

Brittany Taylor

May 6, 2014

Eng112B

Dr. Mary Warner

**Center Piece:** *Prayers for the Stolen* by Jennifer Clements is the piece in which I surrounded my annotated bibliography.

**Rational:**

I knew immediately when we assigned this assignment by Dr. Warner that I wanted to work with novels in the realistic fiction genre. In particular I wanted to work with novels that focused on female protagonist fighting against issues often considered “inappropriate for teenagers.” I have two main reasons for focusing on female protagonist. My first being that there is simply fewer strong female protagonists in Young Adult Literature. Complex male protagonists continue to be far more common than female protagonist. During my years of high school between the years 2003-2007, the only novel we were assigned with a female protagonist was *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O’Dell. While I understood the historical qualities of the novel, I hated it. I found nothing in the story’s main character Karana that I could relate to. Looking back on reading the novel, I remember feeling the novel was assigned for the teacher’s benefit and not the students. This brings me to my second reasoning for choosing the particular focus I did for this assignment- the issues the female protagonists face in the ten novels included in bibliography are real life problems that females globally are facing. The issues are modern and continue to harm women and young girls all over the globe yet these issues are often considered inappropriate for teens. Rather than being inappropriate to expose our high school students to

issues such as rape and forced marriage, I find it inappropriate to hide this knowledge from them. If all we teach are happy ending to our students, we will ultimately disappoint them.

One of the greatest qualities of Young Adult Literature is being able to relate to a character's circumstances and decisions. By providing students with access to strong female protagonists overcoming real modern life struggles, we are providing students with outlets to dealing with their own everyday problems. With most students might not be able to relate to losing your best friend to bulimia like Lia did in Anderson's *Wintergirls*, most students need to be provided with information on eating disorders because they will not receive it at home. If instructors do not take into account the importance of teaching novels surrounding both strong female and strong male protagonist, we will be doing an injustice to our students. Strong female figures are already undermined or flat out excluded in our history textbooks- we cannot afford to lose them in our English classes as well.

## Annotated Bibliography

Allison, Dorothy. *Bastard Out of Carolina*. New York: Penguin Group, 1993. Print.

Allison's story tells the heartbreaking story of Bone, a young girl growing up without a father in South Carolina. Bone's mother Anney deals with several failed relationships until becoming pregnant and marrying Glen Waddel; a man whose family comes from a higher social class than Anney. Bone's new stepfather begins to rape her and physically abuse her. The novel deals with Anney's struggle to save her daughter's life or to put her faith in her husband at her child's expense.

*Bastard Out of Carolina* brings a powerful drama to the classroom and deals with the issue of rape in a very real and tragic way. Glen, being Bone's stepdad, reinforces for students that most rape victims know who their attacker is. It allows for the students to analyze the text while using real life statistics to understand Bone's situation. Students are also able to analyze the ways in which gender and class conditions play a role in Bone's story.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Wintergirls*. New York: Viking, 2009. Print.

This novel tells the story of two best friend, Lia and Cassie, who are suffering with severe cases of anorexia and bulimia. Cassie dies due to a ruptured esophagus and sends Lia spiraling downhill further into her anorexia. Anderson brings to life the very real horrors that eating disorders become, in a language that a high school classroom will find accessible.

The details of Lia's everyday struggles with food and body image show how truly dangerous and painful an eating disorder can be. Lia's tale does not glorify her situation,

but rather shows for readers who maybe suffering with similar issues that anorexia and bulimia are diseases and not a suitable method of dieting. High school students can look at Lia and Cassie's situations and realize that eating disorders are a sickness and require support in order to overcome.

Asher, Jay. *Thirteen Reasons Why: A Novel*. New York: Penguin Group, 2007. Print

High school student Hannah Baker takes her own life and leaves behind thirteen explanations for thirteen different people as to why she committed suicide. Told from the point of view of Clay Jensen, one of the recipients of Hannah's tapes, *Thirteen Reasons Why* shows how much impact our peers can have on a person. Hannah's depression was caused by various terrible experiences with her fellow classmates- experiences many teenagers can relate to.

The bullying and details of Hannah's depression allows for students to recognize the harm that they can cause. Bullying has become an epidemic in the United States along with teenage suicide. Asher's novel belongs in the classroom to demonstrate for the students how important it is to respect our peers and not bullying them for sport. Hannah's story is sadly not unique, and if suicide was discussed more in the serious setting of the classroom it could lead to fewer lost lives.

Clement, Jennifer. *Prayers for the Stolen*. New York: Hogarth, 2014. Print.

Ladydi Martinez lives in a small town in Guerrero, Mexico where drug lords threaten the lives of young girls each and every day. Aside from the drug lords and a few young boys, most males have left for better opportunities in the United States. Ladydi and

her friends rely on each other to escape the drug lords in the unjust war that surrounds their lives. When one of Ladydi's closest (and prettiest) friends is kidnapped, the girls are forced to accept that the disguises and ugly boy clothing is no longer enough to keep them safe.

Clement's novel gives voice to many women and girls living in rural Mexico that are being kidnapped and murdered every day. It is important for students to have knowledge on the conditions of other groups of people and to be able to understand the experiences of Mexico's females. Ladydi's experiences echo the lives of thousands of women and girls living in constant fear that need to be heard. Our high school students would be able to use the novel to analyze and further research a real life issue facing our world's young girls and women.

Efaw, Amy. *After*. New York: Viking, 2009. Print.

Fifteen year old honor student Devon finds herself in a juvenile detention facility and is facing charges for attempted murder along with numerous other felonies. A newborn baby has been found in a trash can near her apartment complex and due to the blood and suffering in her vagina all signs point to Devon. Unable to remember anything involving the birth, Devon struggles to defend her actions and maintain the reputation she fought her whole life to obtain.

Efaw's raw and emotional novel belongs in the classroom. It explains to students the severity of Devon's situation without sugarcoating any of the details. Devon's story forces the reader to reflect on Devon's actions while still being able to relate and sympathize with her. Teenagers need to read these sorts of tragedies so they can

understand certain matters require support from others in order to overcome. Similar to the Lia in Anderson's *Wintergirls*, Devon's situation could have been handled properly if she had a responsible adult in her life.

Farizan, Sara. *If You Could Be Mine*. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2013. Print.

Farizan tells the heartbreaking story of best friends that have fallen in love in present day Iran. Forbidden by law any acts of gay or lesbian relations, Sahar and Nasrin are forced to hide their love and respect their country's rigid laws. Along the way Sahar stumbles upon the various characters that help her understand her hidden desires and ultimately help her to better understand herself. Sahar's character demonstrates the courage one must possess in order to accomplish their heart's true desires in a country where a female has no power.

This novel covers enough issues that it can be used in the classroom in more than one way. It is imperative that students have knowledge on issues outside of their own surroundings and *If You Could Be Mine* offers just that. Whether covering gender roles, LGBT issues, or current day women's issues in Iran, Farizan's novel provides enough information for students to critically analyze the issues presented in both Sahar and Nasrin's lives.

Greene, Michele Dominguez. *Keep Sweet*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2010. Print.

Greene's novel follows the life of Alva Jane who is growing up in Pineridge, a Latter Day Saints walled community. Faithful as her seven different mothers and twenty-nine siblings in their Mormon faith, Alva Jane maintains a virtuous life until she caught

giving her first kiss to her childhood crush. This causes an uproar in the community and Alva is forced to marry the violent fifty-year-old Wade Barton. Alva is determined to escape but not without her eleven-year-old mentally challenged sister who is scheduled to marry the Prophet.

*Keep Sweet* covers tough issues that high school students need to be able to read and understand. Polygamy, rape, forced marriage, and women's positions within the church are all issues discussed in Greene's novel. *Keep Sweet* causes students to question the moral issues presented in this novel and allows for discussion of present days issues such as arranged marriage and rape.

Keller, Nora Okja. *Fox Girl*. New York: Viking, 2002. Print.

Teenage girls Hyun Jin and Sookie are growing up during a time of war and devastation in Korea. Forced to work as Comfort Woman to the American soldiers, Hyun Jin and Sookie watch as their lives are ruined by war, soldiers, and prostitution. Keller uses Hyun Jin and Sookie to tell the real history of Korea's Comfort Woman that is rarely ever told.

Keller combines myth and history to tell the story of Korea's Comfort Woman. Similar to *Prayers for the Stolen*, *Fox Girl* provides high school students with the opportunity to read about characters who similar in age to them and are stuck in an unjust world due to their sex and place of birth. Because this story covers actual events that have occurred in our country's history they can extend their studies after reading the novel by researching subjects such as the Korean War and the government funded brothels that were created during the war.

McCormick, Patricia. *Sold*. New York: Hyperion, 2006. Print.

“Lakshmi is a thirteen-year-old girl who lives with her family in a small hut on a mountain in Nepal. Though she is desperately poor, her life is full of simple pleasures, like playing hopscotch with her best friend from school, and having her mother brush her hair by the light of an oil lamp. But when the harsh Himalayan monsoons wash away all that remains of the family’s crops, Lakshmi’s stepfather says she leave home and take a job to support her family. She soon learns the unthinkable truth: she has been sold into prostitution.” ([www.amazon.com/Sold-Patricia-McCormick/dp/0786851724](http://www.amazon.com/Sold-Patricia-McCormick/dp/0786851724))

McCormick’s novel depicts the real life experiences of little girls being sold to the brothels of India in order to support their family’s needs. Sex trafficking and the forced prostitution is a real life issue that many countries are battling to stop; including the United States. By providing students with novels such as *Sold* instructors are teaching their students on the issues women and young girls are facing in the present day all over the world.

Sapphire. *Push*. New York: Vintage, 1996. Print.

Claireece Precious Jones is sixteen-years-old, illiterate, and a single mother. *Push* follows the young teens struggle to finally graduate from junior high while dealing with a cruel mother and a father that rapes her. Precious shows the struggle African American teenagers deal with while living in poverty with little to no agency in the city of Harlem. Through the help of her dedicated teacher Precious attempts to obtain happiness.

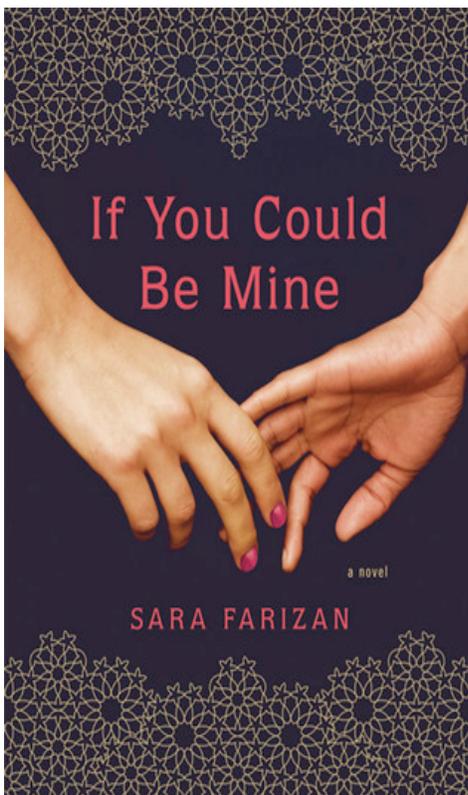
Precious' story is an important portrayal of what life is like for inner city teens dealing with poverty and a lack of education. The struggles portrayed in this novel are based on real life issues that many African American teens living in crime ridden environments such as Harlem face. Using the film students can compare and contrast the novel to the film's portrayal of Precious. African American novels in high school usually surround male slaves. Sapphire's novel brings a modernized approach to teaching African American experiences to high school students.



<http://www.amazon.com/Keep-Sweet-Michele-Dominguez-Greene/dp/1442409770#>

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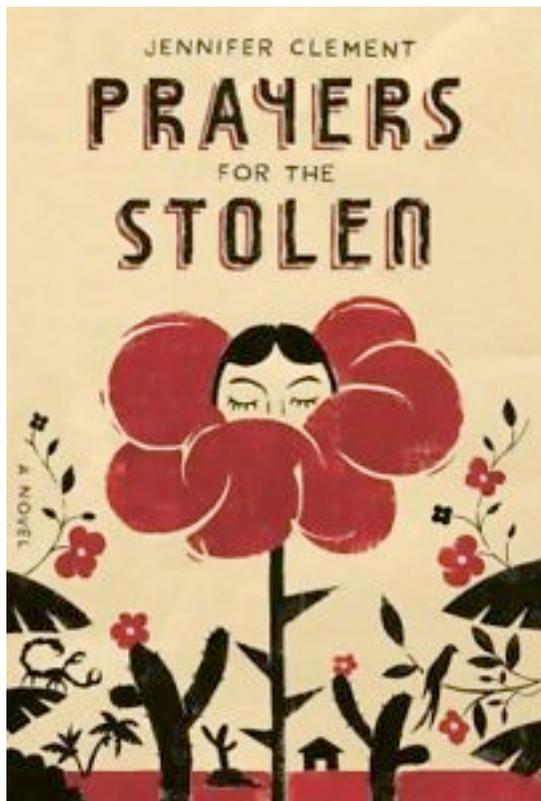
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<http://birthofanewwitch.wordpress.com/2013/10/18/the-50-page-rule-round-1/>

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[http://www.ebay.com/itm/Prayers-Stolen-Jennifer-Clement-2014-Hardcover-/171297360542?pt=US\\_Fiction\\_Books](http://www.ebay.com/itm/Prayers-Stolen-Jennifer-Clement-2014-Hardcover-/171297360542?pt=US_Fiction_Books)

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