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English 112B

Annotated Bibliography:

Truth Hidden in the Fantasy

Fantasy literature is an escape from reality, it's hard to deny that. I myself have been accused of using my reading habits as an escape from my problems. Yet what is wrong with wanting to escape, if only for a little while? Those with a more discerning eye also notice that within these escapes lies truth, as *Literature for Today's Young Adults* points out: "The escape from reality sends those readers back to their own limited and literal worlds to face many of the same problems they found in fantasy." Pondering the problem of racism? There's a great deal of fantasy literature exploring the topic. Gender equality? There's much on that, too. Fantasy may present issues in, well, *fantastical* ways, but that doesn't mean that fantasy can't comment on the real world, or that questions raised in fantasy have no application to the current day.

What about what's *real*? Fantasy isn't real, or so I've been told by several people. But so what? *LfTYA* is here again with the counter, from no less than Ursula K. Le Guin:

"For fantasy is true, of course, It isn't factual, but it is true. Children know that. Adults know it too, and that is precisely why many of them are afraid of fantasy. They know that its truth challenges, even threatens, all that is false, phony, unnecessary, and trivial in the life they have let themselves be forced into living. They are afraid of dragons because they are afraid of freedom."

It is for these reasons that for my annotated bibliography I have tried to choose those books that teach the true issues, the issues that young adults face while growing up and continue to struggle with throughout adulthood.

Duane, Diane. *High Wizardry*. San Diego: Harcourt Childrens Books, 1997. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: Ten-year-old Dairine knows two wizards: her older sister Nita and Nita's friend Kit. But all her life, Dairine has searched for knowledge. From an early age, she discovered that if you *know* things, you can prevent yourself from being hurt. So when Dairine herself is presented with the opportunity to become a wizard, she jumps at the chance. Armed with only her wits and a wizardly manual--her family's new laptop--Dairine travels light-years and galaxies away from home in order to complete her wizardly Ordeal. But no one is prepared for the titanic shake up--the Reconfiguration--that Dairine's Ordeal turns out to be.

Commentary: Dairine is incredibly independent for a ten-year-old girl, as well as a certified child genius. But these qualities serve to hurt her more than they help her once she becomes a wizard, since she is too proud and arrogant to ask for help even though she is way out of her league. This book shows young readers that they should not be afraid to ask questions or ask for help if they are unsure of things.

McCaffrey, Anne. *Dragonsinger*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2003. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: After running away from her home Hold and living by herself for a time, Menolly is now safely where she's always wanted to be: the home of music and learning on Pern, the Harper Hall. But girls--even, or especially, a girl with nine fire-lizards as her companions--are less welcome at the Hall than they used to be. Menolly's rare talent in music is not unnoticed by some, but the prejudice of others is a daily challenge for Menolly as she learns that her parents are not the only hide-bound thinkers in the world.

Commentary: Menolly's shyness and timidity help her to not stand out, but they also hold her back as she often cannot work up the courage to speak up and defend herself. As she makes friends and learns things at the Harper Hall, Menolly's character develops and she learns that it's okay to think of herself and her own needs sometimes. Young readers can learn from Menolly that they don't always need to cater endlessly to others' whims.

Nix, Garth. *The Seventh Tower: The Fall*. New York: Scholastic Paperbacks, 2000. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: In a world shrouded forever in darkness, the Castle is the only light. Tal, a boy of thirteen, lives here. Tal is a Chosen, who commands light and shadow with magic and Sunstones. But Tal's father has gone missing, and with his mother wasting away from an unknown sickness, Tal must lead his family as best he can. However, he'll need a more powerful Sunstone, and all the avenues to acquiring one have been blocked by the mysterious Shadowmaster Sushin. Forced into a corner, Tal prepares to do the unthinkable: climb one of the Castle's sky-scraping Towers, pass through the eternal Veil, and steal a Sunstone.

Commentary: Tal faces multiple problems. In the absence of his father and with his mother unable to leave her room, he tries his hardest to take care of his two younger siblings and keep his family's hard-earned position in the seven color-based hierarchy of the Castle. Outside of the Castle, in the Dark World, he encounters the strange tribal Icecarls and must rethink his entire worldview, and the idea that anyone who is not a Chosen exists only to serve them.

Nix, Garth. *The Keys to the Kingdom: Mister Monday*. New York: Scholastic Paperbacks, 2003. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: Arthur is an average but sickly young teen boy from Earth who was just trying to fit in at his new school, until he collapses from an asthma attack while running in a park during P.E. On the brink of death, two mysterious figures appear before him. One of them, calling himself Mister Monday, presents him with a strange piece of metal he calls a Key, and declares him the Rightful Heir to the Architect, the House, and all the Universe. Saved from death by the power of the Key, Arthur's world becomes increasingly strange until he ventures into the magical House (with a capital H) to discover the truth behind his new status as the Rightful Heir and a ten-thousand year long conspiracy to control the Universe.

Commentary: Arthur is thrust into a situation beyond the means of *any* Earthling, and certainly beyond the means of an asthmatic young boy. But, faced with an impossible task, he rises to the challenge and grows from a shy boy with no friends to a competent Rightful Heir with friends in the highest of places. Arthur must also deal with the temptation of great power and revenge: in the end, with Mister Monday defeated and Arthur's allies calling for Monday's execution, Arthur stays his hand and spares Monday.

Rothfuss, Patrick. *The Name of the Wind*. New York: DAW Books, 2008. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: Young Kvothe leads a happy, nomadic life as part of a band of traveling musicians. He learns the craft of music from his extended "family", father and mother, and speaks with an aged "magician" of the craft of sympathy--a kind of magic--and Naming, true magic, both of which can be learned at the legendary University. But Kvothe's world is shattered when he returns to the caravan one day and finds his entire troupe murdered by a group of terrible beings known as the Chandrian. Now alone, Kvothe must try to survive and reach his dreams--becoming a great musician and learning all he can at the University--in a world intent on grinding him down into dust.

Commentary: Kvothe tells his own tale in his own voice, and it's clear that now, years later, he's learned from the mistakes he made in his youth. Unfortunately for him, he made a *lot* of mistakes. Many of the problems Kvothe faced could have been avoided entirely if he had been less impulsive or kept quiet instead of verbally lashing out. Kvothe is very intelligent and picks up new skills quickly, but he is also very aware of these facts, making him often arrogant and insufferable. Young readers will probably sympathize with Kvothe's character--teenagers often think that they're smarter than everyone around them. The fact that Kvothe often suffers due to his intellect and sharp tongue should make young adults think twice before acting as Kvothe does.

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2003. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: With the Dark Lord Voldemort's return in the previous book, Harry must be more careful than ever at Hogwarts. The Ministry of Magic refuses to believe him and Headmaster Dumbledore about Voldemort, and begins a smear campaign to discredit him, while the vile Dolores Umbridge teaches a pointless Defense Against the Dark Arts class. Harry prepares for Voldemort's reveal and tries to teach students how to properly defend themselves.

Commentary: While Harry's heroic qualities have often helped him in the series previously, in *Order of the Phoenix* they are used against him. Voldemort shows Harry a false vision of his godfather being tortured which leads Harry to lead an infiltration of the Ministry of Magic. In doing so, Harry plays exactly into Voldemort's hands and almost delivers him the information he has desired for years. Young readers see in *Order of the Phoenix* that even heroic qualities can be a bad thing if taken too far and not reined in. Hermione even accuses Harry of "having a thing for saving people."

Sanderson, Brandon. *The Way of Kings*. New York: Tor Fantasy, 2011. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: Kaladin is a nineteen year old surgeon in training on the planet Roshar. He and his little brother are conscripted into the army, and while Kaladin turns out to be a competent soldier, his little brother is much less so, and soon dies in combat. Kaladin wins glory by single-handedly killing the enemy commander, but will not accept the prize due to his grief and honor. His commander hides evidence of Kaladin's heroic deed and has him enslaved due to his eye color-- Kaladin is a "darkeyes" with brown eyes, inferior to those with blue or green eyes. Sent off to a sure death on the Shattered Plains as a servant in a highprince's army, Kaladin must survive and claw his way back up in the world.

Commentary: Though Kaladin is justified in his hatred of the lighteyes who oppress him and the other darkeyes, he causes a great deal of his own problems by making his hatred very clear at all times. He feels responsible for the death of his brother, which causes him to be extremely protective of those he comes to care for. His inability to protect everyone causes him to sink deep into despair, nearly driving him to commit suicide. Young readers can learn from Kaladin's example that while it's alright to want to help and protect others, you can't do everything yourself.

Sanderson, Brandon. *Words of Radiance*. New York: Tor Books, 2014. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: Shallan Davar is trying to rebuild her family's name and fortune after her late father's mismanaging of the family fortune has left them as destitute nobles. Her first plan failing miserably, she travels to the Shattered Plains to seek help from the Alethi royalty there. Forced into playing a part she is ill-prepared for, she must use deception and magic to conceal her

identity and true aims as she learns that here at the heart of the greatest conflict on the planet lie secrets that threaten the whole world.

Commentary: Shallan's story, continued from *The Way of Kings* on into *Words of Radiance*, is a somewhat strange shift in lessons for both Shallan and the reader. In the first book, Shallan tried to deceive her teacher in order to steal a valuable item. She mostly failed at that task, and had to tell the truth, which worked out much better for her. In this book however, she has no choice but to lie and deceive almost everyone she meets due to the danger they present. *Words of Radiance* teaches young readers that in some cases, it is alright, even necessary, to lie to protect oneself or others.

Sanderson, Brandon. *Mistborn: The Final Empire*. New York: Tor Books, 2007. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: Vin is a young street urchin with a certain "luck". In times of great need, she draws on this "luck" to aid her in dealing with people. After a plan with her street crew goes horribly wrong and even her "luck" fails her, she is discovered by Kelsier, who informs her that her "luck" is actually one of the powers of a Mistborn, who use metal to perform magical feats. Kelsier, also a Mistborn, and his band of revolutionaries plan to use his and Vin's powers to topple the world-girding Final Empire, ruled by the immortal Lord Ruler for over a thousand years.

Commentary: As part of the plan, Vin must dress up and act like a noblewoman. Due to her upbringing, she's never done anything like that before, or anything remotely "girlish". A minor story arc throughout the novel is Vin coming to terms with her own femininity and realizing that it's alright to embrace those qualities. Vin also has extreme trust issues: in her street life she learned that trusting people only led to them betraying you later. Young adults can learn from Vin's example that it is alright to be wary, but trusting no one is a very lonely way to go about life.

Vance, Jack. *Tales of the Dying Earth: The Eyes of the Overworld*. New York: Orb Books, 2000. Print.

I've read this book.

Summary: Cugel, sometimes known as Cugel the Clever, seeks to steal valuables from a dangerous target: Iucounu the Laughing Magician. Quickly caught in a trap of Iucounu's, Cugel is forced into performing a task for Iucounu: retrieve a pair of the Eyes of the Overworld, magical artifacts which allow one to see the glory of the Overworld. Cugel faces danger and trickery from every angle as he attempts to complete this task and return to Iucounu.

Commentary: Cugel styles himself as Cugel the Clever, but while he certainly has some talent for deception, more often than not when he tries to trick people he ends up being tricked by them

instead. Cugel is less of a hero and more of a fumbling, ineffective villain protagonist. Young readers can learn from Cugel's example that lying and playing tricks is not an effective lifestyle. Some of Cugel's greatest triumphs in the novel are when he finally drops the deception and is honest with others.