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Annotated Bibliography: The Undiscovered Hero in Dystopian Fiction

My overall theme of my annotated bibliography is young characters in the books that they are thrust into situations that they do not want to be in. However, in many of the stories they rise up to the challenge in order to protect the people they love or change the way their society is run. They are the undiscovered heroes. Most of them did not choose to be in the situations that they are in. Like Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games* she saw herself as a regular girl just trying to keep her family alive, she never wanted to be the symbol of the start of a rebellion against the government. At many points of the story she just wanted things to go back to the way things were before she was in the Hunger Games. However, there are other characters that want to fight against what is considered normal and rebel against the system; like Tally's friend Shay in *Uglies* who refused to turn pretty and become like everyone else.

Dystopian fiction normally has a message of warning rather than hope in utopian fiction. Dystopian stories usually have a controlling government and big military that use intimidation and brainwashing as a way to keep their societies submissive. There are usually one form that represents the oppression of everyone. There is a fine line between utopian and dystopian literature, but one of the main differences is that utopian societies tend to have a so-called equality of all humankind, compared to dystopian societies are based on segregation and inequality. Lyndsey Lore, a blogger for *Strangemore* discusses the difference between the two genres, "While it's true that most utopia masquerades under the guise of dystopia, the difference is sometimes only in perspective. Is the story told from a perspective of despair or of hope?" (Lore). How the story is told does make a difference as to how the society is viewed, because the

government and those who follow the government would see it as a utopian setting, compared to those going against them who would see it as a dystopia.

All these stories that I chose would be good for teens to read either in the classroom or just on their own. I have read most of these myself and they are some of my favorites. Dystopian literature is probably my favorite genre of fiction to read because I like the idea of the undiscovered hero. That maybe that could happen in my own life and I do not know it yet. I think that it is important for young adults to read dystopian literature because they do have the underlying message that deals with government and politics, topics that many teens do not think about. Teens can also connect with these characters because of the rebellious characteristic that tends to be consistent in all the books. Teens can definitely relate with being rebellious and not wanting to do what they are told. Many of them also feel like they do not belong or for some reason that they do not fit in with the norm. This is also a theme in many of the characters. It is hard to go against everyone else, especially friends. So when these characters go through the challenges they do, the young teens that are reading will be able to connect with their own challenges.

I do think that many of these books should be taught in the classroom, and many of them are. I read *Lord of the Flies* in the tenth grade and it is one of my favorite books, and reading it in classroom and discussing the underlying themes with other students helped me to really understand what the book was talking about. And having that base with *Lord of the Flies* got me interested in other books like it because of the subtle underlying theme. I like discovering what the author is truly trying to portray. But when I was a teen I also liked reading about the undiscovered hero. The character that had no idea what was going to happen to them, but that they had to step up to protect what was important to them. This theme definitely connects with

many teens who either want to be discovered, be the hero, or be the rebel. The books that I have compiled all have a character in it that fit into the idea of the undiscovered hero and rebel that teens will be able to connect with.

Works Cited

Lore, Lyndsey. "What Is The Difference Between Dystopia and Utopia." *Strangmore*

Strangmore Blogger, 29 Jul 2011. Web.

<<http://www.strangmore.com/2011/07/difference-between-dystopia-and-utopia.html>>.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic Inc, 2008. Print.

The Hunger Games is set in post war where everyone lives in districts and poverty and are controlled by the Capital. Over seventy years ago the thirteenth district had rebelled against the Capital but lost. As a reminder to never go against the Capital again, the government randomly chooses one girl and one boy from each district to fight to the death until there is only one survivor. Katniss Everdeen is a teenage girl who just wants to protect her family and keep them alive, but in doing so she gets a firsthand experience of the games.

This book and the entire series are good for teens to read because Katniss does not want to be in the situation she is in, but will do anything to survive and save those she loves. This book connects well with the undiscovered hero because without realizing Katniss becomes a symbol of hope.

2. Conde, Ally. *Matched*. Speak, 2010. Print.

Matched takes place in a society where everyone has an arranged marriage decided by the government. Cassia learns that she does not agree with what the government does and starts to rebel against the system.

This would be fun for a teen to read because it is a love story as well as a rebel against the system. The characters are fighting for the ability to choose who they love and are matched with, this is something a teen can relate to if for some reason they cannot be with the person they love.

3. Westerfeld, Scott. *Uglies*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005. Print.

Tally just wants to be pretty with her friends and live where they live in paradise, but she can't have the operation until she turns sixteen. Her plans to be pretty though are changed when she meets Shay, a girl who refuses to become like everyone else and does not want to lose who she is, so she runs away. Tally has to decide if she will become like everyone else and be pretty, or accept who she is and live her own life.

Uglies would be a great story for teens to read for many reasons. One is so that teens can learn that they do not want to look like everyone else and that being an individual is actually a good thing. Looks are not everything, and many young adults forget that. Have to fight to be yourself and not letting other people change you.

4. Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*. Coward-McCann, 1962. Print.

A group of schoolboys are stranded on an island with no adult supervisor. At first everything is fun and the boys are playing and having a good time enjoying their freedom. Then as time on the island progresses the boys become savage like, and their little society falls to chaos and control issues.

This book is taught in many high schools and I believe that it always should be. It shows how people do need some kind of order and rules to their lives because when the balance is shattered chaos ensues.

5. Card, Orson Scott. *Ender's Game*. New York: A Tor Book, 1977. Print.

Ender is a six year old boy that is taken from his family by the government to become a commander at the International Fleet. Ender's world is set in a society that has been destroyed by an alien race and now the government is constantly trying to be ready for another impending attack, even if that means using and dehumanizing children.

Teens are very accustomed to doing things that they do not want to do. Ender definitely at times did not want to be a commander, but he was in a way forced to. This would be a great book for teens to read because they can put themselves in the place of Ender and see what they themselves would do if they were him.

6. Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Del Rey Books, 1978. Print.

Takes place in the future where books that are forbidden by a totalitarian government is burned. The main character, Guy, isn't a teen but his eyes are opened by a seventeen year old girl who shows him that burning books is like burning ideas and is silencing individualism and freedom.

Being silenced and told that their ideas are ridiculous and have no place in the world we live in is something that teens can relate to. A lot of people write younger people off, but Guy listens to the girl and learns from her. She is actually the hero of the story because she was not afraid to stand up against the norm.

7. Orwell, George. *1984*. New York: Signet Classics, 1949. Print.

The government is everywhere. Big Brother is always watching you and there isn't anything that the government does not know. Winston Smith is disturbed by the control of history that the government has and tries to avoid being watched by them. Winston soon falls in love but the government does not approve of this. Winston has to choose being a follow of Big Brother or being with his love.

1984 is an example of what happens when someone does not step up to be the hero and fight for what they want. After being tortured by O'Brien, a government official, Winston gives up and becomes a follower of Big Brother and let the government control him. He could not be what he wanted to be. This is a great book for teens as just a great dystopian book that tries to mask its society as a utopia.

8. Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*. New York: Dell Laurel-Leaf, 1993. Print.

Jonas's world is perfect with no pain or fear. But there is no choices, everyone is assigned a role in the Community. When Jonas turns twelve, he is singled out to receive special training from the Giver. The Giver alone holds the memories of the true pain and pleasure of life. Jonas must learn the truth and he can't go back to the way things were before.

The Giver is an amazing book and every teen should definitely read it. Jonas is young yet he has so much responsibility thrust upon him. He must become the hero he never thought he was going to be.

9. James, P.D. *The Children of Men*. A.A. Knopf, 1993. Print.

The human race is becoming extinct because the males are infertile. Theo Faron learns of a small group of resisters who do not share the same disillusionment of the masses and tries to find a way to save the human race.

The Children of Men takes an unusual look at a dystopian society as people are just giving up. It does show that no matter what a person cannot give up because there is hope out there even if it is the tiniest bit. This book would be good for teens to read on their own, it could be interesting to teach however, as a way to see the different perspectives of those in class.

10. Meyer, Stephanie. *The Host*. Little, Brown and Co., 2008. Print.

An alien race has peacefully invaded the human race by taking control of the bodies and pushing their souls out. However, when Melanie's body is invaded she refuses to let the alien take full control and protects her memories of those she loves from the alien so they won't find them and invade them.

This is a good book for teens to read because they can relate to lost love, fighting for your family, and trying to stay true to yourself. Melanie is a hero in her own right because she never gave up.

Sources

Adolescents In the Search For Meaning- helped to choose and summarize *Ender's Game*

<http://www.npr.org/books/titles-> summaries for *The Children of Men*, 1984, and *Fahrenheit 451*

<http://sffbookreview.wordpress.com/challenges-und-listen/npr-top-100-teen-novels/-> helped to

choose good dystopian books for teens

<http://teens.librarypoint.org/taxonomy/term/2072?page=2-> Again, another website I used to find

recommendations for dystopian fiction for teens.

