

# **What's New In Young Adult Literature: 2007 Edition**

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By  
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Perhaps the greatest joy in working with gifted students is sharing their enthusiasm for reading. Many, if not most, gifted students are highly motivated readers. Indeed, it is often this joy of reading that becomes their major coping strategy. Through their reading, they learn to deal with a world that is not equipped to deal with gifted persons and which is often even hostile to the gifted. By their self-directed reading, gifted students extend their own knowledge bases, enhance their own skills, and develop their capabilities in areas of advanced learning. However, gifted students, like other students require guidance in their learning. The area of reading is not an exception. It is our responsibility to guide our gifted students into positive reading experiences. The growing genre of Young Adult Literature provides the gifted reader with a rich literary resource and a highly appropriate teaching vehicle. These novels are also valuable tools that can be used in guiding the gifted adolescent in social and personality development as well as in other counseling needs.

## **Goals of this session:**

1. To quickly review the reading needs of the gifted learner;
2. To provide a rationale for the use of Young Adult Literature with the gifted learner;
3. To review current young adult novels: *The Focus of this Presentation*

## **THE GIFTED AND READING**

The gifted require creative engagement in their reading. Approaches have been:

1. Make lists of what are popular with the gifted, but this is like a making a list of popular foods and calling it a balanced diet.
2. Suggest award winners: reading requirements may be high but returns may be modest (not challenging)
3. Professional group recommendation lists: They have their own priorities that don't necessarily match the needs of the gifted.
4. Adult reading, but this does not include their interests nor is it always appropriate.

## **SENEY'S "STAND!"**

*My basic premise is that when you compare the characteristics of the gifted adolescent, especially the verbal characteristics, the characteristics of books most suited for gifted learners, and the characteristics of young adult literature, you have an almost perfect match. This leads me to the conclusion that young adult literature is highly appropriate for gifted learners.*

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF BOOKS FOR THE GIFTED**

1. High level of language and vocabulary.
2. Have pronunciation guides.
3. Utilize the full array of literary devices.
4. Use of descriptive works that stimulate strong visual images.
5. Authors who delight in the use of language and the expression of nuances.
6. Language patterns and vocabularies from other times and places.
7. The structure of the book puts the mind to work.
8. Setting evokes an experience of other lifestyles.
9. Unresolved problems are presented and the reader must make some conclusions.

Halsted (1988 and 2002)

### **YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE: DEFINED**

The term young adult literature refers "to realistic and contemporary fiction which young adults as well as more mature and critical readers can find aesthetically and thematically satisfying, and which is implicitly or explicitly, written for the adolescent."

Mertz and England (1983)

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE**

Young adult novels have come of age because they have demonstrated the same skillful craftsmanship employed in all good literature and because they have translated to the world of the young adult the same conflicts and issues with which all humans struggle.

### **ELEMENTS DISPLAYED BY YA LIT TODAY**

1. Complex characters that seek to resolve conflicts of tremendous consequence to themselves and the world;
2. Vividly drawn minor characters that not only create texture but also advance the actions of the stories and serve as meaningful foils and allies for protagonists;
3. Vivid settings - both real and imaginary;
4. Plots that hold the reader through deft pacing, skillful use of suspense, and the use of flashbacks and other manipulations of time sequence;
5. Experimentation with various points of view from which the stories are told;
6. Treatment of thematic issues that matter not only to teens but to all of us: the quest for justice, the savagery of war and hatred and the struggles for love acceptance, and understanding.

***"The same elements of all masterfully crafted works of fiction."***

Monseau & Salvner, 1992

## DONELSON AND NILSEN'S CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEST YA LITERATURE

1. Authors write from the view point of young people.
2. "Please, Mother, I want the credit!"
3. Young adult literature is fast-paced.
4. Young adult literature includes a variety of genres and subjects.
5. The body of work includes stories about characters from different ethnic and cultural groups.
6. Young adult books are basically optimistic with characters making worthy accomplishment.
7. Successful young adult novels deal with emotions that are important to young adults.

Chapter 1: Donelson and Nilsen (2005)

### Seven Books I Recommend:

Halsted, J. (1994). *Some of My Best Friends Are Books: Guiding Gifted Readers From Pre-School to High School*. Scottsdale, AZ: Gifted Psychology Press. [2001 Ed.]

Donelson, K. & Nilsen, A. (2005). *Literature for Today's Young Adults, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed.* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Johnsen, S. & J Kendrick, eds. (2005). *Language Arts for Gifted Students*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press, Inc.

Lesesne, T. (2003). *Making the Match*. Portland, MN: Stenhouse Publishers.

Monseau, V. & Salvner, G. (2000). *Reading Their World: The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Monseau, V. (1996). *Responding to Young Adult Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Probst, R. (1988). *Response and Analysis: Teaching Literature in Junior and Senior High School*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

### References

Mertz, M. & England, D. (1983). The legitimacy of American adolescent fiction. *School Library Journal*, 30. 119-123.

### My Top Ten List of "All Time Favorites"

Caroline Cooney	<i>WHAT CHILD IS THIS</i>
Robert Cormier	<i>FADE</i>
Brian Jacques	<i>SALAMANDASTRON*</i>
Lois Lowery	<i>GATHERING BLUE**</i>

Gary Paulsen	<i>DOGSONG</i>
Katherine Patterson	<i>BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA</i>
Cynthia Rylant	<i>THE VAN GOGH CAFE</i>
William Sleator	<i>INTERSTELLAR PIG</i>
Stephanie Tolan	<i>WELCOME TO THE ARK</i>
Cynthia Voight	<i>A SOLITARY BLUE</i>

\*Whole series

\*\*Painfully removed to make room for *Gathering Blue*: Anne McCaffrey's *DOLPHINS OF PERN* in 2002. I love the whole Pern Series and there is a 2003 book in this series written with her son, [*Dragon's Kin*] and this year Todd McCaffrey has written *Dragon's Blood*. By the way, this was the first change in three years. There have been no changes since 2002.

### Original Top Ten: Circa 1986

M. E. Kerr	<i>GENTLE HANDS</i>
Cynthia Voigt	<i>A SOLITARY BLUE</i>
Anne McCaffrey	<i>THE WHITE DRAGON</i>
Bill Talbert	<i>DEAD BIRDS SINGING</i>
William Sleator	<i>INTERSTELLAR PIG</i>
Katherine Patterson	<i>BRIDGE TO TERABITHIA</i>
Nancy Bond	<i>A STRING IN THE HARP</i>
Robin McKillip	<i>HARPIST IN THE WIND</i>
Paula Fox	<i>ONE EYED CAT</i>
Robert Cormier	<i>EIGHT PLUS ONE</i>

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**BOOKS READ IN 2007**  
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**Please Note: This list is a “work in progress,” which was submitted in October to be included in the Conference CD. I “traditionally” close this list in November when I present it at NAGC. Email me for the complete 2007 list after November 15. I have several promising books in my reading stack.**

Anderson, M.T.	<i>The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Volume I: The Pox Party</i> (ms) <b>Printz Honor &amp; National Book Award</b>	2006
Colfer, Eoin	<i>Artemis Fowl: The Lost Colony</i>	2006
Cooper, Susan	<i>Victory</i> (ms)	2006
DiCamillo, Kate	<i>The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i> (e)	2006
Funke, Cornelia	<i>Inkspell</i> (ms)	2005
Holm, Jennifer	<i>Penny From Heaven</i> (e/ms) <b>Newbery Honor</b>	2006
Hussey, Charmian	<i>The Valley of Secrets</i> (ms) [2006 US edition]	2006
Jones, Patrick	<i>Nailed</i> (hs)*	2006
Korman, Gordon	<i>Schooled</i> (ms)	2007
Larsen, Kirby	<i>Hattie Big Sky</i> (ms) <b>Newbery Honor</b>	2006
Lord, Cynthia	<i>Rules</i> (e/ms) <b>Newbery Honor; 2007 Scheider Family Book Award: Middle School Division</b>	2006
McCormick, Patricia	<i>Sold</i> (ms/hs)* <b>National Book Award Finalist</b>	2006
Myers, Walter Dean	<i>Autobiography of My Dead Brother</i> (ms/hs)	2005
Nix, Garth	<i>The Keys to the Kingdom: Book 4: Sir Thursday</i> [SR] (ms)	2006
Owen, James	<i>Here, There Be Dragons</i> (ms)	2006

Patron, Susan	<i>The Higher Power of Lucky</i> (e) <b>Newbery Medal</b>	2006
<u>Paulsen, Gary</u>	<u><i>Lawn Boy</i> (e)</u>	<u>2007</u>
Peck, Richard	<i>Here Lies the Librarian</i> (ms)	2006
<u>Rowling, J. K.</u>	<u><i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i> (e/ms)</u>	<u>2007</u>
<u>Sachar, Louis</u>	<u><i>Small Steps</i> (ms)</u>	<u>2006</u>
<u>Selznick, Brian</u>	<u><i>The Inventions of Hugo Cabret</i> (ms)</u>	<u>2007</u>
Stroud, Jonathan	<i>The Bartimaeus Trilogy, Book Two: The Golem's Eye, Book Two</i> [SR] [ms]	2004
Warren, Andrea	<i>Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps</i> <b>2002 Siebert Honor Book</b> (e/ms) [TR]	2001
Yang, Gene Yang	<i>American Born Chinese</i> (ms/hs) <b>Printz Medal</b> [Graphic Novel] <b>National Book Award Finalist</b>	2006

**Underlined Books are My Ten Best Reads for this Year – So Far!**

**Codes:**

# Language Alert

\* Situation Alert

e = elementary school

ms = middle school/junior high

hs = high school

SR Student Recommended

TR Teacher Recommended