



## YOUNG ADULT GENRE STUDY

**The ARRT Genre Study Group studied the Young Adult genre from 2000-2001.**

### **Classics**

Discussion centered around the novels from the 60s and 70s which were the first, besides series romances and mysteries, to be either written for, marketed to, or quickly appropriated by teens.

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

This is a very dark story for those who have ever felt themselves to be victims or were afraid of being victims of a teacher or school bully. This is not a feel good book, not escapist reading. The adults are either part of the problem, are, in fact evil, or don't catch on that there is a problem. They [adults] don't have all the answers and often make wrong decisions. The situations in the book are extreme, but teens feel themselves to be in extreme situations. They feel themselves to be isolated, alienated, and with no one to turn to. They may even think, "Well, I have it bad, but at least not that bad." The book opens and immediately draws the reader in. Other similar dark books about peer pressure of are Lord the Flies by Golding and Cat's Eye by Margaret Atwood.

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton

The book creates a feeling of immediacy by being told in the first person. Although terrible things happen in this book, it is a more comfortable read than The Chocolate War. It ends on an optimistic note. There is a real appeal for the idea of being entirely responsible for yourself, for being a teenager, yet being independent. The book has a romantic feel. Some felt that the sex of the author was reflected in the way in which these boys were more demonstrative and in their romantic view of the world. This would appeal to girls: very cute, sensitive boys, but does it appeal to boys? Much of the danger and concern the characters feel in this book seem very

innocent by today's standards. Another book to possibly recommend is *Breaking Rank* by Kristen Randle.

### Overview

These books are now being read by younger and younger readers; however, many kids go back and re-read them when they are older. In many cases allusions to sex or drug use might have been overlooked when the book was first read. These books address the fears that teens have. They identify with the characters because they have the same kinds of problems, although usually less extreme: the sadistic gym teacher, the school bully, and the parents that don't get it. Reading about others with the same problems help them to identify their own concerns and to feel less alone.

These classics are often still read because they are heavily plot and character-driven, not much description. Occasional references to things like a madras shirts or white suit do occur, but can be read over. The setting since it isn't filled in does not date the book. Also, these are the books that today's teen's parents and teachers grew up reading. They bring it home or talk it up, just as our parents brought us *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* or *Seventeenth Summer*. Everyone knows kids who have latched onto one of these books and read it over and over. Everyone also knows kids who would never read one of these books. Why read about what is going on around them at school all day? These kids read for escape. Also, how much time for pleasure reading, do kids have today? They often read magazines or read a book to kill two birds with one stone: a book for literature that will also work for social studies, which is why historical fiction is important. When these classics for young adults were written were there any books that were not problem novels?

There are many lists of Best Books for teens and awards are given. Do kids really like books? They certainly do like *Holes* by Sachar, but have others been so popular? Most kids who are reading young adult books are in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. By High School they have moved into adult books. Unfortunately there are books that would be read and enjoyed by older teens that are lost in the cracks, books like *Smack* by Melvin Burgess or *Like Being Killed* by Ellen Miller.

Other books read:

Salinger is still read, but for pleasure, or because he is assigned? Reading it has an adult much of it seems over the top.

Lisa Bright and Dark by John Neufeld seems very romantic and the ending is corny. This is part of a chain of "mental health" books going back to Sybil by Flora Rheta Schreiber, I Never Promised You a Rose Garden by Hannah Green, and today's Girl Interrupted by Susanna Kaysen, Girls particularly like these. They identify with the troubled girl, perhaps feel "crazy" sometimes themselves.

Lois Duncan has been writing for a long time. She appeals to both sexes. The Giver by Lois Lowry is angst ridden, but optimistic.

The Princess Bride by William Goldman

Are You There God, It's Me Margaret by Judy Blume. This seemed dated. Now days it is read by quite young girls, fourth grade not sixth or seventh.

Phyllis Naylor's Alice books would be a good follow up for Blume

Rosa Guy wrote The Disappearance and The Friends. In black communities these are still read, but not as much as other black authors, especially Walter Dean Myers.

Z for Zachariah by Robert C. O'Brien. A read-a-like would be Tomorrow When the War Begins by Joy Marsden.

Summer of My German Soldier by Bette Greene

## **Humor**

Books read:

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams

The zany, scattershot, stand-up comedy style of this science fiction satire isn't for everyone. It is for young adults who are fans of Monty Python-style British comedy. This was originally a radio play, which is available on cassette, corny special effects and all. There is an entire Hitchhikers industry, including a graphic novel version. Read-a-likes would be Terry Pratchett, Robert Asprin, Piers Anthony, Spider Robinson, Grant Naylor and Roger Zelazny (Bring Me the Head of Prince Charming). If the YA isn't tied in to the science fiction aspect of the book, you could try Tom Robbins.

Rules of the Road by Joan Bauer

Like many of the other books we read, this is a problem novel with humorous situations and a witty, observant narrator. Because the protagonist is a girl it might be hard to get boys read this book, although it really isn't about "girlish" stuff. We all really liked this book. The main character is independent, in control. Her triumph in the end doesn't come

from being suddenly attractive to boys, but from bravely standing her ground. We also liked it that although there were greedy or selfish adults, there were also dependable, friendly, respectful adults. Aspects of the book which would be popular with YAs include all the quirky, odd-ball aspects of a first job and the importance of that driver's license.

#### Flyer by Daniel Hayes

Although we all liked this book, it didn't seem to be going out at our libraries. The cover is part of the problem, too funky and juvenile, but it also is not going out by word of mouth. The book had more depth than some of the others we have read. Some felt that the two main characters might be too good to be true and too erudite to appeal to teens. Some of us were bothered by the fond, humorous way the father's alcoholism was portrayed. Better choices by Hayes would be No Effect and The Trouble with Lemons. They also have the supportive buddy aspect that Flyers has.

#### Arizona Kid by Ronald Koertge

We all felt that this was a good story, but the fact that the boy has sex makes it hard to recommend to some younger YAs who might otherwise like it. The book is twelve years old and the portrayal of the gay uncle seems stereotyped today. Good "lessons" in the book are that love isn't something that you immediately jump into. Also the short kid starts to feel good about himself. Again, the cover is too peculiar and young looking.

#### Rats Saw God by Rob Thomas

This is another book it would be hard to recommend, not because it isn't good, but because of the sex and recreational drug use. In the book the hero's girlfriend sleeps with his favorite teacher, a double betrayal. For older teens.

#### Don't Care High by Gordon Korman

This was one of the only books that was funny for the sake of being funny. It wasn't about a dysfunctional family or teen angst. It was about a school with absolutely no school spirit and how two students maneuver and fool the student body into believing that they have an energetic, pro-active body president when they don't.

#### Getting In by James Boylan

This, too, was a funny is as funny does book. The young protagonist meets up with some cousins he hasn't seen for many years, and they are like

something out of National Lampoon's Vacation, you know, Chevy Chase's red neck cousins. The whole group takes off in a Winnebago to visit eastern colleges. This is a book that could be successfully book-talked to older teens.

Extreme Elvin by Chris Lynch

This is a sequel to Slot Machine. Elvin's relationship with his friend and mom are good. Elvin is 14; he deals with his weight problem, "itch" problem, and burgeoning manhood with wry self-deprecating humor.

Adrian Mole Diaries by Sue Townsend

This is very British and is for the older teen that likes British stuff. It is in diary form. Some of the highlights are Adrian's relationship with an old man and the family stuff. This is related to the kind of humor found in Bridget Jones' Diary. Townsend's The Queen and I is also recommended.

Angus, Thongs, and Full-Frontal Snogging by Louise Rennison

Again, this is very British in the Bridget Jones' mode. A 14-year-old keeps track of all the traumas in her life in her diary. She is a little edgy and sarcastic; for 12 to 16 year olds.

Cat Ate My Gymsuit by Paula Danziger

This seemed very dated today. It was very dark and peopled by fascist wanna-be's. The father is verbally abusive, the school is oppressive, and the mother was born too early to be self-actualized by Oprah.

There's a Girl in My Hammerlock by Jerry Spinelli

This is for younger YAs. It is about a girl on the sports team. This is a girl who is enabled. She meets a guy, but when he turns out to be a jerk, she recognizes that fact and gets on with life.

We then had a discussion about why there are more funny books for guys than for girls. One point is that funny books are often a hook for a reluctant reader, and boys are generally more reluctant than girls. Also girls will read about a male protagonist before a boy will read about a girl.

Friendship Ring Series by Rachel Vail

This is a series of light, humorous books for young YA's about a trio of junior high age friends.

Teen Angel Series by Cheri Bennett

This is another series of "happy little stories."

A Fate Totally Worse Than Death by Paul Fleischman

This is set in high school, so might get some older teens to read. It is probably like Fear Street books. The totally self-centered, physically beautiful ruling clique begin to age prematurely. It all seemed very appealing to us.

Much Ado About Prom Night by William McCants

This is for those who like Fast Times at Ridgemont High. It is very California. Of those who read this, one person really liked, the other found it didactic and the character too perfect.

Here at the Scenic-Vu Motel by Thelma Hatch Wyss

This is about a group of kids who stay in a motel during the week to pick up the bus for school. It is told in journal form, These kids are outsiders, not accepted by the townies. The humor is more gentle and situational, not so much sarcastic comment as many of the others are. (Not that we don't like that).

Dealing with Dragons by Patricia Wrede

This is the first book in the Enchanted Forest Chronicles, a series of humorous fantasies.

Adventures of Blue Avenger by Norma Howe

Although the main character in this book is a boy, we didn't think that boys would like it. They would see him as a freak, while girls would see his sensitive side. Also his pursuit of the perfect weepless meringue does seem a little much.

Right by My Side by David Haynes

This would be good for older teens, including boys. The language is a little rough in places, but there aren't sexual scenes. This is about a son and father dealing with the mother's desertion of the family. Also, the main character is one of the few black kids at his school.

Slave Day by Rob Thomas

This story is told from different points of view: male, female, black, and

white. A school has its annual slave day; but not everyone thinks that this is a good idea anymore. It is funny, but also has some meat.

### Overview

The problem with recommending humor is that each person's sense of humor is so different. Some like more observant sarcastic, wry humor while others prefer gentler, situational humor. Some books are funny simply to be funny. Other books are actually "problem" novels with a quick witted, humorous narrator.

### Historical Fiction

#### Books Read:

#### The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle by Avi

This book has a strong female protagonist. Given the setting, the action-oriented-plot, and the fact that the girl isn't girlish, boys would also like. The story is told in the first person and has a lot of good historical detail that was interesting and added to the feel of life on the ship and in the early 1800s. Yet the detail didn't weigh down the plot. One of the themes in the book was Charlotte's awakening to the limits of race and class prejudice. Although Charlotte is in her early teens, the book might appeal to reluctant older teen readers. The book has a real grab'em beginning. Would be good for a family car trip.

#### Catherine Called Birdy by Karen Cushman

Protagonist is a 14 year- old girl in the middle ages. Her trials in trying to not marry her suitors are funny. There are many humorous quips about saints, a woman's place, etc. Birdy is a typical teenager; this book shows girls that they can do things, can make decisions. It provides an interesting look at castle life. Birdy, like Charlotte, is not "girly" so could give the book to boys.

#### Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse

This is told in a series of poems, some quite short others 2 or 3 pages long about life during the dust bowl. The story is full of tragedy, but ends hopefully. This book is a quick read. It probably doesn't appeal to boys, but since it is short and beginning to appear on some reading lists boys might read it. Billie Jo is 15. The older heroine, the use of poetry, the amount of tragedy, the fact that the book is short has made this popular with teenage girls. The book is very impressionistic, but the story of Billie Jo's life comes

through, as does the personality of other characters. The poetry works like diary entries.

#### The Champion by Maurice Gee

This book is set in New Zealand during WW11. An American soldier is coming to the Rex's home- town to recover. Rex is very excited and proud of the pending guest, but when the soldier arrives, he is black. The book has a nostalgic feel to it. The protagonist is 12, making this a hard sell for older teens, yet the themes are too mature for younger teens. This would be a good book to read aloud in a classroom or some other situation that involves more teen/adult interaction. This is a good book, just not very accessible, Again, the themes are racial relations.

#### Bull Run by Paul Fleischman

This book takes several characters from North and South, black and white, male and female and in very short entries relates events before, during and immediately after the Battle of Bull Run. The number of characters could be confusing. The book is very short and would appeal to boys. For an avid reader or reader of historical fiction the story might be a little thin. This would be a good book to have different kids read different parts aloud. It works well for book talks along with the picture book Pink and Say by Patricia Palacco.

#### With Every Drop of Blood by James Lincoln Collier

This is another book about the Civil War by one of the "standard" historical fiction authors. This book was again about racial understanding when a Southern boy and a Black soldier are thrown together. The boy teaches the soldier to read by using the Gettysburg Address. Seemed very didactic.

#### Let the Circle Be Unbroken by Mildred Taylor

This book is tough to read. It is about blacks in Mississippi during the Depression. Many civil rights issues are addressed in this pre civil rights novel. Relationships between whites and blacks are not good and seem realistic for the time. This book is part of a series about the Logan family. Although they face many adversities, the book is ultimately positive because of the pride and dignity of the Logan family. The book also shows the privations of poor white sharecroppers. Would be good used in conjunction with *The Watson's Go to Birmingham—1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis.

#### Wolf by the Ears by Ann Rinaldi

This is the story of Harrier, Sally Hemming's daughter by Thomas Jefferson. She and her brother are in the position of neither fish nor fowl. They aren't treated as Jefferson's children, yet they are not exactly treated as slaves. They don't belong in either black or white society. The book is about the tension faced by blacks who could "pass" and the decision to do so or not. Rinaldi is the author of historical fiction for girls.

Mary, Bloody Mary by Carolyn Meyer

This is the story of Mary Tudor up to about the age of 20. She is a sympathetic character, despite the title. The historical information about life in the castle was similar to Catherine Called Birdy. The historical note at the end of the book explains Mary's nickname and was jarring after the sympathetic story. For junior-high age.

Anna of Byzantium by Tracy Barret

This is another story about a real person, Anna of Comnena. The book raised interest in the woman and the era, although the book seemed to take liberties with the actual facts of Anna's life. Although she was meant to rule Byzantium, she is forced out of her rightful place by her younger brother and instead becomes a nun. The book is good as a picture of a real time and in showing a strong woman in a position of power.

Pictures 1918 by Jeanette Ingold

This is about a girl named Asia who is 15. It is set in 1918 in west Texas. Asia develops a romantic relationship and begins to pursue a possible career as a photographer with the support of her grandmother. This is about a small town and a close family and close friends. It seems accurate to the era and yet shows a girl breaking away from traditional roles. Good for older teens.

Beyond the Burning Time by Kathryn Lasky

Set in Salem at the time of the famous witch trials and executions. A twelve year-old girl tries to save her mother from being executed for being a witch. The witch trials are always fascinating to teenage girls. The book also shows young people trying to overcome and accomplish what their elders can't or won't.

Kingdom by the Sea by Robert Westall and also Blitzcat

In the first book a young boy on the road after his family is seemingly all killed in the Blitz. He meets both nice and horrible people, eventually

settling in with a widower who has lost his only son in the war. But when he finds out his family is still alive, he must return to them although now his world has expanded while theirs has narrowed. Many Britishisms and rather uncomfortable in the fact that the boy seems to have lost all respect for his family; there is a feeling of British class snobbery. A better book is Blitzcat about a cat that travels throughout the war years searching for her master who is a RAF pilot. The cat is taken in by different people along the way and for each person affects them in a positive way. A good book for cat lovers.

Ajeemah and His Son by James Berry

This book is a real downer about a man and his son captured into slavery and sent to work in Jamaica. The father adjusts better to their change in freedom and status. The book gives a feeling of hopelessness to the reader since we know there is no out for these two. But the father's fortitude shows a way of some transcendence over adversity.

Nightjohn by Gary Paulsen

This book is similar to the Berry book. On some school reading lists.

Glory Field by Walter Dean Myers

This is Roots for YAs, although the length could dissuade some.

The Wreckers and The Smugglers by Iain Lawrence

These books are completely plot driven adventure. In the first book the hero is 14, 16 in the second. They harken back to Robert Louis Stevenson, although are not so fully and colorfully populated.

A Parcel of Patterns by Jill Paton Walsh

This is a powerful but sad story of the plague coming to an English village in 1665. It is based on a real event. Although much tragedy ensues, the book ultimately ends on a positive note with the heroine and her new husband going to America.

Ties That Bind, Ties That Break by Lensey Namioko

This is for teen girls 12 and up. It is about a girl who refuses to have her feet bound. It offers insight into another culture just as did Memoirs of a Geisha.

The Cross by Day, the Mezuzzah by Night by Deborah Spector Siegal

This was about a 13 year-old girl in Spain during the Inquisition. Another strong female character and another interesting and little known time and place.

## Overview

Protagonists in YA historical fiction about a time prior to the 20th Century must be young, no older than early teens, because after that age, they were no longer children, they would be apprentices or married.

Girls in historical fiction are almost always anti-stereotypes. A girl in the past is already distanced or centuries; it's easier to picture her bucking the system than someone from our own era. Also showing the heroine's revolt emphasizes women's place in society by showing what she's revolting against.

Many historical fiction titles seem to be as much about making a point about current

(2000 era) issues as presenting a past time, i.e. the number of novels about race relations or women's rights.

Historical fiction that is about ordinary people is often more accessible than books about a famous person because the novelist was not constrained by specific historical details. However, appearances by historical personages in which they appear in less than a perfect light can be the beginning of an understanding of famous people as real and flawed.

Historical fiction is the only outlet for a young adult interested in [fictional] history. There aren't television shows. There aren't movies.

Historical fiction can arouse a lifelong interest in a past era. It awakens empathy in the reader for the harsh realities of life many people have endured and it can provide perspective on events that are still affecting us today.

## Adventure

What do adventure stories consist of? Primarily they are survival stories, often taking place in the wilderness, but they can also be very similar to science fiction or fantasy, and some historical fiction is an adventure. War stories can be adventure stories. Many books in other better-defined genres have very strong adventure elements. Those that are most cleanly defined as adventure are probably the stories of survival, usually in the wilderness.

Books Read:

Will Hobbs seemed to be the author most highly regarded for the day (coming in right ahead of Gary Paulsen). Every book read by us by Hobbs was well thought of. The books were appropriate for junior high school for those kids interested in nature.

Beardance by Will Hobbs

This book was more slowly paced and literary than other books in this genre. It integrated Indian lore with a respectful, realistic look at nature. Teens who like this might best be served next by reading Tony Hillerman.

Downriver by Will Hobbs

This also has an environmental theme and some Hopi Indian lore. This was a faster paced story. It is on several school reading lists.

The Maze by Will Hobbs

This is the story of a boy who escapes from a detention camp into Canyonlands National Park (the maze of the title). There he meets a man who teaches him about the endangered condor and the sport of hang gliding. It too is fast paced. Again there are themes of the environment.

Jason's Gold by Will Hobbs

This is an historical fiction about the gold rush in the Yukon. It would be good for kids who liked Hatchet.

Nadya: The Wolf Chronicles and Wild Angel by Pat Murphy.

(She also wrote There and Back Again.) These books have a girl as the protagonist, and both involve a close association, even habitation with wolves. In Wild Angel a small child's parents are murdered on the way west and she's taken in and raised by wolves, but later returns to civilization.

Tomorrow When the War Began by John Marsden

There was more disagreement about this book. Some of us liked the girl narrator. Her conflicts about the two boys rang true and the invasion guerrilla stuff was interesting and exciting. Others of us felt that the girl did not ring true and the book was too adolescent to transcend being more than an entertaining read (not that there's anything wrong with that, but after Will Hobbs...)

There are several sequels to this book, for those so inclined. Other books by Marsden that some had read in the past and liked were Letters from the Inside about two female pen pals and So Much to Tell You about a

disfigured girl in a hospital. For older teens who liked *Tomorrow When the War Began*, give them *Arslan* by M.J. Engh. It is also about an invasion, of America this time. It does include a rape scene.

*Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen

Paulsen is very popular with young teens, their teachers, and librarians. There are several more books about Brian that the teen can read. Again, like Hobbs, these books show a respect for nature and for the solitary life. Another book about survival in the wild is *Due North* about a young woman and her husband running trap lines in Alaska. She sees her husband killed by a grizzly. The book then shows her return to civilization and then her return to the wild to face the incident in her past. This is an adult book. Another adult book mentioned here is the nonfiction book *Polar Dreams* by Helen Thayer about a woman who skis to the North Pole and has been successfully book-talked to older teens.

*The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon* by Stephen King

This is the survival story of a nine-year-old girl who gets lost on the Appalachian Trail and survives for over a week. As in other Stephen King novels, there is an element of the Unknown out there in the woods. The girl has a radio, and at night she listens to the Red Sox game and imagines that the player Tom Gordon is looking out for her.

There is much good nonfiction adventure being written, *The Perfect Storm*, *Into Thin Air*. But since they not have adolescent protagonists they aren't marketed or written for teens, though teens would read them and like them. Adventure stories aren't just for boys. Several of these books have female protagonists. On the whole, though, girl's books on survival are about surviving something else: injury or disease.

*Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers.

In some of the other books there was a feeling that not all the characters might make it back alive, but, on the whole, we could enjoy the adventure without really worrying about loss of life. This is not true for this book. There is real anxiety about these characters from beginning to end. The book was realistic in its, probably modified, use of language, and by its portrayal of the youthfulness of the combatants. The book was readable. It did not show drugs as part of the soldier's life. It was more character driven than other books we've read in this genre. Adventure stories seem to fall into the lone protagonist, surviving against nature or a group of teen forming into a

group of buddies who support and look out for each other. This book falls into the latter. Other books about military adventure for teens include AK by Peter Dickinson and takes place in Africa and the Road Home by Ellen Emerson White about a nurse who was in Vietnam. Books for this age about war are often about the home front or are of a more philosophical nature, not too much straight adventure. Other writers of this type were Robb White and The Last Patrol by Mazer.

Jumping the Nail by Eve Bunting

We would like to think that the idea of a girl being so insecure that she would follow along anything a boyfriend would ask of them is outdated, but seemingly not. This book was about a girl suffering from depression who ultimately commits suicide. The book seemed superficial and the characters unrealistic.

Z for Zachariah by Robert C. O'Brien

Although this book is almost 30 years old, it seemed up to date. The main character is a girl who has survived a nuclear war. The book does have an optimistic ending. Those of us read this book really like it.

Into the Forest by Jean Hegland

This is about two sisters left alone after civilization has begun to collapse. They eventually go into the woods to live. The theme has to do with our not needing technology to survive. This is an adult book for older teens.

The Cay by Theodore Taylor

This classic was well-liked by all.

The Last Lobo by Roland Smith

This is the third book in a series for kids who like Will Hobbs. It includes some Native American lore and the survival/saving of wildlife.

Running Out of Time by Margaret Peterson Haddix

This is about a re-enactment village in which the people living there don't know they are they are re-enactors and part of an experiment. A young girl from the village escapes out into the modern world and doesn't know about cars etc. This brought up another book, Another Shore by Nancy Bond in which a young woman working at a re-enactment village is transported back in time to the real time of the village.

## **Series and Graphic Novels**

### **Series**

The older series discussed were Sweet Valley High and Fear Street. These series started in the 80s, have numerous spin-offs, and are still being published. They aren't as popular as they once were, but still have their following, often among a younger group of readers. New series are often connected to either television or movies.

#### **Sweet Valley High**

These books are predictable and comforting. They deal with divorcee, acceptance, dating, etc. and are reassuring to kids. On the other hand, these books are set in a world most kids don't inhabit. There are never any money problems. Everyone is talented and attractive. Even the "bad" twin isn't that bad. The characters, especially the "bad" twin are self-indulgent. The problem and its solution are all tied up by the end of the book, which takes no time at all to read. They are like the sitcoms of the book world. Sweet Valley High does not get into specifics about male/female relationships; however Sweet Valley University does. Over time Sweet Valley High has moved more into suspense.

#### **Fear Street**

Unlike SVH, Fear Street does not have re-occurring characters. The books take place in or with some connection to Shadyside and some make mention of the Fear family after whom the street is named. Again, these are very quick reads. No adults are present or have any real authority. The books do have a scary element. Kids really do get killed. Each chapter ends with a cliffhanger which is easily explained away in the next chapter. These make the books somewhat humorous and keep the pace going. Jealousy is a re-occurring theme it seems in these books. The action or the big showdown can sometimes be superhero cartoonish. Another related series is Fear Street Seniors. These are sexier. The front of the book has yearbook pictures with "Rest in Peace" stamped across the faces of characters who have gone in earlier installments.

#### **Roswell**

This was found to be rather more intellectually stimulating and sophisticated than Fear Street.

## Sabrina

This is more slapstick and geared to younger readers.

## Buffy

The television show is geared towards older teens, although we all know younger teens watch it. Some episodes are humorous, others are more intense. There is more sex, more about "issues." Buffy is a good role model in that she's a tough girl who can handle the situation. The show/books have a blend of the reality of high school and a fantastic element. The Buffy graphic novels are also good. There is a new hardcover title out called Mike and Dru, which is marketed to adults.

## Fearless

This is a Francine Pascal series that doesn't seem to have found an audience. The topics are for older teens, but they have probably moved on to something else. These come out once a month. They are about a commando girl who is, of course, very pretty.

There are also several Jedi series, which are popular.

## **Graphic Novels**

Jane Halsall of the McHenry library came and gave a brief presentation about their graphic novels. Theirs are inter filed with either other YA fiction titles. They pull boys into the YA area and are good for reluctant readers who might be more visually oriented. These readers do sometimes move on to reading the (non-graphic) book. She has also worked with the schools to add books that provide curriculum support. Graphic novels as we know them have been around since Maus in the 70s and have really taken off in the last decade. In the 30s and 40s there were many super hero characters. In the post war era there were several narrative graphic magazines and was really part of the counter culture. Now many of these stories have been compiled into their own graphic novels. Comic books are often eventually compiled into a graphic novel. Graphic novels are often about very serious issues. They can be violent and many of them have a propensity for top-heavy women. They can also be humorous. A good way to get to know what's current is to make friends with the owner of your local comic book store. As we discussed graphic novels several titles came up that might fit into a graphic novel collection, but which aren't really graphic novels. Some of these are picture books; others are novels with illustrations.

When the Wind Blows by Raymond Briggs  
This was very British, perhaps too much so for young adults.

Heavy Snow by John E. Haugse  
Is about the author's father's Alzheimers.

Ethel and Ernest by Raymond Briggs  
Is about the author's parents.

Watertower by Gary Crew  
This is a picture book with a creepy, dark, disturbing story.

Amazing True Story of a Teenage Single Mom by Katherine Arnoldi  
This story about a young single mother was liked by everyone.

Tale of One Bad Rap by Bryan Talbot  
This is the story of a girl who has been abused.

Ghost World by Daniel Clowes

Fax from Sarajevo by Joe Kulbert  
This is a real life, horrifying look at life in Sarajevo during the war.

Big Book Urban Legends by Flemming  
Other books in the Big Book series are popular.

Sandman by Gaiman  
This is an ongoing series and is quite popular

Star Trek and Star Wars  
These aren't as good as they could be, but are still popular with teen.

Bone by Smith

Sailor Moon by Takeuchi  
This is a popular Japanese series.

Making Up Megaboy by Virginia Walter  
This is really more of a novel with illustrations. A thirteen- year old boy

shoots a Korean store owner and everyone looks at the event from his/her point of view.

A Day, A Dog by Gabrielle Vincent

This is a picture book, but really too dark for children.

### Overview

When it comes to graphic novels, the reader has to be visually oriented to really get the full impact of the story. These, then, don't appeal to everyone, but can draw otherwise nonreaders into the library. They can make a moment in history or some other event more understandable since the reader can also see what is meant. Some people prefer color graphics. Others prefer full -page graphics as opposed to the small panel style. For more about graphic novels, look at the books by Eisner and check out some of the web addresses Jane gave us.

## **Mystery and Horror**

### **Mystery**

Lois Duncan has not written anything for roughly 15 years; however, she remains popular, and with boys and girls. Her books are regularly re-released with new covers to make them appealing to each new wave of readers. Her books are mysteries, which often have a hint of the supernatural (or sometimes something more than a hint). Her books are more creepy than gore-filled. In many of her books the importance of family is evident and the characters learn to appreciate theirs. Many of her plots seem to have come "Out of the headlines," however she was writing these books before these were the headlines. Many of these plots could not be written today because what seemed extreme and unlikely in 1980 seems all too likely in 2000. Lois Duncan is a good choice for younger teens, but also for older teens, who are reluctant readers. Her books are fast paced and cover topics that appeal to teens.

Don't Look Behind You by Lois Duncan

This book is straight suspense about a family forced to go into a witness protection program. The 17 year old daughter is understandably upset at having to give up not only her life but her name and identity. The girl returns home where there is, in fact, a murderer waiting. She outwits the murderer and comes to fully understand the importance of her family and keeping it together and safe over her own need to return to her old life. We

felt that at a time when fitting in and finding yourself is so important to a teen the idea of losing all that would of great emotional interest.

#### A Gift of Magic by Lois Duncan

The protagonist in this book is younger, 12. She has the gift of magic while her sister and brother have other, non-supernatural gifts. Our heroine is dealing with her parent's divorce and their interest in dating other people. After being upset and confused by her family and feeling bitter she uses her gift of magic to save her brother from drowning and realizes the importance of her family and the happiness of each member. This is a charming story for younger teens. The heroine's mother marries Mr. Duncan, the school guidance counselor, and they have a daughter, Lois, who is born with the gift of storytelling.

#### Killing Mr. Griffin and Daughters of Eve by Lois Duncan

These two books show the dangers manipulation by a strong and amoral character can lead to.

#### Stranger with My Face by Lois Duncan

This story falls into the pattern of adult suspense. The characters are isolated on an island; the electricity goes out during a storm. The story is about two twins, one good, one evil, who are separated at birth. The evil twin takes over the body of the good twin through astral projection while she herself is confined to a mental hospital.

#### Twisted Window by Lois Duncan

This story felt more dated. It was the story of a girl who helps a boy she thinks is rescuing his kidnapped sister. In fact the boy had accidentally killed his sister, is deranged, and has kidnapped a strange child who he believes (in his delusion) to be his sister. He sees the world through his own twisted view/window?

Joan Lowery Nixon writes very traditional mysteries. When girls are reading Nancy Drew in fifth grade they next read Nixon. Her books are very fast and aren't far removed from the series books we read last time. However these books generally have more of an adult presence, including positive adults, although usually the teens are on their own solving the mystery. These are murder mysteries.

#### The Name of the Game was Murder by Joan Lowery Nixon

This was Agatha-Christie light. The uncle of our intrepid heroine calls together a bunch of people whom he is blackmailing. He ends up dead.

Deadly Game of Magic by Joan Lowery Nixon

A group of kids, including boys, at a creepy old house where lives a psychopathic magician.

Secret Silent Screams by Joan Lowery Nixon

After two teens commit suicide, when a third teen is found dead everyone thinks that it too is suicide, but our intrepid heroine believes that it was murder and sets out to prove it. The evidence centers on the old left hand/right hand ploy

The Stalker by Joan Lowery Nixon

When her best friend's mother is murdered, our intrepid heroine's friend is accused of the crime. The heroine, with the help of a retired policeman, investigates and ends up in a confrontation with the murderer. For an ex-cop, her retired policeman sends her off into all sorts of dangerous situations. The heroine decides not to rush into marriage with her boyfriend, as everyone is expecting, but to go to college to become a cop.

The Séance by Joan Lowery Nixon

Two girls go to a séance and one of them disappears, only to have her dead body found later. Another girl from the séance is killed. The heroine investigates in a bombing way. This book could have been by Stine.

Haunted Sister by Lael Littke

This book veers into horror. A girl has been in an accident has her head/mind entered by her sister who died as a small child. That was much liked. It was like a middle "scary" series book.

Forgotten by Patricia H. Rushford

This was published by Bethany House, but does not have an overpowering religious tone. A girl is kidnapped by a group who have been carrying off a series of robberies. They end up in a cabin in the woods where she hits her head and gets amnesia. This is one of the Jennie McGrady series.

Bodybags by Christopher Golden

This is part of a series about a college age girl, Jenna Blake, who gets a part time job at the medical examiner's office while she is in college to see

if she would like this as a career. There are a very contemporary series that would appeal to high school age teens.

#### The Other Side of Silence by Margaret Mahy

This is set in New Zealand. It is about a very complex family with all sorts of egos and dynamics in the stew. The heroine doesn't speak. She takes a job for a neighbor woman who lives in a decrepit old house and is very strange, even it turns out deranged. This is a more challenging story than most of the American stories we read. It is creepy and discomfoting.

#### The Changeover by Margaret Mahy

This book about Mahy is also about a strong family. It, too, is seriously creepy. In this case there is an element of the supernatural.

#### The Girl in the Box by Quida Sebestyen

This book is intense. A girl wakes up in an underground bunker, not knowing, how she got there or if she'll get out. She spends her time typing out letters to the outside which she pokes through a small trap door to the outside world. As time progresses she becomes more and more unhinged. The book leaves you with her still in the room with no evidence that she will be rescued. It leaves you with a terrible feeling. Who would you recommend this book to?

#### Letters from the Inside by John Marsden

This book too, has a disturbing ending that leaves much unresolved. Marsden is an Australian writer.

#### Locked Inside by Nancy Werlin

A girl is kidnapped from her exclusive school by an obsessed fan of her pop star mother.

#### The Good Children by Kate Wilhelm

This is an adult book about icky family secrets told from the point of view of the kids. It is for older teens.

#### Counterfeit Son by Elaine Marie Aphin

When a serial murderer is caught and killed, his son pretends to be one of the kids he captured, tortured and murdered, not only murdered in this case, so that he can get into a normal family, only to find out that he is now really with his real family. More suspense than mystery.

### Phyllis Whitney

Books by Whitney are now out of print but might still be in your collection. Although a few points in the book might be dated, the plots generally aren't, and Whitney was still writing these when Lois Duncan started. Usually they take place away from the heroine's home while she is staying with an Aunt or another relative, providing a loving adult, but more freedom than a parent would. They take place in different part of the U.S and some other parts of the world. There is often a little boy interest. Would be good for the Nancy Drew readers.

### Bad Chemistry and Chaos Theory by Gary Krist

In Bad Chemistry a boy downloads scenes from Murders; then he finds his own real-life corpse. In conjunction with older woman whose husband has disappeared he investigates. In Chaos Theory some kids end up in the wrong part of town and wander into a murder scene. The book explores issues of race and class. These are for older teens, 15 or older.

### Close to a Killer by Marsha Qualey

The 17-year-old protagonist has a mother who was in prison for several years for having placed a bomb at a nuclear power plant. She is now out of prison and runs a beauty shop which employs other women who have been in prison (subtly named Killer Looks). Now when there is a series of murders the women from the beauty parlor are blamed. The heroine is appealing and we learn a lot about her. Would be good for junior high into high school.

### Overview

Adult mysteries are hard to recommend. After they have read Duncan and Nixon there isn't much that would appeal until they are in their later teens. The books that are appropriate sex and violence-wise have elderly or cutesy detectives. There are also not many mysteries for boys.

### Horror

Stephen King has earlier gorier stuff and later more eerie and subtle stuff. Carrie is probably still the most appealing to teens, about the outsider's revenge. Salem's Lot is the scariest. He works on fears that we didn't know we had.

### The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon by Stephen King

This is King in creepy mode. This is about a young girl lost in the woods. There is the feeling of something out there in the woods, but what is it?

Apt Pupil by Stephen King

This is a novella in the book *Different Seasons*. It is a truly, truly appalling story about a kid with a purulent interest in the Holocaust who discovers an ex-Nazi living in the neighborhood. The perversions of each character play off each other. This is not a supernatural story, but story about horrific characters and events.

*One on One* and *Small World* by Tabitha King are also good to recommend.

*Magic Circle* by Donna Jo Napoli

A woman who heals through magic is lured out of the magic circle by demons to do their bidding. This is very intense and darkly atmospheric with religious undertones. Ultimately this is the witch to whom Hansel and Gretel go. When the demons demand that she eat them, she must struggle against them.

*Blood and Chocolate* and *The Silver Kiss* by Annette Curtis Klause

These are more fantasy about respectively vampires and werewolves. These creatures are dealt with more as powers of nature than as evil.

*Ghost Abbey* by Robert Westall

This is for younger teens. It is about a haunted house that can be malevolent to anyone who tries to harm the house, but in this case helps to bring a troubled family back together. A light, haunting tone, not too scary is the feel for this book.

*Burnt Offering* by Laurell K. Hamilton

This would be good to offer to older teens. It too is about a haunted house that causes people to act out.

*The House Next Door* by Ann River Siddons

This is another haunted house.

*Lost Boys*, *Homebody*, and *Treasure Box* by Orson Scott Card

These are all atmospheric haunted house or possession stories appropriate for older teens.

Thirsty by M.T. Anderson

This is a young adult book about a place where there is "something" unspoken about out in the woods. If ever anything from the woods wanders near the town it is killed. This is also true for the main character who finds out that he is a vampire, or of the woods, so his town, including his parents will kill him.

Look for Me by Moonlight by Mary Downing Hahn

This is set on a remote Maine coast. A teenage girl at her family's hotel falls into fascination with one of their guests, a romantic stranger who is actually a vampire. There are allusions to the poem "The Highwayman". This was a quick atmospheric read.

The Owl Service by Alan Garner

This is a haunting story based on a Welsh myth about a love triangle. This is a complex story, hard to completely comprehend, but worth the effort for those so disposed. Much of the unease of the story is brought about by what seems to be happening just out of the corner of your eye.

Bentley Little is a current author of horror.

Relic by Douglas J. Preston

Is a good one to recommend to older teens.

Robert Block offers supernatural stories more in the menacing rather than the gory vein.

Reef of Death by Paul Zindel

This would appeal to boys and would be good for reluctant readers. The protagonist is a 17 year-old boy. The story is often gruesome and features more deaths by marine life than you can imagine.

A Candle in Her Room by Ruth M. Arthur

This is a British story set in Wales about three generations of a family affected by the malevolent spirit of a wooden doll. This is more gothic and romantic in tone.

Gentlehands by M.E.Kerr is a thriller, and horrific in its revelations.

In the Middle of the Night by Robert Cormier is a psychological thriller.

William Sleator writes teen books, often with a horror element.

## Overview

Horror is not being written or read as much as it once was. Stephen King has mostly moved away from the most graphic horror. Now serial killers and psychological suspense provide the gore and scariness previously found in traditional horror.

## Fantasy

There are several authors who come up again and again, Phillip Pullman and Tamara Pierce for instance. Fantasy, more so than science fiction, is marketed towards teens. Fantasy generally has a more emotional tone than science fiction, which can often seem distanced from the reader. Urban fantasy is a relatively new subgenre of fantasy that is popular with teens. Fantasy readers are generally not as particular as to where a book is, that is, is it shelved in childrens, young adult, adult? They are also not as concerned with the edge of the protagonist. Younger or adult heroes are generally acceptable. In fantasy there is often a lot at stake: big battles between life and death, the end of a civilization, etc. The virtues of courage and kindness are rewarded and good triumphs, although it may take several books in a series to get there. Good fantasy also consists of many levels of meaning. The book might be an adventure on the surface and have philosophical principles underlying.

### Wizard of Earthsea by Ursula K. Le Guin

This book came out in 1968 and reflected many of the themes which would become standard for fantasy: the young person proving themselves worthy, a young person with special powers going to a special school to learn to control those powers, the naming of something connected to its power, moving between this world and the world beyond, the power of life and death (good and evil) and even an early appearance of dragons. There are now five books in the series. The tone of the book is bleak, dark. The story is told in a slow, stately manner, adding weight to the events, but not to everyone's taste. Other authors who write a more serious kind of fantasy are Tamara Pierce (Circle of Magic) and Garth Nix (Sabriel).

### Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J.K. Rowling

The first Harry Potter book came out in 1998. The tone of these books is playful, even tongue-in-cheek. Although there are other fantasies that are being recommended for Harry Potter readers, nothing is quite like this. The sense of humor and the quirky, sometimes unpleasant characters are

reminiscent of Roald Dahl. Other authors who write humorous fantasy are Diana Wynne Jones and Patricia Wrede. The Harry Potter movie will be out in November.

#### The Golden Compass by Philip Pullman

This book has been marketed to different age levels and appeals to different age levels. There are so many levels to the book that each age group gets something different from it from a straight adventure to an allegory and commentary on organized religion. This means the book can be read over and over and different elements over time. This is the first volume in the His Dark Materials series and follows the pattern of many trilogies: the first volume is an adventure, the second is political, and the third is more adventurous again. Much in The Golden Compass is not described in detail allowing the reader to flesh it out with their own imagination.

#### Sabriel by Garth Nix

Sabriel is the daughter of a famous magician who has been going to ordinary boarding school when she is called to the "other side" help her father. In the end she must decide between saving her father or the kingdom. This book has a strong female protagonist and a serious tone. Sabriel's father's magic is connected to a bandolier of bells, the ringing of which makes different magic happen. There is a sequel with Sabriel's granddaughter.

#### Ship of Magic by Robin Hobb

This is the first book of a trilogy about a family of traders on the sea. After generations within a family a ship will become sentient, taking on the memories of those who have sailed upon her. Althea is the daughter of the family, and she loves the ship, but when her father dies the ship passes to her evil brother-in-law, who makes the ship a slaver, and thereby might send her into madness. The book also features a charismatic but ruthless pirate king.

#### Dark is Rising series by Susan Cooper

A couple of books in this series are for younger readers, but others are great for Young Adults. In order they are; T: Over Sea, Under Stone he Dark is Rising; Greenwitch; The Grey King and Silver on the Tree

#### Magic books by Andre Norton

Stel Magic is a book about conquering ones' own fears. [Per Roberta: Although there are other books in this series, and they are good, they are all out of print and not widely held.]

McKinley's books are charming, romantic, whimsical. Probably more for girls than for boys. Some might find these books too fey. Also Spindle's End. For Robin McKinley readers also recommend Patricia McKillip who writes very atmospheric stories.

Donna Jo Napoli

Napoli's stories are simple and spare. Like McKinley they are retellings of fairy tales, but without the whimsy. Hers are psychological and suspenseful. Magic Circle is a re-telling of Hansel and Gretel. Zel is the Repunzel story re-told. Beast is Beauty and the Best, prior to Beauty set in the world of Islam. Spinners is a telling of Rumpelstiltskin which is not for the faint of heart. Rumpelstiltskin is looking for a lover who sees beyond the ugly exterior.

Rumpelstiltskin Problem by Vivian Vande Velde

This is a collection of several different angles on the Rumpelstiltskin problem. Another book by Vande Velde is Dragon's Bait for younger readers about a spunky girl who is accused of being a witch and is set out in a field for a dragon to take her.

Well Favored Man by Elizabeth Willey

This is the first of a trilogy with a humorous touch but exploring larger topics. A young, inexperienced wizard makes his way and his mark in the world. Wonderful characters and enough dark elements to be of interest to older teens.

Dragonlance and Forgotten Realms series

Each of these is written by a different author and are loosely based on characters from Dungeons and Dragons. They have a lot of action. They don't have a lot of gore sex. Once young people start to read these they tend to continue to read them on into adulthood.

Redwall by Brian Jacques

This is the first in a long series about woodland animals, primarily mice, who live in something like the English countryside. The animals behave pretty much like people, and could be an Arthurian tale, only with animals.

In the sense that the animals are just like people, this was reminiscent of *The Wind in the Willows*, which is much gentler story.

*The Tales of Alvin Maker* by Orson Scott Card

Card also writes science fiction. The *Alvin Maker* books are set in an alternative colonial America where things like Pennsylvania Dutch hex signs really work. Indians have special powers. Alvin Maker has the power of making. Like many of Card's books this one is about family. It would appeal to both sexes and kids as young as eleven or twelve could start the series.

*One for the Morning Glory* by John Barnes

This is for older teens. It has a sly sense of humor. It is about a prince who is one-half invisible. He goes on a quest to retrieve his other half. On Amazon this is compared to *The Princess Bride*, with which we agree.

*Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman

This is an urban fantasy about a parallel world in the London underground. Another fantasy by Gaiman, which is quite different, is *Stardust*, which is more of a traditional fantasy.

*Good Omens* by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman

This is truly funny book with plenty of sarcasm.

Terry Pratchett

Pratchett, writing on his own is a reliably funny writer. His book *The Fifth Elephant* was almost a caper novel about a man who is ambassador to the dwarves. Apparently all dwarves have long bears and dress like men, regardless of their sex. The ambassador (also a police lieutenant) has an assistant who is a female dwarf who shocks her community by dressing like a woman. He writes the humorous *Discworld* series.

*Dark Cities Underground* by Lisa Goldstein

This is about a journalist investigating the reclusive grownup child of a famous author (think Christopher Tolkien) who discovers that the little boy "told" his mother these stories and the events and characters are actually real. Sort of like Graham Joyce's *The Tooth Fairy*, but not as dark.

*Time of the Dark* by Barbara Hambly

This is about a girl who is sucked out this world. She also wrote Witches of Wenshar

Night Flying by Rita Murphy

This is for younger readers. It is about a sixteen-year-old girl who lives with all her female relatives, all of whom can fly. This is a different sort of fantasy in that it has a normal on this earth setting, except for the flying.

Orwell's Luck by Richard Jennings

This, too, is more of a junior high book. No one in this book has a name except Orwell, a rabbit. A twelve year old girl finds the injured rabbit who then starts to communicate with her through the newspaper's daily horoscope. Again, this is set in a "normal" world with a soupcon of magic.

I Was a Teenage Fairy by Francesca Lia Block

This is about an eleven-year-old girl who has a fairy named Mab. At this time she is being molested. The book then moves ahead a few years and continues the story. The book deals with serious topics, but does have humor.

Charles de Lint

De Lint writes urban fantasy books with a recognizable city, but the natural world is seen as being more magical.

A Red Heart of Memories by Nina Kiriki Hoffman

This is about five friends from grade school who are now, years later, brought back together in a house on the West Coast. One girl can talk to inanimate objects plus the house is haunted.

Dark Lord of Derkholm by Diana Wynne Jones

This was a fun read, but not great.

Sword of Shannara by Terry Brooks

This is seven hundred pages of young man on a journey meeting with one thing after another. This is like several other popular authors. Roberta recommends reading Legend: Short Novels by the Masters of Modern Fantasy for a taste of these authors without having to wade page after page, volume after volume.

A Song of Fire and Ice series by George R. R. Martin

His books are set in a quasi-Medieval world with only a hint of magic; the focus of the books is on politics.

Pobby and Dingan by Ben Rice

This is a unique book, difficult to place. It is set in Australia in a mining community. A young girl's imaginary friends go missing and her brother gets the entire community involved in searching for them.

## **Romance**

Forever by Judy Blume

Although from 1975, this book is still going out. The characters are not fleshed out and the romance is not really romantic. This is more a how to manual with appropriate precautions (for 1975). The romance is rather clinical. The forbiddenness of the book's reputation still one of its attractions. Also these girls have been reading Judy Blume since 3rd grade; part of the appeal is name recognition.

Hard Love by Ellen Wittlinger

We all liked this book, but some of us would not consider it a romance. It is a book of unrequited love. The book does not give any easy answers. This is the story of a lonely boy who falls in love with a girl who considers herself to be a lesbian (and she is). There is a hint at the end of a more appropriate love interest. The parents in the book are not good parents and are the cause of the boy's problems. The mother, since her divorce, will not touch her son.

Sex Education by Jenny Davis

This book ends with the boy dead and the girl in a mental hospital. Is this romance?

We had a discussion here about teen angst in teen romances. Do kids want the angst in romances or do they want something lighter and more cheerful? Many of the books had dysfunctional families and romances that end badly, if they even get off the ground. There are love stories in other genres. Roberta mentioned that romance is not unusual in fantasy. She particularly liked a collection of short stories called Prom Night edited by Nancy Springer. Some of the stories are pretty dark. Gina mentioned a more traditional and formulaic series called Love Stories put out by Bantam. Karen remembered reading and enjoying as a teenager a series from Silhouette called First Love.

All the Time in the World by Liz Nickles

With this book we move from angst to the realm of death (the Love Story syndrome). A 21 year-old girl discovers that she has an incurable brain disease. She and her friends go off to Greece so she can enjoy her last days. There she meets and marries a handsome English photographer before the final curtain.

The Unlikely Romance of Kate Bjorkman by Louise Plummer

This book was refreshing for having a loving family with actually nice parents. The Beetle and Me also had a nice family.

Too Much T. J. by Jacqueline Shannon

A girl moves from a private school to a public school. There she, just like every other girl in her class, falls for handsome T.J. Unfortunately she finds out that her mother is dating T. J. 's father, and they are getting married!

How I Created My Perfect Prom Date (also called Girl Gives Birth to Own Prom Date by Todd Strasser

This book was actually humorous. When a girl needs a date for the prom she manages to turn her good friend, next door neighbor, into a passable prom date. This was made into the movie Drive Me Crazy.

I Capture the Castle by Dodie Smith

This is an older title, which was recently re-published in the United States and has had a recent rise in popularity. For those who like this sort of thing, this is practically the perfect book. For others, what is all the hoopla about? During the Depression in the English countryside a young girl falls in love with her sister's fiancée. The book is very British. The family is quirky and funny but has some really poignant, heartbreaking moments.

Romiette and Julio by Sharon Draper

This is the story of an interracial romance. Romiette is a very confident, proud black girl. Julio is Hispanic and from a poorer family. Although their parents have reservations, they don't break up the romance. The people who give them trouble are the kids at their school. The two meet online then discover that they are at the same school. The love affair survives, though.

### If You Come Softly by Jacqueline Woodson

This is another multiracial romance. In this case the boy is black and the girl is Jewish. They meet at their private school. They each come from dysfunctional families. The girl tells her part of the story in the first person while the boy's story is told in the third person, probably because he is dead at the end of the book and thus unable to speak for himself.

### Johnny Voodoo by Dakota Lane

A girl from NYC goes to live with her father in Louisiana. Although the book had a lot of on target comments about schools and school cliques, Karen did not like this book. She did not think that taking up with a creepy homeless person was a really positive way for the protagonist to deal with her problems.

### Moon Dancer by Margaret Rostkowski

This was a satisfying romance. A girl goes out into the west for a few weeks where she meets a young local boy. The book has good descriptions of nature and includes some Native American mythology.

### Seventeenth Summer by Maureen Daly

This book was written before WWII, so can be viewed as being historical, which makes some of the elements more acceptable. This book also is very atmospheric of a leisurely Wisconsin summer before the war with country club dances, Cokes at the local hangout and a real sense of the passing of summer, reflected in the family garden, etc. This book was still going out pretty well in an edition with a new updated cover, but are the readers, who check it out finishing it?

### Camilla by Madeleine L'Engle

This book gave real feeling of living in Manhattan. This is a story of first love, but a truly bittersweet story. Camilla's parents are going through marriage problems and Camilla is in the middle. Her best friend comes from a family where her parents are always fighting. Camilla begins a relationship with this friend's brother.

### Tom Loves Anna Loves Tom by Bruce Clemants

This is a story of summer romance. It is a sweet story with no broken hearts told from the boy's point of view

The Beetle and Me by Karen Romano Young

This was one of several stories read about girls who are into something besides the boyfriend. In this case the protagonist is into restoring an old Volkswagen Beetle. Some of us felt that there was just too much about the car, but others of us liked that the girl was interested in something nontraditional for a girl.

Amazon Papers by Beverly Keller

Left to baby sit while mother is gone girl Iris falls for the pizza delivery boy. A funny book about a good girl gone bad(ish).

Truth or Dairy by Catherine Clark

This is cute story told in diary entries about a girl who works at a dairy bar. She is interested in one boy, but it is her old friend who turns out to be the real love interest. This is a light story, but enjoyable. We particularly like stories where the girl sees in a whole new light a boy who has been a friend.

I'll Be Seeing You by Lurlene McDonald

Two teens meet in hospital. The girl has terrible facial scars, but the boy's eyes are bandaged and he can't see this. Will he still like her after the bandages are removed. This was the only McDaniel story any of us read which did not involve death.

Sixteen and Dying by Lurlene McDaniel

Well, the title pretty much tells it all. A sixteen-year old girl is HIV positive. As a last wish a mysterious benefactor sends her money for her heart's desire. She decides to spend the summer on a ranch where she meets a boy with Huntington's Chorea. He stays with her to the end.

For Better For Worse Forever by Lurlene McDaniel

A girl, who in a previous book had lost her fiancée to cystic fibrosis, is now dying herself from brain tumor. Her family takes her down to St. Croix for her last days. There she meets a boy who stays with her to the end.

No Time to Cry by Lurlene McDaniel

This is about a girl who with leukemia who has 16 months to live.

Mourning Songs by Lurlene McDaniel

This is about a girl who for "one last wish" wants to see the ocean.

Somewhere Between Life and Death by Lurienne McDaniel  
Has the girl's sister dying and the theme of then using her organs for transplants.

Angel of Mercy by Lurienne McDaniel  
This story was about a girl who goes to Africa to do good deeds. The book had a more inspirational tone. Is this the path McDaniel had taken lately?

My Angelica by Carol Lynch Williams  
This was a humorous story about a couple who are already together. He writes poetry some of which is included in the book. She is enthusiastically writing a romance novel (her mother is a romance writer who really gets into her book). Her novel is terrible, but she insists in entering it into a writing contest, which she wins, because they think that it is a parody!

Whistle Me Home by Barbara Wersba  
As with Hard Love, a straight character falls in love with a gay character of the opposite sex. In this case a boyish looking girl becomes friends with a boy who is struggling with his sexual identity, but who is, in fact gay.

Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli  
A neo-hippy girl, Stargirl, has been home schooled. She starts high school in the public school where she is very different, very much a free spirit who is always happy and upbeat. Eventually she wins everyone over, even becoming a cheerleader, although she cheers for both sides. Stargirl is unbelievably sweet and the reader either buys into her personality or gags on it.

Jemima J by Jane Green  
This is actually an adult book in the Bridget Jones vein. An ugly duckling English girl comes to California, loses weight and becomes a knockout.

Thwunk by Joan Bauer  
A girl who is interested in photography finds a cupid doll, which turns out to really be cupid. As in the old adage, be careful what you wish for, the girl wishes for Peter to love her and then crazy from his attention. This is a sweet fairy tale romance.

Dancing with an Alien by Mary Logue

An alien comes to earth to find a young woman to take back to his home planet to re-populate it. But when he finds the girl he falls in love with her so goes home without her. This was found to be a satisfying read.

Home by Kimberly Fuller

This book was written by a teenager. It also has an alien coming to earth and falling for an earth girl.

Blue Willow by Kimberly Fuller

This was one of the books in the Booklist list. It is actually a picture book. The story is the Chinese legend about the patterns on the blue willow plate. Okay, but not great and would not appeal to most teens.

Nerdlandia by Gary Soto

This was also from Booklist. This is a very light, silly play. There are asides to the audience and funny touches which would make it fun read aloud in a class, but very light weight and not found to be very satisfying as a read.

## Overview

Discussion of romances centered around the idea of the happy ending. Does a romance have to be happy? Several of us felt that to be satisfying as a romance, yes they do. That the, usually, formulaic girl meets boy storyline is what is wanted when a teen wants a romance. The other books might be very good and satisfying, but not as romances. The other camp felt that teen love is full of insecurity, first love and unrequited love, and so these more problem filled romances so qualify.

The problem with teen romances is that they can't realistically end with happily ever after. Two sixteen year-olds can't be getting married. This is probably why the summer romance is so popular, the romance ends naturally but without bad feelings.

The romances we found most rewarding were those in which the girl has an interest outside of the boy, and sometimes this interest wins out. Books like Thwonk or The Beetle and Me in which the girls have an interest in photography or cars or in which they have funny, quirky personality traits unrelated to the romance are more health romances.

Books were fondly remembered from our own adolescents were Seventeenth Summer by Maureen Daly (from 1942), the Dinny Gordon series by Anne Emery (from the early 60s), the Beany Malone series by Lenora Mattingly Weber (from the late 40s), anything by Rosamond du

Jardin (from the 50s and early 60s) and the First Love series by Silhouette. As you can see, these books were already ancient when we read them.

## **Science Fiction**

Books Read:

The Giver by Lois Lowry

The Giver had themes prevalent in YA literature and YA minds: the individual v society and the challenging of authority. In a perfect society the individual must repress their desires and imperfections to the good of society, even if that means the death of some.

(Unbeknownst to some of us) the ending is controversial. Did the boy die at the end, did he escape to another village, or did he simply circle back to where he had started? The ambiguity of this ending is at the very heart of speculative fiction. This brought up a mention of the book The Gathering in Blue, which is a sort of companion piece to The Giver. In a different village, after the destruction of society, the villagers live in a medieval society in which the "defectives" are put out for the wolves. Kira, the heroine is lame but has been allowed to live because of the prominence of her family. She is a skilled weaver and repairs the robe of the singer (the counterpart to the giver in The Giver). Is there also to be a third book? Some of us had heard that.

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

What most of us remember from this book is how sorry we felt for Ender. He is always the fish out of water, isolated and used by the people in control. This is quite an accessible science fiction title because the world of the book is recognizable as being something close to ours. The emphasis is not upon technology, but upon character and social and philosophical themes. This is a book with more immediate appeal for boys, but girls, required to read it for school, will find it accessible, and readers of both sexes often go on and read the companion titles. This is not a YA book per se and so can be read by adults and even works in a book discussion.

House of Stairs by William Sleator

Gins found this book to be very disturbing. It has a creepy feel and uses strong language. She would not recommend it to anyone younger than high school. In a house of only stairways and landings a group of five 16 year-olds, all orphans, are made part of an experiment in conditioned human response to find young people ruthless enough to survive and be leaders.

This experiment has been requested by the president. The kids are able to get food from a machine only by being increasingly cruel to each other. The kids are constantly humiliated. This book is on many lists and is similar in feel to *Girl in a Box*. The book really doesn't read like science fiction. There is not enough about society and fashion; etc. to make the story set in any one time. It seems to be set in the not too distant future. What would appeal to kids is the feeling of alienation and being at the mercy of unfeeling adults.

#### Interstellar Pig by William Sleator

This book reads much younger even though the protagonist is 15. The college age kids in the next cottage play a game called Interstellar Pig. The person who up with the pig at the end is the winner, but in reality the pig is the "old maid" and who ever ends up with the real interstellar pig will be destroyed along with their society/world. The people next door are aliens. Karen found this story rather lame, although it has been around for a long time and there is talk of a movie.

#### How Much for Just the Planet by John M Ford

This is a Star Trek (original series) novel. Debbie read this book because people she knew had found it uproariously funny. She wouldn't go that far, although there were times she laughed out aloud. There were many little in-jokes about Star Trek personalities, many of which she probably missed. The plot was sort of a mess and the other parts were better than a whole. Anyone normal who is a fan of Star Trek would find it amusing. Anyone who puts on his or her Klingon uniform on the weekends would probably be offended. There are a number of allusions to classic films that may not be known to YAs.

#### Bellwether by Connie Willis

This book is by an author who writes science fiction, but this title really is not . It would perhaps fit into the larger category of speculative fiction. A young woman is a sociologist at the Hi-Tek Company studying trends. She has the assistant from hell (Flip) who has a really unique fashion sense. Sandra, the sociologist, slowly becomes aware that Flip is a bellwether, the sheep that all the other sheep follow, and that her fashion statements soon become the trend in the area. At the same time Sandra becomes aware of the nerdy charms of a young man studying chaos theory. The book is clever and uses social commentary to make digs at our obsession with what's "in". Shari brought the book and a few others of us

have read it. It would be a good read-alike for Bridget Jones, although without working in corporate America it's questionable how many of the jokes a YA would get.

**This Place Has No Atmosphere by Paula Danziger**

This book, read by Joyce, was far too dated from a science fiction point of view. Danziger had not come up with future ways of doing things that have not already been surpassed. Basically this book is about a teen uprooted and forced to make friends, etc only set on the Moon, instead in New York City or a small town in Nebraska. It only has the trappings of science fiction. (Wasn't there another Danzinger book at a previous discussion that we found dated beyond hope, *The Cat Ate My Gymsuit?*)

**Dark Side of Nowhere by Neal Shusterman**

This too did not seem like true science fiction, but an overlay of science fiction trappings on a book about teens rebelling against authority. In this case the authority is their own parents. A boy finds out that he is an alien. His parents and several other couples came to earth to insinuate themselves into earth society and overtake the planet. However their home planet never sent them the additional invaders etc to carry this out. Now many years later they are planning to send reinforcements and carry out the plan. The young people and some of the adults rebel against this.

**Z for Zachariah by Robert C. O'Brien**

In a post holocaust world, somewhere in the Appalachian Mountains, a young girl is the only survivor in a mountain valley until a stranger in a special anti-radium suit appears. He shortly wants to control and abuse her. She escapes to find another place where there might be survivors. At one time or another about all of us had read this book and loved it. The book does not date because technology has been destroyed and thus isn't discussed. The themes of self-sufficiency, loneliness, and creating your own destiny have resonance for all.

**Jumping Off the Planet by David Gerrold**

A father takes his three sons and moves to the Moon. The novel is then a story about a custody dispute. This is a very dysfunctional family. It could be set anywhere though. He could have taken them and moved to France and it would be the same story.

Bug Park by Games Hogan

This is a teen adventure with good guys and bad guys.

Chrysalids by John Wyndham

This is an old book (1955) but it still resonates. It is a short, fast read about a post apocalypse world many generations after the "event". In an agrarian society bits and pieces of the Bible and other pieces of the Bible and other pieces of literature have been found and fused into a new religion, which everyone must follow. Any differences are not tolerated. One kid is psychic and forms psychic connections with other kids. They know that they cannot reveal this difference. They decide to band together and leave to find their own society. This would be good for seventh grade and up. The book does not date because of the lack of technology. It is similar in theme to The Giver.

Calling B for Butterfly by Louise Lawrence

This is another adventure about four teens who, along with two younger children (one infant), are the only survivors on a spacecraft. They are trying to make contact with someone to help them return to earth.

The Last Book on the Universe by W.R. Philbrick

In a world after the "Big Shake" it's a sort of Mad Max place. There are different zones, each different from the others. A kid called Spaz is sent away from his zone, because he has epilepsy. The voice of the protagonist is good although the book on the whole is only okay. In a world where all books are gone an old man Ryter is writing a book. This is easy reading for younger teens.

Transall Saga by Gary Paulsen

A young boy goes off by himself camping in the desert. (What are his parents thinking!) While out there he sees a blue light, when he sees this light he is taken to what appears to be a different planet. In reality he is in the earth's future where plagues and nuclear devastation have changed the atmosphere. He searches for the blue light to go "home". As an adult he searches for the vaccine for the plague. This was inferior Paulsen.

Galax-Arena by Gillian Rubinstein

Three Australian kids are kidnapped and taken to a place where, along with other kids from countries of earth, they are taught to perform increasingly dangerous acrobatic stunts in the arena. The local lizard-like population feeds off of the anxiety of their youthful victims. One of the children is

actually taken away to be a "pet". Finally the kids realize that in fact they are on earth on earth and there is the possibility of escape. Their captors are old people who are made young off of feeding off their fear. This was creepy and good.

Turnabout by Margaret Peterson Haddix

Two girls, 15 and 18, were many years ago part of an experiment in anti-aging. When they were over 100 they started a process in which they became a year younger each year until they got their "perfect" age. Unfortunately, the cure, which was to stop them at that age, only kills those who take it. Now as they are getting younger and younger they try to find someone who will take care of them when they can no longer take care of themselves. It was thought that adults would like this better than YA s.

The Visitors by John Rowe Townsend

In England visitors from the future are discovered by two English schoolboys. One of the boys becomes especially fascinated by this family. When their secret is discovered the visitors must go back, but their daughter has fallen in love with a young man from the present. However, if she stays, current day diseases will kill her within a few months. The book lost much of its emotional impact since we don't follow the young lovers, but only hear of them. This book was a real disappointment.

Doomdsay Book by Connie Willis

Those of us who have read this have found it highly satisfying. A young girl from Oxford goes back in time to the middle ages. By mistake she is sent back to the time of the plague. Helplessly she watches as everyone around her dies. The death of the priest is especially poignant. In the meantime, back in the not-so-distant future, a different plague is striking down much of the community. This is a long book you can lose yourself in.

Bluespring by Charlotte Kerner

This book was translated from the German. A pianist discovers that she has MS. This is a very narcissistic woman who doesn't think that the world should be denied her great talent. So she has herself cloned. This is the story of the clone, Siri, backwards of Iris, the mother. It is a story not only of cloning, but also of a difficult mother/daughter relationship.

Vorkosigan series by Lois Master Bujold

The first book in the series in Shards of Honor. The hero of the series is

Miles Vorkosigan who is physically disabled and not strong, but very intelligent. These are adventures stories.

Startide Rising by David Brin

Also The Postman

Also mentioned as good recommendations for teens. Be aware that The Postman does contain sex and violence.

Parable of the Sower by Octavia Butler

A young girl in a future L. A. , which is extremely violent, gathers together a group of followers who go off in search of a place where they can settle and create a safe society. Roberta reports that the paperback edition of this book has a great cover with a proud black teenager looking right at the viewer that she feels is very appealing.

Overview

Nancy Kress spoke about science fiction at a program at ALA one year. She said that the mark of good science fiction is the creation of a society we can't even imagine and then from that creation extrapolating how these changes would affect behavior. Karen felt that she could see a connection between horror and science fiction titles we just read. Much of what we read seemed to take a typical young adult situation (parent/child conflict or feeling like an outsider ) and simply set it in a future setting.

## **Nonfiction**

Books read:

Holocaust titles:

In My Hands by Irene Gut Opdyke

This is about a Polish girl who works for an SS major near the ghetto and sees what is happening to the Jews. She brings them food and tries to hire them to work in the house. She brings them food and tries to hire them to work in the house. She hides them in the house and in the nearby forest. This would be a book for older teens since to help save people she becomes the officer's mistress. Shari uses this book for book talking along with All But My Life by Gerda Weissmann Kein.

In the Camps: Teens Who Survived the Nazi Concentration Camps by Toby Axelrod

This book is part of a series about Jewish teenagers and different aspects of the Holocaust. It would be appropriate for younger teens as an introduction. This book gives a brief overview of the rise of the Nazis and their view of Jews. Then it moves into brief narratives of the lives prewar, in the camps, and briefly after the camps of four people who were teenagers at the time of the war. There are many pictures and sidebars. The information is given in snippets ala museum education.

No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War by Anita Lobel

Lobel was a child of 5 when the war began. She lived in Poland and their Polish nanny took the children and lived with them in various places until finally as they were hiding in a convent the children were picked up. The nanny seems to have been an unstable person. The children and their parents survive, but their relationship is uneasy when Lobel is finally reunited with her mother. Lobel had ended up in Sweden for some years after the war. This would be okay for 6th graders but high-schoolers would like too. This book is not as horrific as others on the topic.

Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Friedle Dicker-Brandeis and the Children of Terezin by Susan Goldman Rubin

Terezin was the "model" camp that was shown the visiting Red Cross, etc. This book is about the woman who held art classes for children. The book contains their artwork but also gives background on how the art came about.

Diary of Anne Frank

This book has immediacy brought about by the diary form. Since Anne Frank wrote this as she lived it and moved into her early adolescence it juxtaposes the ordinary angst of a teenager, family dynamics with living under the constant fear of discovery. Still, a very moving book.

After Long Silence by Helen Fremont

Fremont tells of her child of Holocaust survivors who never told her of their experiences, never even told her they were Jewish. She is raised as a Catholic and never realizes what her parents and aunt went through.

Motherland: Beyond the Holocaust: A Daughter's Journey to Reclaim her Past by Fern Schumer Cahpman

A woman returns to the German village where her mother was born and

lived until she was 12 when her family sent her to relatives in America.  
Reads like a novel.

**I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944**

This book presents the art. It does not have the narrative that *Fireflies in the Dark* has.

**Bearing Witness: Stories of the Holocaust** edited by Hazel Rochman

This book has selections of some of the best literary writing on the Holocaust by Wiesel, Ida Fink, Primo Levi, etc. Since they are only excerpts they leave you hanging, but might lead the student to go on and read the complete work. *The Shawl* by Cynthia Ozick is especially moving.

**I Have Lived a Thousand Years: Growing up in the Holocaust** by Livia Bitton-Jackson

This is about Jewish girl from Czechoslovakia in a camp who becomes mistress to the camp commandant. Although she was a very young woman, when she was liberated people seeing her thought her an old woman.

**Growing Up**

**Sex: The Cartoon Guide to Sex** by Larry Gonnick and Christine DeVault

This is quite a humorous take on the subject. A kid could start with it at 10 or 11. This book gives advice on safe sex. The illustrations show all kinds of couples, multiracial, same sex. The "story" is moved along by Mother Nature (sex) and Cupid (love).

**It's Perfectly Normal: A Book About Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health** by Robie H. Harris

This book is regularly challenged. The narrators are a bird and a bee. It is a very matter-of-fact look at sexual development.

**This Book is About Sex** by Tucker Shaw

It is humorous but gives serious advice in little quick sound bites and catchy articles such as *Hollywood Sex vs. Real Sex*. It advises kids to talk to their parents. It is published by Alloy, a popular Web site.

**Deal With It: A Whole New Approach to Your Body, Brain and Life as A**

Gurl by Esther Drill, et al.

This book covered more topics besides just sex, but had more about sex than some of us really cared to read about. It, too, is designed in short sound bites for the MTV generation. It would be a book that a girl would want to keep to refer to as a reference. Put out by Gurl.com.

Sex Ed by Mirian Stoppard

Again, lots of little sound bites and sidebars. This is colorful, put out by DK. Encourages kids to talk to a trusted adult, especially parents. Very straightforward.

Teen Body Book: A Guide to Your Changing Body by Judie Lewellen

Pictures are line drawings in black and white. Straightforward presentation without being shocking.

Changing Bodies, Changing Lives by Ruth Bell

The latest edition of this standard work is from 1998. It features real people talking about what it's like.

Other Titles:

The Shared Heart: Portraits and Stories Celebrating Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young People by Adam Mastoon

This large format book gives brief bios, a picture and a short personal narrative written by each young person.

Seen and Heard: Teenagers Talk About Their Lives by Mary Motley Kalergis

Brief biographies and pictures of teens from all walks of life, from all across America, and of different race, religion or sexual orientation. Some are happy. Some are troubled. Another large format book.

My Room: Teenagers and Their Bedrooms by Adrienne Salinger

This book has the same idea as the other two above. A couple of pages are devoted to each teen with their picture and a short narrative.

James Bond: The Secret World of 007 by Alastair Dougall

This DK book has lots of pictures, very appealing. However there are no pictures of the 007 Sean Connery. For preteen and early teen boys James Bond is a big favorite.

In general books about popular television shows such as Buffy and Real World are popular.

Breakup Girl to the Rescue: A Superhero's Guide to Love, and Lack Thereof by Lynn Harris

This common sense guide is fun and has a trendy presentation. It is as much, if not more, for the dumper as it is for the dumpee.

The Girl Code: The Secret Language of Single Women (On Dating, Sex Shopping, and Honor Among Girlfriends) by Diane Farr

This has a glossary of "meanings" to day to day interactions by the host of MTV Love Line.

Understanding Guys: A Guide for Teenage Girls by Michael Gurian.

A topic popular for most girls.

Vanished! Fact of Fiction Files by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler

This is part of a series that came out a few years ago, The Fact of Fiction Files, which also included titles on ghosts, UFOs and lost civilizations. The book is split into two with a presentation of the known facts in the first half under Facts and speculation about what happened next under Fiction.

There are probably a dozen different episodes of someone disappearing. D. B. Cooper, Agatha Christie, Amelia Earhart, Raoul Wallenberg. etc. This brought up the popularity of urban legend and "strange but true" titles with this age group.

My Life in Dog Years by Gary Paulsen

This would be a great book for anyone who loves dogs. Paulsen gives a short narrative about 10 or 12 dogs in his life since he was a kid. Some of the stories are poignant. Some are laugh-out-loud funny.

Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books by Gary Paulsen

This is a quick read about incidents in Paulsen's own life regarding wilderness survival, nutrition in the wild, moose attacks. Would be of interest to anyone who read the Brian books.

Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia by Marya Hornbacher

This book is written by a young woman who lived it. She had been

hospitalized six times. This is a topic that fascinates a lot of young girls. It brings to mind the Levenkron fiction titles about self-destructive behavior, *The Best Little Girl in the World* and *The Luckiest Girl in the World* (about self-mutilation).

*Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer

This is on many summer reading lists. It is about a young man who heads off ill-prepared into the wilds of Alaska and does not make it out alive.

*A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League* by Ron Suskind

A young man from the ghettos of Washington, D.C. is brilliant in his inner city school, but when he goes off to a prestigious college he is tragically ill-prepared. In his background he learned little of cultural literacy and got very little encouragement from school. This is written by a journalist about this young man.

*Hawk: Occupation: Skateboarder* by Tony Hawk

Lots of pictures and short chapters about a hero in a sport very popular to young adults. Hawk started skateboarding young and his parents always supported him.

*It's Not About the Bike: My Journey to Life* by Lance Armstrong

This tells about his childhood in Texas, his close relationship with his mother, his training, and his fight with cancer and his first victory with the Tour De France. This is very upbeat. Armstrong makes a point of giving credit to the non-athletes he met through his illness and the gifts they gave him.

*A Child Called It, etc.* by Dave Pelzer

These are exceedingly popular. Although they tell of terrible abuse, since he triumphs the books are very positive.

*It's True! It's True!* By Kurt Angle

Another sports biography. They generally show lots of hard work and perseverance. Often they are the underdog. The books are generally very positive.

*Street Wise: A Guide for Teen Investors* by Janet Bamford

Probably of more interest to the teen's parents than the teen.

Wiccan Magick: Inner Teachings of the Craft by Raven Grimassi  
A topic of perennial interest to teens.

Teen Witch: Wicca for a New Generation by Silver RavenWolf  
Ditto

Monster: The Autobiography of a LA Gang Member by Sanyika Shakur  
This is very, very popular with kids from certain social/economic backgrounds. The book is very difficult to read. Although he promotes his story as a warning to others, the excitement he felt in joining the gang is what one feels from him, not regret.

Crews: Gang Members Talk to Maria Hinojosa  
See above.

Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A. by Luis J. Rodriguez  
See above.

The Rose That Grew from Concrete by Tupac Shakur  
This has Shakur's poetry in his own handwriting and some of his drawings. Since his death Shakur has still remained popular and has the aura of someone famous and attractive who dies young, in this case violently.

Katie.com by Katherine Tarvbox  
A 13-year-old discovers the Internet with a 40-year-old pervert she thinks is 20. Katie doesn't connect with her family. She arranges to meet with this fellow and he does try to molest her. This is her story about it.

Postcards from France by Megan McNeil Libby  
This is a delightful little book about the author's time as an exchange student in France.

Autobiography of a Face by Lucy Grealy  
At 9 a girl is diagnosed with cancer and loses part of her jaw. There are rather intense descriptions of her medical treatments including chemotherapy. Her family is dysfunctional and the feeling is that she goes through this pretty much alone. It is well written and would be appropriate for high-schoolers.

Boys Know It All: Wise Thoughts and Wacky Ideas from Guys Like You  
Jokes, stories, advice from other young teenage boys. One of the few books for boys.

Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul, etc.

These books are all uplifting. Although the teens went through troubles they are reflecting back as someone who got through it.

Ophelia Speaks by Sara Sandler

This book is a collection of personal experiences written by teenage girls.

Predictions Library

These small books cover the topics of tarot palmistry, graphology, etc. They are short, basic introductions to the topic.

Clueless in the Kitchen: A Cookbook for Teens by Evelyn Raab

Practical cookbook with recipes/food to appeal to teenagers.

If...Questions for Teens by Evelyn McFarlane

"What if" scenarios pose the question what would you do if...

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff for Teens: Simple Ways to Keep Your Cool in Stressful Times by Richard Carlson

Practical coping ideas.

Conquering the Beast Within: How I Fought Depression and Won-and How You Can Too by Cait Irvin

This is presented in a graphic book format. From a teen point of view for teens that are wondering if they are depressed or for the friend who thinks someone they know is drepressed.

When Nothing Matters Anymore: A Special Guide for Depressed Teen by Bev Cobain

Growth Spurt: Zits by Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman

Comic book format: looks at the bane of every teenager's existence.

Pocket Poems: Selected for a Journey edited by Paul B. Janeczko

A longtime favorite with teens; poems written by teens.

Poetry in Motion: 100 Poems from the Subway and Busses edited by Molly Peacock, Elise Pascahen, Neil Neches  
Poetry actually taken from the walls of subways and buses.

The Pain Tree and Other Teenage Angst-ridden Poetry collected and illustrated by Esther Pearl Watson and Mark Todd  
Poems written by teens, mostly serious and bleak with great art.

Learning to Swim: A Memoir by Ann Warren Turner  
A true story told in poetry, about being abused.

Stop Pretending: What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy: by Sonya Sones  
Another true story told in poetry. (Actually everyone has this in fiction. The dust jacket says that the book was inspired by the author's experience).

Gina handed out two book lists: Overlooked Books of the 1990s and books written by teenagers.

## Overview

In many of our libraries nonfiction goes out better than fiction. Having the narrative broken up into sound bites and by pictures and sidebars is appealing for many teens that don't have a lot of time to read. A small book that fits into a backpack is preferred to a large book, no matter how great the book is. Teens like books with personal narratives written by teenagers or someone just out of their teens. They like what is new and hot with connections to popular web sites are television shows.

## Contemporary

Books read:

Face on the Milk Carton by Caroline Cooney

There are a total of four books related to Janie and her trails. This was more a teen novel than others we read: It was not subtle and did not transcend the genre. We could all see, though, why it is so popular. Teens are grappling with their own identity and probably no teen did not at some time think, "no way, these cannot be my real parents. There was more discussion of sex than many of us expected since these books are read by kids pre-middle school age. Even we adults wanted to know what happened next.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

On the whole we loved this book. It is popular with kids, too. We liked the way the book was broken into sections and the way, although dealing with a serious topic, it used (often dark) humor. It clearly showed how cruel teenagers can be and gave an accurate depiction of cliques. We liked that not all the adults were horrible and yet the "hero" adult, the art teacher, was not perfect. The book is also an excellent example of school mascot humor. Melinda's family is portrayed as "normally" dysfunctional. Anderson's other book so far for young adults is very different, Fever 1793 an historical fiction title about a yellow fever epidemic. Companion titles to Speak would be When She Hollers by Cynthia Voigt, Boys Lie by John Neufeld and Reviving Ophelia by Mary Bray Pipher

Smack by Melvin Burgess

Either you thought this was a great book, well written and complex or you thought it was didactic and heavy-handed. Some felt the English slang and 80s setting would be off-putting to today's teens. However, the book is popular with teens and only came out in 1998. Those who liked the book felt that it showed the spiral into addiction and the different ways in which different people fall into addiction. Also the ending is ambiguous. Although the girl seems completely out of the drug scene the boy is still partly living in the past. Kids would like the idea of people their age or slightly older creating their own community. Any author tackling a problem with such extreme and dangerous consequences would be hard pressed to keep the book both non-glamorous and non-didactic. Some of us felt Burgess succeeded, others of us didn't.

Letters from the inside by Jon Marsden

This book is set in Australia. Two girls are pen pals. One girl is, unbeknownst to the other, in prison. The other girl is in her own prison: she has a very abusive brother. The book has Aussie lingo (like RWV) (robbery with violence?) but is very powerful. The ending is ambiguous. Did the brother kill his sister? This one kept people awake.

Weetzie Bat by Francesca Lia Block

This is another book which you really like or can't see what the big deal is about it. The book is very California, full of love and affection and a sunny magical realism. The book can be rather coy. As counterculture as everyone is, everyone is very appreciative about everyone else. The cover

is art dated, and maybe the book is too. It doesn't seem to be as popular as it once was. All the Weetzie books are now available under one cover.

#### Define Normal by Julie Anne Peters

A very straight girl, Antonia, is set to mentor a wild-looking punk girl, Jasmine. It turns out that Antonia who is well behaved and a good student has the home life from hell (a clinically depressed mother) and Jasmine has a warm accepting family. This would be appropriate for 12 and up. The ending is hopeful.

#### Don't You Dare Read This, Mrs. Dunphrey by Margaret Peterson Haddix

This book is similar to Define Normal, but more subtly, Sixteen-year-old Tish is assigned to write a diary for one of her classes. In the diary she tells about the trauma going on in her home where her mother is very depressed and her father is abusive. On the outside she pretends that nothing is wrong. This book, too, ends on a hopeful note.

#### Girls, Girls, Girls by Jonah Black

This is a humorous story of a boy whose mother is a famous radio sex therapist. All the boy can think of is sex and his fantasies are funny. First book of a projected trilogy, followed by Stop, Don't Stop.

#### Stuck in Neutral by Terry Trueman

This is the story of a 13-year old with cerebral palsy who is completely unable to communicate with the outside world. He is very intelligent and witty, but unable to make this known to the world. He believes that his father is planning to kill him, to "put him out of misery." The ending is again ambiguous and disturbing.

#### Angus, Thongs, and Full-frontal Snogging by Louise Rennison

A very light humorous look at love from a British 14-year-old. Sex here is, refreshingly, all about kissing. The book also has fun with the girl's friendships and her cat. There is a sequel entitled On the Bright Side, I'm Now the Girlfriend of a Sex God. This is reminiscent of the Adrian Mole books, but lighter.

#### Feeling Sorry for Celia by Jaclyn Moriarty

This is another story told in letters and set in Australia. What is it about those Aussies?

### Catching Alice by Clare Naylor

This book has older protagonists. A British girl living in LA, it gives an English view of that city. The characters don't have described sex, but do they do drink, a lot. For older teens.

### Whirligig by Paul Fleischman

This book begins like any other teen problem novel. A boy moves to a new town and school and is trying to fit in with right crowd. When that goes bad, he drinks too much at a party, starts to drive home, and in an attempt to kill himself kills the young driver of another car. From then on, though, the book becomes something much more when, in an attempt to redeem himself, the boy goes to the Four Corners of the mainland US and constructs and leaves behind whirligigs. He meets people who see and are interested in so much of life beyond their own corner of the world and also, the same people, with something special of their own. Fleischman is known has a stylist. His novel Seek is about a boy trying to find his DJ father by listening to the airwaves at night. Mind's Eye was a well written, but not liked. It's story of a paralyzed girl who travels in her mind with the help of an elderly blind woman was too depressing and without hope.

### Dacey's Song by Cynthia Voigt

This book was well written, but straightforward and rather old-fashioned. Reminded Debbie of books she had read as teenager by Elisabeth Ogilvie, esp. Come Aboard and Bring Your Dory.

### Tender by Valerie Hobbs

A sophisticated NYC teen lives with her very open and understanding grandmother, but when her grandmother dies she has to move to California to live with her father who is an abalone diver. Tender has many meanings, including the girl becoming the tender on her father's boat. The book ends on a nice note.

### Rats Saw God by Rob Thomas

The kids in this book are smart and witty. Steve and his friends aren't into the high school scene but they do create a float for the homecoming parade-a Dadlist float. The book also has poignancy when the boy finds out his favorite teacher is having an affair with the boy's girlfriend.

Give a Boy A Gun by Todd Strasser

This book is a fast read told in little news items from different points of view about what happens when a boy brings a gun to school. A similar book is

Making Up Megaboy by Virginia Walter.

Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants by Ann Brashares

This book being hotly promoted, was a real disappointment. A group of girls buy a pair of magical pants which each at one time wears and has some tremendous experience. Each episode with the pants was a cliched old story. So instead of having one mediocre story you get a complete set of them. And, as Roberta noted, the whole thing is a rip-off of a Ray Bradbury story, "The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit."

### **Multicultural**

Shizuko's Daughter by Kyoko Mori

Although this book is set in Japan in the 70s, the time and place are not important. Although there are some distinctly Japanese elements in the story the story did not feel so much as being part of a different culture as being about a dysfunctional family. The book is beautifully written and evokes colors and flowers as a sigh of the love Shizuko felt for them and for her daughter. Yuki the daughter of the title, faces a terrible childhood, but learns to take care of herself (there's no white knight). This would be appropriate for junior high into high school. There isn't "boy" appeal to the story; for girls.

Shabanu by Suzanne Fisher Staples

Shabanu is an eleven-year-old girl, a nomad in Pakistan. She is a strong character who must learn to live with the demands of her culture. Much of her culture she loves, but when it comes time for her marriage she is not prepared for the much older man she is forced to marry. There is a feel for the setting, and again for colors and cloth. Most of us were familiar with this culture and it is a good nonjudgmental introduction. The very young age of the protagonist is problematical, but this is good for junior high age YAs

Monster by Walter Dean Myers

This is a very contemporary story told in an alternative sort of format. Although this is not an illustrated novel, the format is very visual, using different type to indicate diary entries and a screenplay Steve Harmon is writing while he waits in jail for his trial and during the trial. Each person sees Steve from a different point of view including his parents and his

lawyer. Did he do anything wrong? We couldn't agree. He sees himself as a good person and yet chose this group of guys to hang out with. Who you associate with and the decisions you make do impact you.

Walkabout by James Vance Marshall

This is an older book from 1959. It is the survival story of two American kids whose plane crashes in the Australian outback. They meet an Aborigine who shows them how to survive. There is much about the Aborigine culture and might still be good for boys because of the survival story. Joyce did not find it very satisfying as an adult, but

Roberta remembers loving it as a teenager. The cover on the hardback copy does not sell it, and it hadn't gone out much at Downers Grove.

Touch Wood by Renee Roth-Hano

This is more a story of WW11 than the Jewish or French cultures. The author has fictionalized the story of her childhood. Her Jewish family moved from Alsac to Paris. When living in Paris becomes dangerous her parents send Renee and her two sisters to Normandy to stay with a group of nuns. The girls did not have a chance to be brought up Jewish before the upset of the war and they aren't Catholic. This does not lead to confusion on their part. The last part of the book is a story of survival as the people of the town endure the invasion bombing. This would be a good book for 5th –7th graders about either WW11 or the Holocaust since it does show what they endured, but everyone survives even the parents back in Paris, living under assumed names.

Life is Funny by E.R. Frank

The book covers 11 teenagers over seven years. Each chapter is told from a different character's point of view. These characters then make appearances in other people's stories. This does cause a lot of flipping back to remind yourself who each person is. The book takes place in Brooklyn and includes black, Muslims, whites, peoples of different economic backgrounds, etc. The stories are interconnected showing the relationships between the characters.

Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan

This book takes place during the time of the Depression. Esperanza's family is well-to do, but when her father is murdered Esperanza and her mother move to California in order to avoid the attentions and manipulations of the father's stepbrothers. In California these once

privileged women become agricultural workers. The story touches upon unionization of the workers and the arrival of the "Oakies". Would be good for young people studying the Depression as a precursor to *The Grapes of Wrath*. Good for junior high and into high school.

*Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech

Despite the title, this is not a multicultural story. A thirteen-year-old travels from Kentucky to Ohio when her mother abandons the family, and then travels cross country with her grandparents to see her mother. There is a very little bit of Native American culture included.

*No Condition is Permanent* by Cristina Kessler

This is a story about female circumcision. A fourteen-year-old girl goes with her anthropologist mother to an African village. She develops a friendship with an African girl and then slowly discovers what her future holds. The book is not difficult to read nor is it graphic about the topic. Because some of the dialogue is in the local dialect that can sometimes be difficult to decipher. This rite of passage, not the African girl, bothers the American girl.

*Push* by Sapphire and *Coldest Winter Ever* by Sister Souljah are both tough and frankly told stories about characters who endure all kinds of abuse. These are both for mature readers and are probably best appreciated by girls living a similar experience.

*Many Stones* by Carolyn Coman

When her older sister is killed in South Africa in a random act of violence, fifteen-year-old Berry is very angry. She hates her father, hates the people who killed her sister, etc. In a trip to South Africa with her estranged father Berry experiences many contradictory emotions. Her thoughts and attitudes are very realistic for a fifteen or sixteen-year-old girl.

*Coffee Will Make You Black* by April Sinclair

This is about a black girl in the sixties on the South Side of Chicago. Her experiences are very different from those we experienced.

*Blacker than a Thousand Midnights* by Susan Straight

Not as hard edged or depressing as many stories of the black experience. A young man out of high school would like to be a fulltime forest firefighter but is unable to get a job. He starts as an "Asian" landscaping business,

because people will trust as Asian. He has a girlfriend that is pregnant and he wants to marry her and do the right thing.

The Star Fisher by Laurence Yep

This is the story of Yep's grandmother and her childhood as part of the only Asian family in a West Virginia town. For younger YAs. There is not a lot of depth to the story, but it is a nice story of accepting people who are different from you, including the Asian family accepting their white neighbors.

All But My Life by Gerda Weissmann Klein

This is Klein's autobiographical story of survival during the Holocaust. After being forced to first live in the basement of their home the family is shipped to concentration camps. All of her family dies, but Gerda survives because of the heavy boots her father insisted she wear right before the transport. This is a very moving story for high-schoolers.

China Boy by Gus Lee

This is an autobiographical novel about Lee's death and then his life under the terrorization of his white stepmother. Eventually the boy does win and learns to look out for himself. There is also a theme of leaving all things Asian behind or trying to learn about them when no one at home wants him to be "Asian". Also the family lives in a largely black neighborhood.

Wild Kids by Ta-Chun Chang

This book is about tough street kids growing up in Taiwan today.

Homeless Bird by Gloria Whelan

This book takes place over seven years and is about a Hindu girl caught in an arranged marriage with a young man who almost immediately dies, leaving her a very young widow, stuck with her husband's family. For junior high and up.

Every Time a Rainbow Dies by Rita Garcia-Williams

This is a tough graphic story about Jamaican kid living with relatives in NYC. He sees a girl being raped and then later befriends her.

Like Sisters on the Homefront by Rita Garcia-Williams

An urban black girl is out of control and her parents ship her and her baby

off to family down south. There she develops a relationship with her grandmother who tells her the family history.

**Go and Come Back by Joan Abelove**

A teenage girl in Peru lives with her tribe when an anthropologist comes to the village. The book is humorous about the misconceptions the anthropologist makes. The book has some mature content. For junior high into high school.

**Buried Onions by Gary Soto**

This fast-paced story is about a young Mexican American boy in California who keeps trying for something more, but events keep conspiring against him.

**The Romance Reader by Pearl Abraham**

This is another story of arranged marriage, this time among the Hasidic Jews of New York. The book shows Rachel growing up and rebelling in this environment, but when it comes down to it in the end she goes through with the arranged marriage.

**Samir and Yonatan by Daniella Carmi**

A Palestinian boy and an Israeli boy meet in the hospital. The Palestinian boy lost his younger brother to violence and lives in the occupied territory of the West Bank. He does not want anything to do with Israelis until he meets the other children in the hospital ward.

**Tears of a Tiger by Sharon M. Draper**

A black teenager is driving a car when there is an accident and his best friend is killed. He has feelings of guilt and even contemplates suicide.