

CHAPTER 1 Young Adults and Their Reading

We are not saying that you should *spoil* a book by telling a potential reader everything you know about the story, but that as a responsible adult making recommendations to individual students, there are often things you need to know and so, yes, we do sometimes give away the endings. But in our own defense, we also want to say that the more you read, the more your pleasure will come not so much from being surprised at how a book ends but from your recognition of all the things the author did to bring you as the reader to the end of the story. As discussed in the following section, “Stages of Literary Appreciation,” reading is similar to a journey where what you experience along the way is often as important as what you experience at your final destination.

A July 2007 *Time* magazine article entitled “Harry Potter and the Sinister Spoilers,” by Lev Grossman and Andrea Sachs, hinted that the “Azkaban-level security” measures that were being taken to keep the plot of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* secret was more of a marketing ploy than an understanding of what reading is all about. If all readers care about is the ending, then “why would they turn out in such numbers to see the movie versions of the book?” They went on to explain:

People read books for any number of reasons; finding out how the story ends is one among many and not even the most important. If it were otherwise, nobody would ever bother to read a book twice. Reading is about spending time with characters and entering a fictional world and playing with words and living through a story page by page. The idea that someone could ruin a novel by revealing its ending is like saying you could ruin the *Mona Lisa* by revealing that it’s a picture of a woman with a center part. Spoilers are a myth; they don’t spoil. No elaborate secrecy campaign is going to make *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* any better than it already is, and no website could possibly make it useless and boring.⁵



Stages of Literary Appreciation

The development of literary appreciation begins long before children learn to read. Table 1.1, Stages of Literary Appreciation, presents an approximation of how individuals develop the personal attitudes and the reading, watching, and listening skills that are a necessary part of literary appreciation. The table should be read from the bottom up because each level is built on the one below it. We used to draw it as a wedding cake, but this cut down on how much information we could put on the page. Our reason for the wedding cake shape was to illustrate that the levels get increasingly smaller. There are dropouts all the way along, with many people never rising to even the level of losing themselves in a good story, much less coming to appreciate the aesthetics of particularly well-done presentations of drama, film, or writing. People do not go through these stages of development; instead they add on so that at each level they have all that they had before plus a new way to gain pleasure and understanding (see also the discussion of teaching literature in Chapter 11).

TABLE 1.1 Stages of Literary Appreciation

Read this chart from the bottom up to trace the stages of development most commonly found in reading the autobiographies of adults who love to read.

Level	Optimal Age	Stage	Sample Literary Materials	Sample Actions
7	Adulthood to death	Aesthetic appreciation	- Classics - Significant contemporary books - Drama - Film	- Reads constantly - Dreams of writing the great American novel - Enjoys literary and film criticism - Reads many books a year - Sees plays - Revisits favorites
6	College	Reading widely	- Best-sellers - Acclaimed novels, poems, plays, films, magazines	- Talks about books and films with friends - Joins a book club - Gathers books to take on vacation
5	High school	Venturing beyond self	- Science fiction - Social issues fiction - Forbidden material "Different" stories	- Begins buying own books - Sees movies with friends - Gets reading suggestions from friends - Reads beyond school assignments
4	Junior high	Finding oneself in literature	- Realistic fiction - Contemporary problem novels - Wish-fulfilling stories	- Hides novels inside textbooks to read during classes - Stays up at night reading - Uses reading as an escape from social pressures
3	Late elementary	Losing oneself in literature	- Series books - Fantasies - Animal stories - Anything one can disappear into - Comic books	- Reads while doing chores - Reads while traveling - Makes friends with a librarian - Checks books out regularly - Gets "into" reading a particular genre or author
2	Primary grades	Learning to decode Developing an attention span	- School reading texts - Easy-to-read books - Signs and other real-world messages	- Takes pride in reading to parents or others - Enjoys reading alone - Has favorite stories
1	Birth to kindergarten	Understanding of pleasure and profit from printed words and from visual and oral presentations	- Nursery rhymes - Folktales - Picture books - Television programs - Songs	"Reads" signs for certain restaurants and food - Memorizes favorite stories and pretends to read - Enjoys singing and listening to stories

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Level 1: Understanding That Pleasure and Profit Come from Literature

Children are fortunate if they have loving adults who share songs and nursery rhymes and who talk with them about the television and the movies they see together. They are also lucky if they get to go to bookstores and libraries for buying and borrowing books and for participating in group story hours. Researchers in reading education are discovering the social nature of reading. Children who seem to get the most from their reading are those who have had opportunities for “talking story” and for having what Ralph Peterson and Maryann Eeds call “grand conversations” both with other children and with adults.⁶

If children are to put forth the intellectual energy required in learning to read, they need to be convinced that it is worthwhile—that pleasure awaits them—or that there are concrete benefits to be gained. In U.S. metropolitan areas, there’s hardly a four-year-old who doesn’t recognize the golden arches of a McDonald’s restaurant. Toddlers too young to walk around grocery stores reach out from their seats in grocery carts to grab favorite brands of cereal. We know one child who by the time he entered first grade had taught himself to read from *TV Guide*. While its format breaks almost every rule any good textbook writer would follow in designing a primer for clear and easy reading, it had one overpowering advantage. The child could get immediate feedback. If he made a correct guess, he was rewarded by getting to watch the program he wanted. If he made a mistake, he knew immediately that he had to return to the printed page to try again. Today’s equivalent is children who learn to read from the tiny screens on computerized games or from going online to find information, advertisements, or cartoons.

One of our students, Marlinda White-Kaulaity, who has now graduated with a Ph.D. (see her photo on p. 309) grew up on the Navajo Reservation in northern Arizona, and when she looked at our stages of literary appreciation, she thought our examples were too specific and too limited. See the article she wrote, “Reflections on Native American Reading: A Seed, a Tool, and a Weapon,” published in the April 2007 *Journal of Adult and Adolescent Literacy*.⁷ As you look at the chart, it might be a good idea for you to do what Marlinda did in questioning the different levels, as well as the examples, and thinking about how you developed your own interests in literacy. For her culture, she thought we focused too heavily on print literacies, while as we will show in Chapter 3, people living in today’s world make use of many other kinds of literacy. Her earliest memories were of sitting on her grandfather’s knee and being told stories and of participating in games and dances. She doesn’t remember her parents ever reading a bedtime story to her, yet she grew up with a strong interest in stories and later in reading.

Level 2: Learning to Read

Learning the principles of phonics (i.e., to turn the squiggles on a page into meaningful sounds) is the second stage of development. It gets maximum attention during the primary grades, where as much as 70 percent of the school day is devoted to language arts. Developing literacy, however, is more than just decoding; it is a never-ending task for anyone who is intellectually active. Even at a mundane level, adults continue working to develop their reading skills. People tackling new computer programs or rereading tax guides in preparation for an

audit exhibit the same symptoms of concentrated effort as do children first learning to read. They point with their fingers, move their lips, return to reread difficult parts, and in frustration slam the offending booklet to the floor. In each case, however, they are motivated by a vision of some benefit to be gained, so they increase their efforts.

Those of us who learned to read with ease may forget to help children who are struggling to find pleasure and enjoyment. Children who learn to read easily—the girl who sits in the backseat of the car and reads all through the family vacation and the boy who reads a book while delivering the neighborhood newspapers—find their own rewards for reading. For these children, the years between seven and twelve are golden. They can read the great body of literature that the world has saved for them: *Charlotte's Web*, the Little House books, *The Borrowers*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Where the Red Fern Grows*, and books by Beverly Cleary, William Steig, Dr. Seuss, and hundreds of other good writers.

At this stage, children are undemanding. They are in what Margaret Early has described as a stage of unconscious enjoyment.⁸ With help, they may enjoy such classics as *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Treasure Island*, and *Little Women*, but by themselves they are far more likely to turn to less-challenging material. Parents worry that their children are wasting time, but nearly 100 percent of our college students who say they love to read went through childhood stages of being addicted for months to one particular kind of book. Apparently, readers find comfort in knowing the characters in a book and what to expect, and this comfort helps them develop speed and skill.

Level 3: Losing Oneself in a Story

Children who read only during the time set aside in school and children who live in homes where the television set is constantly switched from channel to channel and where the exigencies of daily life leave little time for uninterrupted conversations and stories probably have a hard time losing themselves in a good story. There are exceptions, of course, who are like Worm (short for bookworm), the eleven-year-old character in Rod Philbrick's *Max the Mighty* who escapes the horrors of her everyday life by reading. She even uses a miner's helmet and headlight to read in the dark.

Because of life's complications, many children do not lose themselves in a good story until much later than the third or fourth grades, which is typical of good readers, or it may not happen at all. In this segment quoted from *The Car Thief*, by Theodore Weesner, Alex Housman, who is being kept in a detention home, is seventeen years old when he first experiences losing himself in a story (i.e., finding what we refer to as "a good read"). Someone has donated a box of books to the detention home, and, because there's nothing else to do, Alex starts to read. He is intimidated by the words because he had never read anything before except school assignments, but because the book is straightforward and written in a style he can understand,

[he] sat on the floor reading until he grew sleepy. When his eyelids began to slide down and his head began to cloud, he lay over on his side on the floor to sleep

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Level 4: Finding Oneself in a Story

The more experience children have with literature, whether through words or pictures, the more discriminating they become. To receive pleasure they have to respect the story. In reminiscing about his childhood fondness for both the Hardy Boys and motorcycles, the late John Gardner remarked that his development as a literary critic took a step forward when he lost patience with the leisurely conversations that the Hardy boys were supposed to have as they roared down country roads side by side on their motorcycles.

Good readers begin developing this critical sense in literature at about the same time they develop it in real life at the end of childhood and the beginning of their teen years. They move away from a simple interest in what happened in a story to ask why. They want logical development and are no longer satisfied with stereotypes. They want characters controlled by believable human motives because now their reading has a real purpose to it. They are reading to find out about themselves, not simply to escape into someone else's experiences for a few pleasurable hours. They may read dozens of contemporary teenage novels, looking for lives as much like their own as possible. They read about real people in biographies, personal essays, and journalistic stories. They are also curious about other sides of life, and so they seek out books that present lives totally different from their own. They look for anything bizarre, unbelievable, weird, or grotesque: stories of occult happenings, trivia books, and horror stories. And, of course, for their leisure-time reading and viewing they may revert to level 3, escaping into a good story. When they are working at the highest level of their capability, however, their purpose is largely one of finding themselves and their places in society. Parents and teachers sometimes worry when children seem stuck at a particular level or with a particular kind of book. In most instances, as long as there are other choices available as well as time for reading, students sooner or later venture onward in a natural kind of progression.

Level 5: Venturing beyond Themselves

The next stage in literary appreciation comes when people go beyond their egocentrism and look at the larger circle of society. Senior high school English teachers have some of their best teaching experiences with books and stories by such writers as Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Harper Lee, F. Scott Fitzgerald,

Margaret A. Edwards Award Winner (1998)

Madeleine L'Engle, A Writer Who **Asks the Hard Questions**



Madeleine L'Engle, who died on September 6, 2007, was honored by the Edwards committee for two books from her series about the Austin family (*Meet the Austins* and *Ring of Endless Light*) and for two books from her Time Quintet about the Murray family (*A Wrinkle in Time* and *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*). While both sets were originally published as books for children, they have achieved a crossover audience partly because of the way L'Engle brings in philosophical and "other-world" considerations. The Time Quintet is about the intellectual Murray family and the disappearance of their physicist father, who is engaged in secret work for the government.

The introduction to the series, *A Wrinkle in Time*, which won the 1963 Newbery Medal, is still the most popular and as far as we know is the earliest of all the Edwards Award books. The next most popular one is *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, which won the American Book Award. In it, the "baby" of the family, Charles Wallace, is now a fourteen-year-old who, with help from his sister Meg, inherits the task of rescuing their father.

In May 2007, the Time Quintet was reissued with two different covers for each book. Peter Sis drew the illustrations for the set designed to be marketed to children, while the well-known science fiction illustrator Cliff Nielsen drew the designs for the mass-market editions. Anna Quindlen wrote a new introduction to *A Wrinkle in Time*; also included as extras are a new interview with L'Engle and the text for her 1963 Newbery acceptance speech. In this speech, L'Engle noted that because of when she was born (1918) she belongs to the first generation who grew up benefiting from the wisdom of the librarians who chose to bring attention to particularly good books.

I learned about mankind from Hendrik Willem van Loon; I traveled with Dr. Dolittle, created by a man I called Hug Lofting; Will James taught me about the West with Smoky; in boarding school I grabbed Invincible Louisa the moment it came into the library because Louisa May Alcott had the same birthday that I have, and the same ambitions.

L'Engle grew up in New York City surrounded by artists of one kind or another; her father was a writer and her mother a pianist. In 1930, the family moved to Europe where they lived mostly in France and Switzerland, but Madeleine came home for college, first in South Carolina and then at Smith in Massachusetts. After college she lived in Greenwich Village with three college friends. Here she met and later married actor Hugh Franklin. In 1952, he retired from the theater and they moved to an old white farmhouse in northwestern Connecticut where they raised three children and supported themselves by resurrecting a defunct general store—a life *not* conducive to writing, L'Engle laughingly admits. Nevertheless, she plugged away at her writing, with her own children being her first audience. It took two years of rejection letters before she had a book accepted.

L'Engle frequently explores questions of science, philosophy, and religious faith, sometimes in the same book. When *A Wrinkle in Time* won the 1963 Newbery Medal, critics in the field argued that the book was a poor excuse for sci-fi. A colleague at a university where we previously taught conjectured that the women on the Newbery Committee had never read any "real" science fiction and were so bowled over by just a whiff of the genre that they gave it the prize. When, thirty-five years later, L'Engle won the Margaret A. Edwards Award, in her acceptance speech she said that she knew when she wrote *Wrinkle* that she was breaking taboos. One was that sci-fi protagonists had to be male and her protagonist was female: "I'm a female. Why would I give all the best ideas to a male?"

Another "rule" was that fantasy and science fiction don't mix. "Why not?" she asks. "We live in a fantastic universe, and subatomic particles and quantum mechanics are even more fantastic than the macrocosm. Often the only way to look clearly at this extraordinary universe" is through imagination. In her defense, she cited Erich Fromm's book *The Forgotten Language* (Rinehart, 1951), which makes the point that "fairy tales, fantasy, myths, and parables are the only universal language which crosses over barriers of race, culture, and time." ●

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Carson McCullers, William Faulkner, Arthur Miller, and Flannery O'Connor. Students respond to the way these books raise questions about conformity, social pressures, justice, and other aspects of human frailties and strengths. Book discussions at this level can have real meat to them because readers make different interpretations as they bring their own experiences into play against those in the books.

Obviously, getting to this level of literary appreciation is more than a matter of developing an advanced set of decoding skills. It is closely tied to intellectual, physical, and emotional development. Teenagers face the tremendous responsibility of assessing the world around them and deciding where they fit in. Reading at this level allows teenagers to focus on their own psychological needs in relation to society. The more directly they can do this, the more efficient they feel, which probably explains the popularity of contemporary problem novels featuring young protagonists, as in the books by Will Hobbs, Brock Cole, M. E. Kerr, Robert Cormier, Jacqueline Woodson, Virginia Euwer Wolff, and Nancy Garden.

Although many people read fantasy and science fiction at the level of losing themselves in a good story, others may read such books as Nancy Farmer's *The House of the Scorpion*, Neal Shusterman's *The Dark Side of Nowhere*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *Tehanu*, and Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* and *The Subtle Knife* at a higher level of reflection. Such readers come back from spending a few hours in the imagined society with new ideas about their own society.

Levels 6 and 7: Aesthetic Appreciation

When people have developed the skills and attitudes necessary to enjoy imaginative literary experiences at all the levels described so far, they are ready to embark on a lifetime of aesthetic appreciation. This is the level at which producers, playwrights, authors, critics, talented performers, and literary scholars concentrate their efforts. Even they don't work at this level all the time, however, because it is as demanding as it is rewarding. The professor who teaches Shakespeare goes home at night and relaxes by watching *The Simpsons* or *The Office* or by scanning the Internet to see what might turn up on someone's blog or on YouTube. The author who writes for hours in the morning might put herself to sleep at night by listening to a CD of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, while the producer of a new play may flip through magazines as a way of relaxing. Teenagers are much the same. Top students take a break from the seriousness of homework by watching *CSI*, skimming the sports page, listening to music, or playing video games.

In summary, the important points to learn from this discussion of stages of literary appreciation are that teachers, librarians, and parents should meet young people where they are and help them feel comfortable at that stage before trying to move them on. We also need to continue to provide for all the levels below the one on which we are focusing; for example, people at any stage need to experience pleasure and profit from their reading, viewing, and listening. This is especially true with reading, which requires an extra measure of intellectual effort. People who feel they are not being appropriately rewarded for their efforts may grow discouraged and join the millions of adults who no longer read, view, or listen to materials for personal fulfillment and pleasure. Their literary efforts focus

entirely on acquiring the factual information that is needed to manage the daily requirements of modern living.



A University of Exeter Study on the Qualities of Good YA Books

"The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Teachers' Perception of Quality in Fiction for Adolescent Readers" is the way Rosemary Hopper, a lecturer in English Education at the University of Exeter, entitled her 2006 article published in the British journal *English in Education*.¹⁰ The article reported on the first part of a study designed to assess the attitudes and the knowledge of educators in relation to how they view quality in young adult literature and how this affects their view of its place in schools.

The Exeter University researchers suspected that educators, who work mostly under the philosophy of a *cultural literary heritage*, do not make as much use of young adult literature as they could or should, now that the quality and the availability of YA books (including fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and drama) has increased over the past decade. Their underlying assumption was that the literary canon as it is usually interpreted marginalizes many students and does not provide opportunities for students to continue their development of literary appreciation in a smooth, upward line. The goal of the researchers was to see whether it is feasible for teachers to use young adult literature to teach principles of literary judgment and discernment. Teachers want to help teenagers learn to deconstruct stories and to apply criteria showing that they understand such literary conventions as story structure, narrative perspective, and genre conventions. The question being asked by the study was whether or not teachers and librarians think that young adult literature is rich enough to support such pedagogical uses.

The researchers conducted twenty-five in-depth interviews with twenty-one English teachers, three librarians, and one teaching assistant. The interviewees came from eleven different schools and were all volunteers, which the researchers cautioned may mean that they are not typical because they at least knew enough about young adult literature to want to be involved in the study.

One of the first questions asked in the semistructured interviews was how young adult literature should be defined. Some of the interviewees gave basically negative definitions that used such terms as "commercial," "stuff silly girls might read," "lacks weight," and "books set in schools." More positive interviewees focused on the content and used such terms as "issues teenagers would identify with," "explicitly informing," "technically aimed at teenagers," "relevant, accessible . . . and entertaining," "opportunities to explore other things/cultures," "allowing children to work out problems," and "having teenagers as the main characters."

The researchers suggested that those teachers who had the most negative views toward the concept of young adult literature probably "miss an opportunity to move their pupils forward in their reading." While the majority of the interviewees held more positive feelings toward YA books, they did not think

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they could accomplish their goals with just any book written for teenagers. They wanted to work with “well-written” young adult books, and expressed a shared assumption that books either were well written or poorly written. However, the researchers felt challenged to understand what the interviewees considered “good” books because they all found it easier to describe what made books “bad.”

Nevertheless, while not managing to list “absolute criteria,” the Exeter University researchers did find consistent patterns in what the teachers judged to be qualities that would help readers develop. Condensed here are the qualities that the interviewees judged to be important because of the way they allow young readers and their teachers to operate at several levels.

1. Imaginative and well-structured plots going beyond simple chronologies to include time shifts and differing perspectives.
2. Exciting plots that include secrecy, surprise, and tension brought about through narrative hooks and a fast pace.
3. Characters who reflect experiences of teen readers, something that is not found in much of the literary canon, especially when it comes to strong female protagonists.
4. Characters who go beyond typical experiences so that readers can use the fictional experiences to learn and develop in their own lives.
5. Lively, varied, and imaginative language that is grammatically correct while being neither patronizing and simplistic nor unnecessarily confusing through lexical density or complexity.
6. Themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns.
7. Themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues.
8. Varied levels of sophistication that will lead to the continual development of reading skills.

A challenge for the teachers and librarians who were being interviewed was to think of examples of books that would demonstrate these qualities. Ones they mentioned included Louis Sachar’s *Holes*, David Almond’s *Skellig*, and Philip Pullman’s *The Golden Compass*, *The Subtle Knife*, and *The Amber Spyglass*. We were pleased to note that most of these books are included on our United States Honor List (pp. 21 to 26) even though the majority are from England. This gave us the idea of seeing how closely the eight characteristics of “quality” young adult literature developed in the Exeter study fit with the seven “characteristics” of the best young adult literature that we have been using in this textbook.

An important difference is in the methodology. The Exeter study set out to find the characteristics of “good” YA literature, while we started with YA literature judged by many people to be “good” (the books on our Honor List) and then examined the literature to see what characteristics it has. As we describe these characteristics, we will keep the Exeter ones in mind and note places where

there are especially good matches. By doing this, we hope to fill in one of the needs noted in the Exeter study, which is the shortage of teachers' acquaintance with books containing the desired qualities. The teachers being interviewed assumed there were many such books, but they lacked knowledge of them.

Looking for the Exeter Qualities in the Books on the Honor List

Since 1980 we have been compiling a yearly Honor List in hopes of finding a manageable list of "best" YA books as judged by fellow critics, teachers, and librarians. We devise our yearly lists by examining those YA books that make it to the editors' choice lists of *School Library Journal* and *Booklist* and onto such prize lists as that of the National Book Awards, which now includes a youth section. As soon as the American Library Association meets in January, we receive news releases announcing more "best" books than we can hope to read. The Michael L. Printz Award, established in 2000, goes to the best YA book of the year, while the Newbery Medal winner and Honor Books are sometimes of interest to teen readers, as are the winners of the Coretta Scott King Awards for best African American books, the Pura Belpré Awards for best Latino/Latina books, the Robert F. Silbert Award for most distinguished informational book, and the Margaret A. Edwards Award, given to an author for a lifetime contribution to young adult books. On the YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) best-book list of some seventy books, we pay the most attention to the eight or ten that receive unanimous votes. We also look at their list of Quick Picks (designed for reluctant YA readers), and, as general interest has increased in books for young adults and the new category of tweeners, we look for the annual recommendations in such newspapers as the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Horn Book* magazine, with its *Horn Book Fanfare* and the *Horn Book/Boston Globe* Awards.

Over the past thirty years we have seen a tremendous increase in the number of awards and best-book lists, but deciding on the final selection for our Honor List is as hard as ever because readers' and critics' tastes are increasingly diverse and books are selected as "the best" on the basis of many different criteria. We hope that you will read many books so that you can recommend them not because you saw them on a list, but because you enjoyed them and believe they will appeal to a particular student.

When we made our first Honor List, we started with 1967 because this seemed to be a milestone year, when writers and publishers turned in new directions, but as the years have gone by, the number of books has made the list so unwieldy that for this edition we moved the books from the 1960s and 1970s to Focus Boxes in Chapter 2. We also deleted a few books that are out of print and we stayed with our earlier decision to move the biographies, nonfiction, and collections of poetry and short stories to Focus Boxes in appropriate chapters. Occasionally, we add a book to the Honor List when it appears to be growing in respect and popularity, as has happened with Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*, Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*, Laurie R. King's *Speak*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *Tehanu*, and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*.

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We used to identify books as coming from either the juvenile division or the adult division of a publishing house, but this no longer seems like crucial information because within the last fifteen years nearly all the Honor books have been published by juvenile divisions. This is partly because the reviewing sources from which we take our lists are slanted toward juvenile books, and partly because today's publishers have a kind of freedom they did not have in 1975 when, for example, Bradbury felt it necessary to create an "adult" division to publish Judy Blume's *Forever* in hopes of softening the controversy over its sexual content.

Starting here with the Honor List, and continuing through this textbook, we have tried to be consistent in listing the original hardback publisher because this is the company who found the author and did the original editorial and publicity work. Readers interested in finding paperback editions or sound recordings, and so on, can easily check online with such marketers as amazon.com or Barnes and Noble or look in an online version of Bowker's *Books in Print*. However, there is still a challenge in recognizing which subdivisions or imprints belong to which companies because companies often merge and within the larger companies subdivisions are constantly being formed.

If a book is included on this Honor List, obviously it is outstanding in some way, but one book may be here because of its originality, another for its popularity, and another for its literary quality. We should also warn that many excellent books did not happen to find their way to this list and should not be dismissed as mediocre. The chart format was chosen for the convenience of those who want an efficient list of high-quality books to carry with them to a bookstore, a library, or to a computer for online research and buying.

Since 2000, Professor James Blasingame, Jr., who joined our English department faculty, has helped us make the decisions and write the Honor List reviews. These reviews have been published in the *English Journal*—usually the September or November issues—for the past decade or so. Here we use fairly recent books from the Honor List to illustrate the different qualities that over the last several editions of this textbook we have identified as characterizing high-quality young adult literature. And when a book seems to us to be a good illustration of one of the eight qualities outlined by the Exeter University researchers, we make a note. Other books on the Honor List are described in connection with the subjects of particular chapters.

Characteristic 1: Young Adult Authors Write from the Viewpoint of Young People

A prerequisite to attracting young readers is to write through the eyes of a young person. One of the ways authors do this is to write in first person, as with this beginning paragraph of Norma Fox Mazer's 1997 *When She Was Good*:

I didn't believe Pamela would ever die. She was too big, too mad, too furious for anything so shabby and easy as death. And for a few moments as she lay on the floor that day, I thought it was one of her jokes. The playing-dead joke. I thought that at any moment she would spring up, seize me by the hair, and drag me around the room. It wouldn't be the first time. . . .

Honor List

The Best of the Best, 1980–2007

Year	Title	Author	Publisher	Genre	Protagonist		No. of Pages
					Sex	Age	
2007	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i>	Sherman Alexie	Little, Brown	Memoir	M	14	240
	<i>Dreamquake: Book Two of the Dreamhunter Duet</i>	Elizabeth Knox	FSG	Fantasy	F	Older teen	449
	<i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i>	J. K. Rowling	Scholastic	Fantasy	M	19	759
	<i>Tamar: A Novel of Espionage, Passion, and Betrayal</i>	Mal Peet	Candlewick	Adventure Mystery/War	F	15	432
	<i>Twisted</i>	Laurie Halse Anderson	Penguin Viking	Realistic	M	16	272
	<i>What They Found: Love on 45th Street</i>	Walter Dean Myers	Random House	Short Stories	M/F	Mixed	256
	<i>The White Darkness</i>	Geraldine McCaughrean	HarperCollins	Adventure Mystery	F	14	384
2006	<i>American Born Chinese</i>	Gene Luen Yang	First Second Books	Graphic Novel	M	Young teen	233
	<i>An Abundance of Katherines</i>	John Green	Dutton/Penguin	Realistic	M	18	230
	<i>Sold</i>	Patricia McCormick	Hyperion	Realistic	F	13	263
	<i>Surrender</i>	Sonya Hartnett	Candlewick	Psychological Mystery	M	20	248
	<i>The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation: Volume 1: The Pox Party</i>	M. T. Anderson	Candlewick	Historical 1700s	M	Teens	351
	<i>The Book Thief</i>	Markus Zusak	Knopf	Young Teen	F	Childhood	550
	<i>The Rules of Survival</i>	Nancy Werlin	Dial/Penguin	Realistic Problem	M	13–18	260
2005	<i>Criss Cross</i>	Lynne Rae Perkins	Greenwillow Books	Realistic	F	14	337
	<i>Elsewhere</i>	Gabrielle Zevin	Farrar, Straus & Giroux	Fantasy	F	16	277
	<i>Inexcusable</i>	Chris Lynch	Atheneum	Realistic Problem	M	17	165
	<i>Looking for Alaska</i>	John Green	Dutton	Realistic Problem	M	17	227
	<i>Peeps</i>	Scott Westerfeld	Pengium/Razorbill	Vampire Science Fiction	M	19	320
	<i>Twilight</i>	Stephenie Meyer	Little, Brown	Vampire Fantasy	F	16	498
2004	<i>Airborn</i>	Kenneth Oppel	Harper	Adventure/Fantasy	M	15	368
	<i>Chanda's Secrets</i>	Allan Stratton	Annick Press	Realistic Problem	F	16	193
	<i>Godless</i>	Pete Hautman	Simon & Schuster	Realistic Problem	M	16	208
	<i>How I Live Now</i>	Meg Rosoff	Wendy Lamb	Realistic Dystopia	F	16	208
	<i>Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy</i>	Gary D. Schmidt	Clarion	Historical Early 1900s	M/F	Early teens	224
	<i>Private Peaceful</i>	Michael Morpurgo	Scholastic	Historical War	M	18	195
2003	<i>The Canning Season</i>	Polly Horvath	Farrar	Realistic Humorous	F	13	208
	<i>Fat Kid Rules the World</i>	K. L. Going	Putnam	Realistic	M	Older teens	177
	<i>The First Part Last</i>	Angela Johnson	Simon & Schuster	Realistic	M	16	144
	<i>A Northern Light</i>	Jennifer Donnelly	Harcourt	Realistic Historical	F	16	396

(continued)

-2007

Protagonist	No. of Pages
Age	
14	240
Older teen	449
19	759
15	432
16	272
Mixed	256
14	384
Young teen	233
18	230
13	263
20	248
Teens	351
Childhood	550
13-18	260
14	337
16	277
17	165
17	227
19	320
16	498
15	368
16	193
16	208
16	208
Early teens	224
18	195
13	208
Older teens	177
16	144
16	396

(continued)

Honor List continued

Year	Title	Author	Publisher	Genre	Protagonist		No. of Pages
					Sex	Age	
	<i>The River Between Us</i>	Richard Peck	Dial	Realistic Historical	F	Older teens	164
	<i>True Confessions of a Heartless Girl</i>	Martha Brooks	Kroupa/Farrar	Realistic Problem	F	17	192
2002	<i>Big Mouth and Ugly Girl</i>	Joyce Carol Oates	HarperCollins	Realistic Problem Romance	F	17	226
	<i>Feed</i>	M. T. Anderson	Candlewick	Science Fiction Dystopia	M/F	Older teens	236
	<i>The House of the Scorpion</i>	Nancy Farmer	Atheneum	Science Fiction Dystopia	M	Young teens	380
	<i>The Kite Rider</i>	Geraldine McCaughrean	HarperCollins	Historical Adventure	M	Young teens	272
	<i>My Heartbeat</i>	Garret Freymann-Weyr	Houghton Mifflin	Romance Problem	F	14	154
	<i>Postcards from No Man's Land</i>	Aidan Chambers	Dutton	Problem Historical	M	17	312
2001	<i>Damage</i>	A. M. Jenkins	HarperCollins	Realistic Sports	M/F	17	186
	<i>The Land</i>	Mildred D. Taylor	Phyllis Fogelman	Historical	M	YA+	375
	<i>Life of Pi: A Novel</i>	Yann Martel	Harcourt	Magical Realism	M	16	319
	<i>Lord of the Deep</i>	Graham Salisbury	Delacorte	Realistic Romance	M	13	184
	<i>The Rag and Bone Shop</i>	Robert Cormier	Delacorte	Realistic Mystery	M	12	154
	<i>Seek</i>	Paul Fleischman	Marcato/Cricket	Realistic Quest	M	17	167
	<i>The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants</i>	Ann Brashares	Delacorte	Realistic Romance	F	16	304
	<i>A Step from Heaven</i>	An Na	Front Street	Realistic Romance	F	17	156
	<i>True Believer</i>	Virginia Euwer Wolff	Atheneum	Realistic Romance	F	15	264
	<i>Zazoo</i>	Richard Moser	Houghton Mifflin	Realistic	F	13	248
2000	<i>The Amber Spyglass</i>	Philip Pullman	Knopf	Fantasy/Myth	M/F	Young teens	518
	<i>The Beet Fields: Memories of a 16th Summer</i>	Gary Paulsen	Delacorte	Realistic Memoir	M	16	158
	<i>Homeless Bird</i>	Gloria Whelan	HarperCollins	Realistic Quest	F	13	216
	<i>Hope Was Here</i>	Joan Bauer	Putnam's	Realistic Quest	F	16	190
	<i>Kit's Wilderness</i>	David Almond	Delacorte	Historical Supernatural	M	13	229
	<i>Many Stones</i>	Carolyn Coman	Front Street	Realistic Quest	F	Mid-teens	158
	<i>Stuck in Neutral</i>	Terry Trueman	HarperCollins	Realistic Problem	M	14	114
	<i>The Wanderer</i>	Sharon Creech	HarperCollins	Realistic Quest	M/F	Young teens	305
	<i>A Year Down Yonder</i>	Richard Peck	Dial	Historical Realism	F	16	130
1999	<i>Anna of Byzantium</i>	Tracy Barrett	Delacorte	Historical Fiction	F	Older teens	209
	<i>Frenchtown Summer</i>	Robert Cormier	Delacorte	Realistic Poetry	M	12	113
	<i>Hard Love</i>	Ellen Wittlinger	Simon & Schuster	Realistic Quest	M/F	16	224
	<i>Monster</i>	Walter Dean Myers	HarperCollins	Realistic Problem	M	16	240

Honor List continued

Year	Title	Author	Publisher	Genre	Protagonist		No. of Pages
					Sex	Age	
	<i>Never Trust a Dead Man</i>	Vivian Vande Velde	Harcourt	Mystery Supernatural	M	17	194
	<i>Safe at Second</i>	Scott Johnson	Philomel	Sports Problem	M	17	224
	<i>The Smugglers</i>	Iain Lawrence	Delacorte	Adventure	M	16	183
	<i>Speak</i>	Laurie Halse Anderson	Farrar, Straus & Giroux	Realistic Problem	F	13	197
	<i>When Zachary Beaver Came to Town</i>	Kimberly Willis Holt	Henry Holt	Realistic	M	13	231
1998	<i>Clockwork: Or All Wound Up</i>	Philip Pullman	Scholastic	Fantasy/Sci-Fi	M/F	Teens	112
	<i>Go and Come Back</i>	Joan Abelove	DK Ink	Realistic Historical	F	13	177
	<i>Holes</i>	Louis Sachar	Farrar, Straus & Giroux	Fanciful Adventure	M	14	233
	<i>The Killer's Cousin</i>	Nancy Werlin	Delacorte	Psychological Mystery	M	17	228
	<i>Rules of the Road</i>	Joan Bauer	Putnam's	Realistic Quest	F	16	201
	<i>Soldier's Heart</i>	Gary Paulsen	Delacorte	Historical	M	15	106
	<i>Whirligig</i>	Paul Fleischman	Holt	Realistic Quest	M	17	133
	<i>The Wreckers</i>	Iain Lawrence	Delacorte	Historical Adventure	M	14	191
1997	<i>Blood and Chocolate</i>	Annette Curtis Klause	Delacorte	Supernatural	F	18	288
	<i>Buried Onions</i>	Gary Soto	Harcourt Brace	Realistic	M	18	149
	<i>Dancing on the Edge</i>	Han Nolan	Harcourt Brace	Realistic	F	12	244
	<i>Ella Enchanted</i>	Gail Carson Levine	HarperCollins	Cinderella Retelling	F	12	232
	<i>The Facts Speak for Themselves</i>	Brock Cole	Front Street	Realistic Abuse	F	13	184
	<i>Out of the Dust</i>	Karen Hesse	Scholastic	Narrative Poetry	F	13	227
	<i>When She Was Good</i>	Norma Fox Mazer	Scholastic	Realistic Mental Health	F	Early 20s	240
	<i>Whistle Me Home</i>	Barbara Wersba	Holt	Realistic Homophobia	M/F	17	108
1996	<i>After the War</i>	Carol Matas	Simon & Schuster	Historical Realistic	F	15	116
	<i>A Girl Named Disaster</i>	Nancy Farmer	Orchard	Realistic Quest	F	14	306
	<i>The Golden Compass</i>	Philip Pullman	Knopf	Fantasy/Sci-Fi	F	14	396
	<i>Jip: His Story</i>	Katherine Paterson	Lodestar	Realistic Historical	M	11	181
	<i>Rats Saw God</i>	Rob Thomas	Simon & Schuster	Realistic	M	17	219
1995	<i>The Eagle Kite</i>	Paula Fox	Orchard	Realistic Death	M	13	127
	<i>Ironman</i>	Chris Crutcher	Greenwillow	Realistic Sports	M	16	181
	<i>Like Sisters on the Homefront</i>	Rita Williams-Garcia	Lodestar/Dutton	Realistic	F	14	165
	<i>The Midwife's Apprentice</i>	Karen Cushman	Clarion	Historical	F	13	122
	<i>The War of Jenkins' Ear</i>	Michael Morpurgo	Philomel	Realistic/Religious	M	14	171
1994	<i>Deliver Us from Evie</i>	M. E. Kerr	HarperCollins	Realistic Homophobia	F	17	177
	<i>Driver's Ed.</i>	Caroline Cooney	Delacorte	Suspense	M/F	Teens	184

(continued)

Honor List continued

Year	Title	Author	Publisher	Genre	Protagonist		No. of Pages
					Sex	Age	
	<i>Iceman</i>	Chris Lynch	HarperCollins	Realistic Sports	M	14	181
	<i>Letters from the Inside</i>	John Marsden	Houghton Mifflin	Realistic	F	Teens	146
	<i>When She Hollers</i>	Cynthia Voigt	Scholastic	Realistic Abuse	F	17	177
1993	<i>The Giver</i>	Lois Lowry	Houghton Mifflin	Science Fiction Dystopia	M	Mixed	180
	<i>Harris and Me</i>	Gary Paulsen	Harcourt Brace	Realistic Humorous	M	Young teens	157
	<i>Make Lemonade</i>	Virginia Euwer Wolff	Holt	Realistic Single parent	F	14/17	200
	<i>Missing Angel Juan</i>	Francesca Lia Block	HarperCollins	Problem Occult	F	Teens	138
	<i>Shadow Boxer</i>	Chris Lynch	HarperCollins	Realistic Sports	M	Young teens	215
1992	<i>Dear Nobody</i>	Berlie Doherty	Orchard	Realistic Pregnancy	M/F	Older teens	192
	<i>The Harmony Arms</i>	Ron Koertge	Flare	Realistic Humorous	M	14	182
	<i>Missing May</i>	Cynthia Rylant	Orchard	Realistic Death	M/F	Mixed	89
	<i>Somewhere in the Darkness</i>	Walter Dean Myers	Scholastic	Realistic Family	M	14	224
1991	<i>The Brave</i>	Robert Lipsyte	HarperCollins	Realistic Sports	M	18	195
	<i>Castle in the Air</i>	Diana Wynne Jones	Greenwillow	Fantasy	M/F	Teens	199
	<i>Lyddie</i>	Katherine Paterson	Lodestar	Historical mid-1800s	F	13	183
	<i>The Man from the Other Side</i>	Uri Orlev	Houghton Mifflin	Historical, War	M	14	186
	<i>Nothing but the Truth</i>	Avi	Orchard	Realistic	M	14	177
1990	<i>The Shining Company</i>	Rosemary Sutcliff	Farrar	Historical	M	Mixed	296
	<i>The Silver Kiss</i>	Annette Curtis Klause	Bradbury	Occult Romance	F	Teens	198
	<i>Tehanu: The Last Book of Earthsea</i>	Ursula K. Le Guin	Atheneum	Fantasy	F	Child-hood	226
	<i>The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle</i>	Avi	Orchard	Historical Adventure	F	13	215
	<i>White Peak Farm</i>	Berlie Doherty	Orchard	Realistic Family	F	Older teens	86
1989	<i>Blitzcat</i>	Robert Westall	Scholastic	Animal	M	-	230
	<i>Celine</i>	Brock Cole	Farrar	Realistic	F	16	216
	<i>Eva</i>	Peter Dickinson	Delacorte	Science Fiction	F	13	219
	<i>No Kidding</i>	Bruce Brooks	HarperCollins	Science Fiction	M	14	207
	<i>Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind</i>	Suzanne Fisher Staples	Knopf	Realistic Problem	F	12	140
	<i>Weetzie Bat</i>	Francesca Lia Block	HarperCollins	Realistic Spoof	M/F	Teens	88
1988	<i>Fade</i>	Robert Cormier	Delacorte	Occult	M/F	Mixed	320
	<i>Fallen Angels</i>	Walter Dean Myers	Scholastic	Realistic War	M	Older teens	309
	<i>A Kindness</i>	Cynthia Rylant	Orchard	Realistic Family	M	15	117
	<i>Memory</i>	Margaret Mahy	Macmillan	Realistic Disability	M/F	19 80+	240
	<i>Probably Still Nick Swanson</i>	Virginia Euwer Wolff	Holt	Realistic Disability	M	Teens	144

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Honor List continued

Year	Title	Author	Publisher	Genre	Protagonist		No. of Pages
					Sex	Age	
	<i>Scorpions</i>	Walter Dean Myers	HarperCollins	Realistic Crime	M	Teens	167
	<i>Sex Education</i>	Jenny Davis	Orchard	Realistic Death	F	Teens	150
1987	<i>After the Rain</i>	Norma Fox Mazer	Morrow	Realistic Death	F	Mid-teens	290
	<i>The Crazy Horse Electric Game</i>	Chris Crutcher	Greenwillow	Realistic Sports Disability	M	Teens	224
	<i>The Goats</i>	Brock Cole	Farrar	Realistic	M/F	Teens	184
	<i>Hatchet</i>	Gary Paulsen	Bradbury	Adventure Survival	M	12	195
	<i>Permanent Connections</i>	Sue Ellen Bridgers	HarperCollins	Realistic Family	M/F	Teens	164
	<i>Sons from Afar</i>	Cynthia Voigt	Atheneum	Realistic	M	Mid-teens	224
	<i>The Tricksters</i>	Margaret Mahy	Macmillan	Occult	F	17	266
1986	<i>The Catalogue of the Universe</i>	Margaret Mahy	Macmillan	Realistic	F	17	185
	<i>Izzy, Willy-Nilly</i>	Cynthia Voigt	Atheneum	Realistic Disability	F	15	288
	<i>Midnight Hour Encores</i>	Bruce Brooks	HarperCollins	Realistic	F	16	288
1985	<i>Beyond the Chocolate War</i>	Robert Cormier	Knopf	Realistic	M	17	234
	<i>Dogsong</i>	Gary Paulsen	Bradbury	Adventure Occult	M	13	177
	<i>Ender's Game</i>	Orson Scott Card	Tor	Science Fiction	M	Young boy	357
	<i>In Country</i>	Bobbie Ann Mason	HarperCollins	Realistic	F	Teens	247
	<i>The Moonlight Man</i>	Paula Fox	Bradbury	Realistic Alcoholism	F	Teens	192
	<i>Remembering the Good Times</i>	Richard Peck	Delacorte	Realistic Suicide	M/F	Teens	192
1984	<i>The Changeover: A Supernatural Romance</i>	Margaret Mahy	Macmillan	Fantasy	M/F	Teens	214
	<i>Cold Sassy Tree</i>	Olive Ann Burns	Ticknor & Fields	Realistic Historical	M/F	Mixed	391
	<i>Downtown</i>	Norma Fox Mazer	Morrow	Realistic	M/F	Young teens	216
	<i>Interstellar Pig</i>	William Sleator	Dutton	Science Fiction	M	16	197
	<i>The Moves Make the Man</i>	Bruce Brooks	HarperCollins	Realistic	M	Young teens	280
	<i>One-Eyed Cat</i>	Paula Fox	Bradbury	Realistic	M	Young teens	216
1983	<i>Beyond the Divide</i>	Kathryn Lasky	Macmillan	Historical Fiction	F	Teens	254
	<i>The Bumblebee Flies Anyway</i>	Robert Cormier	Pantheon	Futuristic	M	Teens	211
	<i>The House on Mango Street</i>	Sandra Cisneros	Arte Publico	Realistic	F	Young teens	134
	<i>A Solitary Blue</i>	Cynthia Voigt	Atheneum	Realistic Family	M	Early teens	182
1982	<i>Annie on My Mind</i>	Nancy Garden	Farrar	Realistic Homophobia	F	Teens	233
	<i>The Blue Sword</i>	Robin McKinley	Greenwillow	Fantasy	F	Late teens	272
	<i>A Formal Feeling</i>	Zibby Oneal	Viking	Realistic Death	F	Teens	162
	<i>A Midnight Clear</i>	William Wharton	Knopf	Realistic War	M	Early 20s	241
	<i>Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush</i>	Virginia Hamilton	Philomel	Occult	F	Teens	224

Year	Title
1981	Let the
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Honor List continued

Year	Title	Author	Publisher	Genre	Protagonist		No. of Pages
					Sex	Age	
1981	<i>Let the Circle Be Unbroken</i>	Mildred D. Taylor	Dial	Historical U.S. South	F	Early teens	166
	<i>Notes for Another Life</i>	Sue Ellen Bridgers	Knopf	Realistic Family	M/F	Teens	252
	<i>Rainbow Jordan</i>	Alice Childress	Coward McCann	Realistic	F	14	142
	<i>Stranger with My Face</i>	Lois Duncan	Laurel Leaf	Occult	F	17	250
	<i>Tiger Eyes</i>	Judy Blume	Bradbury	Realistic	F	15	206
	<i>Westmark</i>	Lloyd Alexander	Dutton	Historical Fantasy	M	16	184
1980	<i>The Beginning Place</i>	Ursula K. Le Guin	HarperCollins	Fantasy	M/F	Early 20s	183
	<i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i>	Douglas Adams	Crown	Fantasy	M	Adults	224
	<i>Jacob Have I Loved</i>	Katherine Paterson	Crowell	Realistic	F	Teens	216

This kind of immediacy serves as a narrative hook to grab and hold readers. First-person narration is so common that we have heard people discuss it as a prerequisite for YA fiction. It isn't really, but because when authors are writing from an omniscient viewpoint, they are careful to tell what the young protagonist thinks and says, readers come away with the impression that most, if not all, YA literature is told in first person.

Nancy Werlin's 2006 *The Rules of Survival* exemplifies the common practice of telling a story through the voice of the main character. Matthew, the oldest brother in a severely troubled family, is the narrator who starts his story after the dedication page, which reads: "This book is for all the survivors. Always remember: The survivor gets to tell the story." Matthew begins with a letter written to his youngest sister:

Dear Emmy,

As I write this, you are nine years old, too young to be told the full and true story of our family's past, let alone be exposed to my philosophizing about what it all meant. I don't know how old you'll be when you do read this. Maybe you'll be seventeen, like I am now. Or maybe much older than that—in your twenties or even thirties. . . .

After the boy finishes his two-page letter, he begins the story of his family life starting when he was thirteen, his sister Callie was eleven, and Emmy was five. His father is separated from Nikki, Matthew's extraordinarily beautiful mother, who about a third of the way through the story invites the "demons into her soul" and asks them to help her get whatever she wants.

What she wants is to win back the love and dependence of her children, which she thinks someone has stolen from her, but which, in fact, she forced away. The children's father and an aunt live nearby, but they find Nikki hard to deal with and so they mostly look the other way. The children accept their "fate," with the two older ones trying to protect their young half-sister. Their fear of being separated keeps them from going to authorities and asking to be placed in foster care, but when they witness an act of true bravery by a man who, in their neighborhood convenience store, comes between an angry father and his young son, they go looking for this stranger with the unrealistic idea that he can save them.

The harrowing story ends four years later when Matthew is getting ready to go away on a college scholarship. And thanks at least partially to the stranger in the convenience store and to Matthew's aunt and his father, he thinks his sister and his half-sister will be taken care of, but he has learned enough by now to know there are no guarantees. The real mark of how far Matthew has come is that the book ends with his writing another letter to Emmy, in which he confides, "You're never going to read this, are you? I'm never going to give it to you. I didn't write it for you. I wrote it for me."

Matthew's change of heart illustrates something that YA editor Stephen Roxburgh talked about at the 2004 NCTE/ALAN workshop. He said that the defining literary characteristic of young adult books is that the first-person narrator starts out as unreliable and then by the end of the book evolves into a reliable narrator. Werlin's book is a perfect example. Readers travel with the protagonist through a series of harsh but believable events that allow them to develop not only a literary knowledge about reliable versus unreliable narrators, but also to learn some hard lessons in life without having to undergo the dangers of Matthew's atypical life (Exeter Quality number 4) and to undergo emotional and intellectual growth (Exeter Quality number 7) through engaging with personal issues.

M. T. Anderson's *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation: Volume 1: The Pox Party* provides another example of a protagonist who changes from being a narrator who does not understand his role in life to being so knowledgeable about how other people view him, that he rebels. See Chapter 8 p. 248 for a fuller discussion of this amazing book, which exemplifies nearly every one of the Exeter qualities.

Another technique related to point of view is for authors to have a young narrator even when the story belongs to someone else. For example, Joan Abelove's 1998 *Go and Come Back* is the story of two anthropologists who are in their late twenties when they go for a two-year study visit to a mountain tribe in Peru. What readers learn about the anthropologists comes through the eyes of a young Peruvian girl, Alicia, who refers to the anthropologists as "old women." The tribe is fictionally named the Isabos, and Alicia's first-person observations are supplemented by the conversations she has with her friends, with the two "old women," and with her observant and sarcastic mother.

In his 1988 *Fade*, Robert Cormier uses the technique of having the story told by the protagonist, Paul Moreaux, as long as he is in his youth. When the story gets to his adult years, however, Cormier changes the narrator to Moreaux's young female cousin, who aspires to follow in Moreaux's footsteps as a writer.

The most consistent characteristic of the books on the Honor List is the age of the protagonists. Teenagers like to read about other teenagers as shown by such books as Yann Martel's 2001 *Life of Pi: A Novel*, Orson Scott Card's 1985 *Ender's Game*, Bobbie Ann Mason's 1985 *In Country*, and Sandra Cisneros's 1983 *The House on Mango Street*. In spite of being published and marketed to general adult audiences, these books found their way to teen readers at least partly because the protagonists were young.

With other Honor List books published for adults, young people play important roles even if they aren't the main characters, as with the grandson in Olive Ann Burns's 1984 *Cold Sassy Tree*. General adult books that do not include teenagers—for example, William Wharton's 1982 *A Midnight Clear* and Douglas Adams's 1980 *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*—have protagonists who

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are only slightly older than teen readers and who are involved in activities with which young people can identify.

The big dividing line—the final rite of passage—between childhood and adulthood used to be having children of one's own so that stories about parenting seldom, if ever, appeared in young adult fiction. With the public acknowledgment of a soaring birthrate to teenaged mothers, however, this is no longer true, as shown by the success of Virginia Euwer Wolff's 1993 *Make Lemonade*, the story of fourteen-year-old La Vaughn, who answers a babysitting ad and is surprised to find that it was put up by Jolly, the teenaged mother of two-year-old Jeremy and a younger "gooey baby" named Jilly. Rita Williams-Garcia's 1995 *Like Sisters on the Homefront* is the story of fourteen-year-old Gayle, whose mother forces her to have an abortion after she gets pregnant a second time and then sends Gayle and her seven-month-old baby boy from New York to rural Georgia to live "with family."

Angela Johnson's 2003 *The First Part Last* is the most unusual of the books about teen parenting. Nia and Bobby are two middle-class, African American teenagers in Brooklyn who find themselves expecting a baby. They plan to give the baby up for adoption, but a medical aberration causes Nia to go into a permanent coma and so Bobby decides to "be a man," and raise their daughter. Bobby was not really ready for such a responsibility and the chapters alternate between telling about his old life and his new one. This is a fast-moving story that fits well with the Exeter Quality number 3 in presenting a story about a character not often found in the literary canon, Quality number 4 in taking readers beyond typical experiences, and Quality number 7 encouraging readers to develop their own emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues.

Characteristic 2: "Please, Mother, I Want the Credit!"

With formula fiction for young readers, one of the first things an author does is to figure out how to get rid of the parents so that the young person is free to take credit for his or her own accomplishments. Although the Honor List is not made up of formula fiction, authors have devised a multitude of ways for the young character to be the one who solves the problem or who in some other way becomes the hero of the story. This ties in with the Exeter qualities number 3 and 4 because when the focus is on a young protagonist, readers are encouraged to identify with the characters and to see what is relevant to them.

Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* won the 2003 best children's book award in Australia and received high acclaim when it was published in the United States in 2006. It especially exemplifies Exeter Quality number 1, which asks for a plot that goes beyond simple chronologies and includes time shifts and differing perspectives; Quality number 3, which asks for strong female characters; and Quality number 5, which calls for lively, varied, and imaginative language. The story is narrated off and on by Death, who comes to pick up the soul of anyone who dies. The book is set in Nazi Germany during World War II and so, of course, Death is busy, especially in 1942 when the human race was cranking things up a little and increasing production "from Poland to Russia to Africa to Hawaii." See a fuller discussion in Chapter 8, pp. 248–249.

Paul Fleischman's 1998 *Whirligig* is more typical in having a male protagonist. Brent Bishop needs to atone for causing a fatal traffic accident, so author Paul Fleischman contrives to have him travel on a Greyhound bus to the four corners of the United States where he constructs a memorial in remembrance of the girl who was killed in the accident. Brent's wealthy father had brought his checkbook to the meeting with the grieving family and is surprised when they refuse his money and ask Brent to make amends by himself.

Other Honor books in which young people are forced to come to terms with their problems without the help of their parents include Iain Lawrence's 1998 *The Wreckers*, Gary Soto's 1997 *Buried Onions*, Carol Matas's 1996 *After the War*, Nancy Farmer's 1996 *A Girl Named Disaster*, Francesca Lia Block's 1989 *Weetzie Bat*, and Chris Crutcher's 1987 *The Crazy Horse Electric Game*.

Perhaps because they are on the edge of—close but not central to—the mainstream of power, young people seem able to relate more comfortably with elderly than with middle-aged adults. In Joan Bauer's 1998 *Rules of the Road*, sixteen-year-old Jenna Louise Boller is happy to leave behind her troublesome father when she is offered the summer job of driving the "supremely aged" Mrs. Gladstone cross-country to inspect each of the 172 shoe stores that her company owns. In Han Nolan's 1997 *Dancing on the Edge*, Miracle McCloy is at the mercy of some truly bad adults, but at least she knows that her grandfather is there for her. In Nancy Farmer's 1996 *A Girl Named Disaster*, it is the maternal grandmother and the paternal great-grandfather who save the girl, even though they come from different sides of an alienated family.

In keeping with the variety that exists in the Honor List, other books lead young readers to look more realistically at themselves and at parent-child relationships. Among the books that feature at least one capable parent playing a strong, supportive role for a young protagonist are Louis Sachar's 1998 *Holes*, Berlie Doherty's 1990 *White Peak Farm*, Peter Dickinson's 1998 *Eva*, Virginia Euwer Wolff's 1998 *Probably Still Nick Swanson*, Virginia Hamilton's 1982 *Sweet Whispers*, *Brother Rush*, and Alice Childress's 1981 *Rainbow Jordan*. In Bobbie Ann Mason's 1985 *In Country* and Bruce Brooks's 1986 *Midnight Hour Encores*, the young protagonists place great importance on learning about an unknown parent.

Characteristic 3: Young Adult Literature Is Fast Paced

In July 1999, *Time* reporter David Spritz wrote that, "Teen fiction may, in fact, be the first literary genre born of the Internet. Its fast-paced narratives draw upon the target demographic's kinship with MTV . . . and with the Internet and kids' ease in processing information in unconventional formats."¹¹ In reality, teen fiction, which Spitz calls "edgy" was around long before the Internet, but his point is well taken that many of the most popular books tell their stories at almost the same frantic pace and with the same emphasis on powerful images that viewers have come to expect from MTV. This concept will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

Postindustrial countries have become hurry-up societies, and people want their stories to be presented in the same fashion. Books from the Honor List that

come close to being powerful images include *The Silver Kiss* and *Missing Angel Juan* long. When it was accustomed to real teenagers that they writer who was less images and unforgive ble MTV in Chapter 2005 Margaret A. I

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The assumption attention spans than while reading about in the reading ability. As students mature more complex book ers can stick with lo cussed earlier, is 553 trilogy, *The Golden* the set, exemplifies structured plot that and differing perspe secrecy, surprise, an pace. One of our co pass as a "Da Vinc of Discipline, the M power of the Chur impressed us was h are introduced to L the ability to chang panion, and pet—a mysterious, secretiv story takes place so Tokay wine is cons softer Naphtha ligh edginess to the story poppy heads to pre late the tongue" of

come close to being MTV stories because of their pace and their exaggerated and powerful images include Louis Sachar's 1998 *Holes*, Annette Curtis Klause's 1990 *The Silver Kiss* and 1997 *Blood and Chocolate*, and Francesca Lia Block's 1993 *Missing Angel Juan* and 1989 *Weetzie Bat*. The latter is only eighty-eight pages long. When it was published, it was a shocking book because people were so accustomed to reading realistic problem novels providing role models for teenagers that they weren't ready for a fairy-tale spoof of Hollywood and for a writer who was less interested in presenting role models than in presenting vivid images and unforgettable characters. See more about how Block's books resemble MTV in Chapter 3, p. 82, where we write about Block as a winner of the 2005 Margaret A. Edwards Award.

Not all young adult books are going to have the disjointed punch of music videos or the randomness of the Internet, but there is a relationship because modern mass-media entertainers appeal to the same powerful emotions of adolescence—love, romance, sex, horror, and fear—as do young adult authors. These strong emotions are best shown through a limited number of characters and narrative events and language that flows naturally while still presenting dramatic images. The shorter and more powerful books are among those that have been made into impressive movies.

The assumption that publishers start with is that teenagers have shorter attention spans than adults and less ability to hold one strand of a plot in mind while reading about another strand. However, there is a tremendous difference in the reading abilities of young people between the ages of twelve and eighteen. As students mature and become better readers, they are able to stick with longer, more complex books, and as proven by the Harry Potter books, even young readers can stick with long books if they are interested. Zusak's *The Book Thief*, discussed earlier, is 551 pages, and the first book in Philip Pullman's Dark Materials trilogy, *The Golden Compass*, is 351 pages long and, as with the other books in the set, exemplifies Exeter Quality number 1 in having an imaginative and well-structured plot that goes beyond simple chronologies as it includes time shifts and differing perspectives, and also Quality number 2 in having an exciting plot, secrecy, surprise, and tension brought about through narrative hooks and a fast pace. One of our college readers characterized the conflicts in *The Golden Compass* as a "Da Vinci Code for kids," citing such terms as the *Consistorial Court of Discipline*, the *Magisterium*, the *Oblation Board*, the *Papacy*, and the *absolute power of the Church*. While Pullman includes many plots and subplots, what impressed us was how quickly he draws readers into the story. On page 1, they are introduced to Lyra and the fact that she has a soul mate—a daemon who has the ability to change his shape as he serves as her guardian, conscience, companion, and pet—and that together the two of them are involved in something mysterious, secretive, and serious. Within a few pages readers figure out that the story takes place somewhere in the past, but not too far back because the 1898 Tokay wine is considered to be "old" and precious and the scholars prefer the softer Naphtha lighting to the newer anbaric (electric?) lights. There's also some edginess to the story as Lyra smells and watches the Master cut open half a dozen poppy heads to prepare for serving after the feast to clear "the mind and stimulate the tongue" of the scholars.

Characteristic 4: Young Adult Literature Includes a Variety of Genres and Subjects

Because moving from being a child to being an adult is at the core of most young adult fiction, the “genre” is commonly thought of as featuring a troubled teenager in some kind of rebellion. It is true that young adult writers have created thousands of variations on this theme, but the reason we put *genre* in quotation marks is that there is a tremendous crossover with what are traditionally defined as genres. Young protagonists might take important steps toward growing up while in outer space or while challenging nature by climbing a mountain or finding their way home after being lost. It could occur in a courtroom when a young person is either a witness or is on trial; it could occur as part of a love relationship or as part of facing up to a disaster in one’s family or one’s own life. The taking of such steps is a favorite theme for film producers as shown by the movies listed in Film Box 1.1, *The World of Young Adults* (p. 2). The world’s great myths often feature young people accepting and overcoming challenges, and, as will be shown in the rest of this textbook, the story is an intrinsic part of the archetypal images that reside in the human psyche. This is why we not only have chapters about modern realistic, problem novels, but also about all the other genres including poetry, drama, humor, adventure, sports, the supernatural, mystery, fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, and both literary and informative nonfiction.

Although we have moved such nonfiction books as poetry, biographies, memoirs, and information books to the appropriate chapters, in keeping with the Exeter Quality number 8 about varied levels of sophistication and Quality number 4 about going beyond typical experiences, the books on the Honor List reflect a tremendous variety of subjects, themes, and genres. Historical fiction includes Gary Paulsen’s 1998 *Soldier’s Heart*, Katherine Paterson’s pre-Civil War *Jip: His Story* (1996), Olive Ann Burns’s 1984 romantic *Cold Sassy Tree*, Kathryn Lasky’s 1983 pioneer story *Beyond the Divide*, and Rosemary Sutcliff’s 1990 *The Shining Company*, set in England in 600 AD. Elements of fantasy and science fiction are as old as the oldest folktale, as in Gail Carson Levine’s 1997 *Ella Enchanted*, and as new as the latest board game in William Sleator’s 1984 *Interstellar Pig*. Occult fiction is filled with romance as shown by Annette Curtis Klause’s 1990 *The Silver Kiss* and Stephenie Meyer’s 2005 *Twilight*, while futuristic stories thrive on high-tech intrigue as shown in Peter Dickinson’s 1989 *Eva* and Robert Cormier’s 1983 *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*.

Although about half the books are contemporary, realistic fiction, they range from tightly plotted suspense stories as in Nancy Werlin’s 1998 *The Killer’s Cousin* and John Marsden’s 1994 *Letters from the Inside* to serious introspection as in Paula Fox’s 1984 *One-Eyed Cat*. Threats to the social order are explored in William Sleator’s 1984 *Interstellar Pig* and in Lois Lowry’s 1993 *The Giver*. A search for values is shown in Chris Crutcher’s 1987 *The Crazy Horse Electric Game*. What it means to care for others is examined in Kimberly Holt’s 1999 *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town*, Norma Fox Mazer’s 1984 *Downtown*, Francesca Lia Block’s 1993 *Missing Angel Juan*, and Gary Paulsen’s 1993 *Harris and Me*.

Characteristic 5: Stories about Ethnic and Cultural Experiences

Characteristic 5 fits truthfully inform about and challenging issues in the novels written since 1980 presented the same one featured in the taught to read. But one, taboos on profanity, and drugs and stories in realistic experiences of characters.

This freedom of nature. Probably because class protagonists, and many writers during the kinds of kids that swing that the United to minority experience, the trend is reverse be read by large numbers are seeing less segregation, and in many example, in Virginia of skin color, together by “the racial

In Chapter 3, teenagers are more but for now we will interests. Allan Stra who lives in sub-Sah baby brother and e Patricia McCormick Lakshmi, a girl in India thinks she is going earns will be sent home house needs. But a son for his name is cross the border into store owner allows chooses mostly things basket: “a sweater for “rich and happy day” she adds “a boy ing tiny fireworks in

Characteristic 5: The Body of Work Includes Stories about Characters from Many Different Ethnic and Cultural Groups

Characteristic 5 fits with Exeter Quality number 6, which asks for themes that truthfully inform about the wide world and allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues from both local and global perspectives. Forty years ago, the novels written specifically for teenagers and sold to schools and public libraries presented the same kind of middle-class, white-picket-fence neighborhoods as the one featured in the Dick and Jane readers from which most U.S. children were taught to read. But the mid-1960s witnessed a striking change in attitudes. One by one, taboos on profanity, divorce, sexuality, drinking, racial unrest, abortion, pregnancy, and drugs disappeared. With this change, writers were freed to set their stories in realistic rather than romanticized neighborhoods and to explore the experiences of characters whose stories had not been told before.

This freedom was a primary factor in the coming of age of adolescent literature. Probably because there was such a lack of good books about non-middle-class protagonists, and because this was where interesting things were happening, many writers during the late 1960s and the 1970s focused on minorities and on the kinds of kids that S. E. Hinton called *The Outsiders*. With the conservative swing that the United States took in the 1980s, not as much attention was paid to minority experiences; but with more globalization and instant communication, the trend is reversing so that there are many appealing new books that will be read by large numbers of teenagers of all races. It is also encouraging that we are seeing less segregation of characters. People are relating across ethnic boundaries, and in many of the books, the characters' ethnicity is downplayed. For example, in Virginia Euwer Wolff's 1993 *Make Lemonade*, there is no overt mention of skin color, but as one reviewer stated, Jolly and LaVaughn are held together by "the race of poverty."

In Chapter 3, we are going to discuss some of the reasons that today's teenagers are more interested in global concerns than they were a decade ago, but for now we will just mention a few books that demonstrate these expanded interests. Allan Stratton's 2004 *Chanda's Secrets* is about a sixteen-year-old girl who lives in sub-Saharan Africa, and is faced with arranging for the burial of her baby brother and eventually for her mother, both of whom succumb to AIDS. Patricia McCormick's 2006 *Sold* is a terrible—but beautifully told—story about Lakshmi, a girl in Nepal, who is sold to Auntie Bimla at the village store. She thinks she is going to work as a maid in a rich family, and that the money she earns will be sent home to provide her family with the new tin roof that their house needs. But actually Auntie Bimla sells her to "Uncle Husband." The reason for his name is that Lakshmi must pretend to be married to him when they cross the border into India. At the store where the arrangements are made, the store owner allows her stepfather to fill her mother's basket with goods. He chooses mostly things for himself, but Lakshmi bravely adds two things to the basket: "a sweater for Ana [her mother] and a coat for the baby." Then on this "rich and happy day for our family, an 800-rupee day, a festive and auspicious day" she adds "a bottle of Coca-Cola, the sweet drink that people say is like having tiny fireworks in your mouth."

YA books have become big business with publishers offering all kinds of promotional materials to teachers and librarians ranging from posters and lesson plans to coffee mugs, T-shirts, book bags, and CDs of authors reading from their work.



My stepfather scowls, but he does not say anything. On any other day, he would not tolerate such defiance, especially from a mere girl.

But today I am no mere girl. (55)

Michael Morpurgo in his 2004 *Private Peaceful* tells a story from World War I, which is based on the British Army's practice at that time of summarily executing soldiers for relatively minor infractions. Today, the soldiers' actions would more likely have been recognized as a result of shock and fatigue. Other Honor List books that present a worldview include Joan Abelow's 1998 *Go and Come Back*, set in 1970s Peru; Carol Matas's 1996 *After the War*, set in 1940s Poland and Palestine; Nancy Farmer's 1996 *A Girl Named Disaster*, set in 1980s Mozambique and Zimbabwe; and Suzanne Fisher Staples's 1989 *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*, set in present-day Pakistan. Staples was a UPI news correspondent, who uses the story of a young woman's betrothal to introduce English readers to a culture very different from their own. Gary Paulsen's 1985 *Dogsong* is about a young Inuit; John Marsden's 1994 *Letters from the Inside* is set in Australia; Margaret Mahy's 1988 *Memory* is set in New Zealand; while Berlie Doherty's 1990 *White Peak Farm* grew out of her work preparing a BBC documentary in Sheffield, England.

Although most schools and libraries are making a concerted effort to stock and teach books reflecting many different cultures, educators worry that as publishers look more to marketing directly to teenagers, they may be less likely to publish "serious" stories about protagonists from minority groups because less-affluent kids, many of whom are from minorities, are not as likely to spend money on books as are white, middle-class teenagers. Also, as publishers try to attract readers by filling their books with wishful thinking, they tend to return to the romanticized beautiful-people view that was characteristic of the old adolescent literature.

Another fear is that, as with most television programming, everything will be watered down to suit mass tastes. But there are some crucial differences, because one person at a time reads a book, while television is usually viewed by a group.



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Even with cable television, the number of channels from which a viewer can choose is limited, but books offer a vast choice. Moreover, advertisers pay for most television programs, while readers pay the production costs of books.

Characteristic 6: Young Adult Books Are Basically Optimistic, with Characters Making Worthy Accomplishments

The Exeter Quality number 6 mentions *truthfulness*, which relates closely to *credibility* and *believability*. It is emotionally satisfying to teenage readers to have the young protagonists portrayed as smart as, or even smarter than, their parents or teachers. Of course this isn't usually the situation, but good authors know that they have to write about their protagonists in such a way that they will be respected by the readers. The difference between short stories written for adults and those written for teenagers is often the attitude of the author. An author who views a teenager with either condescension or nostalgia will turn young adults away from the story. In young adult books, the protagonists must be involved in accomplishments that are believable but still challenging enough to earn the reader's respect. In the 1970s, when realism became the vogue and books were written with painful honesty about the frequently cruel world that teenagers face, some critics worried that YA books had become too pessimistic and cynical. However, even in so-called *downer* books, authors created characters that readers could admire for the way they faced up to their challenges.

A comparison of E. B. White's beloved *Charlotte's Web* and Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* illustrates one of the differences between children's and adolescent literature. In White's classic children's book, a beloved but useless pig wins a ribbon at the County Fair and is allowed to live a long and happy life, whereas in Peck's young adult book a beloved but useless pig wins a ribbon at the County Fair but must be slaughtered anyway. Nevertheless, rather than being devastated by the death of the pig, readers identify with the boy and take pride in his ability to do what had to be done.

This kind of change and growth is the most common theme appearing in young adult literature, regardless of format. It suggests, either directly or symbolically, the gaining of maturity (i.e., the loss of innocence as part of the passage from childhood to adulthood). Such stories communicate a sense of time and change, a sense of becoming and catching glimpses of possibilities—some that are fearful and others that are awesome, odd, funny, perplexing, or wondrous.

One of the most popular ways to show change and growth is through a quest story (see Chapter 4 for a discussion and Focus Box 4.6, p. 138, for examples). Avi's 1990 *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* is an almost pure example of a quest story camouflaged as a rollicking historical adventure. The intrepid narrator explains on page 1:

... before I begin relating what happened, you must know something about me as I was in the year 1832 when these events transpired. At the time my name was Charlotte Doyle. And though I have kept the name, I am not for reasons you will soon discover the same Charlotte Doyle.

This captures the psychologically satisfying essence of quest stories, which is that the events in the story serve as a catalyst for the Exeter Quality number 7, which asks for emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues. This idea goes back to Stephen Roxburgh's observation (see p. 27) that by the end of most good books the young protagonist will have gained enough wisdom and understanding to become a reliable narrator.

Characteristic 7: Successful Young Adult Novels Deal with Emotions That Are Important to Young Adults

This characteristic overlaps with the Exeter Quality number 7 about emotional and intellectual growth. Often the difference in the life span between two books that are equally well written from a literary standpoint is that the ephemeral book fails to touch kids where they live, whereas the long-lasting book treats experiences that are psychologically important to young people. Of course, good authors do not peruse psychology books searching for case histories or symptoms of teenage problems that they can envision making into good stories. This would be as unlikely and as unproductive as it would be for a writer to study a book on literary devices and make a list: "First, I will use a metaphor and then a bit of alliteration and some imagery, followed by personification." In the best books, both the literary devices and the psychological insights must emerge from the honest telling of a story.

Pete Hautman's 2004 *Godless* is one of the Honor List books that does a good job of probing sixteen-year-old Jason Bock's psyche. As our colleague Jim Blasingame wrote when we reviewed the Honor List books for the *English Journal* (September 2005), Jason is "bullied, threatened, coerced, degraded, ridiculed, manipulated, and generally pinballed through life." The local tough guy "scares the crap" out of him, while his mother keeps scheduling him for doctors' appointments to see what's wrong with him, and his father, who is an attorney accustomed to getting problems solved, enrolls Jason in a church youth group called TPO (Teen Power Outreach).

In a moment of rebellion, Jason mockingly tells the TPO group that instead of being a practicing Catholic he is founding a new religion, one that will worship the town water tower and will be called *Chutengodianism*. To Jason's surprise, several of the teens join his new religion. They find it fun to be doing something so different, but Shin, a younger boy who, when the story starts, was Jason's only friend, takes the whole thing seriously.

A playful night spent "worshipping" the water tower (which really means climbing up and accidentally going swimming in the "holy water") ends badly and Jason is branded as a lost soul, a weirdo, a troublemaker, and a bad influence. Readers know differently and so does Jason, but still the book leaves readers, as well as Jason, pondering several questions of the kind that are often on kids' minds but not very often brought out for open discussion.

Psychological aspects of well-written novels are a natural part of the story as protagonists face the same kinds of challenges readers are experiencing, such as the developmental tasks outlined two generations ago by Robert J. Havighurst.



Adolescents at School: Education, Education, Education, edited by Mary Ho, 2003. In giving teen educators, a Journal, Mary Ho and well-documented it is hoped you are

The Culture of Adolescence, Guilford Press, 1991, and deal with the tudes of invincibility

Millennials Rising: The New Reality of Growing Up in the 21st Century, by William Strauss and William Strauss, 2000. That the Millennials (and 2000) are the Sesame Street, c moms, and of su hugged your child dren are having a the last generation

Queen Bees and Wannabes: Why You Should Get Along with Your Cliques, by Rosalind Wiseman, 2004

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Focus Box 1.1

Books to Help Adults Understand Teenagers

Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education, edited by Michael Sadowski. Harvard Education, 2003. In giving this 182-page book, written by sixteen educators, a positive review in *School Library Journal*, Mary Hofman wrote, "You will have an interesting and well-documented read that will support much of what it is hoped you are already doing."

The Culture of Adolescent Risk-Taking by Cynthia Lightfoot. Guilford Press, 1999. Lightfoot helps adults understand and deal with the pressures that contribute to teen attitudes of invincibility and daring.

Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation by Neil Howe and William Strauss. Vintage, 2000. The authors claim that the Millennial Generation (those born between 1980 and 2000) are the grown-up kids of *Barney* rather than *Sesame Street*, of soccer moms rather than working moms, and of such bumper stickers as "Have you hugged your child today?" These "wanted" and loved children are having a different kind of adolescence than did the last generation.

Queen Bees and Wannabes: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and Other Realities of

Adolescents by Rosalind Wiseman. Crown, 2002.

Although the intended audience is adults, the writing is accessible to young women who might want to skim or read parts of it.

"Real Boys": Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood by William S. Pollack. Random House, 1998. Pollack is a clinical psychologist with the Harvard Medical Center and is asking people to take a second look at "the boy code," which describes boys as tough, cool, rambunctious, and obsessed with sports, cars, and sex. He thinks our major job is to help boys develop empathy and explore their sensitive sides so as to increase their ability to cope with frustrations.

When We're in Public, Pretend You Don't Know Me: Surviving Your Daughter's Adolescence So You Don't Look Like an Idiot and She Still Talks to You by Susan Borowitz and Ava L. Siegler. Warner Books, 2003. Siegler is a child psychologist and Borowitz is a Hollywood writer and producer, as well as a mother. The book is filled with sensible advice aimed mostly at mothers, but teachers and librarians can learn some things too.

1. Acquiring more mature social skills
2. Achieving a masculine or feminine sex role
3. Accepting the changes in one's body, using the body effectively, and accepting one's physique
4. Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults
5. Preparing for sex, marriage, and parenthood
6. Selecting and preparing for an occupation
7. Developing a personal ideology and ethical standards
8. Assuming membership in the larger community¹²

Some psychologists gather all developmental tasks under the umbrella heading of "achieving an identity," which they describe as the task of adolescence. Some aspect of this is in practically any piece of fiction, poetry, drama, informative nonfiction, biographies, and self-help books that are written and published specifically for teenagers.

Close connections exist between adolescent literature and adolescent psychology, with psychology providing the overall picture and literature providing individual portraits. Because space in this text is too limited to include more than

a hint of what you need to know about adolescent psychology, we suggest that professionals working with young people, read one or more of the books listed in Focus Box 1.1, Books to Help Adults Understand Teenagers. And as a reminder of the fact that teenagers face many different problems from those of adults, you might also want to view some of the films recommended in Film Box 1.1, The World of Young Adults. The more that you know, not only about the individual



Focus Box 1.2

Memoirs by Outstanding YA Authors

The Abracadabra Kid: A Writer's Life by Sid Fleischman. Greenwillow, 1996. Fleischman's story of his teenage years as a traveling magician is so interesting it was chosen for the Honor List.

All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes and ***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*** by Maya Angelou. Random House, 1986 and 1970. These lyrical and powerful autobiographies remain favorites of both adults and young readers.

Anonymously Yours by Richard Peck. Julian Messner, 1991. Readers can make interesting comparisons between the real-life events in *Anonymously Yours* and the fictional events that Peck writes about in his Newbery Medal-winning books: *A Long Way from Chicago* and *A Year Down Yonder*.

Bad Boy: A Memoir by Walter Dean Myers. Amistad Press, 2001. The two strengths of this book are the vivid details that Myers presents about Harlem in the 1940s and the documentation of his development from a street kid into a writer.

Counting Stars by David Almond. Delacorte, 2002. These eighteen stories about Almond's growing up in a large Roman Catholic family are told in the same magical and poetic tones that he has used in *Skellig*, *Heaven Eyes*, and *Kit's Wilderness*.

Frenchtown Summer by Robert Cormier. Delacorte, 1999. Although Cormier doesn't say this is an autobiography, the thirty narrative poems, all in first person, are told with such feeling that readers feel they are Cormier's own stories.

Hole in My Life by Jack Gantos. Farrar, 2002. Gantos spent a year in jail between high school and college because he helped sail a boatload of hashish from the Caribbean to New York City.

King of the Mild Frontier: An Ill-Advised Autobiography by Chris Crutcher. Greenwillow, 2003. Because Crutcher

works as a family counselor, many of us thought his plots came from the kids he counsels, but this forthright memoir shows that he has personally "lived" many of the emotions he writes about.

Knots in My Yo-Yo String by Jerry Spinelli. Knopf, 1998. Spinelli uses the lively style of his fiction to tell about the events he remembers from his first sixteen years.

Looking Back: A Book of Memories by Lois Lowry. Walter Lorraine, 1998. Lowry comments on and explains photos from four generations of her family. One reviewer shuddered at the thought of less-skilled writers following suit.

ME, ME, ME, ME, ME, Not a Novel by M. E. Kerr. HarperCollins, 1983. Although these eleven short stories are just as much fun to read as are Kerr's novels, she says they are true accounts of the young life of Marijane Meaker, which is Kerr's real name.

My Life in Dog Years by Gary Paulsen. Delacorte, 1997. Paulsen recounts his experiences with ten different dogs—not the ones that went with him on the Iditarod race, which he writes about in his 1990 *Woodson*.

Oddballs by William Sleator. Dutton, 1993. Kids who dream of getting even with family members by telling the world how strange they are can use Sleator's nine funny stories as a model.

The Pigman and Me by Paul Zindel. HarperCollins, 1992. Readers will both laugh and cry at this true account of a year in the teenage life of Paul Zindel when he was lucky enough to have Nonno Frankie (the model for Zindel's fictional Pigman) as a neighbor and friend.

A Way Out of No Way: Writing about Growing Up Black in America, edited by Jacqueline Woodson. Holt, 1996. Woodson writes about the hope and inspiration that she received from reading books by James Baldwin, Ernest J. Gaines, Rosa Guy, and Ntozake Shange.

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teen readers that you work with but also about the emotional challenges and the interests that are common to most—if not all—young adults, the better able you will be to:

- Judge the soundness of the books they read.
- Decide which ones are worthy of promotion.
- Predict which ones will last and which will be transitory.
- Make better recommendations to individuals.
- Discuss books with students from their viewpoints.
- Gain more understanding and pleasure from personal reading.

Also included in this chapter is Focus Box 1.2, *Memoirs by Outstanding YA Authors* (p. 37). Because the authors are good writers and know what young adults are interested in, they have written their biographies with a focus on their own coming-of-age, a subject dear to the hearts of both adult and teenage writers. Besides introducing teen readers to some wonderful authors, these biographies illustrate new techniques and new attitudes, which can serve as models for teens' own creative writing and, in some cases, for their own artistic endeavors as with the drawings in Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel, *American Born Chinese*, and the illustrations in Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (see p. 6). Students can get lots of inspiration and insight from looking at authors' websites, but they will get even more from reading such Honor List books as Yang's and Alexie's or one of the memoirs listed in Focus Box 1.2.

Notes

1. David Van Biema, "The Loneliest—and Purest—Rite of Passage: Adolescence and Initiation," *The Journey of Our Lives*, *Life* magazine (October 1991): 31.
2. David Spitz, "Reads Like Teen Spirit," *Time* magazine, July 19, 1999, p. 79.
3. Patty Campbell, "The Sand in the Oyster: Middle Mud-dle," *Horn Book* 76 (July–August 2000): 483–485.
4. Campbell, 485.
5. Lev Grossman and Andrea Sachs, "Harry Potter and the Sinister Spoilers," *Time* magazine, July 9, 2007, p. 52.
6. Ralph Peterson and Maryann Eeds, *Grand Conversations: Literature Groups in Action* (Scholastic, 1990).
7. Marlinda White-Kaulaity, "Reflections on Native American Reading: A Seed, a Tool, and a Weapon," *Journal of Adult and Adolescent Literacy* 50:7 (April 2007): 560–569.
8. Margaret Early, "Stages of Growth in Literary Appreciation," *English Journal* 49 (March 1960): 163–166.
9. First cited by G. Robert Carlsen in an article exploring stages of reading development, "Literature Is," *English Journal* 63 (February 1974): 23–27.
10. Rosemary Hopper, "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Teachers' Perception of Quality in Fiction for Adolescent Readers," *English in Education* 40 (Summer 2006): 55–70.
11. David Spitz, "Reads Like Teen Spirit," *Time* magazine, July 19, 1999, p. 79.
12. Robert J. Havighurst, *Developmental Tasks and Education* (Longman Group United Kingdom, 1972).



CHAPTER 2 A Brief History of Young Adult Literature

Margaret A. Edwards Award Winner (1991)

*Robert Cormier, Who Took It
to the Top*

The Chocolate War, *I Am the Cheese*, and *After the First Death* are the books that in 1991 Robert Cormier was honored for. Other exceptionally good books include *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, *Beyond the Chocolate War*, *Fade*, *We All Fall Down*, and *Heroes*.

In 1967, when S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* was published, critics rejoiced because Hinton's novel was a giant step forward for the young adult novel. Its gritty realism and its willingness to take on a hitherto topic like class differences in the teenagers' world made *The Outsiders* a hit with critics and young readers. YA books had reached the top.

That euphoria lasted until 1974 when YA books reached an even higher top. Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* was published to critical acclaim, and readers soon followed the critics. Censors, never willing to let a fine novel pass unnoticed and uncensored, took note. *The Chocolate War* was attacked from almost every imaginable viewpoint and for almost every imaginable sin. When Cormier's next two novels, *I Am the Cheese* and *After the First Death*, were published to the approval of critics and readers, censors trailed not far behind.

What were Cormier's sins? The fact that Archie in *The Chocolate War* had taken a picture of Emile in a restroom stall with his "pants dropping on the floor, one hand furiously at work between his legs." Masturbation, as decent people knew, was not to be mentioned. Crude language was everywhere in Cormier's books, and the books were filled with pessimism and, as one censor told the authors of this text, the books were "unnecessarily realistic." Immorality prevailed, terror and evil abounded, corruption was everywhere, and worse yet, *I Am the Cheese* and *After the First Death* were unpatriotic, implying that the Witness Relocation Program was dishonest and that our government could not be trusted.

What were Cormier's virtues? He was honest, and he told readers what they already knew but were often afraid to admit—that corruption existed around them, not in some far-off place, and that bad guys and evil sometimes won and good guys and innocence could lose even at the end of a book.

Patty Campbell remembers in her *Horn Book Magazine* column for March/April 2003 what it was like in the seventies to hope for real maturity in the YA novel and then to read Cormier's first YA book.

Finally in 1974, all of this excitement and rich promise came to fulfillment with The Chocolate War. Oh, there had already been other YA books of lasting excellence. . . . But The Chocolate War was something else again—a book that shook us profoundly, a book that nobody could ignore. The critics went wild, some of them foaming at the mouth, others singing the book's praises extravagantly.

From that first simple sentence in *The Chocolate War*, "They murdered him," readers knew Cormier was different. And from the first inklings of the plot, readers had the essentials before them. Jerry Renault was not superhuman, Archie and the Vigils were in charge of Trinity High School, and Brother Leon, who was nominally the assistant headmaster of the school but who "served as a flunky for the Head," was corrupt and enjoyed manipulating and corrupting others.

Sylvia Patterson Iskander nicely summed up the matter for the 1999 *St. James Guide to Young Adult Writers* when she wrote, "The novels of Robert Cormier have added a new dimension to young adult literature. Dealing with evil, abuse of power, and corruption, they present a dark view of humanity, but one tempered by an underlying morality."

Robert Cormier had never thought of himself as a writer for young people, but when his agent submitted *The Chocolate War* to Pantheon, the editor convinced Cormier that, as good as the book was, it would be simply one more in a catalogue of adult books. If it were published for teenagers, however, it might sell well, and it certainly would not be just one more in a long string of available adolescent novels. The editor's predictions came true and Cormier later acknowledged that although his initial reaction to becoming a young adult author was one of shock followed by a monthlong writer's block, he was grateful for the editorial help, which led to considerable attention from reviewers as well as his first financial success as an author. ●



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Margaret A. Edwards Award Winner (1996)

Judy Blume, Who Endures

The Edwards committee honored Blume for her 1975 *Forever*, but other excellent books that young teens love include *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* (1970); *Then Again, Maybe I Won't* (1971); *Deenie* (1973); and our favorite, which is *Tiger Eyes* (1981), all published by Bradbury.

When in December of 2004, Judy Blume was the first author of young people's literature to be honored by the National Book Foundation, for her "distinguished contribution to American letters," readers all over the country—in fact all over the world—cheered because they owned one or more of the 75 million Judy Blume books purchased by readers within the past thirty-five years. Blume was a young housewife and mother living in a New Jersey suburb when she began writing. On the morning after she received the award, she explained in a PBS interview with Jeffrey Brown that she wrote her first book about Margaret at age twelve because she had such vivid memories and warm feelings toward the thoughts and emotions she remembers from that time in her life. She loves the optimism and the faith that young readers have as reflected in a letter she quoted in her acceptance speech: "Please send me the facts of life, in number order." She was still pondering on just how to answer that letter, but in general she says that her approach to writing is to go from deep inside herself and to be as truthful and honest as possible.

From the beginning, young readers loved the books and loved talking to Blume, either in person or by mail. Increasingly, college teachers of YA lit began recommending Blume's books and assigning them for class reading and Blume became a welcome speaker at meetings of teachers and librarians. But the more successful Blume's books became, the more censors paid attention to them. Her book about Margaret was described as being negative or flippant toward religion, while one principal would not allow *Deenie* in his school because the female protagonist masturbates. The principal told the librarian that it would have been different if she had been a boy.

Another librarian came up with the idea of blacking out unsuitable words and inserting proper words. Some attacks focused on Blume's lack of moral teachings. Our favorite censorial story came when a mother, upset by two pages about wet dreams in *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*, accosted Blume and said that she had ripped them out of her son's copy. When Blume asked, "What if they had been about a girl's menstruation? Would you still have torn the pages out?" "Oh no," the mother replied, "that's normal." Everyone knows that sexuality sometimes comes into Blume's books, but as Faith McNulty writing in the *New Yorker* (December 5, 1983) observed "only to the degree that it enters most young minds."

Sex isn't Blume's sole topic. In *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, twelve-year-old Margaret is perplexed about what religion she should belong to. In *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*, Blume draws a devastating portrait of a family moving up in social class only to discover that the move may not have been a good thing. In *Tiger Eyes*, Davey has to accept the death of her father in a senseless act of violence. And in the most feared of all of Blume's books, *Forever*, Katherine struggles through the excitement of first sex only to learn that a first love may not endure. For the last edition of this textbook, Blume wrote that:

Fear has always made people anxious, and we are living in fearful times. . . . Book banning satisfies a need for parents to feel in control of their children's lives. This fear is often disguised as moral outrage. They want to believe that if their children don't read about something, their children won't know about it. And if they don't know about it, it won't happen.

Blume is encouraged, though, by how many children and their parents and teachers are speaking out and defending children's right to read. Her message is that parents have "every right to decide what their child should read, but not what all children should read." ●