

## 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](mailto:jbach@lsu.edu).

### That which Is Real

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As a social studies teacher, students are always surprised when I use nonfiction (and especially fiction) in my class. I always try to explain that there is a lot of social science in fiction, and we can read more meaningfully when we have context and depth of thought. My hope is to convert students who “only like to read fiction” into well-rounded readers, ones who can transfer ideas among and between genres. For our civil rights unit, we read *Claudette Colvin: Twice toward Justice* by Philip Hoose. In addition, I offered students the opportunity to read *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* by Heidi W. Durrow as a fiction pairing and then asked them to think about how young people develop their racial, ethnic, and social identities.

One of my students wrote about her own experience that led to not wanting to wear her Star of David necklace at school because a student had been unkind

to her about it, imposing some terrible stereotypes on her. She said that experiencing both books (one about a real person and one about a fictional character) helped her to realize that she had something in common with the women she read about. Her final reflection says it all: “Now, I wear that same shining Star of David necklace once a week, because I have my strength, and the strength of Claudette Colvin and Rachel Morse backing me up. The three of us identified ourselves primarily based upon how others assumed we were, until we realized that the only opinion about us that actually mattered was our own.”

Durrow, H. W. (2011). *The girl who fell from the sky*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.

Hoose, P. (2009). *Claudette Colvin: Twice toward justice*. British Columbia, Canada: Douglas & McIntyre.

### Everyone Is a Reading Model

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As a middle school principal without a literacy background, I knew little about YA literature. I was, however, convinced that for our students to improve their literacy skills, we, as a staff, needed to encourage them to read a lot more. We discussed this point in our staff leadership team meetings, and we decided that every adult at the school could become a reading role model. To this end, each staff member would post outside their classroom or office an 8" x 10" picture of themselves reading a book each quarter. Staff mem-

bers were asked to pick a high-interest young adult novel recommended by the language arts and social studies departments or their own favorite books. Teachers were also encouraged to give a “book talk” during the quarter to their students.

It wasn't too long after the first pictures were posted that I knew the project was bearing fruit. I was doing my regular hall duty when a student, nose in a book, bumped into me. He said sorry, and I asked him what he was reading. He said, *Night* by Elie Wiesel. I

commented he must like the book if he was reading it in the hall. He said yes, it was great. I then asked what made him choose that book. He said it was the book Ms. Lauren, his music teacher, was reading, and she made it sound so cool he decided to read it. I asked this seventh-grade student how many books he had read the previous year. He said none.

By the way, I was also part of the project and I am no longer YA illiterate.