L. Anatol, (Ed.), *Reading Harry Potter: Critical essays*. Westport: Praeger.
- Schnog, N. (2008, August 24). We're teaching books that don't stack up. *The Washington Post*, pp. B1, B4.
- Smith, B. (1943). *A tree grows in Brooklyn*. New York: Harper & Bros.
- Smith, N.B. (1963). *Reading instruction for today's children*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Stanovich, K. (1986). *Progress in understanding reading: Scientific foundations and new frontiers*. New York: Guilford.
- Stinchcombe, A.L. (1964). *Rebellion in a high school*. New York: Quadrangle.
- Sweet, A. P. & Guthrie, J.T. (1996). How children's motivations relate to literacy development and instruction. *Reading Teacher*, 49, 660-662.
- Taylor, T. (1969). *The cay*. New York: Avon.
- Vacca, R.T., and Vacca, J.L.(1974). Consider a stations approach to middle school reading instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 28, 18-21.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wilhelm, J. (2006). What choice do I have? Reading, writing, and speaking activities to empower students. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 49(7), p. 637-639.
- Wolf, D. (Executive Producer). (2008). *Law & order* [Television series.] New York: NBC.

Stories from the Field

Editor's Note: *Stories from the Field* invites readers to share a story about young adult literature. This section features brief vignettes (approximately 300 words) from practicing teachers and librarians who would like to share their interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators around young adult literature. Please send your stories to jbach@lsu.edu.

The Case of the Crumpled Pages

Brooke B. Eisenbach

8th-Grade Teacher/ PhD Candidate
Tomlin Middle School/ USF
Valrico, FL
brooke.eisenbach@sdhc.k12.fl.us

The case of the crumpled pages began early one Monday morning. I returned from the weekend, arms weighed down by the YA novels I recently purchased for student enjoyment. This particular week, I purchased several John Green titles; I recently had the pleasure of discovering *Looking for Alaska* and couldn't wait to delve into the pages of *The Fault in Our Stars*, a book that promised to be another fantastic read.

After I shared each of the new titles with my students, Katie (a pseudonym) approached me and asked to borrow *The Fault in Our Stars*. Despite my secret desire to be the first to savor this text, I passed the book along to Katie and anticipated her review.

A few days later, Katie returned the novel. "I'm sorry," she whispered with her head tilted ever so slightly downward, "But I think I might have damaged your book a little. I can buy you a new one if you'd like."

I examined the book and noticed the ever-so-slightly crumpled pages near the back. "No, no. It's totally okay. Thanks for telling me," I responded as I placed the book on top of my desk.

That evening, I found time to begin the much-anticipated story. Sure enough, it wasn't long before I, too, was near the conclusion of the story. As I rested on my couch, unable to stop reading, my eyes began to fill with tears. Suddenly, I found myself crying onto the very crumpled pages Katie had previously mentioned. Our tears began to blend, further crumpling the delicate pages.

When I returned to class the next day, I made sure to show the book to Katie. "I, too, crumpled the pages," I shared.

"Only the best stories have crumpled pages, Mrs. E," Katie responded with a smile. "Those are the books that really speak to your heart."

Our Readers Share a Memory about the ALAN Conference

Name: Heather Stanich

Affiliation: NCTE, ALAN Member

Memory:

Thanks to Dr. Cindy Bowman, I have enjoyed ALAN. She taught me about ALAN in 2006. A lover of books and a passionate teacher, Cindy, you are missed but not forgotten. RIP.

Name: Helene Halstead

Affiliation: Burney Harris Lyons MS (Teacher)

Memory:

Mentors: They draw you in, they push you in, they

make it happen. Thank you to my ALAN mentor—Anne Mcleod—for “getting” me to my first conference.

Name: Crag Hill

Affiliation: Washington State University

Memory:

500 educators teared up listening to Stephen Chbosky telling the story about the girl who was planning to commit suicide until she read *Perks*, Philadelphia 2009.

Name: Harry Brake

Affiliation: NCTE, ALAN, National Writing Project

Memory:

Being the “literary messenger” for our school in Mexico City was exhilarating, texts from my students, such as “I want your life,” proved meeting authors a dream!

Name: Wendy Glenn

Affiliation: Past ALAN president; University of Connecticut

Memory:

There are few things more rewarding than looking on proudly while your students chat with the authors they adore—while navigating free snacks on a napkin.

Name: Jackie Bach

Affiliation: TAR Coeditor

Memory:

Thanks to the person who loaded video recordings of the speeches from the 2011 conference onto my laptop so I could share them with my students back home.

Name: Catherine Balkin

Affiliation: Owner/Publishing Consultant/Author
Appearance Coordinator at Balkin Buddies at www.BalkinBuddies.com

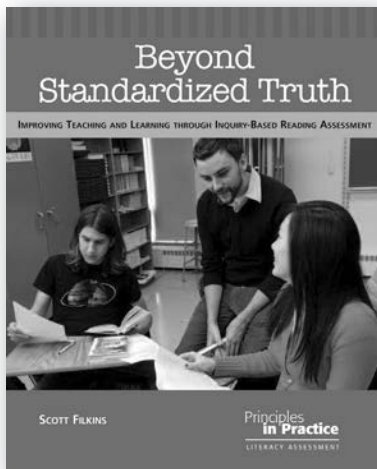
Memory:

I will always be grateful for being elected to be on the ALAN Board at what seemed a low point in my career.

Evidence-Based Teaching and Learning

Principles
in Practice

Literacy Assessment Strand



Beyond Standardized Truth: Improving Teaching and Learning through Inquiry-Based Reading Assessment

Scott Filkins

133 pp. 2012. Grades 9–12

ISBN 978-0-8141-0291-6

No. 02916

\$24.95 member/\$33.95 nonmember

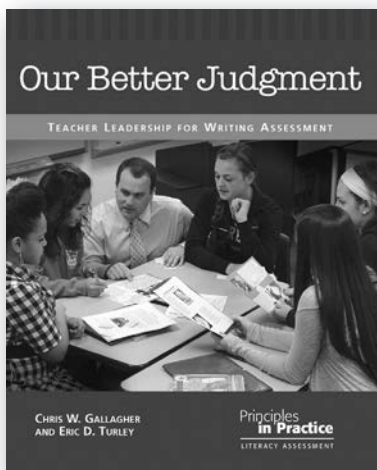
The author brings educators into his and colleagues' classrooms to demonstrate how high school teachers across the disciplines can engage in inquiry-based reading assessment to support student learning.



DOWNLOAD

Supporting Adolescent Readers through Classroom-Based Assessment Web Seminar Recording

\$49 member/\$99 nonmember



Our Better Judgment: Teacher Leadership for Writing Assessment

Chris W. Gallagher and Eric D. Turley

115 pp. 2012. Grades 9–12

ISBN 978-0-8141-3476-4

No. 34764

\$24.95 member/\$33.95 nonmember

This book explores how to move assessments to the center of professional practice by approaching writing assessment through an inquiry framework. This method encourages collaborations with students, other teachers, and community members to help you build your own assessment literacy, expertise, and leadership.

"After reading the first chapter... I knew I had to order the whole thing!"

—Penny Kittle, NCTE member, literacy coach, and author

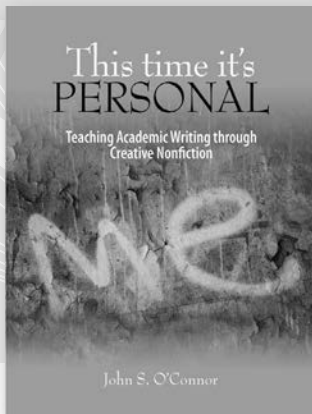
The books in the Literacy Assessment Strand are based on the IRA–NCTE Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing, Revised Edition.

NCTE
National Council of
Teachers of English

Shaping literacy for tomorrow, today.

Visit our website: <https://secure.ncte.org/store/>
or call 1-877-369-6283

Keep Writing Instruction Real, Imaginative & Engaging



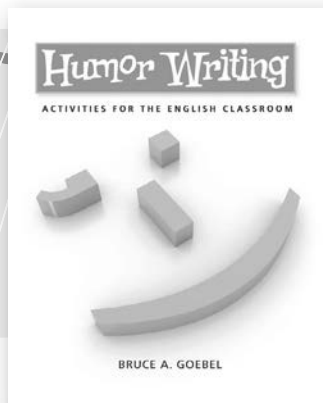
This Time It's Personal
Teaching Academic Writing through
Creative Nonfiction
John S. O'Connor

ISBN 978-0-8141-5430-4 No. 54304
\$29.95 member/\$39.95 nonmember



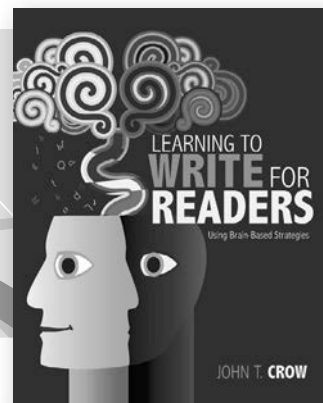
Catching Tigers in Red Weather
Imaginative Writing and Student Choice
in High School
Judith Rowe Michaels

ISBN 978-0-8141-0465-1 No. 04651
\$29.95 member/\$39.95 nonmember



Humor Writing
Activities for the English Classroom
Bruce A. Goebel

ISBN 978-0-8141-2213-6 No. 22136
\$29.95 member/\$39.95 nonmember



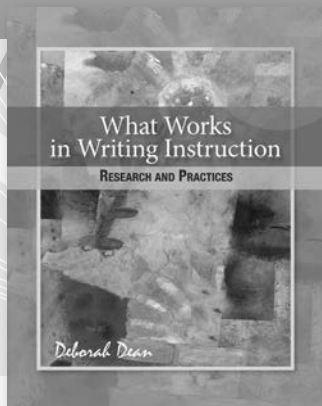
Learning to Write for Readers
Using Brain-Based Strategies
John T. Crow

ISBN 978-0-8141-2782-7 No. 27827
\$29.95 member/\$39.95 nonmember



Shaping literacy for tomorrow, today.
Visit our website: <https://secure.ncte.org/store/>
or call toll-free: 1-877-369-6283

Preparing Our Students as Writers



What Works in Writing Instruction: Research and Practices

Deborah Dean

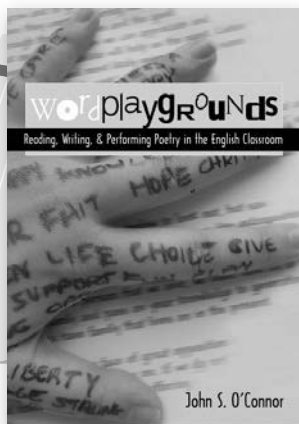
217 pp. 2010. Grades 9–12
ISBN 978-0-8141-5211-9 No. 52119
\$26.95 member/\$35.95 nonmember



Living Voices: Multicultural Poetry in the Middle School Classroom

Jaime Wood

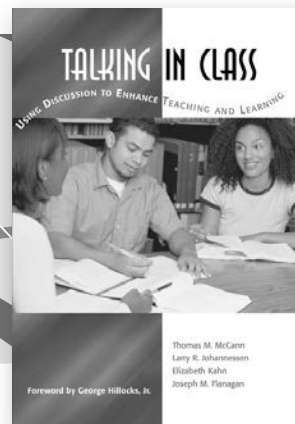
121 pp. 2006. Grades 6–8
ISBN 0-8141-3017-8 No. 30178
\$24.95 member/\$33.95 nonmember



Wordplaygrounds: Reading, Writing, and Performing Poetry in the English Classroom

John S. O'Connor

155 pp. 2004. Grades 7–12
ISBN 0-8141-5819-6 No. 58196
\$22.95 member/\$30.95 nonmember



Talking in Class: Using Discussion to Enhance Teaching and Learning

Thomas M. McCann, Larry R. Johannessen,
Elizabeth Kahn, Joseph M. Flanagan

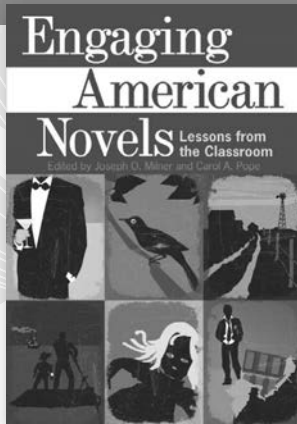
230 pp. 2006. Grades 9–12
ISBN 0-8141-5001-2 No. 50012
\$26.95 member/\$35.95 nonmember

NCTE
National Council of
Teachers of English

Shaping literacy for tomorrow, today.

Visit our website: <https://secure.ncte.org/store/>
or call toll-free: 1-877-369-6283

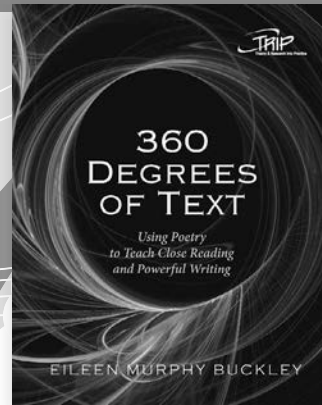
Reading for Meaning



Engaging American Novels Lessons from the Classroom

Joseph O. Milner and Carol A. Pope, editors

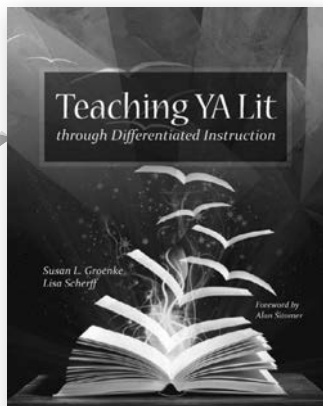
ISBN: 978-0-8141-1358-5 No. 13585
\$31.95 member/\$42.95 nonmember



360 Degrees of Text Using Poetry to Teach Close Reading and Powerful Writing

Eileen Murphy Buckley

ISBN: 978-0-8141-6023-7 No. 60237
\$31.95 member/\$42.95 nonmember



Teaching YA Lit through Differentiated Instruction

Susan L. Groenke and Lisa Scherff

ISBN: 978-0-8141-3370-5 No. 33705
\$29.95 member/\$39.95 nonmember

Differentiating Reading
with a Whole-Class
Young Adult Novel

Teaching Literature Circles:
Focusing on Differentiated
Instruction

NCTE National Council of
Teachers of English
1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-11
Phone: 1-877-369-6283 or 217-328-3870
Fax: 217-328-9645 www.ncte.org

NCTE National Council of
Teachers of English
1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096
Phone: 1-877-369-6283 or 217-328-3870
Fax: 217-328-9645 www.ncte.org

On Demand Web Seminars

Teaching Literature Circles: Focusing on Differentiated Instruction
No. 14926

Differentiating Reading with a Whole-Class Young Adult Novel
No. 15344

Each \$49.00 member/\$99.00 nonmember

NCTE
National Council of
Teachers of English

Shaping literacy for tomorrow, today.
Visit our website: <https://secure.ncte.org/store/>
or call toll-free: 1-877-369-6283