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Annotated Bibliography  
112B Prof. Warner  
Nov. 27, 2020

## LGBTQ+ YA Novels in Fantasy

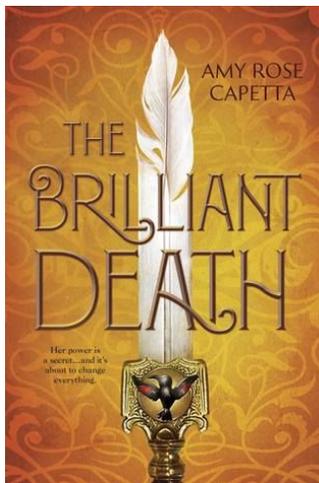
Rationale:

In this annotated bibliography the focus is the representation of LGBTQ+ in young adult Fantasy. There is a shortage of widely known YA literature that features LGBTQ+ characters, especially as main characters and even more so in the fantasy genre. From personal experience a lot of fantasy novels place queer characters as side or background characters, they are rarely ever featured center stage. Also in a lot of novels characters may be written as queer coded but even so they are never explicitly identified as queer. With an ever growing population of young adults and LGBTQ+ individuals it is important that there is a diverse pool of literature they can read and empathize or identify with. In fantasy, many of the Exeter qualities appear in this particular genre yet it does not always include a wide variety of characters who reflect the broad experiences of young adult readers, characters that go beyond the stereotypical heterosexual teen experience, or explore themes that honestly inform young adult readers of the wider world such as LGBTQ+ issues and sexual identity issues to connect with their immediate lives and contemporary concerns. According to *Literature for Today's Young Adults* fantasy is a very social genre that is centered around essential quests with different motives that express the desire to accomplish a journey filled with difficulties or danger and a near insurmountable problem that is likely to fail. It is a story that could enable readers to engage with the stages of adolescence to adulthood; while magic, symbolism, and allegories allow the protagonist to externally manifest their internal struggles. Fantasy main characters live in a world where everything is flipped upside down, they experience war and natural disasters. It is a world where anything can happen and the hero shoulders enormous responsibility for every action they take affects someone else,

or decides the fate of the world. Like young adults the protagonist may fumble or be unsure about both themselves and their journeys, but fantasy is a place where the human experience can be played out on a larger than life scale, such as where John Rowe Townsend says “Our quests may not be as earth shaking as those of fantasy heroes, but our emotional and intellectual wrestling can shake our own personal worlds” (LFTYA 103). Therefore, fantasy as a genre should be more inclusive because as fantastical as the story is and the monumental tasks the hero overcomes it is the humanity at the core of the characters and story that best links to other’s experiences.

### Annotated Bibliography

(all novels are new to me)



*The Brilliant Death* by Amy Rose Capetta

Summary:

This book is about Teodora di Sangro who both hides her magical abilities and secretly uses them to transform her family's enemies into miscellaneous objects. Eventually Teodora travels to the capital transformed as a boy to save her father. There she meets Cielo whose mastery of their power allows them to switch effortlessly between

male and female. Teo and Cielo’s journey to the capital grows more sinister by the day as they uncover secrets and growing feelings together.

Evaluation:

This is a new to me read that features a Nonbinary/Trans/Queer relationship in a YA novel. Though I have not read this book the third Exeter quality is intrinsically linked to Teodora’s journey of gender and sexual identity. She also seems like a protagonist that can fill in both a strong female lead and represent a human experience that is lacking in literary canon.

Capetta, Amy Rose. *The Brilliant Death*. Penguin Books, 2019.



*Labyrinth Lost* by Zoraida Cordova

Summary:

Set in the fantastical world of Los Lagos

Alex prepares for her Deathday, the one

opportunity to get rid of her magic. The

spell to rid herself of her magic backfires and her entire family vanishes. Now she is alone with

Nova, a brujo she can't trust, but might be Alex's only way to save her family.

Evaluation: The entire cast of characters are people of color and the main character is a bisexual

of Latinx decent. Like in chapter 8 of *Adolescents in the Search For Meaning* readers could find

a story built on latin mythology fascinating or connect with Latin heritage more ontop of having

a queer female main character. Of course the Exeter qualities three and four are present as well

with a bisexual female lead and characters that go beyond typical experiences.

Cordova, Zoraida. *Labyrinth Lost*. Sourcebooks, Inc., 2016.



*Nevernight* by Jay Kristoff

Summary:

“Never flinch. Never fear. Never forget.” Mia,

sixteen years old, daughter of a traitor, and

apprentice to the assassins of the Red Church.

Surrounded by treachery she must complete

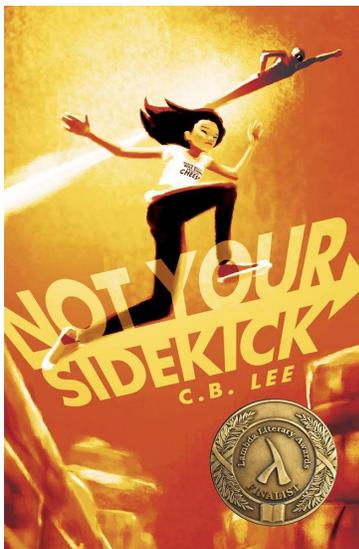
her trials or die. If she survives initiation to be inducted among chosen of the Lady of Blessed Murder, Mia will be one step closer to revenge.

Evaluation:

Nevernight seems like an intense read and it is with murder and political intrigue as the main plot but the underlying emotions Mia experiences tie in with several chapters from *Adolescents in the Search For Meaning*. Facing death and loss, identity, and fantasy are all combined in this story.

Of course, planning to be an assassin to work through loss isn't the healthiest option, but Mia is struggling with real emotions on a bigger scale. Also the main romance is between two girls.

Kristoff, Jay. *Nevernight*. Macmillan, 2016.



*Not Your Sidekick* by C.B. Lee

Summary:

In Andover superpowers are common, and despite her heroic lineage, Jessica Tran is resigned to live without superpowers. To pad her college applications she accepts a paid internship only to find out it's working for an infamous supervillain. Jess's upside is she gets to work with her crush, Abby. But what began as a fun way to spite her superhero parents veers into dangerous territory

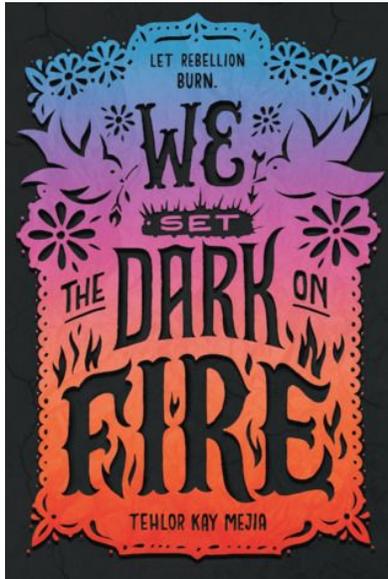
when she discovers a plot larger than heroes and villains altogether.

Evaluation:

This book reminds me of Disney's *Sky High*, if the cast was aged up for college and gayer. It has diverse cast of queer characters of color while the main character is bisexual and biracial. There

is some racism in the book and I think on top of the LGBTQ+ characters that theme also connects with the sixth Exeter quality of connecting to global issues.

Lee, C.B. *Not Your Sidekick*. Interlude Press, 2016.



*We Set the Dark on Fire* by Tehlor Kay Mejia

Summary:

In Medio's School for Girls, Daniela Vargas is a society wife-in-training. Upon graduation women will either run a husband's household or raise his children, both promising a life of comfort and luxury, away from the political and social struggles of the lower class. Asked to spy for a rebel group fighting for equality in Medio, Daniela must choose between the privilege of upper society, or give up everything to free Medio

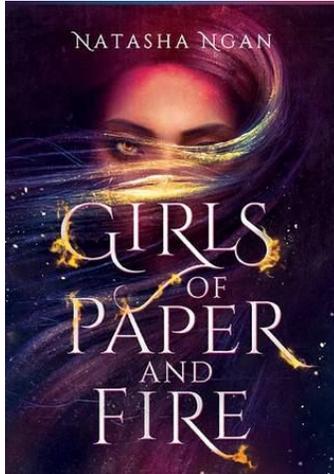
while falling for her biggest rival.

Evaluation:

*We Set the Dark on Fire* is a dystopian novel similar to the *Handmaid's Tale* but for teens.

*Literature for Today's Young Adults* dystopias focus more on sociological, psychological or emotional parts of the story and by summary alone it is clear that the novel will have the theme of women's rights and classism at its core. Which will start a connection and conversation about contemporary issues with the world today.

Mejia, Tehlor Kay. *We Set the Dark on Fire*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2019.



*Girls of Paper and Fire* by Natasha Ngan

Summary:

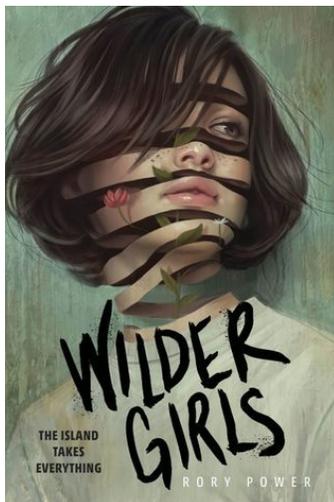
In Ikihara Lei is part of the Paper caste, the lowest and most persecuted class of people and like her mother she is stolen from her remote village by guards. Lei and eight other girls must learn the ins and outs of being the king's consorts. While forbidden romance blooms as Lei decides how far she's willing to go for justice and

revenge.

Evaluation:

Similar to *We Set the Dark on Fire* where women's rights and classism are central themes this novel will start a conversation on global concerns. There are some scenes that discuss sexual assault concerning the before and after along with the trauma of the survivor. So this could also be read as a companion novel to Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* while also being inclusive of LGBTQ+ characters of color.

Ngan, Natasha. *Girls of Paper and Fire*. Jimmy Patterson Books, 2018.



*Wilder Girls* by Rory Power

Summary:

For eighteen months the Raxter School for Girls has been under quarantine due to the Tox. Hetty and the other girls don't travel beyond the school's fence into the infected woods, instead they wait for a cure as the Tox spreads. However when Byatt goes missing,

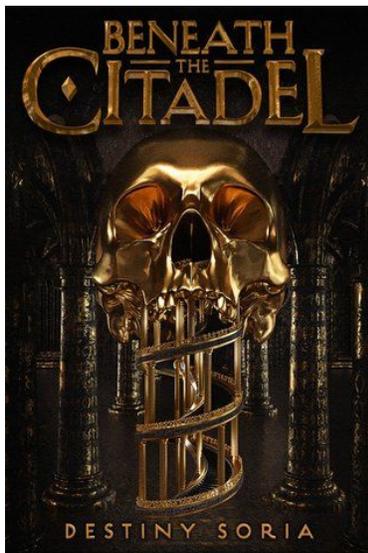
Hetty will break quarantine and brave the horrors beyond the fence to find her and discover there is more to their life beyond Raxter.

Evaluation:

Clara Albright used this novel for her book talk and mentioned desperation, loneliness and survival were key themes of this book that are discussed in *Literature for Today's Young Adults*.

Also with the quarantine portion of the novel would also connect with teen readers affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to several of the themes mentioned there is a LGBTQ+ relationship for representation.

Power, Rory. *Wilder Girls*. Delacorte Press, 2019.



*Beneath the Citadel* by Destiny Soria

Summary:

In the city of Eldra, ancient prophecies rule the people and what maintains the status quo. After a decade-long rebellion, Cassa, an orphan and daughter of rebels, is determined to fight back against the high council with her only allies Alys, Evander, and Newt.

Cassa and her friends must uncover the mystery of the infallible prophecies before it is too late to save themselves or the city.

Evaluation:

It's mostly a fantasy heist novel reminiscent of *Six of Crows* which is another YA novel with some LGBTQ+ representation except *Beneath the Citadel* is more diverse with main characters who are all people of color, come from different backgrounds and are different representations LGBTQ+ community such as Asexual, Bisexual, and Gay. The themes of this particular book are

friendship, found family, classism, and destiny. This novel definitely falls into several Exter qualities such as two, three, six and seven.

Soria, Destiny. *Beneath the Citadel*. Harry N. Abrams, 2018.



*These Witches Don't Burn* by Isabel Sterling

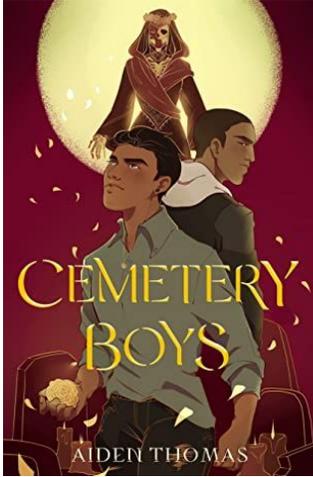
Summary:

Hannah is an elemental witch living in Salem, Massachusetts spending most of her time avoiding her ex-girlfriend, hanging out with her best friend, and selling candles and crystals to tourists, goths, and local Wiccans. When a blood ritual interrupts the end-of-school-year bonfire, evidence of dark magic begins to appear all over Salem, which forces Hannah to team up with the last person she wants to see her ex Veronica. With everything Hannah loves on the line, she must stop the Blood Witch and all the while attempting to date the new girl, Morgan.

Evaluation:

*These Witches Don't Burn* is a more lighthearted read in a YA contemporary fantasy where LGBTQ+ teens struggle with very real relationship and identity issues alongside the magical problems of the novel. This novel is definitely a mix between chapter six and eight of *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning* where young adults might enjoy a mixture of how to approach real life problems set in a fantasy setting.

Sterling, Isabel. *These Witches Don't Burn*. Razorbill, 2019.



*Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas

Summary:

Yadriel is a brujo whose Latinx family does not accept his true gender. To prove he has what it takes he performs a ritual with the help of his cousins to find the ghost of his murdered cousin and set it free.

However, the ghost he summons is Julian Diaz, who refuses to quietly die as he has some unfinished business to attend to before he slips off into death. With no other choice Yadriel agrees to help Julian, but the

more time Yadriel spends with Julian the less he wants to let him leave.

Evaluation:

*Cemetery Boys* main themes are acceptance, family, community and love. They tie in with *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning* chapter four as family seems to be a big part of the novel and how that relationship affects a trans boy coming from a traditional Latinx family. Among the magical elements of the story LGBTQ+ representation alongside Latin culture could draw in young adults who are looking for more diversity in a fantasy novel.

Thomas, Aiden. *Cemetery Boys*. Swoon Reads, 2020.

#### Works Cited

Donelson, Kenneth L., and Alleen Pace Nilsen. *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, 8th ed., Pearson, 2008.

Warner, Mary L. *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*. Scarecrow Press, 2006.