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English 112B
6 May 2014

Abuse in Realistic Contemporary Fiction

I've had my share of hard times. I was made fun of in the 5th grade. I had to wear glasses and was the only one in my class that needed them. My classmates would call me four-eyes and deemed me, "teacher's pet" because the glasses made me look nerdy. I wouldn't be made fun of at home for my glasses, however I was often put down because I wore my emotions on my sleeves. "Drama queen" is what my family called me. Many of these nicknames I don't enjoy now but I figured that it was part of life. None of these words hurt me too much. Sure it would make me cry in my bedroom and make me feel un-pretty. That was the way of life though, right? So when I got into high school, I started dating. My boyfriend would tell me I wasn't good enough, I thought that it meant for me to just be a better girlfriend. When he would tell me that I needed to do things that were sexual with him it was because my body needed it and was responding the way it does because, "I wanted it". I thought that because my boyfriend was in fact, my boyfriend, that when he wanted to have sex that I had to have sex... even when I wasn't ready for it. It wasn't until I got older that I realized that I had been the victim of different types of abuse. Some in mild cases and in others I was wronged.

There is no easy way to bring up abuse. Not only is it a sore subject, but sometimes those who are being abused don't know that he/she is. The type of abuse that many people think of first hand is physical abuse. It's not wrong. Physical abuse is the type that has visible proof. Due to the use of media and stereotypes, somehow any abuse that isn't physical abuse has slipped through the cracks. Through realistic contemporary fiction, young adult fiction

authors are able to bring awareness to teens from the ages of 13-19 and beyond. My centerpiece, *Smoke* by Ellen Hopkins, has both main characters that are victims of physical abuse from their father and his drinking habit. This made me curious and I had wondered what other types of abuse there could be. In my search, I have found that there are six different types of abuse that have snuck its way into the lives of young adults: physical, emotional, economical, verbal, mental, and sexual. Because it is a very sore subject, getting teens to talk openly about it is a challenge and providing them with novels like these will most likely get them to open up or seek help elsewhere.

The types of books I have listed for my annotated bibliography are all about abuse. Most of them are physical abuse, however it comes from different people who are doing the abusing. Also, it is not just about being abused physically or emotionally, sometimes there are more types of abuse that the victim is facing at once.

Burned by Ellen Hopkins

HOPKINS, ELLEN. *BURNED*. NEW YORK: MARGARET K. McELDERRY, 2006. PRINT.

Pattyn Von Stratten is a Mormon daughter and the eldest of seven girls with an abusive father that has gone from hurting her mother to sharing the burden with Pattyn. Once Pattyn is suspended from school due to a window shattering falling out with her first big crush, her father sends her to live with his sister in Nevada where she meets Ethan. Ethan is everything she could ever hope for and falls completely in love with him. Once she decides that she doesn't want to go home, her younger sister Jackie writes Pattyn a letter that tells her that since her mother is pregnant with the first and only boy of the family, their father starts to use her as a punching bag. At the end of the blissful summer, Pattyn goes home and brings along a little bit of Ethan inside of her. When she realizes that she is pregnant, Ethan and Pattyn devise a plan to escape from her troubling household and they almost get their happy ending.

Burned is the novel that comes before *Smoke* and is a better telling of the reaction Pattyn's mother has to her own abuse as well as Pattyn's recollection of what caused her father to lash

out on her. This is a story that is filled with ups and downs in a teenager's life and easier for a young adult to empathize with. It will keep a young adult interested because it is a story about a victim that is able to see that she is being wronged and is able to get out of the situation, giving hope where it is needed.

Smoke by Ellen Hopkins

Hopkins, Ellen. *Smoke*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry, 2013. Print.

Pattyn Von Stratten is on the run while Jackie Von Stratten is left to tell her mother, the authorities, and everyone from the LDS Church why she looks like a bloody pulp and how her father had become cold on the ground. No matter how far Pattyn runs, she can't escape that night in the shed and no matter how many times their mother tells Jackie to hide all the abuse her father bestowed upon her, she can't help but feel wronged. It's already hard for Jackie to remember the rest of the night of her father's death after being violated by her crush, but boxing up the shed where it happened brings her memories to the surface. The truth about that night be hidden for long.

Smoke is a compelling story about the pain that two sisters share over the same night that Pattyn had killed their father. This book begins with the memory of the retaliation of women that had had enough of the brutal beatings without a viable cause that they had received. This realistic, contemporary, fiction story was the book that I had given my booktalk on and sparked my interest for creating an abuse annotated bibliography. Young adults can learn many lessons from this story by living vicariously through Pattyn, the runaway that cannot hide her guilt forever, and Jackie, who refused to fall into the abuse victim cycle.

Identical by Ellen Hopkins

Hopkins, Ellen. *Identical*. NY, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2008. Print.

Kaeleigh and Raeanne are 16-year-old identical twins, the daughters of a district court judge father and politician mother running for US Congress. Everything on the surface seems fine, but underneath run very deep and damaging secrets. What really happened when the girls were 7 years old in that car accident that Daddy caused? And why is Mom never home, always running far away to pursue some new dream? Raeanne goes after painkillers, drugs, alcohol, and sex to dull her pain and anger. Kaeleigh always tries so hard to be the good girl -- her father's perfect little flower. But when the girls were 9, Daddy started to turn to his beloved Kaeleigh in ways a father never should and has been sexually abusing her for years. For Raeanne, she needs to numb the pain of not being Daddy's favorite; for Kaeleigh, she wants to do everything she can to feel something normal, even if it means cutting herself and vomiting after every binge.

(www.amazon.com)

Raeanne and Kaeleigh's story is a compelling novel about the tragedy that their family has suffered and the way it has ripped them apart. The sexual abuse that Kaeleigh has undergone from her father is heart-wrenching. The personal account she gives and Raeanna's point of view on the matter give a well-rounded view. Young adults will be able to vicariously live through the two young girls in their search to feel normal and feel their pain along the road.

A Child Called "It": An Abused Child's Journey from Victim to Victor by Dave Pelzer

Pelzer, David J. *A Child Called "It": An Abused Child's Journey from Victim to Victor*. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 1995. Print.

This book chronicles the unforgettable account of one of the most severe child abuse cases in California history. It is the story of Dave Pelzer, who was brutally beaten and starved by his emotionally unstable, alcoholic mother: a mother who played tortuous, unpredictable games--games that left him nearly dead. He had to learn how to play his mother's games in order to survive because she no longer considered him a son, but a slave; and no longer a boy, but an "it." Dave's bed was an old army cot in the basement, and his clothes were torn and raunchy. When his mother allowed him the luxury of food, it was nothing more than spoiled scraps that even the dogs refused to eat. The outside world knew nothing of his living nightmare. He had nothing or no one to turn to, but his dreams kept him alive--dreams of someone taking care of him, loving him and calling him their son.

(www.bookbrowse.com)

Dave Pelzer's memoir of his childhood is heartbreaking and irrevocably true. Although it is not a fiction book, it is one that is full of content that is easier for a young adult to understand. Most abuse by parents happens during early childhood and it is an eye opener to the horrors of what one boy had really gone through. The reason why I chose this book to be part of my bibliography is that this kind of abuse is real. It is not something that someone made up. Young adults should read this story and realize that this kind of harsh abuse is real.

"Alyssa Lies" by Jason Michael Carroll

Carroll, Jason Michael. "Alyssa Lies". Jason Michael Carroll. Don Gehman, 2006. CD.

A father picks his daughter up from school and she tells him a secret: her new friend Alyssa lies. Her friend is being abused by someone at home and comes to school and lies every day about the bruises that she is trying to hide. One day, the father takes

his daughter to school and has to tell her that her friend had passed away because of the abuse that she had endured.

“Alyssa Lies” is a country song about the effects of abuse when it has gone too far. Although this is a story about child abuse, it brings to light the ultimate outcome of someone who is being physically abused and no one does anything about it. Physical abuse can be fatal and if those who know about abuse going on and doesn’t say anything could cost a life. Young adults who listen to this song may come to realize, before it is too late, that it is better to come forward with information about anyone they know that is being abused.

“Love the Way You Lie” by Eminem featuring Rihanna

Matthers, Marshall, Alexander Grant, and Holly Hafemann. “Love the Way You Lie”. Eminem (Featuring Rihanna). Alex Da Kid & Makeba Riddick, 2010. CD.

A man and a woman are in an abusive relationship fueled by jealousy, rage, alcohol, and lust. In the song, the man tells the woman that he will be better and will try not to hurt her again but he knows that he is just lying to make sure that she stays with him. In the chorus, Rhianna sings that the woman blames the man for hurting her and making her cry but at the same time, she likes the way it feels and that she loves the way he lies to her.

This music video is important because it shows that it is not just the man who is physically hurting his girlfriend but that she is also abusing her boyfriend. This is a destructive relationship that many teens face and it stems from the honesty of Eminem’s personal abusive relationship with his ex-wife Kim. The thought of abuse in a relationship has been sexualized to be completely the male’s manipulation of his girlfriend, but in fact, males can also be victims in their relationships. This song also puts blame on both parties and does not focus on it being one person’s fault over the others.

Dreamland: A Novel by Sara Dessen

Dessen, Sarah. *Dreamland: A Novel*. New York: Viking, 2000. Print.

Ever since she started going out with Rogerson Biscoe, Caitlin seems to have fallen into a semiconscious dreamland where nothing is quite real. Rogerson is different from anyone Caitlin has ever known. He's magnetic. He's compelling. He's dangerous. Being with him makes Caitlin forget about everything else--her missing sister, her withdrawn mother, her lackluster life. But what happens when being with Rogerson becomes a larger problem than being without him?
(goodreads.com)

Caitlin is a victim of physical, verbal, emotional, and mental abuse. She feels like the only way that she won't be physically damaged is when she has sex with her boyfriend. This is important for a young adult to read, especially if he or she is going through the same issue. Sometimes seeing an outside point of view allows the teen to find similarities in his/her own relationship.

Rage: A Love Story by Julie Anne Peters

Peters, Julie Anne. *Rage: A Love Story*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009. Print.

Johanna is steadfast, patient, reliable; the go-to girl, the one everyone can count on. But always being there for others can't give Johanna everything she needs—it can't give her. Reeve Hartt. Reeve is fierce, beautiful, wounded, elusive; a flame that draws Johanna's fluttering moth. Johanna is determined to get her, against all advice, and to help her, against all reason. But love isn't always reasonable, right? In the precarious place where attraction and need collide, a teenager experiences the dark side of a first love, and struggles to find her way into a new light.

(Goodreads.com)

This is the first novel that I have seen that has the main subject concern a LGBT abusive relationship. This novel shows that it is not only in traditional relationships that there is abuse but in same sex relationships as well. What young adults can take away from this novel is that abuse can happen in any relationship and that being in a same sex relationship does not make them immune.

Boy Toy by Barry Lyga

Lyga, Barry. *Boy Toy*. Boston, MA: Graphia, 2007. Print.

Josh was sexually abused by his history teacher, Evelyn Sherman, when he was twelve, for months. It's five years later, and he's still haunted by what happened, even though the teacher went to jail. He gets straight A's, does well playing baseball, but his personal life is nonexistent. The only person he trusts is his best friend Zik, because Zik never asks about what happened. And that's good, because Josh doesn't really know, exactly. He doesn't know what he's angry at, or WHO he's angry at. But he's angry. As for girls, forget it! His responses are so keyed in to what happened back then, as he learned during a game of Spin the Bottle when he was 13, that he doesn't trust himself to ever behave normally again. All he wants is to get away, off to college where no one will know his past. Just a few more months, and school will be over. And that's when Josh hears that Eve is getting released from jail...

(Review by Jackie "the Librarian" from

http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/733111.Boy_Toy)

This is a story that shows the effects on a teen's life when they are sexually abused by an authoritative figure. Young adults can use this novel as an eye-opener that males do get sexually abused as well as females. Also, it is good to see that once someone has been sexually abused, he/she has to deal with it for the rest of their life.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1999. Print.

Melinda Sardino is an outcast her freshman year of high school and refuses to talk. All of her best friends have joined their separate cliques and refused to talk to her. In fact, the whole school believes that she is the reason why during the summer, one of the biggest parties had been broken up by the cops. The last time her ex-best friends had talked to her was that night. The night that she had been raped.

Rape is a type of abuse that is difficult to make known because those who are raped come up with a lot of reasons why he/she shouldn't say anything. Melinda stays silent because she doesn't think that anyone will believe her. Young adults can take from this story that the isolation she feels doesn't have to be his/hers; that telling someone about the incident could make him/her feel normal again.

Nineteen Minutes: A Novel by Jodi Picoult

Picoult, Jodi. *Nineteen Minutes: A Novel*. New York: Atria, 2007. Print.

In Sterling, New Hampshire, 17-year-old high school student Peter Houghton has endured years of verbal and physical abuse at the hands of classmates. His best friend, Josie Cormier, succumbed to peer pressure and now hangs out with the popular crowd that often instigates the harassment. One final incident of bullying sends Peter over the edge and leads him to commit an act of violence that forever changes the lives of Sterling's residents. Even those who were not inside the school that morning find their lives in an upheaval, including Alex Cormier. The superior court judge assigned to the Houghton case, Alex—whose daughter, Josie, witnessed the events that unfolded—must decide whether or not to step down. She's torn between presiding over the biggest case of her career and knowing that doing so will cause an even wider chasm in her relationship with her emotionally fragile daughter. Josie, meanwhile, claims she can't remember what happened in the last fatal minutes of Peter's rampage. Or can she? And Peter's parents, Lacy and Lewis Houghton, ceaselessly examine the past to see what they might have said or done to compel their son to such extremes.

(<http://www.jodipicoult.com/nineteen-minutes.html>)

Bullying is another well-known form of abuse. However, because it is singled out, many do not think about it as abuse. Young adults will be able to see inside of the past of the shooter, Peter, and may be able to sympathize with him. As well as the other characters that have been affected by the shooting. This is an important book because it shows what could happen if someone has had enough of the pain he/she has gone through by being bullied.