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 26 November 2013

Annotated Bibliography:  
 Why is Adventure Fiction a Fundamental Part of Literature

The adventure genre is simply too broad to comfortably fit under a single definition—it frequently overlaps with just about every genre out there in the literary world today. For example, the *Harry Potter Series* is considered fantasy, but it is undoubtedly an adventure for Harry Potter and his friends. This overlapping occurs because adventure is an integral part of literature. It is the form of literature most directly connected to storytelling, and it is no surprise that most works of literature contain some form of adventure. People are naturally keen on telling (or listening to) others about their adventures because it helps define who we are. By listening to other peoples' stories, we are able to vicariously enjoy their lives. We are able to reflect on their stories and think about what we would have done in that situation.

As the name would suggest, adventure fiction takes the protagonist on an adventure. We follow the protagonist on his/her journey and ultimately learn important lessons for our own adventure story: life. The novels I have selected for my annotated bibliography are not only wonderfully written adventure stories, but also incorporate themes that young adults can appreciate and learn from.

**Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2008. Print.**

**Summary:** In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. Long ago the districts waged war on the Capitol and were defeated. As part of the surrender terms, each district agreed to send one boy and one girl to appear in an annual televised event called, "The Hunger Games," a fight to the death on live TV. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives alone with her mother and younger sister, regards it as a death sentence when she is forced to represent her district in the Games. The terrain, rules, and level of audience participation may change but one thing is constant: kill or be killed.

(Summary from: <http://www.amazon.com/Hunger-Games-Book-1/dp/0439023521>)

**Commentary:** In the *Hunger Games*, image is everything. Katniss must be concerned with how people in the Capitol perceive her, and she quickly learns that manipulating her persona and public image can be a powerful thing. Although she changes her physical appearance to please the crowd, does it change who she really is on the inside? *The Hunger Games* is great for young adult readers because it addresses the idea of how appearances can be deceiving.

**Hinton, S.E. *The Outsiders*. New York: Viking Press, 1967. Print.**

**Summary:** Ponyboy can count on his brothers and his friends, but not on much else besides trouble with the Socs, a vicious gang of rich kids who get away with everything, including beating up greasers like Ponyboy. At least he knows what to expect--until the night someone takes things too far.

(Summary from: <http://www.amazon.com/Outsiders-S-E-Hinton/dp/014038572X>)

**Commentary:** There are some people in his gang that Ponyboy strongly dislikes, but he would still defend them from danger if possible. Loyalty is the thread that holds his gang together, and the novel explores what happens when the loyalty between Ponyboy and his brother begins to dissipate. This concept of loyalty is important because the same thing applies to friends, families, and even coworkers.

**Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1960. Print.**

**Summary:** Lawyer Atticus Finch defends the real mockingbird of Harper Lee's classic, Pulitzer Prize-winning novel—a black man charged with the rape of a white woman. Through the eyes of Atticus's children, Scout and Jem Finch, Harper Lee explores with rich humor and unanswering honesty the irrationality of adult attitudes toward race and class in the Deep South of the 1930's.

(Summary from: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/to-kill-a-mockingbird-harper-lee/1100151011>)

**Commentary:** *To Kill a Mockingbird* highlights the importance of moral education to children. The plot of the story essentially charts the theme of how children are educated and is explored mostly through Atticus and his children. Because of her father, Scout believes that everyone deserves a fair trial whereas the Maycomb community disagrees. The novel ultimately teaches about desirable moral principles and ethics, a powerful subject that must be taught at a young age.

**Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1999. Print.**

**Summary:** For twelve long years, the dread fortress of Azkaban held an infamous prisoner named Sirius Black. Convicted of killing thirteen people with a single curse, he was said to be the heir apparent to the Dark Lord, Voldemort. Now he has escaped, leaving only two clues as to where he might be headed: Harry Potter's defeat of You-Know-Who was Black's downfall as well. And the Azkaban guards heard Black muttering in his sleep, "He's at Hogwarts...he's at Hogwarts." Harry Potter isn't safe, not even within the walls of his magical school, surrounded by his friends. Because on top of it all, there may well be a traitor in their midst.

(Summary from: <http://www.amazon.com/Harry-Potter-Prisoner-Azkaban-Rowling/dp/0439136369>)

**Commentary:** The *Harry Potter* series is such a valuable read because it teaches that with friends, anything is possible. Harry would not have been nearly as successful without Hermione's brilliance or Ron's creativity, and despite their fighting, they are always there for each other to make it through the most difficult of times. Furthermore, it demonstrates the old English idiom "don't judge a book by its cover." Snape appears to betray Harry, but in the end, he proves that he has always been protecting him.

**Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998. Print.**

**Summary:** This winner of the Newbery Medal and the National Book Award features Stanley Yelnats, a kid who is under a curse. A curse that began with his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather and has since followed generations of Yelnats. Now Stanley has been unjustly sent to a boys' detention center, Camp Green Lake, where the warden makes the boys "build character" by spending all day, every day, digging holes five feet wide and five feet deep. It doesn't take long for Stanley to realize there's more than character improvement going on at Camp Green Lake: the warden is looking for something. Stanley tries to dig up the truth in this inventive and darkly humorous tale of crime and punishment—and redemption.

(Summary from: <http://www.amazon.com/Holes-Yearling-Book-Louis-Sachar/dp/0440414806>)

**Commentary:** It is undeniably inevitable that people change; we all grow up and make our own decisions. Stanley and the other boys are put into an environment that causes them to change at a much quicker pace both emotionally and physically. *Holes* addresses the concept of change—are people aware that they are changing, whether for better or for worse? Ultimately, the novel teaches that a person controls their future through the choices they make in the present.

**Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951.**

**Summary:** Ever since it was first published in 1951, this novel has been the coming-of-age story against which all others are judged. Read and cherished by generations, the story of Holden Caulfield is truly one of America's literary treasures. Salinger's classic coming-of-age story portrays one young man's funny and poignant experiences with life, love, and sex.

(Summary from: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/catcher-in-the-rye-j-d-salinger/1100192775?ean=9780316769488>)

**Commentary:** Religion in this novel is an interesting topic. It is treated as a worthless social barrier that encourages people to act fake or phony as Holden would put it. Despite this mindset, Holden actually shows a lot of respect for the religious people he runs into. It is far too common today that I see Christians or Atheists berated simply for their beliefs. This novel highlights the fact that just because someone believes in something different than you do, don't automatically dismiss the person as bad.

**Shusterman, Neal. *Full Tilt*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2003. Print.**

**Summary:** Sixteen-year-old Blake and his younger brother, Quinn, are exact opposites. Blake is the responsible member of the family. He constantly has to keep an eye on the fearless Quinn, whose thrill-seeking sometimes goes too far. But the stakes get higher when Blake has to chase Quinn into a bizarre phantom carnival that traps its customers forever. In order to escape, Blake must survive seven deadly rides by dawn, each of which represents a deep, personal fear -- from a carousel of stampeding animals to a hall of mirrors that changes people into their deformed reflections. Blake ultimately has to face up to a horrible secret from his own past to save himself and his brother -- that is, if the carnival doesn't claim their souls first!

(Summary from: <http://www.amazon.com/Full-Tilt-Neal-Shusterman/dp/0689873255>)

**Commentary:** *Full Tilt* is full of action, mystery, and adventure. It keeps you constantly on the edge of your seat wondering what the outcome of each ride is, and with each subsequent ride, Blake learns something about himself and grows as a person. Beyond the action and suspense, the novel does a great job drawing attention to just how powerful temptation can be. We all experience dark temptations to benefit ourselves, whether it's cheating on a test for a higher grade or shoplifting to avoid paying, but we find the good in ourselves to overcome that temptation—Blake represents the best in us and how to not let past experiences bring us down.

**Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit, or, There and Back Again*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996. Print.**

**Summary:** When Thorin Oakenshield and his band of dwarves embark upon a dangerous quest to reclaim the hoard of gold stolen from them by the evil dragon Smaug, Gandalf the wizard suggests an unlikely accomplice: Bilbo Baggins, an unassuming Hobbit dwelling in peaceful Hobbiton. Along the way, the company faces trolls, goblins, giant spiders, and worse. But as they journey from the wonders of Rivendell to the terrors of Mirkwood and beyond, Bilbo will find that there is more to him than anyone—himself included—ever dreamed. Unexpected qualities of courage and cunning, and a love of adventure, propel Bilbo toward his great destiny . . . a destiny that waits in the dark caverns beneath the Misty Mountains, where a twisted creature known as Gollum jealously guards a precious magic ring.

(Summary from: <http://www.amazon.com/Hobbit-Movie-Tie-J-R-R-Tolkien/dp/0345534832>)

**Commentary:** There is so much to learn from reading *The Hobbit*, but one thing a young adult reader can really gain from reading this novel is that money is not the most important thing in life. The dwarves would rather starve to death than share their wealth, and as the dwarf leader lied on his deathbed, he came to the realization that if they valued food and happy times above gold, it would be a merrier world. Young

adults can relate in the sense that I've seen plenty of students all the way from grades four to twelve who would forego eating lunch and instead save their lunch money throughout the week. While I am all for saving money anywhere possible, it is not wise to harm yourself in order to do so.

**Twain, Mark. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.**

**Summary:** Widely considered one of the greatest American novels ever written *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* follow on Mark Twain's earlier novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. This book inspired controversy with its rich local color and often scathing examinations of racism. The story of *Huckleberry Finn* abounds with enduring lessons and images and is one of Mark Twain's greatest novels.

(Summary from: <http://www.americanliterature.com/author/mark-twain/book/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/summary>)

**Commentary:** As disrespectful as lying is, there are special circumstances when lying is the right thing to do. Lies and deceit is a prevalent theme throughout the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and it helps draw the line between a harmless lie and a harmful lie. *Huckleberry Finn* is a compulsive liar, but often does it in order to protect Jim, whereas the Duke and King would con innocent people for money. As the novel progresses, *Huckleberry Finn* observes the Duke and King and the negative effects of lying become apparent to him.

**Verne, Julius. *Around the World in Eighty Days*. New York: Baronet Books/Playmore Inc, 1989. Print.**

**Summary:** One ill-fated evening at the Reform Club, Phileas Fogg rashly bets his companions that he can travel around the entire globe in just eighty days -- and he is determined not to lose. Breaking the well-established routine of his daily life, the reserved Englishman immediately sets off for Dover, accompanied by his hot-blooded manservant Passepartout. Traveling by train, steamship, sailboat, sledge, and even elephant, they must overcome storms, kidnappings, natural disasters, Sioux attacks, and the dogged Inspector Fix of Scotland Yard -- who believes that Fogg has robbed the Bank of England -- to win the extraordinary wager. *Around the World in 80 Days* gripped audiences on its publication and remains hugely popular, combining exploration, adventure, and a thrilling race against time.

(Summary from: <http://www.amazon.com/Around-World-Eighty-Signet-Classics/dp/0451529774>)

**Commentary:** Throughout the novel, Fogg showed great determination and always found a way to solve his problems. No matter how high his obstacle, Fogg would climb over it by giving it his best effort. *Around the World in Eighty Days* would be an excellent read for young adults as a motivational book. After all, success inevitably arrives for everyone who perseveres. This novel can be accompanied by stories of how even famous people failed at first, but ended up being more successful than many people could even dream of.