



From the Editors

Dollars and Sense?: Economic Disparities in YAL

Some might agree with Billy Idol: “It doesn’t matter about money; having it, not having it. Or having clothes, or not having them. You’re still left alone with yourself in the end.” Others, like Franklin D. Roosevelt, might subscribe to the belief that “Happiness is not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort.” These words, however, reflect the voices of those with money, those who have the privilege of deciding that the money they possess isn’t all that it’s worth. We can’t shake the steady voice of Nelson Mandela who advises us to remember that “Money won’t create success, [but] the freedom to make it will.”

When it comes to money, our local and global realities are complicated. We talk of the top 1%, those in positions of power by virtue of their hefty investment portfolios. We learn of the vastly different living wage earned by people around the world. We hear of families in our own communities without homes, of jobs lost, of educational opportunities denied, of institutional oppression that limits access and mobility.

In this issue, contributors consider the complexities of economics and how they are taken up in young adult literature. They examine questions related to the relationship between fiction and our lived realities: How do authors represent class systems in the settings they create? How often is race conflated with socioeconomic status? What are the implications of such representations for young adult readers? How can we support students’ critical reading and understanding of wealth and poverty and their role in politics and policies, in literature and life?

We open this issue with the powerfully memorable keynote address delivered by A.S. King at the 2016 ALAN Workshop in Atlanta, Georgia. In “On Making Innovators,” King invites readers to learn from, be inspired by, and celebrate teenagers in hopes of supporting them in becoming the innovators, rebels, and visionaries our world needs if we are to do better.

In “(Socio)Economics, Power, and Class: A Collaborative Conversation,” three YA authors, Sarah Carroll, Pablo Cartaya, and Kara Thomas, address explicitly and candidly the intersections of (socio) economics, power, and class in both their literature and their lives. They consider how we might rethink narratives perpetuated by society and how story offers opportunities to invite readers to engage in complicated and sometimes controversial conversations.

In their article, “Taking Out the Trash: Complicating Rural Working-Class Narratives in Young Adult Literature,” Karly Marie Grice, Caitlin E. Murphy, and Eileen M. Shanahan explore intersectional understandings of race, class, and place. They analyze three recently published texts and consider how these texts complicate assumptions and provide pedagogical opportunities to (re)consider counter-narratives of the white, rural, working-class adolescent experience in the United States.

Sean P. Connors’s and Roberta Seelinger Trites’s “*Legend*, Exceptionalism, and Genocidal Logic: A Framework for Reading Neoliberalism in YA Dystopias” presents a critical framework that readers (and their students) might use to read neoliberalism—an economic philosophy that privileges free-market capitalism and emphasizes individualism at the expense

of the collective—in young adult dystopias and other texts for adolescents. Their work illustrates the complex readings that can come from examining literature through an economic lens of analysis.

Katie Rybakova's "Using Young Adult Literature with First-Generation College Students in an Introductory Literature College Course" analyzes the perceptions of six first-generation, rural college students as they use young adult literature as a scaffold for canonical texts. Her article serves as a justification to more strongly and intentionally incorporate YAL in college environments in order to facilitate conversations among students.

In her article, "'Now I See Them as People': Financial Inequity in *Eleanor & Park*," Alice D. Hays follows one student's experiences while engaging with Rainbow Rowell's (2013) novel within a social-justice-based curriculum. Hays analyzes the ways in which this student's perceptions of poverty were challenged through the experience of reading YAL, which speaks to the power of texts to engage students in important conversations about poverty and economics.

Sarah Hardstaff's "Whose War? Symbolic Economies in Conversations about Conflict in Mildred Taylor's *The Road to Memphis* and Cynthia Voigt's *The Runner*" draws upon symbolic economics in conversations about conflict in two classic young adult texts. Her work builds upon current analyses of economic issues and themes centered on questions of socioeconomic inequity and injustice to explore how certain types of economic logic and ideas shape texts linguistically, working to reinforce or subvert their ideologies.

In her article, "A Hair Closer to Freedom: Retellings of Rapunzel as Self-Rescuer," Corinna Barrett Percy examines three retellings of the original Grimm tale, arguing that Rapunzel's hair in the contemporary versions serves as a strength and weapon rather than a cause of subjugation. Percy draws upon anthropological theory to demonstrate how the protagonists (in relation to their hair) engage in the coming of age process of confinement, metamorphosis, and reemergence.

Bryan Gillis, in his Book in Review: A Teaching Guide column titled "Understanding and Connecting Our Ways of Being in the World: Promoting Sensitivity and Understanding in Classrooms with Undocumented Latinx Students," features two YA texts, *Saint Death* (Sedgewick, 2016) and *Disappeared* (Stork,

2017). Gillis explores how YAL that portrays the experiences of undocumented Latinx youth can serve as a powerful tool with the potential to move teachers and students toward a better understanding of each other's ways of being in the world.

In his Right to Read column, "Who Decides What You Can Teach?," Victor Malo-Juvera invites readers to better understand the ways in which academic freedom works—and is limited—in school and university communities. Drawing upon legal precedents and other court proceedings, the aims and activities of teachers' unions, and recent legislative decisions and influences, Malo-Juvera informs and advocates for action among teachers at all levels.

The Layered Literacies column, "The Beyond Books Project: Preparing Teachers and Students for a World of (In)Equities," explores how we might use texts as a framework to discuss and consider the complexities of equality and economic disparity. Lotta Larson and Shelbie Witte highlight the Beyond Books project, which uses traditional and nontraditional texts along with digital and online resources to highlight local and global inequities.

We express heartfelt thanks to our outgoing column editors. Bryan, Victor, and Shelbie, your wisdom, care, and passion have resulted in writings that make a significant contribution to the journal and field. We appreciate you.

In their collaborative conversation, "What We Have and Who We Are: (Socio)Economics and Identity," YA authors Kayla Cagan, Love Maia, and Lillian Rivera explore the connections between (socio) economics and personal identity. In their discussion, they share personal connections to this topic, as well as how it is portrayed in their novels in meaningful ways.

In reading this issue, we invite you to explore questions about the norms that underpin our views of how the world works when it comes to money: Do those with financial equity benefit inequitably? Are they "untouchable, immune to life's troubles" (Maggie Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* [2013], p. 66)? Is it true that all young people have a chance, as Matthew Quick implies in *Boy 21* (2012)? "Someday an opportunity will come. Think about Harry Potter. His life is terrible, but then a letter arrives, he gets on a train, and everything is different for him afterward. Better. Magical" (p. 73). Can we find truth in the advice to

“Take care not to listen to anyone who tells you what you can and can’t be in life” (Meg Medina, *The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind* [2012], p. 79)?

References

Medina, M. (2012). *The girl who could silence the wind*. New York, NY: Candlewick.
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Rowell, R. (2013). *Eleanor and Park*. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Griffin.

Sedgewick, M. (2016). *Saint Death*. New York, NY: Roaring Brook Press.
Stiefvater, M. (2013). *The dream thieves*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
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Voigt, C. (2012). *The runner*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers. (Original published 1985)

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/page/alan-review-author-guidelines>. All submissions may be sent to thealanreview@gmail.com.

Summer 2019: What’s Now? What’s New? What’s Next?

Submissions due on or before November 1, 2018

The field of young adult literature has exploded over the past few decades. As a result, we have enjoyed increasing numbers of memorable stories written by authors willing to trust their readers with complexity and challenge. We have learned from colleagues who have implemented innovative approaches to teaching and thinking about this literature and its implications for the young people who read it. And we have begun to think carefully and critically about whose voices are present and not present and how literature both reflects and has the potential to shape the sociocultural realities in which we live and work.

In our final issue as editors of *The ALAN Review*, we aim to create space for reflection, contemplation, and anticipation around young adult literature. We invite you to consider where we are, what we’ve accomplished, and what we all might tackle in our collective pursuit of scholarship and teaching. As we engage in this work, we find inspiration in the words of Nicola Yoon: “I was trying so hard to find the single pivotal moment that set my life on its path. The moment that answered the question, ‘How did I get here?’ But it’s never just one moment. It’s a series of them. And your life can branch out from each one in a thousand different ways” (*Everything, Everything*, p. 305). And we are reminded that we can (and must) do better in this work, knowing that “Sometimes you can do everything right and things will still go wrong. The key is to never stop doing right” (Angie Thomas, *The Hate U Give*, p. 155). Given our shared commitment to books, young people, and a better tomorrow, we are hopeful that our forward momentum will impel us to move the field ahead in ways that foster equity and social justice for all. As Renee Ahdieh intones, “When I was a boy, my mother would tell me that one of the best things in life is the knowledge that our story isn’t over yet. Our story may have come to a close, but your story is still yet to be told. Make it a story worthy of you” (*The Wrath and the Dawn*, p. 387).

As always, we also welcome submissions focused on any aspect of young adult literature not directly connected to these themes. Please see the ALAN website (<http://www.alan-ya.org/page/alan-review-author-guidelines>) for submission guidelines.