



Books about Courage and Survival

Bagdasarian, Adam: *Forgotten Fire*

Published by Laurel Leaf, reprint edition 9 April 2002,

ISBN 0440229170

In 1915, Vahan Kenderian is 12 and the youngest son in a wealthy Armenian family. Historic Armenia was at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. Repeatedly the Armenians were controlled by invaders—Greek, Persian, Roman, and Mongolian. By 1900, one-ninth of the Ottoman Empire's population was Armenian; in the eyes of the Turks who ruled the Empire, the Armenians were a threat to the government's security. Vahan narrates the terrible suffering that came upon his family, his village, and his culture. His story is based on the true story of an Armenian child in 1915.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The epigraph to the book reads, "Who does now remember the Armenians?" This is a quote from Adolf Hitler in 1939, before he launched into so many parts of Europe and annihilated peoples. He made the statement in support of his argument that the world would soon forget the extermination of a people. Use the quote to find out if any of your students have heard of Armenians and the genocide of these people in 1915.
2. Discuss with students their knowledge (or lack of knowledge) about any current situation similar to the destruction of the Armenians; have students locate news articles on similar situations and share their findings with the class.
3. The Dell Laurel-Leaf Books paperback edition has an interview with

the author at the end of the book, providing insights into the novel and why he wrote the book. If you can get a copy of this edition, use these resources to teach the book.

4. Use the following websites for further background on the book:

www.education-world.com/a_curr/curr401.shtml
 www.ala.org/Content/ContentGroups/ALSC1/ALSCConnect1/
 March_2003.htm
 www.cms.edu.do/Teachers%20Folders/william%20farren/Pages/pdfs/
 comp/readlists/t_c_2001.pdf

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because Vahan Kenderian represents another group of people who have been tortured and annihilated.
- Because Vahan's story of courage is a powerful one.
- Because we all need to learn how to live in peace and acceptance with others of different races, religions, and cultures.
- Because someone like Hitler arose years after the Armenians were destroyed and he counted on humans being forgetful and unaware.

Crew, Linda: *Children of the River*

Published by Laurel Leaf, reissue edition 1 August 1991,
 ISBN 0440210224

Cambodian refugees are the central characters; the narrator at the beginning of the novel is Sundara, age 13. She is living with her aunt Soka (her mother's sister) and Soka's husband, Naro. Soka has just given birth. Ravy is 6; his little brother Pon is about 3. Chamroeun is the boyfriend Sundara left back in the city (Phnom Penh) when she came to be with her aunt's family. The family is warned that the Khmer Rouge (Communists) are coming. Soka does not want to leave, having just given birth and having been unable to complete the rituals accompanying birth.

The grandmother also sees no reason to leave, but Naro, upon returning for work, forces everyone to go. They get on board ship; then everyone gets sick. Soka can't provide milk for the baby. Sundara is caring for it, but eventually the baby dies and Sundara is forced to throw the baby into the water.

Later, the family is settled in Oregon. When Sundara is in school, she writes a poem about her experiences but is embarrassed as her teacher reads

it aloud. Sundara's writing is so much more serious and full of big issues than that of her classmates—most of whom are White.

Jonathan McKinnon, son of a doctor who helped Sundara's family when they first arrived, is a star football player. He becomes intrigued with Sundara and her life. Much of the book is about her trying to explain the difference in customs between her world and his.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Very often the "average" American teenager—many of the students in our classes—do not know what it means to have to leave behind family, friends, the homeland . . . everything. Have students make a list of the things and people they'd find most difficult to leave and explain why they have listed what they have.
2. Have students write about the best aspects of our culture that they want to share with immigrants—they might focus on why they are happy to be living in the United States. Have them also write about what is weak or faulty in American culture. After they've written about the pros and cons, have a class discussion on the topic.
3. Students could do a web quest related to Ellis Island and the conditions of immigration during some of the major immigration periods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They might like to focus specifically on the cultures from which they and their families have come.
4. "America: Mother of Exiles" by Gail Gregg, Melinda Miller, and Nan Vollgracht (in Gregg and Carroll, *Books and Beyond*, 1998) uses this novel as one of the YA novels depicting immigrant life in America.
5. Bonnie O. Ericson, in "Heroes and Journeys in *The Odyssey* and Several Works in Young Adult Literature" (chapter 1 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), describes how to teach *Children of the River* in conjunction with *The Odyssey*.
6. "*The Awakening* and Young Adult Literature: Seeking Self-Identity in Many Ways and in Many Cultures" by Pamela Sissi Carroll (chapter 4 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995) uses *Children of the River* as one novel to complement *The Awakening*.
7. Lois Stover and Connie Zitlow, in "Using Young Adult Literature as a Companion to World Literature: A Model Thematic Unit on the 'Clash of Cultures' Centered on *Things Fall Apart*" (chapter 5 in

Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), use *Children of the River* as one of the novels in this unit.

8. Resources for teaching the novel can be found at:

www.webenglishteacher.com/lcrew.html
www.randomhouse.com/teachers/authors/crew.html
www.classroom.com/edsoasis/TGuild/Lessons/Cambodia.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because many students in their schools may come from different cultures and they can learn about these immigrant students' lives.
- Because sometimes Americans have limited perspectives about immigrants and think they are coming to the United States to take our jobs.
- Because many immigrants who are teens have to struggle to hold on to their family's values and culture while trying to fit into U.S. teenagers' culture.

Elliot, Laura: *Under a War-Torn Sky*

Published by Hyperion Books for Children, 2001, ISBN 0786817534

Henry Forrester is only 19 years old, but he wants to become a pilot in World War II. He is on his fifteenth bombing mission, but every airman in his company of the Eighth Air Force bombing crew had come to realize that 15 missions were the "average life span" for pilots. Few made it to 25 missions and were able to go home alive.

Henry's plane is shot down, and he knows most of his crew has died. He survives the parachute landing, but he is injured and alone in enemy territory. Henry's story is a powerful survival story—he overcomes not only the physical injury, but also the psychological pain he has from his relationship with his father that has haunted him from childhood.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Early in the novel, Henry is reflecting on a poem, "High Flight," written by a 19-year-old American pilot flying with the Royal Air Force, just before his death. Give students a copy of the poem and have them compare the ethereal images in the poem to the reality that Henry and other pilots experienced. "High Flight" could also be compared to poetry by Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and other poets of war.
2. The novel presents a number of topics related to World War II—the

French Resistance Movement; the Royal Air Force; the B-24, B-17, and other aircraft; the life of pilots and bombing crews; the Luftwaffe and German air force—students could do a web quest on any of these topics.

3. This novel would make an excellent, easier-to-read companion novel to *All Quiet on the Western Front*.
4. Another book by Laura Elliot for younger readers is described at the following site:

www.harpercollins.com/hc/aboutus/subrights/Fiction%20Notebook%20-%20Spring%20Summer%202003.pdf

5. Other websites related to World War I and World War II include:

www.websterschools.org/classrooms/willinklib/world_war_i_and_world_war_ii Fic.htm
www.scrantonlibrary.com/teen/guybooks.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might have family members or friends who have been in war, and by reading this book, they can learn more about what these people have experienced.
- Because they might be worried about having to fight in war.
- Because they might need to learn that those we fight in war are also humans.

Gordon, Sheila: *Waiting for the Rain*

**Published by Laurel Leaf, reprint edition 6 October 1996,
ISBN 0440226988**

The main characters are Frikki, an Afrikaner/Dutch boy who comes frequently to his uncle's (Oom Koo) farm, and Tengo, a Black South African boy. Though the boys become friends, their worlds are indeed separate. Tengo's mom works in the house of the Koo family; his father works as a hired hand. Tengo and other natives are referred to by the term "kaffir." Tengo is a voracious learner; he eventually gets to go to Johannesburg and study; it is the time soon after the massacres in Soweto and other places. Joseph, Tengo's cousin, is an active member of resistance groups such as the ANC (African National Congress). The novel traces the two boys' stories up through young adulthood; ultimately they end up with Tengo unknowingly beating Frikki

(now a soldier in the Afrikaner military—doing his two years of mandatory service) over the head to prevent Frikki from killing him (Tengo). Neither knows the other right away—when they do recognize each other, Tengo is holding Frikki's gun and has the power most Blacks in South Africa never know.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This is a great novel to pair with *Cry the Beloved Country*. This book can also be used for teaching about apartheid. *Waiting for the Rain* is also another one of the novels that builds on the friendship of two young males, so it could make a good pairing with *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok.
2. Have students do a web quest on apartheid, South Africa, and the reasons for the violence in that country; they could also look for newspaper articles or news reports on other nations struggling with racial discord.
3. Lois Stover and Connie Zitlow, in "Using Young Adult Literature as a Companion to World Literature: A Model Thematic Unit on the 'Clash of Cultures' Centered on *Things Fall Apart*" (chapter 5 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), use *Waiting for the Rain* as a YA novel addressing clashes of culture.
4. Teacher resources on African countries are located at:

www.ohiou.edu/internationalstudies/ovic/Africa1.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because the friendship these two boys experience proves that we learn hate and discrimination.
- Because we need to know that humans are not always kind to others.
- Because we need to learn ways to end hatred and prejudice.

Hesse, Karen: *Out of the Dust*

Published by Scholastic, 1997, ISBN 0590371258

Billie Jo is 13 as the book opens; in a loosely poetic and extremely powerful text, she tells of her life in Oklahoma during 1934–1935 in the days of the dust bowl. Her family—mother, father, and the child her mother is carrying in her womb—are all managing in the dust and depression, until the day of

a tragic accident, when Billie Jo's hands are severely burned; her mother is also burned and the unborn child dies. Billie Jo then no longer wants to do much of what she had done in the past, including playing the piano.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Students can learn a good deal from older family members or relatives about specific periods in U.S. history. This book provides the springboard for them to learn about and explore the era of the Great Depression. A community interview activity would work well.
2. This book would be a good companion to *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Of Mice and Men*, or other literature connected to the Depression Era. Hesse's book, as the easier read, would be good for reading outside of class.
3. "What's Good about the Best?" by Ted Hipple and Amy B. Maupin (*English Journal*, January 2001) discusses why *Out of the Dust* is such a highly rated young adult novel and provides a rationale for teaching this book.
4. There are excellent teaching resources for this book at the following websites:

www.knowledge.state.va.us/cgi-bin/lesview.cgi?idl=297

www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/hesse.html

[205.213.162.11/stairs_site/workshop_pages/TeacherLine/](http://205.213.162.11/stairs_site/workshop_pages/TeacherLine/childrens_authors/activity1_shared_resources.html#kh)

childrens_authors/activity1_shared_resources.html#kh

www.fsu.edu/%7ECandI/ENGLISH/power/dust.htm

5. "The Motherless Daughter: An Evolving Archetype of Adolescent Literature" by James Lovelace and Laura Howell Smith (*ALAN Review*, Winter 2002) looks at *Out of the Dust* and the motherless daughter.
6. An essay by Jackie Swensson on *Out of the Dust* is available in *Rationales for Teaching Young Adult Literature*, edited by Louann Reid and Jamie Hayes Neufeld (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999).

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they need to know about some of the difficult times in American history, and this book presents a good understanding of the years of drought during the Great Depression.
- Because, like Billie Jo, they might have to live through hard days.
- Because Billie Jo has to overcome great grief and sadness and her story is inspiring.

Hesse, Karen: *Letters from Rifka***Published by Puffin Books, 1993, ISBN 0140363912**

Rifka is 12 as this work opens; the time is 1919–1920. The book is a series of letters written by Rifka to her cousin Tovah. Rifka and her family are trying to flee Russia; three of Rifka's older brothers have already escaped conscription into the Russian army and gone to America. Now, Rifka, her parents, and her other brothers, Nathan and Saul, are fleeing.

At the Polish border, they are stripped and searched; only then can they board the train for Warsaw. Rifka contracts typhus; then the rest of the family, except for Saul, gets it as well. After they are all better and are en route, Rifka sees a Polish peasant girl with a baby. Rifka tells the young woman she (Rifka) will help style her hair. While doing so, Rifka catches ringworm from the peasant girl. Thus when the rest of the family is "cleared" for passage to America, Rifka must stay behind and be treated for the ringworm. People from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) help Rifka get settled in Antwerp. A Catholic sister helps with the treatments for Rifka; in the process, she loses all her hair. To make matters worse, the rest of her family is now in America and Rifka is constantly homesick.

Rifka is writing in a book of Pushkin's poetry; eventually she also writes some poetry, which she doesn't feel is very good. On the ship over, she grows to love Pieter—tragically, he is drowned in a terrible storm at sea. Rifka experiences loss after loss as she befriends those in need. She is detained on Ellis Island since she has no hair, and the officials fear she'll become a "social responsibility"—unable to get a husband.

Rifka is a powerful young heroine based on a real person, Karen Hesse's great-aunt Lucy.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book uses the genre of letters. Have your students look for letters from family members or use websites to locate letters from earlier historical periods, then compare these letters with Rifka's. They can write letters to Rifka or to those whose letters they locate.
2. Throughout the book, Hesse includes excerpts from Pushkin's poetry. These excerpts provide a good way to study this poet and the tradition of Russian poetry of which Pushkin was a part.
3. This novel came after the publication of "Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl: World War II and Young Adult Literature*" by Joan Kaywell (chapter 2 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993), but it would work well in the unit.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they will read a story of tremendous courage.
- Because Rifka faces separation from her family and other connections and has to rely on her own strength.
- Because we need to learn from the past about the terrible ways people have treated others and how to change our world for the better.
- Because Rifka's family wanted to immigrate to the United States, as so many people today do—this book gives insights into the struggles immigrants face.

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki, and James D. Houston:***Farewell to Manzanar*****Published by Bantam Books, reissue edition 1 March 1983,
ISBN 0553272586**

Jeanne is telling the story of her family and other Japanese people who experienced the internment camp at Manzanar. The book reveals much of the subtle racism against the Japanese, particularly once the camps were closed. Jeanne, who is about seven in 1942 when Pearl Harbor is bombed, tries to come to understand the major impact of the experience on her family, her culture, and her world, especially the deep fears of the "other." It is well presented from the female voice of a young girl who has to keep struggling with the mix of cultures; though her heritage is Japanese, she is American-born and caught up in what it takes to be American.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. If possible, have a survivor of the Japanese internment come and talk to your class or have students try writing to those who have been survivors.
2. *Legends from the Camp*, a book of poetry by Lawson Fusao Inada, presents in poetry form many of the experiences of the Japanese Americans. Locate this book and share some readings with the class. You might also have students respond to a prompt about what they would have taken with them if they were forced from their homes into the camps as the Japanese Americans were. Students should be prepared to explain why they would take what they've listed.
3. This novel is good to pair with *Summer of My German Soldier*. Websites that are particularly helpful with the historical context of these two novels are:

www.cfep.uci.edu/ProDevel/uci-sati/faculty/rodebaugh_unit.html
www.intranet.csupomona.edu/%7Etassi/manzanar.htm
www.smith.edu/fceas/curriculum/mayewil.htm

4. Pair this novel with *Snow Falling on Cedars*—you might also consider using the film version of *Snow Falling on Cedars* and then having your students write about their impressions after seeing this visual portrayal.
5. “Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl: World War II and Young Adult Literature*” by Joan Kaywell (chapter 2 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) uses this novel in the portion that deals with the Japanese.
6. “Reconciling Memories of Internment Camp Experiences During WWII in Children’s and Young Adult Literature” by Jacqueline N. Glasgow (*ALAN Review*, Fall 2002) has good ideas for this novel and others on the same topic.
7. Lois Stover and Connie Zitlow, in “Using Young Adult Literature as a Companion to World Literature: A Model Thematic Unit on the ‘Clash of Cultures’ Centered on *Things Fall Apart*” (chapter 5 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), use *Farewell to Manzanar* to compare to the clash of generations in *Things Fall Apart*.
8. “Japanese and Japanese American Youth in Literature,” by Connie S. Zitlow and Lois Stover (*ALAN Review* 25, no. 3 [Spring 1998]) offers good insights to help teach this novel.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they need to know that Americans have not always been tolerant of other Americans.
- Because they need to know about this sad “chapter” of American history.
- Because since September 11, 2001, Americans have become more suspicious of immigrant peoples and this book can help them understand the suffering that Japanese Americans experienced simply because of fears of other Americans.

Lowry, Lois: *Number the Stars*

Published by Laurel Leaf, 9 February 1998, ISBN 0440227534

Annemarie Johansen is 10 years old and the story is told from her viewpoint. She and her family live in Copenhagen; Kristi is her younger sister. Lise,

their 18-year-old sister, was killed in an accident two weeks before her wedding, and Peter Nielsen, her fiancé, is active in the resistance movement. During the three-year occupation, electricity and food have been rationed; no one has enough to eat and there is a nightly curfew after 8:00 P.M. No leather is available so shoes are made of fish skin (fish scales). Eventually the Nazis close all businesses that are owned or run by Jews. Using a reference made early on about the King of Denmark, “All of Denmark is his bodyguard,” Annemarie says all of Denmark must be bodyguards for the Jews.

Annemarie’s friend Ellen Rosen is from a Jewish family. One day the Rosen family comes and leaves Ellen with the Johansens; the Rosens are led into hiding by Peter. The Nazis come to the Johansen home; they question why Annemarie is blond and this “other daughter”—that’s what they’ve been told about Ellen Rosen—is dark. Fortunately the Johansens have pictures of Lise when she was little—Lise was dark, so they claim Ellen is Lise, and the Nazis go away. Ellen and her parents are eventually helped to escape to a boat that Henrik is running which will take them to safety in Sweden.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The title of the book comes from a line from Psalm 147: “he who numbers the stars one by one.” This reference can lead to a discussion of how the title of the book fits the story. It can also lead to a connection of biblical parallels.
2. “Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl: World War II and Young Adult Literature*” by Joan Kaywell (chapter 2 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) uses this novel to discuss those who risked their lives to save the Jews.
3. Lois Stover and Connie Zitlow, in “Using Young Adult Literature as a Companion to World Literature: A Model Thematic Unit on the ‘Clash of Cultures’ Centered on *Things Fall Apart*” (chapter 5 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), use *Number the Stars* as a complement to *Things Fall Apart*.
4. A website that pairs this novel with *Farewell to Manzanar* is:
www.cfep.uci.edu/ProDevel/uci-sati/faculty/rodebaugh_unit.html
5. The following website provides helpful resources on Lois Lowry:
www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/lowry.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might learn about how they can be helpful to those who experience hatred or prejudice.

- Because they can learn stories of great courage.
- Because they may sometime have to decide whether they will help another in need even if it means risk to them.

Nolan, Han: *If I Should Die Before I Wake*

Published by Harcourt Paperbacks, 1 May 2003, ISBN 0152046798

Hilary is a member of a neo-Nazi group; she is also dealing with abandonment issues since the death of her father when Hilary was only five. Hilary's mother, unable to handle grief, had left Hilary alone for three days. Now in adolescence, Hilary finds a sense of belonging with the Aryan Warriors. After one of the group's latest attacks on a young Jewish boy named Simon, Hilary is in a motorcycle accident while riding with Brad, a leader in the Aryan Warriors. Hilary is critically injured and in a Jewish Hospital. Through time travel, Hilary "becomes" Chana, a Polish Jew who sees her family and the families of hundreds of other Jews destroyed by the Nazis. Chana ultimately ends up in Auschwitz.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The first Harcourt paperback edition of the book, 1996, contains an interview with Han Nolan. This interview can be a good starting point for class discussion, since Ms. Nolan discusses why she used the time travel concept.
2. *If I Should Die Before I Wake* presents a new "take" on the Shoah (Holocaust), opening with a hate-filled monologue from Hilary and her neo-Nazi indoctrination. You could use the opening with students to address the topic of hate crimes/hate groups.
3. This novel could be paired with *The Diary of a Young Girl*, *The Devil's Arithmetic*, or *Night*, again coming from the late twentieth-century perspective of revisionism and the revival of Nazism.
4. "Bubbe," Chana's grandmother, is a woman of tremendous courage and wisdom. Use any of the passages from the book that include her advice and have students write about a wisdom figure in their lives. One possible passage is the following:

"Hardship and suffering should not lessen our love for God. Everything we do, even here, [in Auschwitz] should remain as it has always been, a means of communion with God. Remember, there is nothing, nothing here on this earth that is apart from *Shekhinah*, God's presence." (*If I Should Die Before I Wake*, 196–97)

5. These author sites give additional background on Han Nolan:

www.Authors4Teens.com
greenwood.scbbs.com/servlet/A4TStart?authorid=hnolan&source=introduction

6. An essay by Jeffrey Kaplan on *If I Should Die Before I Wake* is available in *Rationales for Teaching Young Adult Literature* (Reid and Neufeld 1999).

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may need to learn about the harms and problems of groups like the Aryan Warriors.
- Because they may have known discrimination or abuse for their ethnic, religious, or sexual identity.
- Because they may need to have someone like Chana's "Bubbe," her grandmother, who can encourage them to go through any of life's difficulties.
- Because they will read about tremendous courage and terrible suffering.

Paterson, Katherine: *Lyddie*

Published by Demco Media, April 1999, ISBN 0606160671

****Teen Recommended****

Lyddie is not yet 15, but she and her younger brother Charlie become the sole supports for their family, trying to hold onto the farm their father had established. He's gone West to seek for riches; after he left, their mother never was "quite right." She leaves to live with Lyddie's aunt and uncle, taking the two youngest children, Rachel and Agnes. Eventually Lyddie and Charlie are "apprenticed out" to earn money for the farm. Lyddie's experiences are not as pleasant or productive as Charlie's, and she eventually leaves Vermont for Massachusetts and the life of a "factory girl" in Lowell.

Yes, she makes money, but it is hard earned. The novel reveals the cruel world of child labor at the turn of the twentieth century and shows the courage of a young woman who will not be defeated.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book would work well to companion an American history unit on the early years of the twentieth century—especially the issues of child labor and factory life.

2. For more sense of the labor reality for young women described in *Lyddie*, read the novel along with Lois Lowry's *The Silent Boy*.
3. "Organize! A Look at Labor History in Young Adult Books," by Deborah Wilson Overstreet (*ALAN Review*, Fall 2001) includes a discussion of *Lyddie*.
4. "Lyddie and *Oliver*: Instructional Framework for Linking Historical Fiction to the Classics," by Janis Harmon (*ALAN Review* 25, no. 2 [Winter 1998]) offers an examination of the novel.
5. "Finding Your Way Home: Orphan Stories in Young Adult Literature," by Dirk P. Mattson, (*ALAN Review* 24, no. 3 [Spring 1997]) is a helpful essay for the theme of foster children and orphans.
6. "Family Relationships As Found in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Cynthia Voight's *The Runner*," by Ruth Cline (chapter 5 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) uses this novel as one of the YA books on family relationships.
7. Teaching ideas and background can be found at the following sites:

www.carolhurst.com/titles/lyddie.html

www.lessonplanspage.com/

SSLACreateJournalAndPetitionAboutWorkingConditions67.htm

teacher.scholastic.com/authorsandbooks/events/paterson/more_info.htm

www.webenglishteacher.com/paterson.html

volweb.utk.edu/Schools/bedford/harrisms/novel.htm

www.bcps.org/offices/lis/curric/middle/eng/8.html#lyddie

www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/paterson.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may have to hold an outside job while going to school, and Lyddie's story might inspire them.
- Because sometimes they might find themselves in the role of the adult or parent, despite the fact they're still teenagers.
- Because they might have to deal with working conditions that are unjust or need to learn about others who have to face these.

Paulsen, Gary: *Hatchet*

Published by Scholastic, 1999, ISBN 059098182X

****Teen Recommended****

Brian Robeson is a teen—he is caught in the stress of his parents' divorce. He has seen his mother with a lover; he wants to keep this "secret" from his

dad. He is off to visit his dad, going via private plane to the Canadian oil-fields where his dad is working. Brian's mom has given him a hatchet—Brian is somewhat embarrassed, but having the hatchet eventually is Brian's life-saving item. En route to Canada, seated in the cockpit with the pilot who doesn't seem all that communicative, Brian is given a "mini"-flying lesson. The pilot begins to give signals of pain—eventually he has a heart attack. Brian first tries to make contact with the ground via radio, but he loses touch. He then attempts to fly the plane, but he crashes into a lake. Brian makes it to an island—there he begins a series of learning experiences for this city boy now alone without anything except his hatchet. He survives on the island for 54 days before he is rescued.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This is a good novel to pair with some of the "man versus nature" works such as Jack London's "To Build a Fire."
2. "Bringing Us the Way to Know: The Novels of Gary Paulsen" by Susan Nelson Wood (*English Journal*, January 2001) focuses specifically on *Hatchet*, but is good for teaching any of Paulsen's novels.
3. "An Overlooked Characteristic of a Good Literary Choice: Discussability" by Robert C. Small Jr. (in "Adolescent Literature: Making Connections with Teens," special issue, *Virginia English Bulletin* 44, no. 2 [Fall 1994]) examines this book as one of the novels it suggests.
4. For more information on Gary Paulsen and his books, check the following websites:

falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/paulsen.htm

www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/paulsen.html

www2.nypl.org/home/branch/kids/read2003/chats/paulsen.cfm

5. A teaching guide to *Hatchet* is located at:

www.simonsays.com/subs/183/teacher_guide.cfm?areaid=183&asset_id=119051

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because this is a story of bravery and survival.
- Because Brian has had a "city life" and learns what it means to be in nature.
- Because he is experiencing the psychological pain of his parents' divorce and many teens are experiencing that as well.

Paulsen, Gary: *Nightjohn***Published by Laurel Leaf, reissue edition 1 January 1995,****ISBN 0440219361**

The book is narrated by Sarny, who is, as the book opens, a slave girl of age nine. The novel deals with the horrendous treatment of slaves owned by Waller. (According to Sarny, he deserves no first name.) John is purchased and comes to the plantation very beaten and scarred. Sarny reveals much about the plight of slaves who try to run away, the women who are used as “breeders,” the cruelty of dogs trained to track runaways slaves, the terrible whippings, and the other inhuman conditions (inadequate food, shelter, etc.) they must endure.

Sarny wants to learn “letters” and she realizes that John will teach her in return for tobacco. John had escaped to the North, but he returned to slavery to help others learn to read. At one point when she has learned the letters to make a word, Sarny is caught by Waller. He tries to get her to tell who taught her; Mammy takes the blame and is whipped as she is forced to have a harness around her neck and pull the master in a wagon. John admits he is the one who taught Sarny. As punishment, John has two toes cut off—the “rule” was that an appendage was cut off for each time a person was caught.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This is a good novel to use with a unit on African American literature and racism. It would work particularly well companioning *Nightjohn* with Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative of a Slave* or other slave narratives.
2. “Considering the Power of the Past: Pairing *Nightjohn* and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*” by Kelly Chandler, an essay in *United in Diversity: Using Multicultural Young Adult Literature in the Classroom* edited by Jean E. Brown and Elaine C. Stephens (NCTE, 1998), offers good teaching ideas.
3. “Gaining Understanding about Human Relationships through Young Adult Fiction” by Elizabeth Poe (in “Adolescent Literature: Making Connections with Teens,” special issue, *Virginia English Bulletin* 44, no. 2 [Fall 1994]) uses this novel as one of the focus novels for the unit.
4. A unit plan for incorporating *Nightjohn* with other texts in American literature is available at www2.sjsu.edu/depts/english/Warner.htm/nj.htm.
5. *Sarny* is a sequel to *Nightjohn*; your students might want to read this novel for further study about slavery. Also, the film version of *Nightjohn* is a powerful visual portrayal of the book.

6. Several good websites are the following:

www.slaveryinamerica.org/amliterature/amlit_lp_nightjohn_overviewunit.htm
www.learner.org/channel/workshops/makingmeaning/makingmeaning/planning/reading.html
active.sln.org.uk/ema/Resource.htm
www.davis.k12.ut.us/curric/languagearts/grade8.html
www.k12webworks.com/shhs/pages/115.html

7. For more information on author Gary Paulsen, check these websites:

www.trelease-on-reading.com/paulsen.html
www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/paulsen.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because it is important to know about the horrors of slavery.
- Because Sarny and John are willing to make huge sacrifices to learn to read.
- Because sometimes we take it for granted that we can read and can get an education.
- Because freedom is never given easily.

Spinelli, Jerry: *Milkweed***Published by Knopf Books for Young Readers, 9 September 2003,****ISBN 0375813748**

He is called many things since no one really knows his name. He is a Gypsy living in Warsaw, Poland, during the early Hitler years, still young enough to think that he will be safe because he isn’t a Jew. He’s first called simply “Stophief” since that is what he has heard many times during his smuggling incidents. Later, Uri, one of the boys who befriends “Stophief” and takes him into the lifestyle of other young boys who are living by smuggling, creates a story of Misha Pilsudski, and that becomes “Stophief’s” new identity. The novel is a courageous story of Misha’s attempts to feed and save orphans, especially Janina, amid the ghetto life of Warsaw.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This novel could be paired with any that you use to teach about the Holocaust; it might work especially well with Elie Wiesel’s *Night*. The

added insight of this novel is that Gypsies were among those persecuted during the Nazi genocide and often students know little about other groups who suffered.

2. The following websites connect you with the range of topics addressed by this novel and with author information:

www.Authors4Teens.com
 topics.practical.org/browse/Jerry_Spinelli
 www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/spinel.html
 www.randomhouse.com/features/jerryspinelli
 www.teachervision.fen.com/lesson-plans/lesson-26381.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might not know that groups other than the Jews were also hated and persecuted by the Nazis in World War II.
- Because they can learn about others, even as young as 13, who have had to overcome life-and-death challenges.
- Because they might be someone who is orphaned or feels alienated from parental figures and need to know Misha's story.

Other books by Jerry Spinelli to consider reading: *Stargirl*, *Loser*, and *Wringer*.

Veciana-Suarez, Ana: *Flight to Freedom*

Published by Scholastic, 1 February 2004, ISBN 0439382009

Yara, a young Cuban woman, relates her family's story of leaving Cuba in 1967. They are leaving a Cuba where they experience a government under which "we must get approval to breathe" (*Flight to Freedom*, 6). Yara's family (except for her brother Pepito, who is conscripted into the army) leaves for Miami and joins relatives there. This novel reveals the tensions the family experiences. Papi believes they must join forces and fight for Cuba's liberation; Mami wants to adapt to American life, but only to a point. Ileana is an older daughter who becomes involved with Tommy, an Anglo activist protesting the Vietnam War. In addition, the family has relatives who have been in Miami longer and have some acculturation. Through Yara's journal, we see the world of refugees, culture clashes, and the struggle to know "where is home."

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Yara's diary entries reveal much about the family's tensions. Consider using this novel for teaching first-person narrative and pairing it with

The Diary of a Young Girl, which presents a family that stays and hides rather than emigrates. Discuss with your students which option they think their parents would take.

2. If you have students from other cultures in the class, have these students share stories of the cultural differences they have experienced. Which experiences of Yara or her family do these immigrant students connect with? Have the Anglo students in the class write about a country they would like to live in; if they have traveled outside the United States, have them write about some of the cultural differences they have experienced.
3. Keep a bulletin board with newspaper clippings about immigrants to raise awareness about the difficulties immigrant people face.
4. The following websites offer resources for teaching this book:

www.webrary.org/rs/bibhistfict.html
 www.somosprimos.com/spjun02.htm
 www.greenhill.org/AISL2004/presentations/Notable2003.pdf (notable trade books for Social Studies—2003)
 db.latinosandmedia.org/bibliography/title.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because since September 11, 2001, Americans have been more suspicious of people from other countries, and this book offers the perspective of those coming to the United States.
- Because Yara and her family lived through events like the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, and she shares her sorrow even though she is new to the country.
- Because Yara has to adapt in school, and many Anglo students don't realize the difficulties they create for those who are new.

Voight, Cynthia: *Homecoming*

Published by Fawcett Juniper/Ballantine, 1983

****Teen Recommended****

Dacey is 13, her brother James is 10, Maybeth is 9, and Sam is 6. As the novel opens, the children's mother is telling them to stay in the car and to obey Dacey; the mother heads into the shopping mall in Peewauket, Rhode Island, and never comes back. The children stay in the car overnight; then eventually head (walking!) to Bridgeport, Rhode Island. Dacey shows incredible

ingenuity for a 13-year-old: she keeps the children together; she helps them find food; she maps their route; she keeps them hidden from the police, afraid the police will separate the children and put them in foster homes. The conditions are extraordinarily demanding—walking in rain, not always getting something to eat; not always able to find shelter at night. Dicey is going on an address she has for Aunt Cilla in Bridgeport—Cilla is the children’s mother’s aunt.

The father of the family deserted when the two oldest could barely remember him; the mom became desperate after losing her job and having to face questions about Maybeth—teachers think Maybeth is retarded since she is very quiet and noncommunicative in school. James is intelligent and does well in school. Sam is a little fighter—he struggles particularly in trying to understand that their mom has gone.

Dicey lives an incredibly responsible life in caring for all her siblings and trying to keep the family together. Her story is a compelling one.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The issue of homeless children is a growing concern. This novel offers good insight into the challenges and the courage needed for children. The novel could be an introduction to a research unit on the topic of homelessness.
2. Bonnie O. Ericson, in “Heroes and Journeys in *The Odyssey* and Several Works in Young Adult Literature” (chapter 1 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), describes how to teach *Homecoming* in conjunction with *The Odyssey*.
3. “Finding Your Way Home: Orphan Stories in Young Adult Literature,” by Dirk P. Mattson (*ALAN Review* 24, no. 3 [Spring 1997]) is a helpful essay for the theme of foster children and orphans.
4. “Into the Woods Again: Three Recent Young Adult Novels of Parental Abandonment” by Gail Munde (*ALAN Review* 24, no. 3 [Spring 1997]) examines this novel as one of the three.
5. Helpful websites for teaching *Homecoming* include the following:

www.webenglishteacher.com/voight.html
www.randomhouse.com/highschool/guides/homecoming.html
www.mcdougallittell.com/disciplines/_lang_arts/litcons/homecomi/guide.cfm
scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/fall96/f96-11-Research.html
www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/voight.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might have friends or peers who have been abandoned by parents.
- Because they can learn about the resourcefulness and courage of a teen who does all she can to keep her family together.
- Because the issue of homelessness is more a reality today than ever.

Other books by Cynthia Voight to consider reading: *Dicey’s Song* and *Jackaroo*.

Wojciechowska, Maia: *Shadow of a Bull*

Published by Aladdin Paperbacks, 1992, ISBN 0689715676

Manolo Olivar is nine; he looks a good deal like his father, Juan Olivar, a famed bullfighter. At Juan’s birth, the prophecy was that he would be one of the best bullfighters ever. Manolo is fearful; he sees himself as a coward. He is rapidly “taken under the wings” of six men in the village of Arcangel, who want him to begin learning all about bullfighting. He even begins to practice secretly. At the same time, Juan, the older brother of Manolo’s best friend, is very eager to become a bullfighter. Juan, unlike Manolo, has the “aficionado”—the love of fighting, but his father had been injured and “rejected” by Manolo’s father, so Juan does not believe he has any chance to become known. On the day Manolo first “tests” his bullfighting skills, he realizes he cannot kill the bull and that he is not “made” for fighting. He wants to be a doctor; he learned that in helping the aging village doctor help an injured “clown” bullfighter. Manolo waits two years before actually being “tested,” wondering if his father was ever fearful.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Because of the setting in Spain and in the bullfighting arena, this book would be a good companion to Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*; it could be the outside-of-class text.
2. You might consider reading the book aloud while the class is studying a novel like *The Sun Also Rises*; use the book for a discussion about what makes for true courage or for the topic of following in parents’ footsteps. Your students can debate the statement: “A person should follow his or her parents’ expectations.”
3. Some web resources for teaching the book include:

www.bcps.org/offices/lis/curric/middle/eng/6.html

www.schoolhousebooksworld.com/Newbery.html
 clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/products/perspectives/sep-oct97/
 teachers.html
 www.ed.uiuc.edu/YLP/Units/Mini_Units/94-95/Loos.Hispanic-
 cultures
 www.michigan.gov/documents/
 Social_Studies_Trade_Books_42259_7.pdf

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might be sons or daughters who everyone thinks will do what their father or mother did/does.
- Because, like Manolo, they may need to test their courage.
- Because they might need to get a better sense of who they really are instead of what others think they are.
- Because they may wonder if their parents or other role models were/are ever fearful.

Yolen, Jane: *Briar Rose*

**Published by Tor Books, reprint edition 15 November 1993,
 ISBN 0812558626**

Rebecca, Shanna, and Sylvia are now all young adults, but each remembers their grandmother telling and retelling the “Sleeping Beauty” fairy tale. Their grandmother’s stories always held some harsh and strange images that were not part of the original tale. Following their grandmother’s death, Rebecca is left with her “Gemma’s” parting words: “I am Briar Rose.” Rebecca’s search to find the real identity of her grandmother leads to another chapter in the horrendous story of the Holocaust.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Have your students research their favorite fairy tale and write a new version that addresses some contemporary issue of hate, violence, or injustice.
2. Have students research a family member—preferably a grandparent or older relative—and write a short biography of that person’s life. These presentations could include Power Point slides, and if the person written about is available, he or she could be invited to a “This Is Your Life” presentation.
3. If possible, invite a Holocaust survivor to the class for a presentation.

4. Students can write fairy tales with contemporary emphases. Check the following website for help with fairy tales:

www.theliterarylink.com/fairypage.html

5. Websites that are helpful for teaching a number of Jane Yolen’s books and providing author information are the following:

www.Authors4Teens.com

www.webenglishteacher.com/yolen.html

www.loretonh.nsw.edu.au/english/year12_yolen/yolen_page.htm

www.janeyolen.com/tchrsideas.html

www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/swteach.html

www.theliterarylinks.com/questins_otherbooks.html#Briar%20

Rose

www.stmary.pvt.k12.de.us/Lib_Holocaust_Resources.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may have a grandparent or older relative they want to know better.
- Because this is another story that reveals how humans can treat other humans inhumanely, and we need to learn to make peace, not hatred.
- Because reading helps us understand worlds we can never experience.