

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE YOUNG ADULT LIBRARY SERVICES ASSOCIATION  
A DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

# *young adult* library services



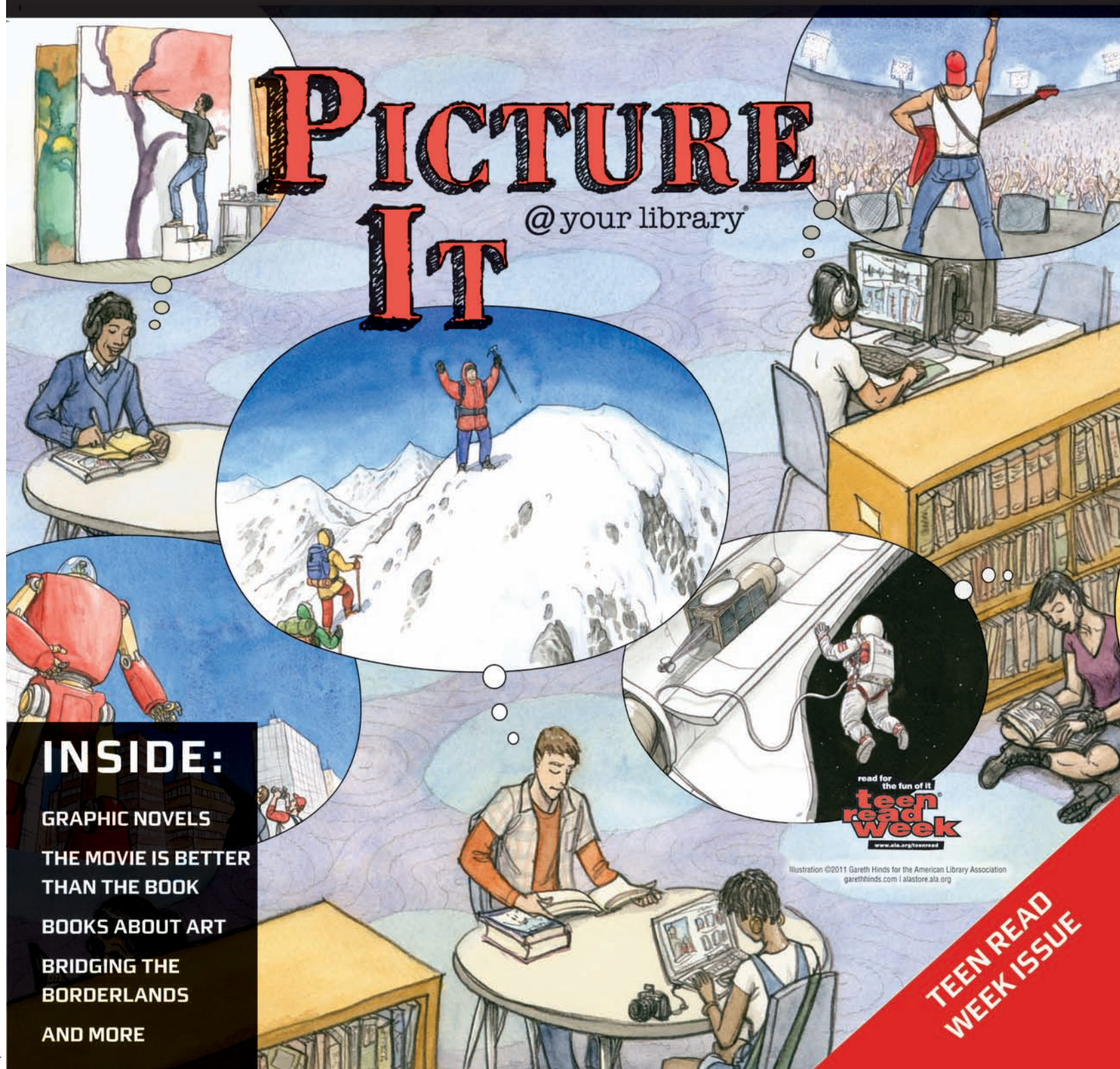
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SUMMER 2011

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## PICTURE It @your library®



### INSIDE:

GRAPHIC NOVELS  
THE MOVIE IS BETTER  
THAN THE BOOK  
BOOKS ABOUT ART  
BRIDGING THE  
BORDERLANDS  
AND MORE

read for  
the fun of it  
**teen  
read  
week**  
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**TEEN READ  
WEEK ISSUE**



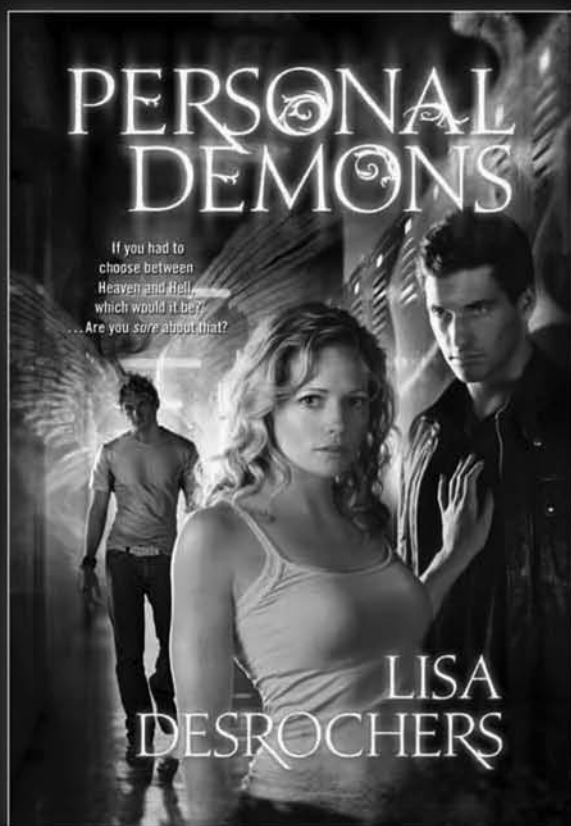
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# young adult library services

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## About This Cover

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#### Statement of Purpose

*Young Adult Library Services* is the official journal of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the American Library Association. YALS primarily serves as a vehicle for continuing education for librarians serving young adults, ages twelve through eighteen. It will include articles of current interest to the profession, act as a showcase for best practices, provide news from related fields, publish recent research related to YA librarianship, and will spotlight significant events of the organization and offer in-depth reviews of professional literature. YALS will also serve as the official record of the organization.

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# from the Editor

*Sarah Flowers*

Teen Read Week™ will be celebrated October 16–22 this year, and the theme is “Picture It @ Your Library.” Teen Read Week is always about teens reading for the fun of it, and this year’s theme lends itself to some really fun ideas for programs and displays. Movies are an obvious tie-in. You could have a film festival, do a display pairing books with movies, have a book and movie discussion, or have the teens make their own movies or book trailers. See Jesse Vieau’s article in the Winter issue of YALS for tips on how teens can make their own short films. In this issue, Mark Flowers gives us some examples of when the movie is better than the book it’s based on, and how to promote watching movies as a way of gaining better insight into the books they adapt.

Art is another obvious tie-in to the Picture It theme. A partnership with a local museum can be the basis of a great art-related program, whether it is on art appreciation, art-related careers, or a hands-on workshop. See Julia Riley’s article in this issue for some suggestions for a display of books relating to art and artists. Graphic novel displays or workshops are surefire hits and a great tie-in to the theme. In this issue, Francisca Goldsmith shares some of the diverse possibilities of using graphic novels with teens and, as an added bonus, suggests some titles for picturing it with your ears—audio books that create strong mental images in the listener. Paige Battle has some great ideas of ways to celebrate Teen Read Week in your school.

Barbara Klipper shares an experience of using a teen read-in as a library fundraiser, Karen Keys talks to three of this year’s Alex Award-winning authors, Maureen Hartman talks about the library’s role in serving teens outside of school hours, Jamie Naidoo and Francisco Vargas give us some really practical tips on serving Latino teens and tweens, Linda Braun updates us on the current state of e-books and libraries, and Heather Blicher and Stephanie Bedell describe a unique summer activity for teens in the library. And, finally, we have two articles that focus on sexuality in young adult literature.

I hope you enjoy this issue of YALS, which is my last as editor-in-chief. I’m not going away completely, though, since for the next year I will be appearing in each issue as the author of the “From the President” column. Editing YALS for the past two years has been a truly gratifying experience. I’ve gotten to know a lot of YALSA members—if only virtually—and learned a lot about what is going on nationwide in the world of teen services. The authors and reviewers who have contributed articles have been professional, responsive, and enthusiastic, and I’m grateful to them—YALS simply couldn’t happen without member participation. Special thanks go to Stevie Kuenn, YALSA’s web services manager, who has given me more help, guidance, and good advice than I can say. I’m very pleased to announce that the new editor-in-chief of YALS will be Megan Honig. I’ll let Megan introduce herself to you in the Fall issue, and I am looking forward to watching what she does with the journal in the coming years, including helping to create a real online presence for YALS. You can contact Megan with ideas for articles at [yalseditor@gmail.com](mailto:yalseditor@gmail.com). YALS



# from the President

Kim Patton



Many library professionals typically use Teen Read Week™ (TRW) as an excuse to get out of the library and pay a visit to middle school and high school classes in their local area. It is a great way to break up the sometimes tedious talks about library databases, homework help, and research resources, and have some fun talking to teens about just reading for the fun of it. TRW is one of the best tools we have for engaging teens in reading and encouraging them to spend time reading for pleasure.

As we celebrate fourteen years of TRW, it is exciting to look back and see how much the initiative has grown in awareness. Gone are the scenarios we faced in those first few years of spending time explaining the purpose of TRW and why it is, in my eyes anyway, a vital component of the big picture of a teen's literary education.

TRW is also a great time to do some big-picture collaborating between school

and public libraries and other organizations providing services to teens. Public librarians can make contact with school librarians to do many activities together to bring books to teens, from scheduling school visits to public libraries and classroom visits for booktalking to joint programs and reading challenges to make reading fun for all involved.

Themed programs not only are a good way to spark interest and get teens in the door of the library but also help teens expand their reading choices and explore reading about subjects that are new to them. Challenging them to read and vote in YALSA's Teens' Top Ten program engages them in reading and in sharing their opinions about the books and their likes and dislikes in a meaningful manner.

Celebrating TRW gives us an opportunity to engage more than just the teens we work with in the joys and advantages of reading for pleasure. As we plan for TRW celebrations, we can reach

out and engage school and library administrators in our events, not only by using

information and statistics to advocate for materials and staffing to provide adequate library services to our teens but also by encouraging administrators to actively participate and visibly model good reading behavior themselves so that not only do they see first-hand the efforts of their library staff but also teens see interested adults other than their parents and caregivers engaged in the actions that we are advocating teens take.

However your library celebrates TRW with the teens you live and work with on a daily basis. I wish you success in celebrating books, reading, and most of all, teens themselves as we share the love of reading and all its benefits in our communities during TRW. YALS

# feature

School Library  
Perspectives

## Picturing Teen Read Week @ the School Library

*By Paige Battle*

**T**he beauty of this year's Teen Read Week™ theme, Picture It @ Your Library, is that it can be interpreted in myriad ways and easily lends itself to being integrated with other celebrations throughout the entire school year. In addition to placing young adult literature in the spotlight and arranging for fun library programming, Teen Read Week (TRW) is the perfect time to paint a picture for all the members of your school community of how a 21st century school library serves as a learning commons for not only reading advocacy, but also the incorporation of the latest technology through information literacy instruction. By educating your community on the effect your library has on the lives of your students, you have the opportunity to create new advocates for your program—a necessity in a time of shrinking education budgets.

The key to a successful TRW in the school library is to plan early and enlist the

help of staff members interested in collaborating and members of the community who are willing to work in partnership on big events. When picturing how to capitalize on this year's theme, you can incorporate any or all of the following suggestions.

### Displays and Book Lists

#### Let's All Go to the Library to Get Ourselves a Book

For this display you can utilize images reminiscent of the 1950s movie theater advertising that featured popcorn boxes and soda cups parading toward the concession stand. Put up posters from movies based on novels along with a marquee listing "Now Circulating" book titles. A great resource for developing a list of novels made into films can be found on the Mid-Continent Public Library's Web

page [www.mymcpl.org/books-movies-music/based-book](http://www.mymcpl.org/books-movies-music/based-book).

Here are a few cinematic suggestions popular with teens in my library:

*The Virgin Suicides* by Jeffrey Eugenides. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1993.

*The Princess Bride* by William Goldman. Harcourt, 1973.

*Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen, Algonquin Books, 2006.

*What's Eating Gilbert Grape?* by Peter Hedges, Poseidon Press, 1991.

*Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro. Knopf, 2005.

*Howl's Moving Castle* by Diana Wynne Jones. Greenwillow Books, 1986.

*Different Seasons* by Stephen King. Viking, 1982.

*Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* by Bryan Lee O'Malley. Oni Press, 2004.

*It's Kind of a Funny Story* by Ned Vizzini. Hyperion, 2006.

*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Lippincott, 1960 (okay, this listing is wishful thinking as it really represents one of my favorite cinematic adaptations that I regularly exhort students to watch at some point before they graduate from high school).

### A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words (Or, How to Convince Your Teacher to Let You Read a Graphic Novel for Your Book Report)

With a mixture of series and stand alone titles available, the graphic novel section of my library consistently has the highest number of checkouts on each month's circulation statistics report. This collection has doubled in size for the last two school years. Because graphic novels have gained more credibility, many classroom teachers are willing to accept this literature for silent

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**PAIGE BATTLE** is the teacher librarian at Union High School in Vancouver, Washington. She is a member of the Teen Read Week committee.

sustained reading and book report assignments. Titles I have suggested to reluctant and emerging readers and that also garner the nod of approval from colleagues are:

*Houdini: The Handcuff King* by Jason Lutes and Nick Bertozzi. Hyperion, 2007.  
*The Color of Earth* by Kim Dong Hwa. First Second, 2009.  
*Pinocchio, Vampire Slayer V. 1 & 2* written by Van Jensen; created and drawn by Dusty Higgins. SLG Pub, 2009.  
*Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty* by G. Neri. Lee and Low, 2010.  
*A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge* by Josh Neufeld. Pantheon, 2009.  
*Stitches: A Memoir* by David Small. Norton, 2009.  
*Skim words* by Mariko Tamaki and drawings by Jillian Tamaki. Groundwood, 2008.  
*Ghostopolis* by Doug TenNapel. GraphixScholastic, 2008.  
*Blankets* by Craig Thompson. Top Shelf, 2003.  
*The Eternal Smile: Three Stories* by Gene Luen Yang. First Second, 2009.

## Picturing Art in New Ways

Perhaps the most obvious subject area that comes to mind for this year's theme is art. While there are many possible subthemes for this category (painting, murals, metalwork, ceramics, street art, photography, cinematography, typography, graphic design, interior design, etc.), I enlisted the aid of an art teacher at my school to compile a list of books that focus on our shared appreciation for the art forms of collage and printmaking:

*Joseph Cornell: Navigating the Imagination* by Lynda Roscoe Hartigan. Yale Univ. Press, 2007.  
*The Printmaking Bible: The Complete Guide to Materials and Techniques*

by Ann d'Arcy Hughes and Hebe Vernon-Morris. Chronicle Books, 2008.  
*Stitched Collage: Creative Effects on Paper and Fabric* by Sherrill Khan. Martingale, 2008.

*Cover to Cover: Creative Techniques for Making Beautiful Books, Journals and Albums* by Shereen LaPlantz. Lark Books, 1995.  
*Pockets, Pull-outs, and Hiding Places: Interactive Elements for Altered Books, Memory Art, and Collage* by Jenn Mason. Quarry Books, 2005.  
*Altered Book Collage* by Barbara Matthiessen. Sterling, 2006.  
*Collage, Assemblage, and Altered Art: Creating Unique Images and Objects* by Diane Maurer-Mathison. Potter Craft, 2008.  
*Altered Art: Techniques for Creating Altered Books, Boxes, Cards and More* by Terry Taylor. Lark Books, 2004.  
*Image Transfer on Clay: Screen, Relief, Laser and Monoprint Techniques* by Paul Andrew Wandless. Lark Books, 2006.  
*Handmade Graphics: Tools and Techniques Beyond the Mouse* by Anna Wray. How, 2009.

## Teens' Top Ten

YALSA's Teens' Top Ten is a list of titles nominated by teen members of preselected public and school library book groups. Nominations were announced on Support Teen Literature Day during National Library Week (NLW). Because voting is open to teens across the country, this book list is the perfect resource to use in promoting a summer reading program. Allowing summer checkouts is a great way to encourage students to continue reading while school is not in session and also serves as a promotion tool to let parents and guardians know how your library program promotes teen literacy year-round. With online voting taking place between August 22 and September 16, you can incorporate a Back-to-School activity by having students stop in the library during registration to choose their favorite nominee,

cast their vote and have their picture taken holding their selection. With student permission, these photos can be highlighted on your webpage or in library displays. The Teens' Top Ten winning titles will be announced during Teen Read Week. For a downloadable annotated list of nominees go to [www.ala.org/teenstopten](http://www.ala.org/teenstopten).

## Programming Ideas

### Lunchtime Cinema

October is National Popcorn Month, the perfect time to serve up some movie treats and show the short film *All Summer in a Day* based on the Ray Bradbury short story of the same name. To comply with copyright law make sure your school district has a public performance site license or factor in time for a face-to-face educational discussion before or after the film.

### PhotoStrip Bookmarks

If you saw the movie *Amélie*, you will remember that an integral part of the plot centered on a character collecting discarded photobooth pictures. You can easily create photostrips without the bother of renting a photobooth by using the iPhone app Incredibooth (<http://incredibooth.com/>). The app takes four pictures separated by two second intervals and there are four different retro effects to choose from (with the Helga Lens setting most resembling the classic photostrip look from the French film). You can also create three, four, or five-photo template photostrips of iPhone, Facebook, Flickr, and Shutterfly photos and have them made into prints through Wink, a service of Shutterfly. These photostrips can be turned into bookmarks by either purchasing 2 × 6" bookmark sleeves or using remainder bits of Kapco covers.

### Who's Reading That Book?

Take a picture over the shoulder of a teacher reading a book on their break and have students guess who's who. You could

also solicit yearbooks photos from brave staff members' teenage years to see if students can match the right name with the right photo.

### Picture Book Memories

If you have a picture book collection in your library, have students come in to record podcasts (à la NPR's StoryCorps, [www.npr.org/series/4516989/storycorps](http://www.npr.org/series/4516989/storycorps)) relating why a certain book was their favorite as a child. Let elementary librarians in your district know that these podcasts are available for their students to listen to; perhaps a younger student will be inspired to read the book for themselves knowing that a teen has recommended it.

### You Can Judge a Book by Its Cover

Some readers might remember the classic game show *Concentration* that challenged contestants to decipher a puzzle hidden behind a series of cards. Challenge your students to see who can be the first to guess what famous YA novel cover is hiding underneath note cards. Remove one card each day until the entire cover is revealed.

### Magnet Art

This craft will require purchasing a few items from the craft store: clear marbles (the kind with one flat side), small round magnets, and clear craft glue. Scissors and old magazines will most likely be on hand in your library. Having a craft punch the same size as the marbles speeds up the creative process but is not necessary. Put a small drop of glue over the picture then adhere to the flat side of a marble (applying a little pressure will help get rid of any bubbles). All that's left to do is add a drop of glue to the magnet and adhere it to the back of the picture. The same process can be followed using push pins to create bulletin board accessories.

### Put Your Stamp On It

For this stenciling activity, I am enlisting the help of an art teacher because she owns most of the required materials: manila folder, scrap paper, fabric paints, repositionable adhesive, X-ACTO knife, sponge or stenciling brush, hair dryer, or iron. Students can bring in tote bags, t-shirts, card stock (basically anything they want to put their stamp on) to stencil. The five-step guide I will be following to help students create and paint a stencil on the fabric of their choice can be found at [www.greenmagazinehawaii.com/DIY\\_v3-1.html](http://www.greenmagazinehawaii.com/DIY_v3-1.html).

### What's the Story?

Using panels from wordless books, have a contest to see which student can come up with the best short story to accompany an illustration. Books that would work well for this activity are:

*Window* by Jeannie Baker. Greenwillow, 1991.  
*Zoom* by Istvan Banyai. Puffin, 1998.  
*Wave* by Suzy Lee. Chronicle Books, 2008.  
*Museum Trip* by Barbara Lehman. Houghton Mifflin, 2006.  
*The Red Book*, by Barbara Lehman. Houghton Mifflin, 2004.  
*The Boy, the Bear, the Baron, the Bard* by Gregory Rogers. Roaring Brook, 2007.  
*The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007.  
*Robot Dreams* by Sara Varon. First Second, 2007.  
*Floatsam* by David Wiesner. Clarion, 2006.  
*Sector 7* by David Wiesner. Clarion, 1999.

### Picture Your Future

Through your school's career center or counseling department, partner with staff members to interpret the theme by way of picturing how students can reach their future goals. This could include setting up visits with representatives from local colleges and vocational schools; workshops

on writing résumés and cover letters; and advice on goal-setting.

### Publicity

Before students bolt out of the building on the last day of school, let them know they can find reading recommendations and a link to the annotated Teens' Top Ten nomination list on your library Web page. If you have a Twitter or Facebook account, post a link to the recommendations as a reminder that students can visit the library at the start of school to vote for their favorite nominee.

When faculty members return for teacher planning days, make announcements about Teen Read Week events at staff meetings. Classroom visits are also an effective means for welcoming staff back and sharing updates on all the library program has to offer students for the current school year. Provide teachers with bookmarks that have dates and additional information for special events. A Back-to-School Open House is a great time to create book displays that highlight the Teen Read Week theme and also offer a presentation for parents and students on special events you have planned. Ask freshman English teachers if you can schedule a library orientation with their classes to share all the library has to offer with new students.

For the school or local newspaper, have a student write an article about events scheduled for Teen Read Week and highlight the Teens' Top Ten titles available for check out. For daily announcements, have students read PSAs they have written or ones provided by YALSA ([www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/trw/trw2011/publicity.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/trw/trw2011/publicity.cfm)).

At the beginning of the school year, contact your school district's Public Relation department with dates for your special events. This will ensure publicity for your library program and bring public awareness to the role school libraries play in promoting teenage literacy. **YALS**



As the nine-member 2011 Alex Awards committee, we had requested, read, and reviewed nearly 500 titles. December and early January had been a blur of words and punctuation, as we attempted to read during spare moments: bus rides, grocery store lines, and lunch breaks. Our homes became obstacle courses and fire hazards of stacked books; our e-mail inboxes were flooded with a mix of poignant reviews, tangential observations, and sleep-deprived ramblings. We pushed books into the hands of teens, our plea-filled words running into each other, hey-could-you-pretty-please-look-at-this-book-and-let-me-know-what-you-think?

It all came down to this one moment.

We walked back into the conference room, our eyes scanning the covers of the selected books. The committee chair, Beth Gallaway, and the administrative assistant, Scott Rader, had tabulated the votes that committee members had scrawled earlier on hotel stationary. We cried "Yes!" for our beloved books that stood tall among the ten, and observed moments of silence for our lonely favorites that did not make the cut.

"This year's list runs the gamut of mystery, suspense, magical realism, adventure, and memoir," said Gallaway, chair of the 2011 Alex Awards committee. "Our selections are accessible to a wide range of ages, and feature a mute, a zombie slayer, a family of vampires, a Chinese American immigrant, a homeschooler, and an insomniac—truly, there is something for everyone."

The Alex Awards recognize ten books written for adults that have special appeal to young adults, ages twelve through eighteen. In addition to the awards, the committee also releases a vetted nominations list.

I had the opportunity to speak with three of the winners: Liz Murray, author of *Breaking Night: A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, and My Journey from Homeless to*

*Harvard*; Steve Hamilton, author of *The Lock Artist*; and Joshua Gaylord, who wrote *The Reapers Are the Angels* under the pseudonym Alden Bell.

## First Readers, Then Writers

Over the course of my interviews, something became clear: these three authors had childhoods and teen years marked by voracious reading and library use.

Murray grew up surrounded by library books. Her father, an avid library fan, would often check out books and (despite best intentions) neglect to return them. In addition to the perpetually borrowed collection, Murray and her father also made frequent trips to the library.

Murray said, "My relationship with books was because of my father." Books showed Murray that "Life can be different." Even when homeless as a teen, Murray continued her routine from childhood of visiting the library. She spent what she called "countless hours" in branches of the New York Public Library, in Manhattan and the Bronx, hanging out, reading, and meticulously keeping a journal. It is where she began writing.

As a teen, Gaylord's reading was fueled by a fascination with horror fiction (Stephen King and Peter Straub) before moving onto the more serious recommendations of his teachers (James Joyce, Franz Kafka, and William Faulkner). Likewise, Hamilton read everything he could get his hands on. From *Lord of the Rings* to crime stories and

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**KAREN KEYS is an Outreach Librarian with Queens Library in Long Island City, N.Y. She is in the midst of her third year on the Alex Awards committee and is currently serving as the chair. Her favorite stories involve heists, humorous private investigators, or anything written by Joan Didion.**

mysteries, he read all the time. Hamilton said, “The library in Dearborn, Michigan, was Shangri-la for me.” He continued, “I would check out as many books as they would let me check out.” Responding to the budget and staffing cuts so many libraries face during these rough economic times, he said, “It’s hard to imagine a world without libraries.”

In 2006, Hamilton was honored by the Michigan Library Association with the Michigan Author Award. Recognized for his books about Alex McKnight, a private investigator living in Paradise, Michigan, Hamilton has even had the distinction of having his novels be required reading for students. He said, “I’ve arrived, now that I’m homework.”

Libraries nurture readers, laying the foundation for the next generation of writers, from memoirists to dystopians to crime writers. The teen that devours every Agatha Christie mystery and Stephen King tale could grow up to be the next large-font name on the book jacket.

### Alden Bell Will Break Your Heart

Explaining his pen name, Gaylord shared, “The name Alden Bell was conjured up in a fairly straightforward way: Alden is my middle name, and Bell was the name the Bronte sisters used as a pseudonym when they published under men’s names.” In *The Reapers Are the Angels*, Bell imagines a bleak world where the arrival of zombies a quarter of a century earlier has halted civilization. Zombie-slaying Temple wanders the abandoned, postapocalyptic landscape, living day-to-day as she scours for supplies and attempts to find sanctuary. With the compelling character of Temple, Gaylord draws readers in: “God is a slick God. Temple knows. She knows because of all the crackerjack miracles still to be seen on this ruined globe.”

Even after writing *The Reapers Are the Angels*, Gaylord said, “I am so not ready for the zombie apocalypse. I am not prepared for anything. Changes in weather mystify me.” *The Reapers Are the Angels* has been compared to Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*. Gaylord drew inspiration for his kickass, knife-wielding heroine from Buffy the Vampire Slayer. In Temple, Gaylord evokes both fearlessness and vulnerability. Gaylord said, “I admire her ability to survive. She’s tough.”

Deceptive in size—a slim 225-page trade paperback—*The Reapers Are the Angels* packs a literary punch. While making use of horror conventions, the book is epic, thrilling, suspenseful, creepy, uplifting, enthralling, and dark. Both the novel and its heroine are a meditation on contradictions. Readers are forewarned: the ending might have you throwing the book across the room. Without revealing too much, Gaylord said, “I wanted a heartbreaking ending.”

Gaylord, who has also written *The Hummingbirds*, teaches literature at a prep school in New York City. While some of his students have read his books, he said that the teens at his school are not fans of horror, generally. Gaylord enjoys reading contemporary Southern Gothic writers, including Tom Franklin, William Gay, and Daniel Woodrell. He admits that *The Reapers Are the Angels* is more of a Southern Gothic tale than zombie story.

When questioned about his favorite dystopian novels, Gaylord said, “There always seems to be a fine line between dystopias and utopias—as though dystopias were ultimately just an inch or two away from achieving their utopian ideals (and maybe even still could). So other than things like *1984* or *A Clockwork Orange*, it’s hard for me to know if what I’m reading is really dystopian or not.” Gaylord continued, “I love *Neuromancer* by William Gibson—and I know a lot of people see it as a dystopian novel. But I

find it invigorating even in its darkness. I also love *Snow Crash* by Neal Stephenson. I am drawn toward cyberpunk—because I figure if I’m going to live in a brutal and dark future, at least I want it to be filled with smart machines and escapes into cyberspace.”

Gaylord is hard at work on several projects, including one under his name and others by Alden Bell. Fans of *The Reapers Are the Angels* can look forward to a prequel about the adventures of Moses and Abraham before either of the brothers ever encountered a fierce girl named Temple.

### Wrong Side of the Law

Michael, the narrator of *The Lock Artist*, shares toughness with Temple. In the opening chapter, Michael tells us: “So hang on, because this is my story if you’re ready for it. I was the Miracle Boy, once upon a time. Later on, the Milford Mute. The Golden Boy. The Young Ghost. The Kid. The Boxman. The Lock Artist. That was all me.” Mike, the boy who can claim all those names, writes from prison and intrigued readers will immediately wonder how he ended up there. Unable to speak since a tragedy occurred at the age of eight, he wants a chance to tell his story.

Initially, Mike attends a special school for deaf and mute kids, but it is when he returns to public school for high school that he discovers two talents: lock picking and drawing. Both provide salvation and both eventually lead to trouble. Despite not speaking, Mike opens up to a girl, Amelia, and they communicate through drawing. The novel is well-plotted and contains many elements appealing to teens: suspense, romance, and adventure. Teens will relate to Mike’s struggles to both figure out who he is and to how to overcome his tragic childhood. Although no true tips are revealed, the details about the craft of lock picking will fascinate would-be safecrackers.

Hamilton's previous novels have been straightforward and entertaining detective novels, starring Alex McKnight. Comparing Michael in *The Lock Artist* to his earlier protagonist, Hamilton said, "It really was a big departure." Michael is the first young character Hamilton has written, and unlike McKnight, Michael quickly finds himself on the wrong side of the law. Hamilton also shared, "He is a fairly fantasized version of myself at that age." Michael feels like an alien, wondering if he'll ever fit in anywhere. Hamilton said, "[Teens] can relate to feeling like. . .nobody can ever get them."

As one would expect, Hamilton enjoys reading crime fiction. Other favorites include *Winter's Bone* by Daniel Woodrell and anything by Cormac McCarthy. He cites Stephen King as a guilty pleasure. Hamilton, who won Edgar Allan Poe Award for First Novel for *A Cold Day in Paradise* also won the Edgar for Best Novel for *The Lock Artist*.

## Homeless to Harvard to Hopeful

As detailed in her memoir, *Breaking Night*, Liz Murray grew up with drug-addicted parents in the Bronx, barely getting by on her mother's welfare checks. At fourteen she left home for the streets. After years of ditching school, she decided to graduate from high school. Homeless, she began an

alternative high school with one credit. She then went on to attend Harvard. Murray's gripping memoir reads like fiction, and teens will be drawn in by her honesty, resilience, and straightforward language. Prior to *Breaking Night*, Murray's life was the subject of the Lifetime movie, *Homeless to Harvard: the Liz Murray Story*.

"[There are] a ton of people who grow up in situations exactly like mine," Murray says. She often hears from teens and educators who say that her story gives them hope. Murray wants teens to know: "You can transform your life. There are things you can focus on."

Murray spoke about the power of making a distinction between things she could and could not control. In one column, she included her parents, the weather, and her living situation. In the next column, she included her grades and the type of person she was (someone who was kind, someone who told the truth). She realized, "I get to choose the person I want to be."

Readers will be inspired by what Murray has overcome, and be struck by the way she views the world and the people around her. Murray said, "I'm inspired by people. . .looking to make the lives of those around them better." She admires those who have adopted a character of giving.

When writing *Breaking Night*, Murray realized, "I had two stories to tell." She alluded to the possibility of another memoir within her first, and is

now working on something that continues her story. Murray would also love to someday publish a work of fiction or poetry.

One of her favorite authors is Wally Lamb, and Murray often makes time to re-read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston. Her recent reading also includes pregnancy books (such as *Pushed: The Painful Truth About Childbirth and Modern Maternity Care*) as she prepares for a baby with her husband, James.

She juggles work with her organization, Manifest Living, and speaking engagements, and still manages to find time to write. She said, "I find these quiet, little moments."

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# feature

Best Practices

## Out of School and In the Library

### Connecting With Resources in the Out of School Time (OST) Field

*By Maureen Hartman*

It's 3 p.m. and any minute now, young people will be entering the building in large numbers looking for available computers, meeting friends, and participating in programs that supplement their formal education. This is the daily routine for many librarians, as well as for the many other organizations in your community that provide afterschool programs and services for young people. For everyone in the out of school time (OST) field, the hours after school has let out are dramatically different from those

during the day—working with volunteers, running programs, assisting with homework resources, and making sure you have enough snacks.

Serving youth well during hours they aren't in school has always been critical to the success of the public library. In many communities across the United States and other countries, how young people are spending the hours they aren't in school is increasingly recognized as a critical piece in helping them develop skills, keeping them safe, and improving achievement in

school. It's time for libraries to claim the powerful role they have in their community's services to young people during OST.

### Background

OST is usually defined as the hours young people have each day that they are not in school. It includes afternoons, evenings, weekends, and school breaks. The terms "afterschool" and "out of school" are used somewhat interchangeably throughout the field, but out of school time (OST) now tends to be used more—to focus on the many hours young people aren't in school.

According to a report from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, each year, on average, young people have a minimum of 1,900 hours of discretionary time.<sup>1</sup> While anecdotally we often think that kids are overscheduled, research in the field has corroborated that youth who are overscheduled tend to be the exception rather than the rule. While exact numbers differ greatly among communities, it's a safe bet that there are more youth in your community who lack opportunities during the afterschool hours than you know.

Communities have been talking about how young people use afterschool hours for many years. References in the past (and still today in some communities) often focus on a deficit model of providing services to young people. Nationally, police and public safety officials have known since the 1990s that over half of all juvenile crime takes place between the hours of 2 and 8 p.m. A report to the United States Attorney General in 1997 argues for an increase in the number of afterschool programs to "keep kids off the street."<sup>2</sup>

For some communities, public safety is still a strong factor in creating more opportunities for young people but other communities are approaching OST from a

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positive youth development perspective—that young people are assets to be developed rather than problems to be solved—working alongside young people to create opportunities that are meaningful and enjoyable to them.

While very separate from formal education, the OST field is now also recognizing the important role informal programs have in academic achievement during the school day. Research has shown that one factor in the achievement gap disparity is the difference in how youth spend their OST hours—the difference between engagement in an afterschool program (whatever the focus)—and sitting at home watching TV.<sup>3</sup>

Communities across the world are developing organized strategies to better serve young people during the hours they are not in school. Elected officials, the public, and funders are also more aware of the impact OST services can have on young people and the community.

## Variety of Opportunities

Like libraries, OST programs offer a variety of ways for young people to engage—and learn—after school. From recreation and gym programs to arts programs and to field trips after school, each organization, like each library, focuses on something different. Many afterschool programs offer young people choices of activities or change activity options periodically to keep them engaged.

Younger kids and teens tend to be the most active participants in OST programs, but the field, like libraries, continues to pursue ways for older teens to stay involved—including finding opportunities for them to mentor younger youth, developing paid opportunities, and thinking differently about how programs will be structured or run to meet the developmental needs of older youth.

## The Library's Role

Libraries are critical pieces in a community's support for young people during nonschool hours. While we are sensitive that our mission is not to replace child care, we must also recognize that by our very nature—we're convenient, nearby, free, and safe—we are a place where young people are choosing to come. Even in libraries that do very little formal programming, we still have many elements that afterschool programs have—caring adults, access to technology, and opportunities to socialize with friends. For libraries that do more programming, we start to look even more similar to high-quality programs: appropriate structure paired with opportunities to make choices, learn new skills, build relationships, and make a difference—all facilitated by a caring, trained adult.

For as similar as we are to afterschool programs, we have some big differences—there is no cost to join the library, but there is also no regular adult supervision. We don't keep track of attendance in the same way other programs do and we can never really predict which kids will show up from day to day. Some of these are very positive assets; others are more challenging when looking for funding to continue our work.

## Advocating Locally

Libraries can successfully leverage our important role during OST hours in a number of ways—from pursuing funding to running formal OST programs on our own or in partnership with other organizations to securing community resources—people, support, or money—into ensuring that libraries continue to be open—and staffed appropriately—during critical OST hours.

Libraries can also work directly with local afterschool providers to promote library services. Youth workers in the OST

profession are frequently part-time and almost always underpaid. They most likely do not know what resources or services you may already be providing. Promoting services like online homework assistance and databases may be the first step in a longer partnership.

Connecting to others in the field is critical to ensuring that your services align with others in the community. If it's a priority for your city or county the connecting with other providers will be critical. In Chicago, St. Paul, Boston, Providence, and other cities, creation of OST networks has already begun and libraries have been involved to varying degrees.

## Funding

Capitalizing on available funds will be critical to your success in this area. The vast majority of afterschool programs rely on grants to run their programs. Here's a checklist for learning more:

- Who are the local foundations—corporate or private—involved in your state's afterschool network and what are their requirements for grantees? As you network with other providers, ask them who funds their programs and follow up with those foundations directly. Many states have statewide afterschool networks, hosting training, networking opportunities, and research dissemination. You can check if your state has a network at [www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net](http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net) (accessed April 19, 2011).
- The 21st Century Learning Center funds are the only federal grants dedicated exclusively to funding afterschool programs and are administered by each state. As of this writing, 2011 reauthorization of these funds by Congress is unclear. While the majority of these funds go directly to

schools, some libraries have had success in partnering with their school districts or being part of a local collaborative. A listing of all 21st Century Learning Centers can be found at [www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html) (accessed April 19, 2001), and a good summary of the 21st Century Learning Center funds can be found at the Afterschool Alliance, [www.afterschoolalliance.org/policy21stcclc.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policy21stcclc.cfm) (accessed April 19, 2011).

- Other federal funds can be used for afterschool opportunities, but be aware reporting requirements do not often work for the nature of library programs. You can get more information about federal funding for afterschool programs at [www.afterschool.gov/xhtml/topic/t\\_29.html](http://www.afterschool.gov/xhtml/topic/t_29.html) (accessed April 19, 2001), and the Finance Project has a helpful primer about using federal funds for youth programs, [www.financeproject.org/publications/Finding\\_Funding\\_PM.pdf](http://www.financeproject.org/publications/Finding_Funding_PM.pdf) (accessed April 19, 2011).
- Some statewide alliances have put together their own resources for securing funding. Minnesota has a new Minnesota Youth Funders Database, for example, that helps providers track down funding for their programs, [www.accessphilanthropy.com/clients/youth-community-connections](http://www.accessphilanthropy.com/clients/youth-community-connections) (accessed April 19, 2011).

- Libraries have many different ways to talk about the important work we do; connecting your work with youth to the broader OST field can energize your services, make them even more successful, and ensure their continuation. For librarians working with youth, there's an added bonus—meetings are almost always in the morning!

### For More Information

Below are additional resources to learn more about the OST field.

Afterschool Alliance, [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org) (accessed April 19, 2001), includes resources on advocacy, funding, tool kits, and information on their national October initiative, *Lights On Afterschool*.

The Forum for Youth Investment, a nonprofit “action tank” dedicated to making sure all young people are ready for college, work, and life. Their series of OST Policy Commentaries are helpful in understanding issues in the field: <http://forumfyi.org/pubs> (accessed April 19, 2011).

The National Institute on OST publishes the journal *Afterschool Matters*, has also sponsored practitioner fellowship cohorts in New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Seattle, is expanding to Pittsburgh and New Orleans in 2011 and welcomes librarians to apply: [www.niost.org/Practitioner-Fellowship/practitioner-fellowship-overview](http://www.niost.org/Practitioner-Fellowship/practitioner-fellowship-overview) (accessed April 19, 2011).

With more of an academic focus, the Harvard Family Research Project has a huge database of publications, research studies, and measurement strategies for OST: [www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time](http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time) (accessed April 19, 2011).

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*I'm a grafted flower that didn't make, a Mexican without being one, an American without feeling like one . . . a puppet jerked by the strings of two cultures that clash. I'm la mestiza la pocha, la Tex-Mex, la Mexican-American, la hyphenated who lacks identity and struggles to find it.<sup>1</sup>*

Approximately 8.1 million Latino tweens and teens (ages 10–19) reside in the United States.<sup>2</sup> These youth represent a myriad of cultural backgrounds, races, interests, linguistic abilities (in English and Spanish), religious preferences, abilities, sexual identities, socioeconomic levels, and citizenship statuses. While it is difficult to make generalizations about this rapidly increasing, diverse, cultural group, there are common characteristics apparent among significant portions of the Latino tween and teen populations in the United States. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Latino youth exhibit a higher risk of becoming high-school dropouts and teenage parents when compared with other young adults in America.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, they are “more likely than White and Asian youths to live in poverty” and “have high levels of exposure to gangs.”<sup>4</sup> The report also notes that majority of Latino youth (two-thirds) are U.S. citizens, dispelling the misconception that many Latino teens are immigrants (documented or otherwise).

As Sentías expresses in the poem that opened the article, many of these youth feel as if they are living in the *borderlands* of society—not quite fitting into the overall U.S. culture; yet not entirely comfortable with the culture of their parents, grandparents, or other relatives who may have immigrated from one of over twenty different countries throughout Latin America. This borderland experience has been described by numerous researchers and authors, one of the first being cultural theorist and scholar Gloria Anzaldúa. Over twenty-four years ago, Anzaldúa suggested

# Libraries Bridging the Borderlands

## Reaching Latino Tweens and Teens with Targeted Programming and Collections

*By Jamie Campbell Naidoo and Luis Francisco Vargas*

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JAMIE CAMPBELL NAIDOO is an assistant professor at The University of Alabama School of Library and Information Studies. A former youth services coordinator, he is serving as chair of the 2012 Pura Belpré Award committee and is director of the National Latino Children's Literature Conference. He wrote *Celebrating Cuentos: Promoting Latino Children's Literature and Literacy in Classrooms & Libraries*.

FRANCISCO VARGAS is Colombian born and serves as the Youth Services Manager at the Yuma County Library District that is an incredibly diverse area serving a border town community, military base, winter visitors from as far as Canada, and a large Latino agricultural community. He is currently the REFORMA president of the Central Arizona Chapter and is also serving on the 2012 Pura Belpré Award Committee.

that Latinos reside not only in the physical borderlands separating them from their ancestral country of origin but also the psychological, social, sexual, and spiritual borderlands.<sup>5</sup> Kevane also notes that to be Latino is to be “a hybrid, bilingual, bicultural individual who is sharing two worlds, straddling the fence, belonging neither here nor there, belonging to both here and there, being from two worlds, living in the borderlands, living on the hyphen.”<sup>6</sup>

Borderland experiences are present throughout Latino young adult literature and should be addressed within targeted library programming for Latino tweens and teens. Examples of this type of programming, where librarians specifically strategize to reach a particular demographic of tweens and teens, are covered in the following section, which profiles selected targeted programs.

### Targeted Library Programming for Latino Youth

How do librarians attract Latino tweens and teens to the library? Once youth are there what do librarians do with them? One example of targeted programming for Latino youth can be observed in Arizona at the Phoenix Public Library, another at the Yuma County Libraries, where one of the authors worked for several years. Another example of targeted Latino youth programming is at the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library in North Carolina.

Early in his career, Francisco was fortunate to work with a rowdy group of radical teen librarians at the Teen Central space of the Burton Barr Central Library in downtown Phoenix. The space opened in early 2001 and had an overwhelming gravitational pull for inner city Latino teens. This early exposure to raw nontraditional library teens was the key

foundation to developing his “Latino Teen Sense” that YA librarians must possess to strategize unusual and interesting programming ideas that are irresistible for a new wave of nonlibrary Latino teen users.

Today, Phoenix Public offers a large variety of programs for teens and tweens. The most memorable and successful of these programs—such as Silk Screen T-shirt Design, Henna Decorations, Comic Collab, Teen Zine, and Sk8 and Rock—involve teens creating, and allowing their personalities and culture to be showcased. Programs such as the t-shirt design offer a perfect fit for libraries serving groups of Latino teens. For this program, the YA staff contracted the services of a Latino artist to teach a hands-on workshop where teens make and take home their own t-shirt with a design that represents some aspect of their Latino culture. The workshop had a two-fold purpose. First, it allows teens to feel like they and their culture are valued in the library. Second, it creates a space where teens that are part of the Library Teen Council can design logos or images that brand their group.

The SK8 and Rock program was designed to engage a larger audience of nonlibrary Latino teens in telling them directly: “look: the library is a hip, happening place.” The program also sends out an obvious message that librarians do not believe skateboarders are delinquents; rather skateboarders are welcome in the library doors to check out materials. For this program, the YA staff arranged for a semi-pro skate team to teach basic and intermediate level workshops for Latino teens to develop their skate skills, concluding with a live demo in the library parking lot with ramps, and a teen band hammering away classic rock cover songs. In a similar vein, one of the library’s talented pages taught a hip-hop DJ workshop using two iPods and simple public domain software. Latino teens created their own remix of their favorite

songs. What’s the tie-in with literacy, a skeptical librarian may ask? Besides the obvious increase of circulation among the music CDs, skate videos, and magazines, there are absolutely no traditional literacy tie-ins and that is the point!

One strategy of targeted programming is for the library to attract nonlibrary users by not appearing so conventional. The job of the YA librarian is to reinvent the library as more than books housed in a building, to leave a great first impression that cool things do happen at the library, and to develop a close, professional bond with teens. The success of targeted Latino youth programming is anchored in teen feedback and in allowing them to make their ideas a reality. For example, the sequel to the skate program at Phoenix Public was the idea of a teen who felt left out because she believed the program’s focus was really for boys, so she helped retain the services of the local roller derby association for a forty-five minute demonstration. At one point, the roller derby girls broke into the library in full attire on their skates, promoting the informational discussion or teen recruitment occurring in the meeting room.

Another successful series of programs in Phoenix, as well as in Yuma County, was centered around fashion: making fabulously trendy skinny jeans from old baggy jeans, and turning regular t-shirts into modern, slim-cut shirts. Using a simple sewing machine, the Latino teens had a chance to design their *couture du jour*. The library wanted to lure nonlibrary users who might not have the money to buy designer jeans. The room setup intentionally had several appealing features as well, to draw even more teens. For example, the YA staff had a laptop logged into the library’s Teen Blog and teens could also post on Myspace or Facebook; in addition the staff had music playing and the Wii console set up on a projector. The teens had enough activities to be engaged the entire time and, as a result, they began to mingle and bring their friends

to more programs. Eventually, the YA staff at the library had to include preregistration for their programs because of the popularity. Using popular culture and local Latino teens as informants, Phoenix Public developed program after program “for teens by teens” as the teen department’s mantra dictated.

From state-of-the-art new facilities to small community branches, targeted programming can work. Another example is the Ocotillo Library, in south Phoenix, which is notable for its high crime rate and twice the national average in high school drop-out rates. In addition to gang activity, the two large high schools have suffered full-fledged race riots between African Americans and Latinos. At one point, teens in South Phoenix were being banned from public spaces, including libraries, and were seen as a nuisance because their disengagement and negative behavior. Targeted programming turned the culture of the library around and within six months there was a functioning Library Teen Council. To gather support and energy for a constituency of disenfranchised Latino teens with a very few opportunities, YA librarians must use that “Latino Teen Sense” and offer tangible initiatives. Once introduced to high-energy fun activities, the teens develop a thirst for more programming including the more traditional literature-based book clubs. Some of the local young adults, and now college graduates at the Ocotillo Library, continue to submit book recommendations via Facebook and other social media to their YA librarians, even when those librarians are assigned to other libraries.

## How do you get there?

How can you provide outreach to a group of racially divided teens? Basically targeting Latino teens in Phoenix, Yuma, or anywhere else in the United States is grounded in three key significant elements

that engage them from day one: fun, cultural incentives, and a positive social network. Fun, yet safe, age-appropriate video games have been the staple to getting Latino teens in the library. At the Yuma County Library District, YA librarians offer a variety of gaming options such as Dungeons and Dragons, Card Captor Sakura, Wii Tournaments, and Manga Gama Clubs, and are constantly looking for new games. By allowing Latino teens to suggest games and following through with promised program times and equipment, YA librarians can easily snag reluctant Latino tweens and teens who do not use the library. Targeted programs such as video gaming set the tone of your library and let Latino youth know: this is not your abuela’s library!

Unfortunately, many Latino teens continue to get banned from libraries and YA librarians become the intermediaries between the administration and teens. To overcome some of the library’s old stereotypes, we must advocate for our teens, which in turns gives YA librarians much-needed street credentials and catapults them into being the Latino “face of the library” and creates a cultural incentive for Latino teens to come to the library. In many libraries in the Yuma County Library District, YA staff speak Spanglish at the service desk. However, it’s a delicate balance, making sure that in doing so staff is respectful, natural, and sincere, avoiding the use of stereotypical slang. In addition, the YA staff members have tweaked their dress code to include the use of culturally appropriate accessories that teens notice immediately, while at the same time keeping a professional look. A simple checkered belt or wristband is enough. Another significant cultural incentive—as with most other cultural groups of teens—is food, which has proven to be a great way to get Latino tweens and teens into the libraries in Yuma. Being able to secure collaborations between local

businesses, in particular large Latino supermarket chains that donated *orchata*, pan dulce, churros, and 100-calorie snacks, greatly benefited the library’s image in the Latino community. In hard economic times, libraries cannot afford to purchase snacks for all their programs and local collaborations with Latino supermarkets demonstrates to upper library management that YA staff want to reach out to teens but also want to cut library costs.

After several months of engagement and one-on-one coaching, YA librarians should have in place a positive social network. At this time, YA staff can offer more traditional educational enrichment programming for Latino teens such as the Democratic book club, Skype author chats, manga movie clubs, writer’s workshops, and poetry slams. One of the strategies that works best is to pick punchy intelligent books. For instance, *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher is a great conversation starter and attracts reluctant readers from all cultural backgrounds. However, it needs to be clear from the beginning that after an initial recommendation teens can vote on future selections, and they have the responsibility to be ready for book discussions. Often, Latino teens may decide to drop out of the book clubs and only participate in the fun gaming programs; however, building a positive social network implies full participation. To enjoy the snacks, gaming, and socializing, the Latino tweens and teens have to read! To help them succeed, librarians can make the discussions fun by providing structure but staying far away from anything resembling school busy work.

While book clubs can prove to be very difficult to continue past the third or fourth book, with the right partnerships and incentives teens will stay engaged and actively suggest new books. One successful collaboration at the Yuma County Library is with the local Starbucks; teens who come prepared for the book discussion receive a



complimentary drink of their choice. Teens also enjoy other privileges for participating in book clubs, such as having their fines reduced \$5 per book read, first pick at the new library DVDs, and unlimited access to their teen librarian. Making the library a fun place for teens also significantly increases teen involvement within the organization; many teens both in Phoenix and Yuma have successfully applied for page jobs or volunteered during the summer reading program.

Another example of targeted programming for Latino teens can be seen through the work of Irania Patterson, a bilingual specialist at the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library. Each year the library conducts targeted programming for various cultural groups through their Día, Celebrate the World, Noche de Cuentos, and Con A de Arte programs. While these programs are designed for all children, teens, and families, various elements of the programs hold appeal for Latino tweens and teens. One such program for Latina teens is focused on the Quinceañera—the coming-of-age birthday celebration for fifteen-year-old Latinas. Although many libraries across the United States have developed programs focused on helping Latinas plan for this special occasion, Irania developed a program for the 15th Anniversary (Quince) of Día where Latina teens fifteen and above design mini-programs for groups of children. During these mini-programs, Latinas wore their Quinceañera dresses, talked about their special party, and read one of their favorite childhood stories. Through this type of targeted program, Latina teens were empowered to teach children about the Quinceañera celebration while also sharing a love of reading.

Other programs at the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library include a renaissance of the arts, where the library works with various museums and art organizations to develop programs that

allow teens to showcase their artistic skills while also learning about the work of local Latino artists, storytellers, musicians, and so forth. This allows teens to make cultural connections with local artists that could serve as mentors in their future careers.

For additional suggestions of library programming targeted for Latino tweens and teens, consult the two chapters on serving middle grade and high school Latinos in Sharon Chickering Moller's *Library Service to Spanish Speaking Patrons: A Practical Guide*.<sup>7</sup> Other sources include the section on Latino youth programs in Susana G. Baumann's *¡Hola, Amigos!: A Plan for Latino Outreach* and the multiple chapters on serving Latino young adults in Barbara Immroth and Kathleen de la Peña McCook's *Library Services to Youth of Hispanic Heritage*.<sup>8</sup>

### Choosing Books for Latino Tweens and Teens

Now that Latino tweens and teens are in the library, what types of books should librarians send their way? The answer to this question depends upon the local Latino tween and teen populations served by your library. If you have mainly Spanish-speaking youth, then books written in Spanish, representing both popular U.S., as well as Latin American authors for tweens and teens, are recommended. However, if many of your youth do not speak or read Spanish, then English books would be the best alternative. While it is tempting to push only culturally relevant books about Latino cultures, it is important to remember that Latino tweens and teens are no different than youth from other cultural groups. They do enjoy reading books about their culture, quality books written by both

Latino and non-Latino authors; however, Latino youth are also as interested in the next vampire, zombie, adventure, or sappy love story as any other teen or tween. Considering YALSA already publishes many lists of recommended books, this section will focus on recommended books either in Spanish or about the Latino cultures.

The late Isabel Schon was a leading authority in selecting quality Spanish books for children, tweens, and teens. She published numerous articles in professional journals with recommended Spanish books for youth, wrote multiple books recommending both Spanish and Latino-themed titles, and directed the Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents.<sup>9</sup> Her work is a good place to begin when selecting tween and teen books either in Spanish or about Latinos.

Another resource of youth books in Spanish is the "Essential Guide to Spanish Reading for Children and Young Adults."<sup>10</sup> Published by America Reads Spanish, this free resource is available online and provides an extensive annotated bibliography of recommended books for both tweens and teens. Two other similar resources of recommended titles either in Spanish or about Latino cultures are Alma Ramos-McDermott's YALS article "REFORMA and YALSA: Working Together to Reach Latino Youth" and Jamie Campbell Naidoo's *Celebrating Cuentos: Promoting Latino Children's Literature and Literacy in Classrooms and Libraries*.<sup>11</sup>

Naturally librarians tend to gravitate towards award-winning books for their collections and a good source for young adult titles about Latino cultures is the Américas Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature.<sup>12</sup> The first award for Latino children's literature in the United States, the Américas Award was created in 1993 and is sponsored by the

national Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP), an organization of postsecondary Latin American Studies programs throughout the United States devoted to teaching, program development, and outreach about Latin America and the Caribbean. Coordinated by Julie Kline at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee’s Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, the Award is given annually to U.S. picture books, novels (juvenile and young adult), poetry collections, folktales, and nonfiction books published the previous year, in English or Spanish, that authentically and accurately depict the lives and experiences of people in Latin America and the Caribbean, or of Latinos living in the United States. The award’s criteria for winners, honors, and commended titles include distinct literary quality in design and illustration, authentic cultural representation of Latino cultures, and applicability for use in classrooms.

A useful source of biographical information about Latino authors for young adults is Frances Ann Day’s *Latina and Latino Voices in Literature*.<sup>13</sup> In addition to profiling thirty-five creators of Latino young adult literature, the book provides a synopsis of their major works as well as an extensive list of hands-on activity suggestions for tweens and teens that extend Latino literature into various areas of the school curriculum.

Finally, the list below provides an annotated list of recommended Latino tween and teen books published within the past few years. The list was compiled and annotated by Alma Ramos-McDermott and Lyn Miller-Lachmann from the Children’s and Young Adult Services Committee (CAYASC) of REFORMA (The National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking). The list below compiled by Jamie Campbell.

## Recommended Books

Calcines, Eduardo F. *Leaving Glorytown: One Boy’s Struggle Under Castro*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

In this gripping memoir arbitrary arrests, starvation and forced separations are endured by Cuban people as the Communist regime became more oppressive. Readers gain an insight into the loving closeness Calcines shared with friends and family, and understand his mixed emotions when his family was finally granted their visa after ten years of planning and waiting. Calcines opens the readers’ eyes to what is being endured in Cuba by those living there now, and what was left behind by those able to escape to America. Both middle and high school readers will benefit from this knowledge and, hopefully, gain a fresh perspective on what it means to be an American. Age: 12+; Culture: Cuban.

Cervantes, Jennifer. *Tortilla Sun*. Chronicle Books, 2010.

When her mother signs on to do a research project in Costa Rica for graduate school, twelve-year-old Izzy Roybal must spend the summer with her maternal grandmother in New Mexico. Kept from information about her mother’s Mexican-American roots and her Anglo father, who died before she was born, Izzy is impatient to learn the truth. An enchanted baseball with missing words, a neighbor boy obsessed with a treasure map, a six-year-old orphan, and the village healer all offer clues to Izzy’s past. Age: 11+; Culture: Mexican American, Biracial/Bicultural.

De La Peña, Matt. *I Will Save You*. Delacorte Press, 2010.

Kidd’s mom killed his father and herself, so he was sent to live in a group home. When he was seventeen years old, he ran away and got a job working at a campsite near a beach. While there, he met a girl named Olivia and fell in love.

Unfortunately, an ex-best friend, Devon, who he knew from the home, shows up. Devon has decided rich people are the cause of problems in the world, and wants to kill all of them—especially Olivia. Kidd feels his only choice is to protect Olivia, even if it means confronting Devon for the first time in his life. Age: 14+; Culture: Mexican American.

Ferrer, Caridad. *When the Stars Go Blue*. St. Martin’s Press, 2010.

Soledad loves the feel of the dance floor beneath her feet and the way music makes her feel. She loses herself in her roles, and only comes back to Earth with the sound of the audience’s applause. Into this world comes Jonathan, an avid musician who appears to share the same musical intensity. Together they embark on a romantic summer adventure performing with a competitive drum and bugle corps, with Soledad playing the role of *Carmen*. As the summer draws to an end, another suitor vies for Soledad’s attention. The ensuing jealousy brings her stage role into reality, and her entire career as a dancer is in jeopardy. Age: 14+; Culture: Cuban American.

González, Christina Díaz. *The Red Umbrella*. HarperCollins, 2010.

After Fidel Castro’s Communist revolution in Cuba, fourteen-year-old Lucía’s parents decide to send her and her younger brother Frankie alone to the United States until they can obtain exit visas for themselves. The children are sent to a foster family in Nebraska and must adjust to a new climate, language, and culture, as well as being without their parents for nearly a year. Age: 12+; Culture: Cuban.

Hijuelos, Oscar. *Dark Dude*. Atheneum Books, 2009.

Rico, growing up in the 1960s in Harlem, is tired of being hassled for his light hair and skin, of working multiple jobs, and of the violence in his neighborhood. To avoid military school, he

runs away and hitchhikes to Wisconsin. As he tries to adjust to living in a rural setting, Rico tries to find himself and, while doing so, falls in love and becomes at peace with what life has to offer him. Age: 14+; Culture: Cuban American.

Lopez, Diana. *Confetti Girl*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2009

Middle school is not going well for Lina and her best friend Vanessa. Lina's mom has unexpectedly died, so her father buries himself in his books while Vanessa's mom, recently divorced, creates endless supplies of *cascarones*, confetti filled eggs. The girls hatch a plan to set up their parents with each other and, in between Spanish *dichos* (sayings), the girls pursue their own love interests with not-so-successful results. The angst of adolescence comes through, making *Confetti Girl* true-to-life. Age: 10+; Culture: Mexican American.

Miller-Lachmann, Lyn. *Gringolandia*. Curbstone Books, 2009.

During the political upheaval in 1980s Chile, Daniel's family flees to the United States where he assimilates into a new life playing guitar with a rock band and dating. He hopes to become a citizen when he turns eighteen. Into his new life comes part of the old when his father is released from prison. After years of torture, his soccer and fun-loving father has been replaced by a paralyzed, bitter man. Daniel will have to face the demons his father has faced and make a decision for himself as to what he will do with his new knowledge. Age: 14+; Culture: Chilean American.

Perez, Ashley Hope. *What Can't Wait*. Lerner/Carolrhoda, 2011.

Marisa, a high school senior with dreams of studying engineering at the University of Texas, struggles to balance her schoolwork with family responsibilities that include babysitting her niece and working at a supermarket in her Houston neighborhood. A boyfriend who wants her

to attend college near him further complicates matters. Perez sets up a seemingly intractable conflict between a teenage girl's loyalty to her family and her quest for individual fulfillment and success, showing both sides of the values that have kept Marisa's impoverished family together and with the bare necessities at the same time as those values reduce the options of its most ambitious members. Age: 13+; Culture: Mexican American.

Resau, Laura and Maria Virginia Farinango. *The Queen of Water*. Delacorte, 2011.

This collaboration is a novel based on Farinango's childhood and adolescence as a servant in Ecuador. Like many indigenous children, Virginia is sent at the age of seven to a family that abuses her and breaks their promise to pay her and give her an education. The lively and ambitious girl overcomes her feelings of inferiority and learns to read, then secretly borrows the textbooks of her masters to teach herself science and history. Resisting the wife's regular beatings and the husband's sexual advances, Virginia eventually escapes their household, returns to her family, and works her way through high school and to a better life. Age: 14+; Culture: Quichua, Ecuadorean.

Restrepo, Bettina. *Illegal*. HarperCollins Children's Books, 2011.

When Nora's father, Arturo leaves their home in Mexico to search for work in the United States, Nora stays back with her mother, Aurora and her grandmother. Nora struggles to make sense of her loss as the three women live in poverty awaiting Arturo's return and a better day. When the letters and money stop coming, Nora decides she and Aurora must go to Texas to find Arturo. After a harrowing and dehumanizing border-crossing experience, they find themselves alone in a new place, unable to speak the language. Nora must find the strength to

meet these challenges and locate her father—all while pining for friends, a pair of new shoes, and a Quinceañera. Age: 12+; Culture: Mexican.

Ryan, Pam Munoz. *The Dreamer*. New York: Scholastic, 2010.

Through vignettes real, embellished, and imagined—for Ryan ventures several times into the realm of pure fantasy—readers observe the twelve-year process in which young Neftalí Reyes, with the support of his siblings, Mamadre, Uncle Orlando, and other caring adults, resists his tyrannical father's goals for him and grows into the world-famous poet Pablo Neruda. He adopts the pen name to circumvent his father's fear that his literary and political pursuits will embarrass the family. Exquisite illustrations and design enhance this fictionalized childhood biography of the Nobel Prize winning poet from southern Chile. Age: 10+; Culture: Chilean.

Stork, Francisco X. *Marcelo in the Real World*. Scholastic, 2009.

Sheltered in a special school for much of his life, Marcelo Sandoval is told he must spend the summer before his senior year of high school working at his father's law firm so he can learn about and get by in the "real world." At the firm, Marcelo is bullied and exploited by a fellow intern, finds himself in ethical dilemmas when he discovers his father has made improper advances to a female employee and the firm has concealed evidence to assist a corporate client in a liability suit, and learns about love, lust, and the costs of making moral choices. This book about a teen with Asperger's Syndrome is a thoughtful multigenerational (appeals to teens, their parents, and their grandparents) novel. It is one of the few novels for teens depicting an upper middle class Mexican-American family. Equally valuable is the way Stork incorporates Marcelo's "special interest," world religions, into the plot as he ultimately applies the lessons he absorbed from the holy books. Age: 12+; Culture: Mexican American.



## Serving LGBTQ Latino Youth

Latino youth who see themselves represented in the literature that they encounter, have a greater respect for their cultural heritage and a stronger sense of self that leads them to accept their sexual orientation. It is crucial for LGBTQ Latino youth to see representations of themselves in the books they read. Unfortunately, there are relatively few U.S. young adult books featuring LGBTQ Latinos. Of the books that are published, most are novels featuring gay male Latinos and many of these are not readily available in the collections of school and public libraries. Below is a listing of the current youth novels, available in English, with LGBTQ Latino characters or written by LGBTQ Latinos:

- *Bait* by Alex Sanchez. Simon and Schuster, 2009.
- *Boyfriends with Girlfriends* by Alex Sanchez. Simon and Schuster, 2011.
- *Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa* by Rigoberto González. University of Wisconsin Press, 2006
- *Down to the Bone* by Mayra Lazara Dole. HarperCollins, 2008.
- *Fat Hoochie Prom Queen* by Nico Medina. Simon and Schuster, 2008.
- *Getting It* by Alex Sanchez. Simon and Schuster, 2006.
- *The God Box* by Alex Sanchez. Simon and Schuster, 2007.
- *Hard Love* by Ellen Wittlinger. Simon and Schuster, 1999.
- *Love and Lies: Marisol's Story* by Ellen Wittlinger. Simon and Schuster, 2008.
- *Meaning of Conseulo* by Judith Ortiz Cofer. FSG, 2003.
- *Pedro and Me* by Judd Winick. Henry Holt, 2000.
- *Rainbow Boys* by Alex Sanchez. Simon and Schuster, 2001.

## LGBTQ Latino Youth

Over 10 percent of today's Latino youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Add the percentage of Latino youth who question their sexuality and this number increases significantly. Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) Latino youth feel alienated in U.S. schools because of their cultural heritage as well as their sexual orientation. Unfortunately, these youth cannot turn to their family for support as many people within Latino communities reinforce negative cultural perceptions of homosexuality rather than helping their children reframe the stereotype as they would with racial stereotyping. These attitudes are predominantly attributed to Latino cultural traits and beliefs, such as *machismo*, *marianismo*, and Catholicism, which condemn same-sex relationships.<sup>14</sup> As a result of not feeling accepted in school or by their *familia*, LGBTQ Latino youth are more likely than their Anglo counterparts to develop feelings of worthlessness, engage in unsafe sexual practices, run away from home, or commit suicide.

- *Rainbow High* by Alex Sanchez. Simon and Schuster, 2003.
- *Rainbow Road* by Alex Sanchez. Simon and Schuster, 2005.
- *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood* by Benjamin Saenz. Cinco Puntos Press, 2004.
- *So Hard to Say* by Alex Sanchez. Simon and Schuster, 2004.
- *The Straight Road to Kylie* by Nico Medina. Simon and Schuster, 2007.
- *Tommy Stands Alone* by Gloria Velásquez. Piñata Books, 1995.
- *What Night Brings* by Carla Trujillo. Curbstone, 2003.
- *Who Framed Lorenzo Garcia?* by R. J. Hamilton. Alyson Books, 1995.

It is critically important for school and public libraries to circulate the few books with LGBTQ Latino characters that are currently available. In light of the growing Latino population in the United States, libraries that overlook LGBTQ Latino youth miss an opportunity to serve an important strand within their local fabric. Libraries can create welcoming environments that embrace diversity by offering books and services reflecting the experiences of the LGBTQ Latino community. Upon entering the library, we want LGBTQ Latino youth to think, "I feel warm and accepted. This is where I

belong, loved and understood right down to the bone."<sup>15</sup>

To help create an environment where youth feel accepted and understood, librarians are encouraged to consult the following professional and Web resources that will assist with developing collections, programs, and services for LGBTQ Latino youth.

## Concluding Thoughts

Latino tweens and teens have many of the same informational, recreational, educational, and literacy needs as tweens and teens from other cultural groups. However, they often encounter borderland experiences where they feel as if they do not completely belong to a single culture—the one defined by their ethnicity nor the one defined by the overall U.S. culture. Libraries can help Latino youth as they navigate the physical, social, and psychological borderlands in their life by providing targeted programming and collections that include both culturally relevancy as well popular culture components. We hope that some of the ideas for programs and collections suggested in this article will assist you as you jump-start your outreach to Latino youth. ¡Buena suerte!

### Selected Professional Resources

- Cart, Michael and Christine A. Jenkins. *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969–2004*. Scarecrow Press, 2006.
- Day, Frances Ann. *Lesbian and Gay Voices: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Literature for Children and Young Adults*. Greenwood Press, 2000.
- Martin, Hillias J. and James R. Murdock. *Serving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Teens*. Neal-Schuman, 2007.
- Rimpau, Ina. "Entendidos: Library Services to Hispanic Gay Teens and Their Families." In *The Power of Language/El poder de la palabra: Selected Papers from the 2nd REFORMA National Conference*, edited by Lillian Castillo-Speed. Libraries Unlimited, 2000; pp. 159–166.

### Selected Web Resources

- *Ambiente Joven*. Spanish-language Web site for LGBTQ youth in the United States and Latin America ([www.AmbienteJoven.org](http://www.AmbienteJoven.org))
- *GLSEN Report: School-Related Experiences of LGBT Youth of Color*. Discusses the social climate of schools for LGBT students with diverse ethnic and racial heritages ([www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN\\_ATTACHMENTS/file/474-2.pdf](http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/474-2.pdf)).
- *10 Ways to Fight Hate*. Collection of resources that address various issues related to hate and bias including topics related to LGBTQ Latinos ([www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/ten-ways-to-fight-hate-a-community-response-guide](http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/ten-ways-to-fight-hate-a-community-response-guide)).
- *LGBTQ Resources for Latino Families*. This Web site includes many links to

online documents in Spanish and English addressing LGBTQ topics of concern for Latino youth and their families (<http://community.pflag.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=467&srcid=462>).

- *Human Rights Campaign: "Resources for Latinas and Latinos."* Provides several links to Spanish and English documents for LGBTQ Latinos ([www.hrc.org/issues/3579.htm](http://www.hrc.org/issues/3579.htm)).
- *Youth Resource and Advocates for Youth*. Partner Web sites that provide information to LGBTQ youth and their advocates, portions have a particular emphasis on queer youth of color ([www.advocatesforyouth.org/about-us/programs-and-initiatives/740?task=view](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/about-us/programs-and-initiatives/740?task=view) and [www.amplifyyourvoice.org/youthresource](http://www.amplifyyourvoice.org/youthresource)). YALS

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4. Ibid.
5. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco, Calif.: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.
6. Bridget Kevane, *Latino Literature in America, Literature as Windows to World Cultures*. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003), 9.
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This Spring, I was in a Barnes & Noble and noticed a display titled “Read the Book Before You See the Movie,” advertising the novels of various movie adaptations released this summer: *Beastly*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Atlas Shrugged*. The one that caught my eye, though, was *Red Riding Hood*—not an edition of the Grimm fairy tale but a novelization of the movie.<sup>1</sup> The absurdity of asking customers to “read the book before seeing the movie,” when even the author of the book itself had not done so, got me thinking about what a bad name film adaptations get in our culture. We constantly hear that “the book is always better than the movie” or that some particular movie didn’t “live up to” the book. So, in honor of this year’s Teen Read Week™ theme of “Picture It,” I thought I’d make a plea for movie adaptations of books, short stories, and other literature.

## The Movie Is Better Than the Book

For the past year or so, I’ve been compiling a list of movies I’ve seen which are better or equal to their literary source. The list is already at almost 150 titles. Tastes differ, and I don’t want to start an argument about specific movies or my own tastes, but I do think it is clear that Hollywood in particular, and filmmakers all over the world as well, have a penchant for making great art out of relatively minor, or even trashy, material. Alfred Hitchcock, Fritz Lang, David Cronenberg, Orson Welles, and Roman Polanski, to name just a few examples, each made many, many films based on the works of such literary “giants” as Roland Topor, Norbert Jacques, Patrick McGrath, Georges de La Fouchardière, Cornell Woolrich, Robert Bloch, Sherwood King, and Whit Masterson. Again, we could argue over the specifics of

a few of these cases, but the general trend is clear: novels and short stories which have either been completely forgotten, or are remembered only because they inspired film masterpieces.

The premise that the literary source of a film is more valid, important, or valuable than the film not only is patently false but also does an incredible disservice to all parties involved. It shortchanges the artistry and critical thought of filmmakers. It shortchanges the intelligence of the people being fed the line, and especially in the case of teens, it has the potential to belittle them for preferring one art form over another. And ultimately, it backfires on the cultural “guardians” (teachers, parents, and librarians) who make the

claim, when audiences realize they are wrong.

This is all the more disheartening because, as I will attempt to show below, film adaptations, besides being entertaining and artistic in their own right, also have the potential to act as a powerful critical lens through which to view their literary source, a lens which we forgo to our own detriment.

## Adaptations as Critical Commentaries

Google “the movie was better than the book” and you will find plenty of examples of people arguing that their favorite movie surpassed its source. So rather than spend

# The Movie Is (Sometimes) Better Than the Book

## Adaptations as Literary Analysis

*By Mark Flowers*

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this article ranting about how great some Cronenberg picture is, I would rather write about a somewhat different topic which I think has not been given much attention: film adaptations which act as critical commentaries on the works they are adapting (regardless of the artistic merits of each). Filmic critiques are (at least) doubly interesting because they can not only be great fun in and of themselves but also be great pedagogic tools for teachers trying to get their students to think critically about literature.<sup>2</sup>

Below, I take a look at three adaptations: a short comic based on a fairy tale; a short film based on a short story, and a feature film based on a novel. Each of these offers separate ways of looking at the ways in which adaptations can illuminate their sources. I start with the fairy tale that began this article.

### Red Hot Riding Hood

In “Red Hot Riding Hood”, directed by cartoon genius Tex Avery, a narrator begins to tell the traditional story of “Little Red Riding Hood,” but gets only a minute or so in before all three main characters object.<sup>3</sup> Riding Hood, the Wolf, and Grandma declare that they are bored with the normal story and demand a change. The narrator obliges, and we are abruptly dropped into a parody of 1940s Hollywood glamour picture. Riding Hood is an exotic dancer, the wolf a man about town, and Grandma a high-class older woman out for a good time. The story follows the tradition loosely: the wolf, wishing to seduce Riding Hood, speeds ahead of her to get to Grandma’s house first. At this point, all slapstick breaks loose: Grandma decides she wants the wolf and tries to catch him. A series of chases end with the wolf in great physical distress, vowing not to look at a woman again.

The traditional fairy tale of “Little Red Riding Hood” is generally accepted to be about rape. Zipes, in particular, notes that “Perrault and the Grimm Brothers [the two most widely known versions of the tale]. . . transformed an oral folk tale about the social initiation of a young woman into a narrative about rape in which the heroine is obliged to bear the responsibility for sexual violation.”<sup>4</sup> To put it simply, in the most well-known versions, the story is a cautionary tale for young women—don’t stray from the path, or the wolf will rape you. Avery inverts this version into a feminist story: Red Hot Riding Hood and Grandma are self-empowered, sexually charged women, who consistently beat the wolf at his own game. No need for a woodcutter.

Avery’s version, then, is a perfect way to engage a whole host of issues surrounding the story: from the fact that it is about sexuality at all, to the way Perrault and the Grimms moralized the story, to its continuing relevance in Avery’s hands, and much more.

### The Black Cat

Roger Corman’s *Tales of Terror* consists of dramatizations of three Edgar Allan Poe stories, the middle of which is “The Black Cat.”<sup>5</sup> Corman directed a number of Poe adaptations, most of which were heavily criticized for being extremely loose in their interpretations. And indeed, except for the final reveal of the cat behind the wall, Corman’s “The Black Cat” appears to deviate completely from Poe: there is only one cat, there are extra characters, and nothing supernatural at all happens in the film.

Here’s where things get interesting, though. In a fascinating and persuasive paper from 1992, Susan Amper argues that the story related in Poe’s “The Black Cat” is in fact an elaborate set of lies by the

narrator.<sup>6</sup> She marshals forensic evidence (the state of decomposition of the body) as well as internal inconsistencies in his story to determine what “really” happened: “the narrator murdered his wife, not impulsively on the cellar stairs as he asserts, but willfully and with malice aforethought at the very time he claims to have killed his cat; the supposed cat-killing is a fiction he invents to assuage his guilt,” because, of course, “there are not two black cats; there is only Pluto: *the* black cat.”<sup>7</sup>

Corman’s film, then, follows almost exactly the events which Amper, three decades later, deduced must have been the “real” story behind “The Black Cat.” Corman provides a motive (adultery) and an extra character (the wife’s lover), but the main points are there: a drunken, unhinged protagonist, the premeditated murder of his wife, and only one cat, who gives the game away by meowing from behind the brick wall. In other words, a B-list director provided a plausible and, in fact, exceptional close reading of Poe thirty years ahead of literary criticism.

### Who Framed Roger Rabbit?

*Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* was putatively based on the novel *Who Censored Roger Rabbit?*<sup>8</sup> In fact, though the characters, conception, and some plot points remain, the plot of the film is very clearly derived from the neo-noir film *Chinatown* (a detective hired for a seemingly straightforward case of exposing adultery becomes deeply embroiled in a plot to utterly remake the landscape of Los Angeles by sinister means; both films are also loosely based on real events that occurred in Los Angeles).<sup>9</sup> This double set of influences is made more complex by the fact that both *Chinatown* and *Who Censored* are (in a way) adaptations of the classic hard-boiled detective films and

novels of the 1930s and 1940s (*Who Censored*, e.g., takes large portions of its plot from Dashiell Hammett's—not to mention John Huston's—*The Maltese Falcon*).

The film's critical commentary on this complex set of sources is deep and could probably fill a book, but the essential message, like that of "Red Hot Riding Hood," is one of thematic subversion. The hard-boiled detective novels and films generally held a relentlessly pessimistic outlook on human nature, and their copiers tended to take that pessimism to extremes. *Chinatown* in particular is one of the bleakest films in the classic Hollywood canon. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, however, parodies many of the standard tropes of this genre to posit a fundamentally opposite viewpoint—that human nature, while flawed, is inherently good. This is not so much accomplished by the happy ending (probably a requirement of any kid friendly movie made in the late 1980s) as by the film's treatment of the toons as embodiments of childlike wonder. In the novel, toons are merely actors, and in fact create their own stunt doubles for dangerous scenes. The film pays this gimmick some heed—the toons offstage do not always live up to their on-screen personas—but the film is very clear that toons exist essentially "to make people laugh." Add to this the much more nuanced characterization of protagonist Eddie Valiant—including his narrative arc from jaded toon-hater, to savior of Toon Town—and you have a film that is very much at odds with the beliefs and themes of its forebears.

## Why Is This Important to Teens?

The claim that the book is better than the movie is one frequently tossed at children and teens, especially in the context of reading assignments. Teens are assigned a book, and expressly told by various adults not to watch the movie before reading the book, or not to watch the movie at all. The objective of promoting reading and enforcing assignments is laudable, but the resulting condescension toward what is probably the major art form of the 20th century clearly has an impact on teens.

What's more, teens who are not cowed into submission by these edicts are able to see for themselves that the claim is patently false. To take the most obvious example, while I yield to no one in my enthusiasm for Shakespeare's (or rather, his printers') written words, I'd submit that, especially given that the plays were intended to be performed, most viewers are able to understand much more of both the text and the subtext of Shakespeare by viewing an excellent version (say, Polanski's *Macbeth*) than in reading it on the page. It is often only in viewing a play that the written text begins to make sense. So too, for visual learners, it is often greatly to their advantage to see a filmed version of a book first, to understand the basic plot, and then go back to the source novel.

As we've just seen, a good adaptation (or sometimes even not such a good adaptation—I make no claims for the great artistry of Corman's "The Black Cat") can shed light on the themes, issues, and unspoken assumptions of its source text. In light of these important issues, I invite teen

librarians to use this year's Teen Read Week to ignore claims that "the book is always better than the movie" and to promote watching movies as a way of gaining better insight into the books they adapt. YALS

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# feature

Hot Spot: Teen Read Week

## Picture It The Diverse Possibilities of Graphic Novel Literature

*By Francisca Goldsmith*

While comics and graphic novels seem an easy format to couple with the 2011 Teen Read Week™ theme of Picture It, the diversity of viewpoints and genres the format supports can be mined for something deeper than simply offering the picture-positive. The “picture” part of graphic literature involves *creative expression*, may rely on other *visual resources*, can nimbly portray parody (a *literary genre* that resonates well with many teens), and allow narratives told *from one viewpoint to be retold* from another.

Let’s look at some fine examples of these, each of which offers teen readers an invitation to read for the fun of it—and for the discovery of visual impact on storytelling as well.

Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón have been working in the comics industry for decades. More recently, they have been collaborating on nonfiction projects in which pictures are essential to the narrative or provide key ways of understanding events that mere words cannot. Their most recently published project, *Anne Frank* (Hill and Wang, 2010), was sponsored by the Anne Frank House, an Amsterdam museum that preserves and gives public display to the World War II hiding place Anne’s diary made famous. Anne’s father, Otto Frank, was a lifelong amateur photographer, and it is many of his own candid snapshots of his family that are among the thousands of images the museum has collected in pursuit of continuing scholarship on the Jewish

experience under Nazism. The watercolor images throughout Jacobson and Colón’s work—which is a biography of Anne, not a retelling of her diary—are based purposefully on this photo archive. Because of that, the reader sees not just styles of the time, but the Frank family’s actual clothing, not just the artist’s interpretation of mood through posture, but the postures of the family members as they aged and became increasingly stressed.

Jacobson and Colón also use the format to an advantage that is both subtle and uniquely edifying: the sequential art medium permits the writer or artist to present the personal as well as the public aspects of a historical moment as fully intertwined. Unlike a narrative text in which one reads one type of account and then possibly the other, or a film in which only the splitting of a screen—which itself requires a visual stunning of thought in preference of action—the historically based graphic novel text can move the reader from the personal to the public within a small amount of page space, requiring the mind to attend to what the eye shows: the personal has a public context, the public has a personal effect. In *Anne Frank*, this is effected through the use of panels that show what is going on outside the Secret Annex, cut between witnessing events as Anne and her family experienced life while in hiding.

**Picture it:** we have our own lives, our own expressions and styles, and yet we are surrounded by a world that informs how we can express ourselves, where we can be seen—and when we must remain hidden.

Lynda Barry, whose often quirky comics do not use the medium of photography as a basis, shares what amounts to a rich course in learning how to picture for oneself, in *Picture This* (Drawn and Quarterly, 2009). Barry gently taps the reader’s creativity and encourages nascent visual expression through a series of nondogmatic exercises that feature a

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FRANCISCA GOLDSMITH has worked with and written extensively about graphic novels and readers, especially teens. Her most recent book is *The Readers Advisory Guide to Graphic Novels* (ALA Editions, 2010). She regularly speaks to library associations and other regional groups about graphic novel collection development, advisory work, and enjoyment.



Near-Sighted Monkey, the long-established Barry cartoon character of Marlys, and Barry's own exercise doodles. Even those with no desire to create the visual will be engaged by her invitation to use one's eyes to do more than simply look, but to also gaze, stare, and otherwise see.

**Picture it:** finding your inner visual artist can tap a supply of imagination such as you never realized you had.

What happens when a contemporary artist is given a venue for collaboration with those from the past? France's great fine arts museum, the Louvre, contracted with comics publisher NBM for a series of graphic novels featuring art within the museum. *The Glacial Period* (Nicolas DeCrecy, English translation ComicsLit, 2007) is the first in the series, juxtaposing futurist science fiction with an exploration of real art treasures from the past. Again, this eschews dogma, makes important use of full color, and doesn't outlast the story it has to tell. Other titles in the brief series allow readers to explore the night-be-creepy work of an archivist in *The Museum Vaults* (Marc-Antoine Mathieu, 2007), and the most recent, *The Sky Over the Louvre* (Jean-Louis Carrière and Bernard Yslaire, English translation 2011), in which the evidence of the French Revolution's affect on painting is revealed before the reader's eyes.

**Picture it:** fine art doesn't have to be approached without imagination on the part of either the storyteller or the viewer.

Oral sarcasm's literary cousin parody interprets nicely in sequential art form. In fact, the history of graphic novels' ancestors harkens back to 18th century caricature. Most recently, the publisher Papercutz "Slices" series has been releasing spot-on and frighteningly funny parodies of popular young adult series. In *Breaking Down* (Stefan Petrucha and Rick Parker, 2011), the "Twilight" saga gets treated to a boldly

## Picture It. . .with Your Ears

Connecting this year's Teen Read Week theme with audiobooks provides another way to encourage the use of visual imagination. Just as oral literature predated our efforts to write artfully, well performed audiobooks using well written source writings give the mind's eye a lot to see.

Because well crafted audio provides instant access to character elements such as accent, gender, age and even metabolic disposition, listening readers can have an easy and satisfying time seeing them and the action described. Audiobooks that include ambient sounds from the stories' described surroundings also offer the possibility to enter the world created by the authors more fully. Here are some examples to discuss with listening teens: **Before We Were Free.** Book by Julia Alvarez, read by the author. (Listening Library, 2004, 5.3 hours).

The author's story of Dominican life under the 1950's dictator known infamously as El Jefe includes many emotionally charged family discussions as well as descriptions, all readily pictured as the author reads her own words.

The **Jacky Faber** saga. Books by L. M. Meyer, read by Katherine Kellgren. (Listen and Live, 2008 forward)

By creating and maintaining a host of appropriate accents and personalities, Kellgren brings the 18<sup>th</sup> century—at sea and on the streets of London, Boston and Jamaica—to life and makes it a breeze to picture Jacky and her cohorts.

**Jerk, California.** Book by Jonathan Friesen, read by Andy Paris. (Recorded Books, 2010, 9.5 hours)

What better way to picture how Tourette's syndrome can affect the sufferer than by listening to him tell you about it?

**Just Tricking!** Book by Andy Griffiths, read by Styg Wemyss. (Bolinda Audio, 2004, 3 hours) Younger adolescents will snort with laughter and have no trouble picturing—and perhaps replicating—the practical jokes described here.

**Night.** Book by Elie Wiesel, read by Jeffery Rosenblatt. (Audio Bookshelf, 2000, 3.75 hours) Listening to this stark memoir of concentration camp life during the Holocaust boosts the horror even higher and makes it impossible to turn a blind mind's eye from what the victims lived.

**Will Grayson, Will Grayson.** Book by John Green and David Levithan, read by MacLeod Andrews and Nick Podehl. (Brilliance Audio, 2010, 8 hours)

A performance featuring two different actors lends auditory truth and makes it even easier to picture the relationship development between the two Wills.

colored and side-slapping remake as antiheroine Bleh-Bleh and her boy toy Fredward Sullen turn all the vampire and romance tropes on their heads—or kick them in the belly. Because of teen familiarity with the original—whether any one teen has any taste for that—the puns and over the top caricaturing that goes on in this parody will both make sense and show how clever a visual joke or three or four hundred of them can be.

**Picture it:** a series which has run its course in terms of publishing and library staff patience can be reborn with the simple injection of fake blood and really bad twists on now tiresome characters.

In a move opposite that of parody is the expanding and opening of a narrative text by way of presenting a visually rich version of its story. Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, a classic prose novel, is written in epistolary form, requiring the original narrative to omit details about landscape and body language. In their conceptualization of Austen's work, Sonny Liew's manga-tinted art works with Nancy Butler's adaptation (Marvel, 2011) to give the reader the opportunity to see the world in which the letters were written. To achieve this, the novel also had to be realized anew to include dialog that

## Picture It: The Diverse Possibilities of Graphic Novel Literature

“outs” the characters’ formerly inward thoughts.

**Picture it:** what happens when we speak aloud what we have before spoken only within our heads?

While recent prose novels have included increasing numbers of references to comics and graphic novels as a way of offering a suggestion of preferences (and thus traits) held by their fictional characters, a few of these narrative authors actually offer readers a true understanding of how sequential art works. Norma Howe provided that in her “Blue Avenger” series (beginning with *The Adventures of Blue Avenger*, H. Holt, 1999), while Barry Lyga’s *The Astonishing Adventures of Fanboy and Goth Girl* (Houghton Mifflin, 2006) includes much information about the qualities of a graphic novel and how one goes about creating a narrative based on visual imagery. Neither of these novelists has thrown “comics fan” at a character just

for the sake of making the character popular with some readers. Instead, these characters understand comics and, because they do, readers who get to know them will come away with some genuine sense of sequential art’s strengths and attractions as well.

**Picture it:** traditional text-only novels in which the art and function of graphic storytelling is revealed.

Web comics are not all created equal in terms of how they exploit—or ignore—their online medium. Some really good ones just sit in panels on the screen, as though the Internet connection were a substitute for the paper page. Others, however, manage to walk the tightrope between that and full animation—motion on the screen—which would take them out of the realm of graphic lit and make them into video instead. More and more apps are being created for Web comics reading on different devices, but more to the point here is that there is an increasing amount of guidance for teens—and others—

who want to create their own Web comics. Michael Duggan’s *Web Comics for Teens* (Cengage, 2008) no longer holds the most useful technology information, given all the changes that have occurred in the past few years, but it still holds strength as a guide in story development, character creation and maintenance, and teen friendly information about how to make gags work.

**Picture it:** teens can launch their own ideas off the paper and around the world by developing Web comics.

Creative expression, visual resonance, literary stylings, and viewpoint flexibility have a lot to offer that’s fun, stimulating to mind and senses, and encouraging of adolescent development. Picture it: the iceberg of options is way bigger than this tip we’ve just explored. And that’s the beauty of Teen Read Week: it’s the invitation to look inside and underneath and all around at the possibilities for reading for the fun of it. **YALS**



### Stand up for teen services with YALSA’s free advocacy tools!

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**E**-books, e-books, e-books; a day doesn't go by when there isn't a news story or library announcement related to this topic. It's clear that e-books are not the wave of the future; they are the present, and will play an increasingly big role in the future of libraries. E-books are the present not just for a lucky few, but for the millions who own an e-reader, a tablet, or a smartphone. As the devices capable of supporting e-reading proliferate, so too will the number of people (including teens) who have access to materials available in e-formats.

As e-reading evolves from a trend for libraries to be aware of to an established part of library services, it is critical for teen librarians to be aware of what's going on in the world of e-books and how teens are and will be using them. Teen librarians also need to become a part of the discussion about successfully integrating e-books into collection development, marketing, programming, and outreach. As we head into Teen Read Week™ 2011, with its focus on teens reading for the fun of it, it's a good time to think about the present and future of teens, libraries, and e-books.

## The Lay of the Land

Consider the following recent news:

- In February, *The New York Times* published an article entitled "E-Readers Catch Younger Eyes and Go in Backpacks," which included this information: "In 2010 young-adult e-books made up about six percent of the total digital sales for titles published by St. Martin's Press, but so far in 2011, the number is up to twenty percent . . ."<sup>1</sup>
- In April the Association of American Publishers reported that as of February 2011, "US publishers sold more e-books than they did books in

# Now Is the Time E-books, Teens, and Libraries

*By Linda W. Braun*

any other format, including paperbacks and hardcovers."<sup>2</sup>

- In the spring, Amazon made three announcements of interest: the Kindle was available, with ads, at a lower price—\$114, it is selling more Kindle ebooks than print books, and Kindle books will be available for library lending via Overdrive sometime in 2011.<sup>3</sup>

These are just a few examples of changes happening every day. Expect the price of e-reading devices to continue to drop, and more and more titles of interest to be available to teens in e-formats. Teens will continue to gain access to devices and materials to take advantage of the format.

## E-Reading and Collection Development

This is big. That's clear. This is changing libraries. That's clear. What might not be

so clear is what teen librarians need to know and focus on to make sure they are able to build strong e-book collections. Let's look at the similarities between physical book collection development and e-book collection development.

What's the same in collection development no matter the format? The teen librarian:

- Must know the community and constantly assess the needs and interests of teen customers;
- Has to regularly talk with teens to guarantee he or she knows what teens are looking for in the library collection in terms of formats, genres, and subject matter;
- Needs to use a variety of resources and tools to locate materials for the collection;
- Has to continually assess the collection, weeding titles that are no longer of value or interest;

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- Needs to make sure there is money in the budget to support the acquisition and maintenance of a strong collection of materials for teens.

If the above are the constants, what are the differences and how do they figure into the equation when focusing on digital formats?

- In an e-reading world, the age of a collection, what is missing from a collection, and where multiple copies are required is much less obvious. A librarian doesn't see materials as they are circulated or are returned or when walking through the stacks. As a result, e-collections require a different type of concerted effort than physical collections when it comes to assessment.
- In the early stages of e-reading collection development, it is easy for the teen librarian to miss being part of the collection development process. In some libraries, e-collection building is occurring outside of a specific department or specific customer focus. That means the teen librarian may not be aware of what's on order or even in the collection because she doesn't have any direct connection to developing it and may not be searching for and checking out items on her own.
- Popularity of materials is not as easily determined because teens may not be asking for books inside the library but simply placing titles on hold virtually.
- New titles that might be of interest to a teen audience are less obvious as teens may search a catalog virtually, and if a new title of interest is not found simply leave it at that. No asking the librarian face-to-face to buy the item or help access it via interlibrary loan.
- As agreements with vendors stand now, many libraries are licensing e-materials and do not own the

materials as they do traditional physical content. This means that vendors and publishers have more control over use and access.

While the above list might make teen librarians throw up their hands and say, "I hate everything 'e,'" it's time to accept that these materials are a part of collections and acknowledge that now is the time to think about what teen librarians need to do to be just as successful in building digital collections as they have been with the physical collection. Or, if there have been weaknesses, the new technologies could provide a golden opportunity to renew capabilities, services, and commitment to excellence.

### How To Do It

- Make sure to be a part of the library's collection development process. Don't just assume teen e-books are being added to the collection or that the books that are being added are the ones in which teens are interested.
- As licensing instead of ownership is the norm when it comes to e-content for libraries, it's important to understand licensing agreements and keep abreast of when changes to licenses occur. The terms of these agreements may even affect collection development choices.
- Make sure an adequate and fair amount is being spent on e-books for teens.
- You might need some statistics to back up what you say is required in an e-collection for teens. Get those statistics by finding out who in your community has the ability to read in e-formats. Don't just look at who owns Kindles or Nooks or iPads. Also pay attention to those who use smartphones since apps are available for reading library books on those devices. Think long term and assess

trends; don't just pay attention to the current picture. Look at global statistics about the sales and use of e-reading materials and devices and about the use of e-readers by teens and adults. Even if you aren't finding a huge amount of e-reading among teens today, it's very likely that those numbers will grow quickly over the next several months as the hardware, apps, and content spread.

- Pay attention to the library e-catalog. Look at reports of what's circulating and not circulating. Know what's on hold and how many holds there are on each item.
- Browse through the catalog yourself and take a look at what's available and how teens need to search the catalog to find what they might be interested in reading.
- Look at the collection in the e-catalog just like you would the physical collection. Look at different areas in fiction and nonfiction and look to see what is and isn't available. Be resourceful; don't assume a hole isn't pluggable. Cast a wide net to see what is possible.

Begin to think about how the print and e-collections will live together. For example, as the teen library collection grows on the e-side, what does that mean for maintaining titles in physical form? Is it necessary to have all titles in both formats? Think about when it's wise to have a title just in the e-version, when it's necessary to have titles in both e and physical format, or when the only format needed is the physical one. This isn't so different than what has been happening to reference collections. As more and more materials become available electronically, physical reference collections shrink. The same is likely to happen to the physical circulating book collection. Start thinking about that now.

Remember, it's just as important to "walk through" the virtual stacks on a regular basis as it has been to walk through the physical stacks.

## Marketing and Outreach in the e-World

It is important not only to walk through the virtual stacks to find what is and isn't available to teens but also to walk through the virtual stacks to determine what needs to be marketed to the young adult audience. With a physical collection it's possible to pull books off of the shelves and put them on display, in the library or even somewhere else in the community. What's the equivalent, or new ways, for a teen librarian to promote e-materials successfully? Some ideas:

- Use social networks to highlight great titles. For example, post a compelling sentence from a new book for teens a few times a week on Twitter. Remember to add a link to the e-catalog in the tweet.
- Have teens tweet and write Facebook posts about materials available in e-formats. Teens might review books they've read in e-format, on Twitter or Facebook.
- Have teens create screencasts about how to use the e-catalog to find materials and place materials on hold. Teens might also create screencasts on how to download an e-book and get it working on a device. These screencasts could be posted in multiple places from the library Web site to YouTube to teen personal Facebook spaces.
- Investigate whether or not it's possible to have new titles, or other titles that deserve extra attention, highlighted within the library's e-catalog. Whenever possible, use the pages of the e-catalog to act as a display venue for the teen collection.
- Use QR Codes in the library, on the library Web site, on library e-catalog pages, and so on to give teens easy access to lists of materials available in e-format.
- Create a Glog that highlights e-materials that teens can access from their social spaces. A good example of this is the *Dystopian YA Glog* created

by Katherine Bowers, <http://katherinebowers.edu.glogster.com/dystopian-ya>. The titles Katherine included on the Glog are not e-format specific; however, such a Glog could easily be modified to focus just on e-titles.

As more and more materials are added to the collection that are not in physical form, it's likely librarians will discover that they are spending less time on the usual physical collection chores—looking for materials, shelving materials, shelf reading, and so on. This means that more time will be available for improving teen outreach and collection development.

Teen librarians will be able to spend more time connecting with other youth-serving organizations to learn about their needs and the needs of teens. More time will also be available for learning more about teens' favorite e-content technologies, which will enhance collection development decision making. The time can also be spent talking directly to teens either in the library, in virtual spaces, in schools, or in other community locations to learn what they specifically want and need in library e-collections.

## Programming in the World of e

Many libraries are already hosting virtual book discussion groups for teens using blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. With new e-reading apps such as Copia and Inkling, for example, it is possible to interact with others while reading an e-book. In a book discussion group, as the librarian and teens read the book, they highlight passages that are of interest and make notes about what they like and don't like. All those involved see these interactions in real time and can respond to the highlights and notes, participating in a conversation from right inside each person's digital copy of the book.

This new form of book discussion is not yet easily accomplished with the

software typically used to access most library books, which will change as the idea of app-based social reading takes off. For example, Amazon has already announced that when their materials are available for library lending, those checking out materials will be able to make annotations inside checked-out items.

There are concerns within the library community about user privacy with notes and highlighting within a book. However, the two apps already mentioned, Copia and Inkling, have designed their software so that those taking notes and highlighting passages in an e-book can determine who gets to see the highlights and notes. A librarian can set up an e-book discussion group so that only those taking part in the group are able to see each other's notes and highlights.

Think about the opportunities available when teens can take part in a discussion group while actually reading a book. For example, the ability to discuss with others something in a book at the time an idea strikes, not two weeks later, helps guarantee that a teen is able to articulate thoughts about a book successfully. This is just one example of the kind of programming and interaction that will be possible as e-books and e-book apps become more commonly used. It's time to get familiar with the ideas of real-time social reading so that when the technology comes to libraries, you'll be ready to launch programs.

## Teen Library Space, the e-Collection, and the Future

Imagine the world in which e-books for teens are the major part of the library collection. What happens to the teen space then? In an e-centric world, the space you currently use for most physical materials—books, magazines, tables, and chairs—is greatly diminished. That space can then become something newly interesting and exciting. It's a space in which you can provide opportunities for teens to create

content using computers, movie making and recording software, writing apps, and more. It's a space where teens can collaborate on projects together, from homework to fan-fiction. It's a space in which teens can hang out with digital devices—their own or the library's. Perhaps they'll come to play a digital game, passing a device around to friends as each one takes a turn. Or perhaps a teen wants to read a library book on his own device, but wants some face-to-face contact while reading. He brings his device to the library and reads while sitting with friends in the teen area. A passage he reads cracks him up so he hands the device to a friend to show what's so funny. The screen is large enough that they can both look at the passage together and point out their favorite lines to each other.

As e-collections grow, teen librarians will have great opportunities to imagine new ways to connect with and support young adult customers.

It might not hurt—as hokey as it sounds—to close your eyes and think about your entire collection being in

e-format. Imagine what that would mean for your space, your outreach and marketing, and your programming and collection development. Can you picture it? Does it seem exciting? I hope so. If not, find a way to make it exciting. Otherwise, how will you serve teens as effectively tomorrow as you do today? It can be done. Now is the time! **YALS**

### Resources

Copia  
[www.thecopia.com](http://www.thecopia.com)  
(accessed May 25, 2011).  
Inkling  
[www.inkling.com](http://www.inkling.com)  
(accessed May 25, 2011)

### References

1. Julie Bosman, "E-Readers Catch Younger Eyes and Go in Backpacks," *The New York Times*, February 4, 2011, [www.nytimes.com/2011/02/05/books/05ebooks.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/05/books/05ebooks.html) (accessed April 23, 2011).
2. Marjorie Kehe, "E-book sales overtake paperbacks in February" *Christian Science Monitor*, April 15, 2011, [www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2011/0415/E-book-sales-overtake-paperbacks-in-February](http://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2011/0415/E-book-sales-overtake-paperbacks-in-February) (accessed April 23, 2011).
3. Laura Indvik, "Amazon Announces Cheaper, \$114 Kindle With Ads," *Mashable*, April 11, 2011, <http://mashable.com/2011/04/11/kindle-withspecial-offers/> (accessed April 23, 2011); Jason Kincaid, "That was Fast: Amazon's Kindle eBook Sales Surpass Print (It Only Took Four Years)," *TechCrunch*, May 19, 2011, <http://techcrunch.com/2011/05/19/that-was-fast-amazons-kindle-ebook-sales-surpass-print-it-only-took-four-years/> (accessed May 25, 2011); Michael Kelley, "Librarians Hope for a 'Seamless Experience' With Amazon's Kindle" *Library Journal*, April 22, 2011, [www.libraryjournal.com/lj/home/890302-264/librarians\\_hope\\_for\\_a\\_seamless.html.csp](http://www.libraryjournal.com/lj/home/890302-264/librarians_hope_for_a_seamless.html.csp) (accessed April 23, 2011).



## YALSA's Third Thursday Webinars

**60 minute webinars on timely topics. Presented by experts. Commercial free.**

Upcoming webinars:

Aug. 18: From 140 Characters to 10 Pages: Teens, Social Media and Information Literacy

Sept. 15: Tweet, Like, Link: Creating a Social Media Policy for Your Library

Webinars cost \$39 for YALSA members, \$49 for nonmembers. Group rates cost \$195.

### Webinars 24/7:

All archived webinars are free for members. They're posted two months after the live presentation in the For Members Only section of the website.

Learn more at [www.ala.org/yalsa/webinars](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/webinars)

Each year, Teen Read Week™ encourages teens to pick up a book and read for the fun of it. Entice teens with an artistic and cinematic take on the 2011 Teen Read Week theme, *Picture It! @ Your Library*.

Bryant, Jen. *Pieces of Georgia*. New York: Knopf, 2006; ISBN-13: 9780375832598; 166p; \$15.60.

Georgia is an artist, just like her mother was, and seeing her with a sketchbook is painful for her father. An anonymous gift of an art museum membership and the encouragement of her school counselor give Georgia the push she needs to explore art and reach out to her father.

Calonita, Jen. *Secrets of My Hollywood Life: On Location*. New York: Little, Brown, 2008; ISBN-13: 978-0316154406; 256p; \$7.99.

Media darling Kaitlin Burke is starring in a movie with her favorite director and enjoying her new relationship with Austin Myers. But the return of an old flame and a scheming publicist could spell disaster.

Carter, Ally. *Heist Society*. New York: Disney/Hyperion, 2010; ISBN-13: 9781423116394; 287p; \$16.99.

Kat Bishop conned her way into an exclusive prep school to avoid being involved in the family business (art theft). But now her father is being accused of pulling off a heist Kat knows he didn't do, and she has no choice but to try and save him.

Crawford, Brent. *Carter's Big Break*. New York: Hyperion, 2010; ISBN-13: 9781423112433; 231p; \$15.99.

14-year-old Will Carter parlays his success in a school production into a starring role in an independent film being shot in his hometown. But a budding friendship with his co-star, superstar Hilary Idaho, may ruin his life before the film even wraps.

de la Cruz, Melissa. *Girl Stays in the Picture*. New York: Simon and Schuster,

2009; ISBN-13: 9781416960966; 432p; \$16.99.

Fresh from rehab, teen starlet Devon Dubroff is ready to restart her career. Spending the summer working on the island of Saint-Tropez with unlikely allies Livia Romero and Casey West, Devon might have her ticket back to the top.

Headley, Justina Chen. *North of Beautiful*. New York: Little, Brown, 2009; ISBN-13: 9780316025058; 373p; \$16.99.

High-school senior Terra channels her frustrations about her verbally abusive father, her complicated relationship with new friend Jacob, and the port-wine stain that dominates her face into mixed-media art.

Marcus, Kimberly. *Exposed*. New York: Random House, 2011; ISBN-13: 9780375866937; 272p; \$16.99.

Photography is everything for Liz, but when her best friend Kate raises an

unimaginable accusation against Liz's brother, her life is turned upside down.

Noel, Alyson. *Art Geeks and Prom Queens*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2005; ISBN-13: 9780312336363; 240p; \$9.99.

When Rio Jones is transplanted from New York City to southern California, she's content to befriend fellow art geeks Mason and Jas in AP Art, until queen bee Kristi offers her a chance at popularity. Rio quickly discovers that life at the top isn't all that it seems.

Runholt, Susan. *The Mystery of the Third Lucretia*. New York: Viking, 2008; ISBN-13: 9780670062522; 278p; \$16.99.

High-school freshmen and artists Kari and Lucas believe a Rembrandt recently discovered in Amsterdam is actually a fake. Getting to the bottom of the mystery will mean risking their lives.

# Picture It!

## Novels To Fuel Imagination and Spark Creativity

*By Julia K. Riley*

JULIA K. RILEY is a Library Technician serving teens at Pflugerville (Texas) Community Library. She is currently a member of the Advocacy Task Force and blogs about youth services at [juliakriley.com](http://juliakriley.com)



## Picture It! Novels To Fuel Imagination and Spark Creativity

Sandell, Lisa Ann. *A Map of the Known World*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2009; ISBN-13: 9780545069700; 273p; \$16.99.

Frustrated with life in her small town, high-school freshman Cora copes with the devastating loss of her older brother, Nate, by drawing maps and imagining herself in various locales. She connects with Damian, the boy who was in the car with her brother the night he died, and discovers

she and her brother may have had more in common than she thought.

Summers, Courtney. *Fall for Anything*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2010; ISBN-13: 9780312656737; 230p; \$9.99.

Eddie's father, a successful photographer, committed suicide without warning. While her mother is consumed by grief, Eddie latches on to her father's assistant, Culler Evans, in the hopes that he can provide an

explanation for her father's last desperate act.

Whelan, Gloria. *See What I See*. New York: HarperTeen, 2011; ISBN-13: 9780061255458; 199p; \$16.99.

Kate Tapert is a talented artist with a scholarship to an art school in Detroit. All she needs is a place to stay, so she shows up on the doorstep of her estranged and reclusive artist father, Dalton Quinn, in what turns out to be a life-altering decision. **YALS**



here's  
your  
chance  
to get  
involved

### Volunteer for a YALSA Committee or Task Force!

Starting this fall, YALSA begins appointing new jury and committee members—and we need your help!

- Make sure your YALSA membership is up-to-date! We can only offer committee appointments to current members.
- Fill out the Selection Committee Volunteer Form at [www.ala.org/yalsa/membership](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/membership) by September 30.
- Contact the chair of the committees or task forces you're interested in, and let them know! Names and contact information are available at the "Governance" link on the left-hand side at [www.ala.org/yalsa](http://www.ala.org/yalsa).
- Selection Committee members are expected to attend Midwinter Meetings and Annual Conferences during their term of appointment, so plan your schedule accordingly.
- Virtual spots on task forces are also available.

**Find more ways to make the most of your YALSA membership at [www.ala.org/yalsa/membership](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/membership)!**

**T**his article describes a program created when Heather was planning a trip during the summer months. However, it would be a great program to adapt as a Teen Read Week™ activity. The trip doesn't even have to be a real one, like Heather's was. You could pick a country or city, do your research, and ask the teens to use their imaginations to Picture It: Where in the World Is Your Librarian?

**Heather:** I was ready to leave for a couple of weeks of traveling through India and Nepal. As the supervisor of the Youth Services area at a busy public library, everything that could be done ahead of time was finished, schedules made, tasks assigned, and leave slips turned in almost six months before. Then it hit me. I was chatting with my colleague Stephanie, and we joked about the questions she and the other Youth Services staff would get from our tweens and teens about my missing status. Without question, when one of the Youth Services staff is away, it is noticed. Let me clarify—it is NOTICED. It becomes an onslaught several times each day—the questions—“Where is (name here)?” “When will they be back?” “What are they doing?” The close relationship we have with our tweens and teens is a definite.

The library is next door to a middle school, the city's Alternative school, and a community center, and is down the street from a high school. Packed in neatly among these youth-serving branches of the city, the library is conveniently located on this unofficial campus, serving a bustling community of youth, the majority being teens, many of them at-risk teens. The Youth Services staff members are more than just librarians to the youth in our community. We are their advocates, after-school chatting partners, board-game challengers, pep talkers, and even friends. Why not turn my vacation into something that not only I would

# Picture It: Where in the World Is Your Librarian?

## A Bibliographic Experiment

*By Heather Blicher and Stephanie Bedell*

remember but also the teens would too—and give staff a chance to try an experiment in a different approach to bibliographic instruction, normally difficult to make entertaining for our crowd, by introducing and instructing them in the use (and existence) of library databases and other trusted Web sites. The plan became to create clues to guide

the teens on a search to specific library databases and public Web sites, all with the goal of exposing them to different resources they may have never used before, but hopefully would use in the future.

The rules for the “Where in the World Is Your Librarian?” contest were quickly put together:

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**HEATHER BLICHER** is a librarian located in Virginia Beach, Virginia. She is a passionate advocate for teen services in libraries. She looks forward to her next travel adventure and finding ways to engage teens with library resources.

**STEPHANIE BEDELL** is a Library Assistant for Chesapeake Public Library (Virginia). She will complete her Master's Degree in Library and Information Science this summer. She loves the challenges and rewards of working with at-risk youth and hopes to continue advocating for young people for many years to come.

## Picture It: Where in the World Is Your Librarian? A Bibliographic Experiment

- You must follow the clue directions; no shortcuts or cheating by getting the answer without completing the clue! Youth Services staff will determine if you get a ticket.
- Every time you complete a clue and it is correct, you get a ticket to fill out.
- There will be a total of ten clues.
- You cannot backtrack and complete clues from previous days to get more tickets.
- Three winners will be drawn at random at the end of the contest. You can only win once, but the more clues you have completed, the more chances you have to win. (The prizes would be various trinkets I brought back from the trip.)
- One clue will be given out per day (except weekends when one clue will be given out on Friday for the entire weekend).

Before I left for my trip, I wrote up the clues and Stephanie created bookmark-size handouts with the clues ready for distribution.

Examples of clues:

Clue #1: Where is Heather?

Go to [www.infopeake.org](http://www.infopeake.org)  
 Scroll over "Books and More" and click on "Online Books, Magazines, Newspapers, and More"  
 Scroll down to "World Culture"  
 Find "CultureGrams Online" and click on "search this database"  
 Click on "World Edition"  
 The first country Heather is visiting includes the word "Republic." Go to the search box and type in "republic." Go to page three of the search results, #52.  
 Report back to the Youth Services desk the name and capital of this country.

Answer: Republic of India and Delhi

Clue #2: Stay healthy, Heather!

Go to the Web site for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Go to the middle of the page and click on "Travelers' Heath"

In the "Destinations" box, scroll down to India and click "Go"

Scroll down to the section on "Malaria"  
 Report back to the Youth Services desk with one of the three best ways Heather can avoid getting sick with malaria.

Answer:

- Take a prescription antimalarial drug
- Use insect repellent and wear long pants and sleeves to prevent mosquito bites
- Sleep in air-conditioned or well-screened rooms or use bed nets

Clue #6: Colorful City of Jaipur

Go to the Lonely Planet travel Web site  
[www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)

In the search box under the "Lonely Planet" logo at the top of the page, type "Jaipur" and click "Go"

Click on "Jaipur-Overview"

Read the short article entitled "Introducing Jaipur" and report back to the Youth Services desk with what color Heather will find this famous city to be (Answer: Pink).

Clue #7: Help Heather find her elephant!

Heather was taking an elephant ride to the Amber Fort and lost her elephant.

Go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)  
 Scroll over the top of the Web site and click on "more"

Click on "Translate"

In the box, type "I lost my elephant."

In the "Translate from" box, click on "English"

In the "Translate into" box, click on "Hindi"

Now click "Translate" and listen to the translation.

Report back to the Youth Services desk and tell them how Heather can say "I lost my elephant" in Hindi.

Clue #8: Will Heather have good weather?

Tomorrow, Heather is planning on walking to a temple in Kathmandu and needs to know what the weather will be like.

Go to The Weather Channel Web site  
[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

In the search box, type "Kathmandu, Nepal"

Click "Find Weather"

Report back to the Youth Services desk what the weather will be like in Kathmandu, Nepal tomorrow.

Clue #10: Welcome home Heather!

Go to a Time Zone Converter/ Calculator  
[www.timedial.net/world-time-difference-calculator](http://www.timedial.net/world-time-difference-calculator)

Next to the house icon, scroll down to choose "United States" and "Virginia"  
 Next to the globe icon, scroll down to choose "Nepal"

Report to the Youth Services desk and tell them the time difference between Virginia and Nepal. How tired will Heather be when she gets back to Virginia?

Answer: nine hours and forty-five minutes and VERY tired

**Stephanie:** While Heather started her twenty-four hour journey to reach Delhi, I set the contest in motion. To draw attention to it, I set out a sign we had created listing the rules and placed it on top of the Youth Services desk, along with another sign to draw attention to the contest to encourage the tweens and teens to inquire about it at the Youth Services desk. Since we know our young patrons love winning prizes, I placed a large glass bowl that contained the prize slips at a

prominent place on top of the desk, hoping they would ask about it.

I made each clue into a bookmark and color-coded them according to the day they would be used. I also made an answer guide to keep up at the Youth Services desk so that any staff member at the desk could give out prize slips if necessary. I encouraged all library staff to help our patrons should they get stuck at various points in the clue, but stressed the importance of letting them find the answer. In other words, we told staff to make sure they avoided taking over the search for our patrons.

## The Results

Although our library has approximately thirty to forty different youth of varying ages in the youth space on each day throughout the summer, about fifteen or so show up every day to use the computer or hang out with their friends; we call this group our “regulars.” For this contest we targeted our regulars first, simply because we chat with them daily and knew they would be in the best position to participate fully in the contest. Most of our regulars knew about Heather’s trip and tried to get us to reveal the location. Their curiosity allowed us to pitch the contest to them before it began while simultaneously sparking their interest even more by refusing to answer their questions. Therefore, I encountered very few problems getting them to participate on the first day. Many of the tweens and teens, regardless of whether they were regular visitors to the library, wanted to know the location of Heather’s trip.

After the first day, the excitement wore off a bit, so I counted more on our regulars to keep up with the contest. A few participants, in particular, excitedly requested a clue every day and diligently followed the steps to get a prize ticket for the bowl. To reach some of our quieter teens, or ones that do not normally willingly chat with staff, the Youth Services staff would roam around the children’s area and teen room with the clue bookmarks and talk up the program. We approached them with the contest in this way on the day we had a clue leading to the Lonely Planet Web site as well as the day the clue instructed our patrons to use Google’s translate feature. The teens seemed to really enjoy the Lonely Planet Web site. We noticed them clicking around different parts of the Web site, which gave us the opportunity to discuss ways they might be able to use that particular Web site in the future. The teens were less interested in the Google Translate clue because it involved potential embarrassment while trying to pronounce “I lost my elephant” in Hindi. However, the tweens loved learning about Google Translate. Initially, they were hesitant to try and pronounce the phrase in Hindi, but once I showed them how to listen to a pronunciation, they were practicing ways to say “I lost my elephant” in Hindi, Vietnamese, French, and many other languages as well. I captured their pronunciation on video for Heather to view when she got back; we knew she would enjoy it.

A couple of the clues gave the teens some difficulty, but library staff willingly stepped in and helped them find the information in those cases. For the most part, the clues which caused them to struggle were the ones that required them to

use the databases available through the library Web site. Many of the youth were largely unaware of the library’s databases. Their difficulty gave library staff the opportunity to go over the databases with them and show them how to use the search features available on the database. One of the databases they searched was under our “Homework Help” category, which gave us the chance to covertly mention the reliability of the information on those databases. We are hopeful that the next time they get stuck on a school assignment, they will turn to the library databases for resources.

Even though almost all the tweens and teens we talked to about the contest were interested in Heather’s whereabouts, some were just too engrossed in games on the computer or checking their Facebook or MySpace to be bothered with the contest. We had difficulty trying to convince these patrons that the clues were quick and exceptionally easy. We did persuade a couple to try a clue, but for the most part, they were far more interested in their own internet exploits.

**Heather:** In the end, the three prize slips were randomly selected. One young man was extremely excited to choose a carved wooden elephant as his prize, another a string of brightly painted elephants and bells to hang up for good luck, and the last prize to a TAG member who received an intricate bead necklace bought from a man who was also selling photographs of his monkeys. We hope all of the participants of our “Where in the World is your Librarian?” contest took away a broader knowledge of not only the informative, reliable databases the library offers but also a better understanding of the myriad of resources at their disposal on the Web. YALS



# feature

Hot Spot: Teen Read Week

## Funding Problems? Your Teens Can Make a Difference

*By Barbara Klipper*

The library was closing, but as regular users checked out their materials and started to leave, teens entered the building in ones and twos. Some came by themselves while others were dropped off by parents who would return at midnight to pick them up. All were clutching papers and envelopes of money. They were there for the first ever Teen Read-In fundraiser, prepared to spend hours reading to help the library they care so much about.

Like many public libraries across the country, The Ferguson Library in Stamford, Connecticut, has faced budget problems over the past few years. Funding from the city decreased significantly for fiscal year 2010-2011, necessitating cuts in branch and library hours. Staff agreed to furloughs and other draconian measures to avoid layoffs and branch closures. The library was told that it needed to look to private citizens and organizations to make up the budget shortfall.

Enter T-MAD (Teens Making a Difference), which has been the library's teen advisory board since 1998. Hearing about the library's financial situation, one member suggested that the group hold a walkathon to raise money. Everyone jumped on the idea. They wanted to do something to help the library through this difficult time.

After the T-MAD meeting, I looked into the feasibility of a teen library fundraiser. A walkathon would involve permits and access to the outdoors: a logistical challenge. Considering other types of pledge fundraisers, I thought a Read-In might be just the thing. Teens would collect sponsorships from family and friends and then spend a period of time reading at the library. The event would not be hard to plan or control. It would highlight reading and could take place in the library building. I took the idea to my supervisor, the library's administration, and T-MAD. Everyone liked it and planning

began for the first ever Teen Read-In fundraiser to support The Ferguson Library. Although this particular event took place in the Spring, it would be a natural fit with Teen Read Week™, with its focus on reading for the fun of it.

Every year the library hosts a special end-of-year program for T-MAD. Called a "lock-in," at this event the teens spend a Friday night in June, from 6 P.M. to midnight, eating and playing at one of the library branches. The teens love being the only people in the building and the opportunity to stay until midnight makes the program even more appealing. In planning the Read-In, we borrowed from the lock-in format and scheduled the event on a Friday night from 6 P.M. to midnight. At the suggestion of T-MAD, participants in the Read-In were given a choice of three reading times: 6 to 9 P.M., 9 P.M. to midnight, and 6 P.M. to midnight. Having an optional early end time made it easier for younger teens and those with busy schedules the following day to participate.

The T-MAD members took ownership of the event, naming it Read a Book, Save Our Library and sharing many ideas on how to structure and promote the Read-In. They posed for photos for the flyer and other materials, which were designed by library staff with T-MAD input. The flyer explained the event and promised a \$50.00 gift card to the local mall to the teen who raised the most money. In addition to the flyer, we produced a registration form, a pledge sheet for teens to keep track of their sponsors, and a bookmark that explained why the library needed money on one side and how to ask for contributions on the other.

As the Read-In approached, the community began to take notice. Several online local news sites posted articles about the event. One reporter came to the regular monthly T-MAD meeting to talk to members about the Read-In. Another

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**BARBARA KLIPPER** is a Youth Services Librarian with The Ferguson Library in Stamford, Connecticut. She has had the privilege of working with the teens of T-MAD since the group's beginning in 1998.

reporter interviewed a librarian and a T-MAD member on the telephone and then came to the event itself at 10:30 P.M. Her after-event online posting included video interviews of teens who attended the Read-In. One adult user of the library was so taken with the idea that she offered to bake cookies for the teens to eat during the Read-In. She brought homemade chocolate chip cookies and Rice Krispie treats, which disappeared quickly.

Registrations were slow to arrive at the library, and the librarians weren't sure if many teens would choose to participate. But we saw teens we knew in the library and they assured us that they were coming, so we began to relax, but only a little. Those of us who work with teens know that they can be impulsive and often change their plans at the last minute if a better offer comes along. We hoped this wouldn't happen with the Read-In, and it didn't.

On March 25, 2011, thirty-one teens came to the Harry Bennett branch of The Ferguson Library for the Read-In. Some brought in \$20.00, some \$100.00 or more. One teen arrived with more than \$400.00. A teen who couldn't come gave a donation in advance. All of the contributions were significant, regardless of size, and the teens went outside their comfort zones to ask for donations. One teen got \$1.00 from a sibling, and another brought in a number of \$1.00 gifts from friends. One boy asked his teachers. A girl collected \$50.00 from a family that does not have a lot of disposable income, a serious and heartfelt donation. All together, the teens turned in

\$1858.00 in contributions that evening, with more donated after the event. Since some of the attendees found out about the Read-In at the last minute and others who were interested in competing for the gift card wanted a chance to bring in more money, the fundraising deadline was extended to April 15. The total raised by the teens exceeded \$2000.00.

The fact that the teens were able to collect this amount of money was amazing, but equally important and inspiring is the goodwill the event generated and the impact it had on the teens. They had fun, enjoyed the quiet and the chance to read for pleasure, and now feel even more connected to the library. Each participant did the Read-In in his or her own way. Some sat in comfortable chairs, while others sprawled on the floor as only teenagers can do. Still others camped out in the branch's story circle. Most, but not all, joined in the optional activity breaks, which were held in the branch's auditorium: a chance to stretch and burn off some energy after long hours of reading. The library's President stopped by and made a point of speaking personally to each of the teens. They were touched that he took the time to do this, and his attention cemented these young people's attachment to the library.

Food was available all evening at the "Café," a conference room equipped with a buffet of snacks, small tables, and chairs. Some of the teens set up shop in the "Café" so they could eat while they read. Others left notes on half-eaten food and went back

to their favorite reading spot in other parts of the library. The one exception to the "no eating around the library policy" was a container of organic lollipops, which the teens could suck on anywhere in the building. Several T-MAD members said that the lollipops were one of their favorite parts of the evening. Go figure.

At the April T-MAD meeting, members talked about the Read-In after they watched themselves in the online video interviews. They shared what they liked about the event and what they felt could be improved. They had ideas for new and better ways to promote the Read-In. They asked to write the thank you letter for the teens who participated, instead of having acknowledgments produced by library staff. They enjoyed the event, felt proud of themselves, and are determined to continue to support the library. When asked if they wanted to do the Read-In again next year, their answer was a resounding and heartfelt "YES!"

Our response to these young people is an equally heartfelt "Thank You." Their actions made a difference and demonstrated that they consider their public library an essential part of their community. They reminded us that the work we do with and for teens and other young people not only makes a difference in their lives but also is recognized and appreciated. The thought of their support is something we can hold onto as we continue to face hard times and fight for the funding that our libraries need to survive. YALS

# Beyond *Forever*

## The Next Generation of Young Women Protagonists' Sexual Motivations in Contemporary Young Adult Novels

*By Caroline McKinley*

**D**uring the last decade, young adult literature has evolved. In the past, young women protagonists were often narrowly depicted as “fending off boys’ advances,” lacking desire, or facing punitive consequences because of their sexual activity.<sup>1</sup>

More recent professional studies and reviews have recognized authors for writing novels that enlighten teen readers because their stories mirror reality. Still, there hasn’t been enough thematic exploration to uncover how teen women can see themselves in the narrative portrayals of these sexual relationships.

In examining twelve novels published in the last ten years, old-fashioned stereotypes are refuted in the hearts and

minds of thirteen fully developed heterosexual female protagonists. Emotions can be hurt and goals unmet, but unwilling female participants no longer dominate these storylines. Their reasons for sex are as varied as life itself.

Sex is a large component of teen life. According to a 2007 survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 45.7 percent of high school females and 47.9 percent of high school males, age fifteen to nineteen, have engaged in sexual intercourse.<sup>2</sup> A 2002 CDC study revealed that fifty-five percent of teen boys and fifty-four percent of teen women engage in oral sex.<sup>3</sup>

In searching for the answers behind these numbers, the Sexuality Information

Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) asks: “How do teens make decisions about when and whether to have sex?” Their answer: “There is very little research into what motivates young people’s decisions regarding sexual behavior.”<sup>4</sup>

Where scientific data has its limits, thematic analysis of these novels might offer further insight beyond incomplete responses such as: “‘met the right person . . . the other person wanted to . . . just curious . . . hoped it would make the relationship closer’ and ‘many of their friends already had’” that the 2000 survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and Seventeen Magazine were able to uncover.<sup>5</sup>

In her insightful article, “The Secret Source: Sexually Explicit Young Adult Literature as an Information Source,” Amy Pattee states: “Young Adult literature that deals explicitly with adolescent sexuality and that situates discussions of sexuality with a developmentally and socially relevant context can become a valuable source of information for teens” and in many cases, adults as well.<sup>6</sup>

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**CAROLINE MCKINLEY** is a recent graduate from the Master’s in Library Science program at Queens College. As an actor in several television movies dealing with teen issues, such as *Girl Positive* and *Fab Five: The Texas Cheerleader Scandal*, she loves working with teens and the real life stories that surround them. She is currently writing a fictional biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe for YA readers.

## Beyond *Forever*

Michael Cart applauds the contributions of young adult author Judy Blume. Her groundbreaking novel *Forever* (1975) uncovered the possibility of teens enjoying the physical act of sex without obsessing over negative consequences.<sup>7</sup> However, these later stories go farther in depicting the characters' entire world and its affects on their sexual lives. Cart wrote, "in . . . earlier YA fiction, it is the issue of sex that drives the action and motivates the character, not vice versa. The characters, in fact, are little more than cardboard conveniences, bodies like [*Forever's*] Sybil's—that can be manipulated by the author to perform the obligatory acts."<sup>8</sup>

*Forever* doesn't dig into Sybil's issues of low self-esteem and its connection to her sexual behavior. It merely has others mention her heavy weight and its relation to her need to feel loved. There isn't enough in the narrative revealing how Sybil feels from her own perspective. For instance, why does Sybil announce from her hospital bed in the maternity ward that she is getting an IUD because she has "no intention of giving up sex"?<sup>9</sup> This is an important missing piece, which should be addressed. Beth Younger writes: "in early texts, like Judy Blume's *Forever*, weight issues are deeply imbedded and barely acknowledged, in later texts, body image becomes an acknowledged and often crucial aspect of the characters' development."<sup>10</sup>

Daria Snadowsky reveals this development in her novel, *Anatomy of a Boyfriend*, when Dom thinks that her boyfriend, Wes, lost interest in her because of her "freshman fifteen."<sup>11</sup> Dom describes her physical insecurity to her best friend:

'Maybe I wasn't as smart or interesting as his New York friends. . . . Oh my God, do you think it was my freshman fifteen?' I think back to our Thanksgiving hookup. I must have

looked like such a cow while I was going down on him."<sup>12</sup>

Dom's refreshing honesty helps teens relate to her insecurity and heartache, a reality for many teens when breakups occur. As Ed Sullivan states, this is why it is important that:

Teens should see sex as both an emotional and physical experience, and one that is special and unique. To do otherwise is to trivialize it. In the fiction they read, teens should see that sex is a serious business.<sup>13</sup>

However, it is precisely because of the fact that life circumstances are unique that sex cannot always be special. To depict it any other way is to trivialize a teen's world. In fact, Zoe, in Mary Pearson's *A Room on Lorelei Street*, might agree by saying: "Yeah, sex is a serious business, but so too is putting food in your stomach and a clean, safe, roof over your head." In other words, while it is difficult to endorse Zoe's actions of selling herself to pay the rent, it is equally difficult to judge her.

## Self-Esteem

Learning to love themselves and not seek validation through sexual relations is a valuable discovery for teens and witnessed quite often in life and in these stories. Ken Setterington, youth advocate of the Toronto Public Library, believes that in young adult novels, "It's not just about sex but about being comfortable with who you are, about exploring the emotional side of being involved with someone, where that leads, whether you're ready, the distress when a relationship doesn't work out."<sup>14</sup>

A 2008 study, *Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self-Esteem*, surveyed girls (aged 8–17) nationwide. It revealed that seventy percent

believe they do not measure up and "seventy-five percent . . . reported engaging in negative and potentially harmful behavior . . ."<sup>15</sup>

Ann Kearney-Cooke, a psychologist and self-esteem expert, believes:

The new report from Dove confirms the importance of healthy self-esteem and the dangerous consequences that can arise when hang-ups about looks, academics, and popularity erode a girl's sense of self worth and acceptance.<sup>16</sup>

Considering that 45.7 percent of high school females have engaged in sexual intercourse and 54 percent of teen women have engaged in oral sex, it is important to examine the specifics of how this national crisis of low self-esteem affects sexual activity.<sup>17</sup>

Because these thirteen female protagonists have matured beyond Cart's earlier criticism as being mere "cardboard conveniences," an examination into the issue of self-esteem and other motivations of their sexual activity is possible. Furthermore, it is possible to achieve a greater understanding of these well-researched statistics by thematically addressing the following ten questions.

## Do Any Female Protagonists Have Sex to Increase Their Sense of Self-esteem or Gain Meaning in Their Lives?

Different degrees of enhancing self-esteem motivate the sex lives of twelve out of thirteen protagonists, or ninety-two percent of the sample.

In Sarah Dessen's *Dreamland*, Caitlin suffers from such an extreme case of low self-esteem and lost identity that she makes extreme choices to find herself. She had always lived in the shadow of her accomplished older sister, Cass. When that



shadow is lifted, Caitlin feels the warm light in the wildly attractive Rogerson beaming down on her. The physical abuse had not yet begun and Rogerson made Caitlin feel like “[she] was someone else. Not Cass . . . [she] took his wildness from him and tried to fold it into [herself], filling up the empty spaces all those second-place finishes had left behind.”<sup>18</sup> The attention he pays her intensifies her love for him. Caitlin believed:

There were so many things I already loved about him . . . He was so attentive, with one eye on me regardless of what else he was doing. Even with his back turned, he always seemed to know exactly where I was.<sup>19</sup>

Beth Younger demonstrates how “characters and readers internalize the gaze that reinforces female objectification.”<sup>20</sup> Rogerson’s gaze is the source for Caitlin’s newfound identity and confidence, which goes beyond the worth of her body. It defines her worth as a person.

Caitlin’s sense of importance is so intertwined with how Rogerson views her that the bond cannot be broken even after the physical abuse begins. After the first time he hit her, Caitlin understands:

I could have gotten out of the car and walked up to my house, leaving him behind forever . . . But the fact was that I loved Rogerson. It wasn’t just that I loved him, even: it was that I loved what I was when I was with him.<sup>21</sup>

Sadly, Caitlin is a fictional character that represents reality. The Liz Claiborne and Family Violence Prevention Fund Study discovered that partner violence has become increasingly prevalent in our world, and that one out of three teenage girls in America has been the victim of physical abuse or sexual abuse, or has faced threats of physical abuse by a

boyfriend or girlfriend.<sup>22</sup> Yet shame, fear, assumed guilt, low self-esteem and the need to feel loved keep many silent.<sup>23</sup>

Answering the question of why teen women stay in these relationships, the study reports:

Typically by the time the physical violence begins, her self-esteem is seriously damaged. When she doesn’t value herself, it is more likely that she’ll accept and put up with the physical abuse. Once her self-esteem has been broken down, it can be even harder for her to leave the relationship.<sup>24</sup>

Holly in *Nothing Like You*, Ellie in *Jumping off Swings*, Deanna in *Story of a Girl*, Zoe in *A Room on Lorelei Street*, Audrey in *Good Girls*, Dom in *Anatomy of a Boyfriend* and Nicolette in *A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl* all face moderately low self-esteem issues that they try to enhance through their sexual activity. They strive to be someone, to be wanted by someone and gain meaning in their lives through their sexual relations. However, in Ellen Wittlinger’s *Sandpiper*, Sandy’s high frequency of oral sex with many different boys illustrates a borderline case that isn’t as extreme as Caitlin’s, but more serious than the others.

By explaining how her oral sexual activity began, Sandy confirms the conflict of sexual relationships feeding self-esteem while devouring it at the same time.

It all started in the eighth grade. That year all of a sudden you had to have a boyfriend—you had to or you just felt worthless . . . Tony Phillips was my slave for two months. Some days I felt like a princess and some days I felt like a prostitute, but every day I felt popular.<sup>25</sup>

As soon as Sandy gets bored or becomes “anonymous” to these boys, she dumps all eleven of them. Her addiction of

using others to feed her self-worth unravels a jealous ex, who in turn attempts a violent sexual power trip over her.<sup>26</sup>

In Daria Snadowsky’s *Anatomy of a Boyfriend*, Dom’s need to feed her moderately low self-esteem yields instability in her behavior and circumstances. She is an academic achiever, a biology whiz kid, has good friends, and a great relationship with her parents. However, those successes soon take a backseat to Wes, the great-looking track star, who gives her life even more of a boost. The night before they have sex, Dom believes she has “discovered the meaning of life—to love and be loved.”<sup>27</sup>

She tells Wes why she wants to have sex: “I just want to be as physically close to you as I possibly can, you know? I want nothing separating us.”<sup>28</sup>

Her once independent identity becomes so defined by Wes that she uncharacteristically considers rejecting a full scholarship to Tulane to maintain this physical closeness and be with him at NYU. Dom says, “He singlehandedly screwed up my direction and priorities. Because of him, I’m scared of change for the first time in my life.”<sup>29</sup>

Aviva in *A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl*, Kylie in *Played*, and Tess in *Lost It* experience what are more mild self-esteem issues. For Aviva and Kylie it has mostly to do with their physical attractiveness. Tess, however, faces an additional need to feel better about her paranoid personality, which manifests itself into her doing and believing strange things.

Ben, the love of her life, loves the outdoors. Therefore, to increase her worth in his eyes, Tess battles her anxiety of wild animals by losing her virginity under a canoe, outside his family’s cabin in the middle of the winter wilderness. She remembers: “I felt dubious about losing my virginity outdoors. It seemed incongruent with who I was on so many levels.”<sup>30</sup> But to be with Ben, it is who she believes she must become.

## Do Any Protagonists Have Sex to Fill an Emotional Void or to Feel Alive?

Sometimes it is not ego and self esteem that need to be fed, but an emotional void. Five out of thirteen protagonists, or thirty-eight percent of these teens, need to replace this emptiness with the physical sensation of sex. All have faced emotional loss, either through parental death such as Holly in *Nothing Like You* and Zoe in *A Room on Lorelei Street* or in their lack of demonstrated parental love or understanding at home as Ellie in *Jumping off Swings*, Deanna in *Story of a Girl*, and, again, Zoe in *A Room on Lorelei Street*. They need to return to the land of the living, and their sexual activity is a source of vitality. But Tessa, in Jenny Downham's *Before I Die*, is facing her own mortality and has an added emptiness to fill.

Sixteen-year-old Tessa has leukemia and hungers to feel alive. She finds this with her neighbor Adam. She desires him physically and emotionally, describing him as the remedy for her emotional and physical pain:

Kissing Adam replaced it. Making love replaced that. . . . I've been in hospital all night. My head's stuffed with cotton. I'm clutching a bag full of antibiotics and painkillers, and my arm aches from two units of platelets . . . And yet, it's extraordinary how happy I feel.<sup>31</sup>

The sex that is an expression of their love doesn't feed her self-esteem. It feeds her life.

In Lauren Strassnick's *Nothing like You*, Holly faces the reality of parental mortality, and ends up losing her virginity on the same beach she used to enjoy with her mother, her best friend, who has died after a struggle with breast cancer. This emotional void has made her numb, and the physical pain of first-time sex helps revive her senses. It feeds a hunger that makes her feel "really

fantastic . . . the opposite of dead, what [she'd] been striving for."<sup>32</sup>

Zoe in Mary Pearson's *A Room on Lorelei Street* is pummeled on two fronts: her father's death and, like Deanna and Ellie, an emotionally withdrawn parent. Zoe's struggle for life-giving peace, away from her mother's morbid alcoholism, forces Zoe into making some tough sexual choices. Sex becomes a replacement for her father's love and life. Because ". . . she looked for that recognition after he died . . . She needed to hold it together in some way. If she could just get a small part of him back."<sup>33</sup>

## Do Any Female Protagonists Have Oral Sex or Sexual Intercourse to Control or Assert Power and Reinforce Their Identities?

The following four protagonists, or thirty-one percent of the sample, assert sexual control in order to feel more powerful and emotionally secure.

Nicolette in Tanya Stone's *A Bad Boy Can be Good for a Girl* describes it best when she says: "It's all about the power . . . If I say who and I say when and I say what then I have It."<sup>34</sup> So she always makes sure she has sex with guys from other high schools without any emotional connection. This way, her promiscuous reputation never leaves her vulnerable on her own home turf. But as soon as her heart gets involved with T.L., she questions herself: "I can feel my 'I say who and I say what' slipping. Who's got the power now? Is it still me?"<sup>35</sup>

In *Nothing Like You*, Holly's competitive edge is sharpened when Paul tells her that his other, beautiful girl friend Saskia, is frigid. When Holly learns that sex is so much better with her, she tells herself: "I loved this," not "I loved him." Because she doesn't love Paul, Holly just loves how her sexual prowess makes her feel like the winner.<sup>36</sup>

With Sandy in *Sandpiper* and Audrey in *Good Girls*, oral sex seems to replace sexual intercourse for similar reasons. It is a little more complicated with Audrey because she really loves Luke. This thematic analysis answers some important questions that scientific data regarding the CDC's research on oral sex was unable to reveal.

In her *USA Today* article, Sharon Jayson highlights a report issued by the CDC in 2005. The federal agency polled teens in the age range of 15–19 across the country and found that fifty-four percent of girls engaged in oral sex. The CDC also learned that twenty-five percent of teens who have only had oral sex still consider themselves virgins.<sup>37</sup>

Jayson illustrates how the CDC research was conducted:

The researchers did not ask about the circumstances in which oral sex occurred, but the report does provide the first federal data that offer a peek into the sex lives of American teenagers.<sup>38</sup>

However, by not asking about the "circumstances," the researchers missed a large piece of the puzzle. In examining the protagonists who engage in such activity, particularly stories like Ellen Wittlinger's *Sandpiper* and Laura Ruby's *Good Girls*, one begins to get a perspective of these "circumstances" to fill in the unknowns that the CDC researchers did not address. In delving into the fictional lives of Sandy and Audrey, one can get a better look than just a mere "peek" from the outside. The narrative enables us to be in their world and get inside their minds and emotions.

Jayson cites a study published in the journal *Pediatrics*, "supporting the view that adolescents believe oral sex is safer than intercourse, with less risk to their physical and emotional health."<sup>39</sup> It suggests, "teens have replaced sexual intercourse with sex."<sup>40</sup>

This is seen in greater detail in both Sandy and Audrey, who perceive it as a safe emotional substitute.

The CDC researchers admit to the limits of their statistical data because it “doesn’t help them understand the role oral sex plays in the overall relationship; nor does it explain the fact that today’s teens are changing the sequence of sexual behaviors so that oral sex has skipped ahead of intercourse.”<sup>41</sup>

Stephanie Sanders, associate director of the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction at Indiana University, also confesses that the CDC oral sex statistics do not give a complete picture of a teen’s mental and physical world. In an interview with Jayson, Sanders says:

All of us in the field are still trying to get a handle on how much of this is going on and trying to understand it from a young person’s point of view. Clearly, we need more information about what young people think is appropriate behavior, under what circumstances and with whom. Now we know a little more about what they’re doing but not what they’re thinking.<sup>42</sup>

A better understanding “from a young person’s point of view” and a better idea of “what they’re thinking” is enhanced when reading and discussing contemporary young adult novels, such as these. It is a great way to visualize their world so adults are not completely starting from a blank canvas.

After believing (incorrectly) that Luke has cheated on her, Audrey wants to shift the dynamics and establish power in the only way she thinks will keep him wanting her. She lets him go by performing a final ceremonial act of oral sex. She doesn’t have sexual intercourse this time because, as she says: “On the bed, he could work me up, peel off all the layers till there’s nothing left to cover me and it’s too hard to say no . . .

But I want to do something. Make him feel me. Make him beg me. Make him be the naked one.”<sup>43</sup>

At the party where the goodbye took place, someone used their cell phone and took a picture of Audrey performing oral sex. The photo travels the social network and when her father, a believer in the old-fashioned idea of male pursuit, sees it, he cannot “understand” that this was his own daughter’s decision, that she was not the victim of male aggression, but of her own ego’s power play and need to end things her way. “No Dad,” she says, “Nobody forced me.”<sup>44</sup>

Audrey silences this old-fashioned stereotype of the boy always pressuring the girl and, even her best friend, Ash, isn’t comfortable with that and says: “You should have said someone forced you.”<sup>45</sup>

Like Audrey, Sandy in *Sandpiper* refers to her oral sexual activity as a “sexual power trip.”<sup>46</sup> Yet, her need for dominance is not affected by love or physical desire. It is strictly a way to establish her self-worth. As she says: “It makes me feel like I’m in control. He needs me so much.”<sup>47</sup>

But Sandy’s need for making others desire her can only be enhanced if is not done at the expense of losing her identity of “technical virginity,” her emotional safety net; after all, she continuously emphasizes, she’s only “the queen of blow jobs.”<sup>48</sup>

### Do Any Protagonists Have Sex to Keep the Peace in the Relationship or As An Act of Physical Safety?

In *Dreamland*, Caitlin’s extreme case of low self-esteem and identity survival turn into a need to survive physically. “It got to be that sex was the only time [she] could count on being safe. And it never lasted long enough.”<sup>49</sup> She represents one out of thirteen protagonists, or eight percent of the sample.

### Do Any of the Protagonists Have Sex As An Act of Economic Survival?

In order to keep her place of peace, Zoe in *A Room on Lorelei Street* sells herself to the high-tipping customer at Murray’s Diner. She needs \$90 for the rent, a rent that will take her away from the constant “owing” she has always given others. She represents one out of thirteen protagonists, or eight percent of the sample.<sup>50</sup>

### Do Any Female Protagonists Have Sex Out of Fear of Losing Their Boyfriend?

Kylie in *Played* demonstrates this fear to a minimal degree. Once she learns her relationship with Ian was based on a fraternity dare, she stops the relationship cold.

At the young age of thirteen, Deanna in *Story of a Girl* is so lonely at home that the moderate fear of losing Tommy as a friend shapes her decision to have sex with him. Three years later, she realizes that she really just wanted the company when she was so lonely. “[The] sex part itself was just a trade-off, something [she] felt [she] had to give to get the other part.”<sup>51</sup>

Ellie in *Jumping off Swings* faces an extreme fear of losing any young man she has slept with, so much so that she continues to have sex in the hope that someone will stay around long enough to become her boyfriend.

These three protagonists represent 23 percent of the sample.

### Do Any Protagonists Have Sex Because They Believe They are in Love and Their Sex is An Expression of that Love?

Caitlin in *Dreamland*, Tessa in *Before I Die*, Zoe in *A Room on Lorelei Street*, both

Nicolette and Aviva in *A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl*, Audrey in *Good Girls*, Ellie in *Jumping off Swings*, Dom in *Anatomy of a Boyfriend*, Tess in *Lost It* and Kylie in *Played* all have sexual relations because they were in love or believed they were in love. This represents ten out of thirteen protagonists, or 77 percent.

Love is complicated. Even with all of Rogerson's physical abuse, Caitlin still has nightmares of trying to get to him while obstacles are being thrown in her way. Now in therapy, her psychiatrist tells her, "If you didn't love him, this never would have happened. But you did."<sup>52</sup>

Kylie also discovers that, even though sex with Ian began as a fraternity dare, she knows he loved her as much as she loved him and has the confidence to tell him:

"What happened between us was special for me and for you . . . Maybe you have turned out to be this sick, mean person, but the earlier stuff was true, too. You're not that good an actor."<sup>53</sup>

### Do Any Female Protagonists Have Sex Out of Pure Physical Need or Desire Without An Emotional Connection?

Nicolette (before she met T.L.), in *A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl* describes it best when she says, "Let's just leave the rest of the lovey-dovey crap out of it" and "it should be illegal for a body to feel this good state of mind."<sup>54</sup> Also, Tessa in *Before I Die*, Holly in *Nothing Like You*, Deanna in *Story of a Girl*, and Zoe in *A Room on Lorelei Street* have sexual experiences without any emotional connection and pure physical need or desire. This represents five out of thirteen protagonists, or thirty-eight percent.

Nevertheless, Tessa is troubled by having sex without any emotional

connection and asks her best friend Zoey: "If I have sex with a boy I don't even know, what does that make me? A slag?"<sup>55</sup> Tessa's best friend could also be speaking for the motivations of Nicolette, Deanna, Holly, and Zoe, when she responds, "No, it makes you alive."<sup>56</sup>

### Does Their Sexual Activity Make Any of the Protagonists Feel Emotionally or Psychologically Weakened or Demeaned?

Caitlin in *Dreamland* is the only one who is psychologically weakened by her relationship, in which sex obscured the problem, because "the pain didn't linger, easily overshadowed by how good it felt to lie in his arms afterward."<sup>57</sup> However, this doesn't depict a negative consequence of sex. To the contrary, it reveals a dangerous reality that can serve as a valuable vehicle for discussion so teens are aware of this dynamic of denial.

### Do the Female Protagonists Ever Grow or Learn Anything From Their Sexual Decisions or Become Empowered Afterward?

Except for Caitlin, twelve out of thirteen protagonists gain emotional maturity or become empowered after their sexual relationships. This represents 92 percent, which is quite the reverse from the criticism of earlier young adult literature depicting punitive fallout from sexual activity.

Even for Ellie in *Jumping off Swings*, it is literally when she feels the love of her own baby growing inside her, a baby she decides not to abort, that she realizes how love from within empowers. Suddenly her baby's life becomes

more important than her need to please others.

In saying "no" to the nurse when asked if she is ready to have an abortion, Ellie finally gains courage in making her own decisions without seeking outside approval or attention in which sex was a huge component. This isn't a political statement. It isn't the fact that she is having the baby, but the fact that it is her choice to do so. No one is pressuring her anymore. More important, she isn't pressuring herself. This new confidence gives her powerful insight on how she will handle her future relationships.

After Ellie has given her baby up for adoption, it is at her hospital bedside that her mother turns into the woman Ellie has always needed her to be. "This time, she doesn't turn away. She keeps hold of [Ellie's] hand and doesn't let go."<sup>58</sup>

Self-esteem expert Jess Weiner says, "We cannot underestimate just how vital words and actions of parents are in fostering positive self-esteem in girls." In fact, "sixty-seven percent of girls ages 13–17 turn to their mothers as a resource when feeling badly about themselves."<sup>59</sup> This is also witnessed in the no-nonsense support and love Kylie in *Played* can count on from her mother Jillian, who, from the very beginning of her daughter's relationship, accepts the reality of teen sexuality without judgment and offers her daughter sound advice on staying emotionally and physically healthy. Kylie's beautiful strength of character from her mother's love outshines Ian's cruelty.

This support can be as simple as Nicolette's mother taking the day off: "'A Mental Health Day. And we can talk,' she says." Then Nicolette remembers: "I smile. I nod. I guess for a while there I forgot. I do have a friend in this world after all."<sup>60</sup>

Interestingly for Zoe in *A Room on Lorelei Street*, the power of motherly love works in reverse. Zoe's rejection of a



selfish, unloving mother, and the love Zoe has for her little brother Kyle, overpower her shame in selling her body and prevent her from killing herself. This love will help her grow into the woman she can become.

## Books Can Help Build a Bridge

These thematic findings are by no means intended to replace data from reputable organizations that provide valuable education on sexuality and health. But as the SIECUS states:

Unfortunately, there is a limited amount of scientific data on adolescent sexual behavior. Research designed to examine this subject is often controversial, as adults seem to falsely fear that asking young people about sex is tantamount to giving them ideas and encouragement.<sup>61</sup>

This is why real-life situations depicted in young adult literature should be considered as an enhancement of knowledge. Moving beyond the “fear” of asking questions about teen sexuality is essential to gaining much needed information.

Jess Weiner believes in the power of adults creating a steady “conversation of encouragement, honesty, and openness” and how “it can definitely help girls gain confidence and reach their full potential . . . . However, it can be challenging because adolescence is not typically a time when girls are reaching out to their parents and speaking candidly.”<sup>62</sup>

So what is the solution to this roadblock? Ken Setterington believes that books can be a great start to bridging the gap in communication.

That doesn’t mean you can leave a pile of books beside your kids’ beds and tell them

to have a good life. But a good book . . . offers the opportunity for discussion to broach topics that might not otherwise come up.<sup>63</sup>

The reason is that “young people are more likely to give credence to the decisions of an empathetic character than to a parental lecture on, say, pregnancy risks and birth control.”<sup>64</sup> Parents can become impartial messengers, helping to deliver the insightful themes found in these stories. Other professional adults can help in this effort as well.

## Teaming Up

In attempting to solve the crisis in low self-esteem, Dove has formed partnerships with the Girl Scouts of the USA and the Boys and Girls Club of America to help build confidence in girls 8–17-years-old with workshops across the country.<sup>65</sup>

Another valuable partner is Girls Inc., a nonprofit organization that “inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.”<sup>66</sup> One of the many resources offered through Girls Inc. is “Media Literacy.” It educates girls on how to critically analyze and differentiate between unhelpful stereotypes found in commercial messages and the truth that is in their own lives.<sup>67</sup>

Unfortunately, young adult novels are not mentioned. They should be. Young adult advocates need to pave the way for these well-written stories to compete with the cloud of misinformation that “skinny is beautiful and that girls have to be attractive to men; that sex is fun and risk-free; and that most people think about and have sex frequently, without much concern for love or the stability of the relationship.”<sup>68</sup> Libraries should be part of this team. They should reach out to the Dove Self-Esteem Fund and similar organizations to promote the

educational importance of these stories, which reveal a world beyond stereotypes.

## No Panacea

These novels cannot serve as an inoculation against being hurt. No one can be immune from the reality of life. However, for teens making decisions about sex, these stories can offer some clarity and perspective that can lessen the pain and enhance the joy and understanding of their relationships.

After being dumped by Wes in *Anatomy of a Boyfriend*, Dom wants to understand how she got it all wrong. She is smart, driven, and thought their love would last. Through the tears, she wants to know:

How is it that mankind can engineer condoms to prevent pregnancy and STDs and not be able to invent some sort of emotional safeguard? Is it even possible to abstain from falling in love?<sup>69</sup>

No, it isn’t. Dom’s words support Amy Pattee’s belief that biology class and sex education curriculums don’t have all the answers.<sup>70</sup> No one does. There are no “emotional safeguards.” But there is emotional insight gained through reading and discussing the messages of these stories with peers and adults. This is why Ken Setterington says:

There’s a lot of material out there that offer details about sex, but none of it talks about emotions. At the end of the day, it’s the stories that will have an impact on young people, not the books about the plumbing.<sup>71</sup>

Aviva in *A Bad Boy Can Be Good for a Girl* learns the supportive power of knowledge found in these stories. She admits to her dear friend Amanda that she should have listened to her warnings about T.L.: “You pegged him right away, didn’t you,

Amanda? You learn about boys like that from all those books you read?" Accepting the reality of life, Amanda responds by saying, "I'm sure my time will come." As much as hearts can fall in love, they can be broken. Regardless of what happens, Aviva says, "I'll be here. Count on it."<sup>72</sup>

With story in hand, let us all be. YALS

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## Guidelines for Authors

*Young Adult Library Services* is the official publication of the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of the American Library Association. *Young Adult Library Services* is a vehicle for continuing education of librarians working with young adults (ages twelve through eighteen) that showcases current research and

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## Getting It On: An Examination of How Contraceptives Are Portrayed in Young Adult Literature

*By Jeanne T. McDermott*

**F**orever (by Judy Blume, Bradbury, 1975) broke the silence about sex in young adult (YA) literature<sup>1</sup> by showing a teenage couple deciding to have sex and behaving responsibly when it came to their sexual health. How has contraception been portrayed in YA fiction in the last fifteen years? In particular, how much useful information about contraception—badly needed in light of teen sexual health statistics—might teens pick up from their leisure reading? This is an examination of contemporary YA fiction published between 1995 and 2010 featuring protagonists who are considering becoming or are sexually active to gauge the quality of the information provided and the message teen readers are receiving about contraception.

### Background

Authors<sup>2</sup> and librarians<sup>3</sup> agree: it is important that teens see sex and sexuality represented in YA fiction. Ed Sullivan goes further, exhorting, “in the fiction they read, teens should see that sex is a serious business.”<sup>4</sup> Some librarians have suggested that these books are a source of information: Amy Pattee states “fictional texts should be considered as unique information sources that can offer young readers both realistic and needed information about sex and the sex act.”<sup>5</sup> Over a decade earlier, Frances

Bradburn had advocated the same, saying, “perhaps the most effective messages about AIDS and ‘safe’ sex come from children’s and young adult fiction because they tend to be the most subtle.”<sup>6</sup>

But how does recently published YA fiction represent sexual responsibility when it comes to contraception? Michele Gorman and Tricia Suellentrop find that “teen romance novels with more than a hint of sex and no negative repercussions are becoming more common.”<sup>7</sup> One might hope that the reason for no negative repercussions is that characters are portrayed as being sexually responsible and using contraception, but this is not specified.

### Teen Sexual Health Statistics

A look at teen statistics shows the importance of accurate information about contraception. Although preliminary data for 2009 touts a decline in the teen birth rate, the number remains unacceptably high at 39.1 births per 1,000 females between the ages of 15 and 19.<sup>8</sup> In comparison, the U.K. has a

rate of 26.7 per 1,000—the highest in all of Europe.<sup>9</sup> The most recent data for teen pregnancy rates in the U.S. puts the number at approximately 72 pregnancies per 1,000.<sup>10</sup> Fifteen percent of teens have an STD—more females than males and more blacks than any other race/ethnicity.<sup>11</sup>

### Teens Need Information

In addition to the proof provided by the statistics, teens report a need for more information. In a checklist of teens’ sexual preparedness, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation found that, of students who had taken sexuality education, forty-six percent needed to know how to talk with a partner about birth control and STDs, forty-three percent wanted information on how to talk with their parents about birth control, and forty percent needed to know how to use or where to obtain birth control.<sup>12</sup> In a more recent survey, the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found that forty-nine percent of teens reported that they

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did not really know how to use condoms and thirty-four percent felt a certain fatalism about pregnancy: “it doesn’t matter whether you use birth control or not, when it is your time to get pregnant, it will happen.”<sup>13</sup>

With nearly half of the teen population engaging in sex<sup>14</sup> and the rest most likely considering it, what kind of information about contraceptives will teens pick up from their leisure reading? Is enough information provided that these books can legitimately be described as an “information source” as well as an entertaining story?

## Incidental Learning

It is not a stretch to theorize that discussions about and scenes including sexual activity and sexual health in YA literature can inform and affect the behavior of teens. A survey conducted by Jessica Moyer with adults regarding incidental information seeking and leisure reading found that subjects all reported reading since childhood even though none had been asked about their early reading experiences: “A full one-hundred percent of the interview sample stated that reading was an important part of their life since childhood. . . . When asked if they saw a connection between leisure reading and learning, all respondents replied with an enthusiastic ‘yes!’”<sup>15</sup> Jane Brown, in a complementary study, finds that mass media affects the behavior of and provides social scripts for the sexually inexperienced, for example, condom use.<sup>16</sup>

## Method

Because the most cited source, the National Survey of Family Growth, limits sexual experience to heterosexual vaginal intercourse the study was limited to the heterosexual experience.<sup>17</sup> Although there

are many reasons why the protagonists are considering becoming or are sexually active, this project does not include any books where the experience is due to sexual violence or extreme circumstances such as economic need, drug addiction, or emotional illness.

Titles discussed below were recommended by librarians working in the field or appeared in professional articles written about YA books and teens’ sexual behavior. Content was analyzed using a checklist composed of points of interest identified as a result of teen sexual health statistics, the Henry J. Kaiser Family checklist of teens’ sexual preparedness, and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy survey, as mentioned above.

Thus, the questions were as follows: If the protagonist is sexually active or considering becoming so, are contraceptives mentioned? Who is the protagonist (female/male, race/ethnicity) and is s/he proactive about contraception? Does the protagonist discuss contraception with her/his partner? Does the protagonist discuss contraception with a family member, friend, or another person such as a health professional? Does the book provide teen readers with a social script for how to discuss contraception? Is information included to indicate why contraception is important and how it is acquired and used? Is contraception used consistently and correctly, is it effective, and how do protagonists view it?

Ultimately, what message are teens receiving about contraception when all factors are taken into consideration? Will teen readers find contraceptives used responsibly by fictional peers who might be viewed as friends providing solid information while also finding useful social scripts for communication with partners and with family? In the YA fiction they read, are any of teens’ informational needs met?

## Findings

The books provide the opportunity to study the behavior of thirty-two protagonists—twenty female, twelve male—in thirty-six relationships. The number of protagonists reflects books with multiple main characters. In these cases, only those characters considering becoming or currently sexually active were included. In some books, narration was shared by a male and a female in a relationship. In these cases, each individual’s experience of the relationship was examined. A few characters had more than one relationship. Readers will find very few protagonists of color.

From six to eight of the books examined provide enough details to be helpful to a teen in need of information about contraception. The range is explained by whether or not, ultimately, the contraceptive is portrayed in a positive light. If a positive portrayal is among the criteria, then—even including the outlier cases—the number is six.

## Portrayals of Contraception

In examining the kind of message readers are receiving about contraception in each of the books examined, that is, whether the portrayal is positive or negative, it was determined that there are shades of gray. Some books get a neutral rating; they indicate that someone in the relationship is prepared with contraception, but no other significant information is included. Then there are outlier cases, those that do not easily fall into any category.

### Positive

A positive representation is determined by a seamless mention of contraception as part of the teen experience: the

protagonist must be seen discussing and/or acquiring contraception; it must be viewed positively; and if the protagonist is sexually active, the contraceptive must be effective. Only four books fall into this category.

In *Things Change*, Johanna has prepared herself if not by actually purchasing condoms herself then by looking up birth control in the library and talking with an experienced friend. It is indicated that Johanna has discussed contraception with her partner beforehand and that he is the one who will provide condoms (unfortunately, readers do not witness the conversation). Johanna suffers no consequence due to failure or inconsistent use, so readers infer that the condoms are effective.

Megan (*Unexpected Development*) is at risk of being unprepared until her friend Jilly takes control. The range of information provided is quite good. The girls giggle as they purchase condoms, spermicide, and a birth control sponge. Jilly cautions Megan about condoms and shows her how to use one by rolling one over a banana. Megan does use them.

Alice (*Intensely Alice*) discusses contraception with her friends. They talk about the myth that contraception is the male's responsibility and conclude that women must be responsible for their own sexual health. As Alice's friend Pam points out, "Technically, the guy's not the one who gets pregnant. My motto is: Be prepared." Alice buys condoms and, even though she is nervous, carries them to Chicago where she plans to meet Patrick. (She does not have sex.)

*Rules of Attraction* shows readers the male and female perspectives. Although they do not discuss sex or contraception together, both protagonists have had a discussion with someone in advance and are prepared. Kiara's friend is unusual in that he is a gay male offering advice. Tuck is succinct when he insists Kiara take the condoms he has

gotten for her: "If you're not planning on [sex] and it happens, you won't be prepared and then you'll end up pregnant or diseased." Carlos recounts a discussion with his mother. When they both pull out condoms, they are playful about it.

## Negative

Eleven books warrant a negative rating for a number of reasons: the book did not mention contraception at all; showed contraceptives being used inconsistently or incorrectly; or the contraceptive failed. Also considered was how the contraceptive is viewed by the protagonist including, in one case, a protagonist who refuses to discuss contraception.

## No Mention of Contraception

*Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* does not mention contraception even though Bee is actively planning to seduce Eric. There are natural windows of opportunity to insert a discussion when Bee announces her plans to her camp friends. Afterwards, when Bee spirals downward, no one asks about her physical health and whether or not she used contraception.

*You Just Can't Get Enough* falls into this category as well: Rhys wants to have sex with Kelsey and plans the evening but no one mentions contraception, even though all the boys on swim team have taken a vow of chastity until Rhys gets some action. After Rhys announces to the team "It's all going to happen. Soon," his friend Hugh suggests "Let's do an emergency trip to Barney's lingerie department. That's where the ladies are." So a run to Barney's is in order but none to a drugstore for condoms.

*Borrowed Light* is so oblique about the issue, it falls into this category. How Callisto became pregnant seems to be unimportant; the plot focuses entirely on what she will do about her pregnancy. Even at the end when

Callisto has made her decision (abortion) and has moved into another relationship, the author seems reluctant to bring contraception into the story. The closest the author comes to representing contraception is in the Epilogue: "At first, on Saturday nights, when I was rushing off to Richard's, Dad would say, 'Have you got everything?' in this really significant tone . . . But he shouldn't worry. Not about that, anyway. If I get pregnant again, it will be because I really want to."

## Method Fails

Contraception plays a big role in *Someone Like You*, but the book is a cautionary tale: Halley's best friend Scarlett is pregnant. When Halley asks whether she and Michael used "protection," Scarlett responds: "Of course we did. But something happened, I don't know. It came off. I didn't realize it until it was over." Despite the fact that Halley knows enough to question Scarlett about her use of contraception, when Halley decides to have sex with Macon she is not proactive about contraception nor is she seen discussing it with Macon. Scarlett gives Halley condoms and forces her to talk to talk about it. (Ultimately, Halley does not have sex.)

There is barely a mention of contraception in *Hanging onto Max*. When Sam starts seeing Claire, another teen parent, his father expresses concern, asking, "Are you having sex with her, Sam?" His helpful advice? "You have to be careful, Sam." Near the end of the book, condoms are finally mentioned when Sam is talking with a friend about another sexually active couple. Sam wonders, "Why wasn't Melissa pregnant? Better condoms?" This would lead readers to believe that the reason Sam's first girlfriend Brittany became pregnant is because the condom they used broke.

Tibby and Lena in *Forever in Blue* are both passive about contraception; their

partners must provide it. Readers do not witness any discussion or planning. Then Tibby panics after the condom Brian uses breaks: “She could get pregnant. She could be getting pregnant right now. What about STDs? Herpes? What about, God, AIDS?”

*Slam* is a cautionary—although funny—tale full of references to condoms that earns a negative rating on a few points. On a couple of occasions Sam and Alicia are unprepared for sex, taking condoms from Alicia’s parents. Sam also indicates inconsistent use, describing how Alicia became pregnant: “We’d been messing about without putting anything on, because she said she wanted to feel me properly, and . . . Oh, I can’t talk about this stuff. I’m blushing. But something happened. Half-happened.” Even though Sam was not using a condom when they initiated sex, he becomes paranoid about them. Among other things, he claims he’ll never have sex again, then only if he uses five condoms, giving readers the impression that he blames the condom rather than inconsistent use.

### Negative View of Contraception

In *Cosmos Coyote and William the Nice*, Cosmos agrees to abstain from sex in deference to his girlfriend’s religious beliefs. However, Cosmos does not share these beliefs and he has been sexually active in the past. Thus, as they progress toward heavy petting, readers witness the couple in sexual situations navigating their boundary. But their ability to adhere to abstinence is left untested. At the end of the book, Cherlyn chooses to put physical distance between them.

*Rats Saw God* contains a wealth of information; in fact, readers will find a discussion between partners and a humorous scene of Steve buying condoms at the Piggly Wiggly. This takes place after

Dub has solicited information from her older sister and has told Steve exactly what to buy. However, the book does not provide a positive portrayal of methods. When Steve and Dub discuss the pill, Dub says, “I’ll experience radical mood swings. I’ll get nauseous—probably gain weight.” None of the benefits are included. When Steve describes his sensations while having sex with a condom, it does not fare much better: “The condom I was wearing was numbing most sensation coming from the South Pole, but the peripheral stimulation was electric . . .”

*The First Part Last* is another information-rich book that earns inclusion in this category simply because readers have no idea why Bobby chooses not to use contraception when he has been thoroughly educated and provided with condoms. Bobby recalls telling his parents that Nia is pregnant: “I waited to hear how they’d been talking to me for years about this. How we all talked about respect and responsibility. How Fred and me had taken the ferry out to Staten Island and talked about sex, to *and* from the island. And didn’t we go together and get me some condoms? What the hell about those pamphlets Mary put beside my bed about STDs and teenage pregnancy?”

*The Sky is Everywhere* features a protagonist edging towards sex with two boys, yet she refuses to discuss or acknowledge the possible need for contraception. Gram is aware of both boys in Lennie’s life and tries to initiate a conversation about sex and contraception: “We talked about birth control, diseases and all that. . .” Lennie responds: “Gram, there’s no need yet, okay?” But in fact, there is: Lennie and Toby are interrupted just before they lose control. Lennie and Joe are passionate and talk about having sex yet do not mention contraception. Given how close Lennie keeps coming, and given the fact that her teenage sister was pregnant at the time of her death, it is too

bad Lennie and readers do not benefit from Gram’s advice.

### Neutral

Seven books contain protagonists who are considering becoming or are sexually active where the portrayal of contraception is so minimal, all one can say is that at least they contained a mention of it. In some books, it is indicated that condoms are bought in anticipation of or used during sex. In some, it is acknowledged in retrospect that contraception should have been used.

In *Gossip Girl*, when Nate and Blair go to her room with the intention of having sex for the first time, there is no mention of either being prepared although their friend Chuck calls out “Don’t forget to use protection.” Nate and Blair are interrupted, so Blair invites Nate over again. *Gossip Girl* reports in *Sightings*: “B buying condoms at Zitomer Pharmacy. Lifestyles Extra-Long Super-Ribbed!”

Four books portray sexually active protagonists who use contraception. Of these, two feature female protagonists who have not taken steps to discuss or acquire contraception; they are simply lucky enough to have partners who use condoms: *A Bad Boy Can be Good For a Girl* (in fact, this book features three female protagonists who all are passive) and *The DUFF*. Two feature male protagonists who are seen to use condoms during sex: *Doing It* and *The Lighter Side of Life and Death*. However, one may argue the inclusion of *Doing It* in this category when only one of three sexually active main protagonists is portrayed as using contraception.

Books portraying protagonists who realize they should have used contraception in retrospect include *Runaway* and *What Kind of Love? In Runaway*, the protagonists lament that they did not use protection and the repeated refrain is that they should have waited. *What Kind of*

*Love* is better; the basics are covered in a few sentences. When Valerie realizes she wants to continue having sex with Peter, she forces a conversation about contraception, saying, "I'm afraid we'll get AIDS or something." When Peter scoffs, she continues, "But I could get pregnant." Peter decides to get condoms and wants Valerie to go on the pill. Of course, it is a moot point since Valerie is already pregnant.

## Outliers

The outliers are information-rich books that do not fall easily into any category because they contain both positive and negative portrayals: *Gingerbread*, *Kendra*, and *Rich and Mad*.

Cyd (*Gingerbread*) is currently proactive about her sexual health but had been passive in the past. Readers see that she is still reeling, a year later, from the fact that her first boyfriend Justin let her go to the clinic for an abortion alone. They had sex without protection one time. Her absentee "real-dad" Frank paid for the abortion. When they finally spend time together, Frank tries to talk with Cyd about contraception, asking if she is "managing to stay out of trouble." Cyd responds, "I realized that in his way Frank was trying to make sure I was okay and part of me suspected that was probably the best I would ever get out of him. 'Yup,' I said. 'I'm on the pill now.'" Frank pushes, telling her that the pill is not enough, a point Cyd acknowledges. Later, Cyd describes the contents of her bag, which include her birth control prescription and a stash of condoms.

Kendra's case is complicated because abstinence is forced on her by her grandmother. Since this is not a decision Kendra makes, it is not effective. Kendra, in an effort to stay true to her grandmother's rule, has anal sex instead. She is not proactive and readers sense that even if Nashawn did not use condoms she

would still engage in sex with him. Nana finds out and sends Kendra to live with her mother who explains: "It's time for you to see a gynecologist. . . . You need to get a checkup to make sure you don't have any STDs and then you and the doctor can decide on a form of birth control. Being sexually active requires a lot of responsibility, doesn't it?" Kendra decides to take a break from sexual activity but resolves to be responsible for her own sexual health should she resume.

*Rich and Mad* includes more useful information than most. Maddy knows she wants to fall in love and have sex so she goes to the health center for the pill: "Thinking ahead, smart girl. So I suppose you know all about STIs." Maddy reflects on the statistics. She also recounts, in detail, what taking the pill entails. Rich prepares to have sex, too: "He had got himself a pack of three condoms. He knew how to roll a condom on. What entirely defeated him was the question of timing." Maddy tells Rich she is on the pill so he does not need to use a condom. He is relieved that he doesn't have to deal with his feelings of awkwardness and, in fact, does not use one. So while the book provides good information and scripts, it could have done better with the issue of the condom.

## Sources of Information

In determining whether books may be considered informational as well as entertaining, then, the following points were considered: Is the protagonist seen taking responsibility for contraception; is contraception discussed with the partner or someone else before or after sexual activity; is it indicated why contraceptives are used, how they are acquired, and/or how they are used; when protagonists are sexually active is contraceptive used (whether provided by the protagonist or partner); if so, is it used consistently and correctly; and last, is it effective?

Given these parameters, eight books may be considered information sources: *Rats Saw God*, *Cosmos Coyote* and *William the Nice*, *Gingerbread*, *Things Change*, *Unexpected Development*, *Kendra*, *Rich and Mad*, and *Rules of Attraction*.

The number of informational books is lower if a positive view of contraception is among the requirements. If so, the number of qualifying books is further reduced to six: *Gingerbread*, *Things Change*, *Unexpected Development*, *Kendra*, *Rich and Mad*, and *Rules of Attraction*. Even this number includes the outlier cases. This is a mere twenty-four percent of the books examined.

## The Numbers

### Responsible Protagonists

In only thirty-nine percent of the relationships depicted do protagonists take responsibility for contraception. In eight percent of the relationships, protagonists do not take responsibility because it is known in advance that the partner will. In a couple of cases, contraceptives are used, but readers are uncertain whether the protagonist was proactive or just lucky to have a responsible partner. This means that, in the majority of relationships, contraception is not being given due consideration.

Even though readers will find nearly twice the number of female protagonists as male, only thirty-five percent of them take responsibility for contraception as opposed to fifty percent of the male protagonists. The ethnic mix is so small it makes no impact.

### Discussions about Contraception

In seventeen percent of relationships, partners discuss contraception in advance. Only two percent of these discussions are in-depth enough to potentially provide



readers in a similar situation with a social script.

In twenty-five percent of relationships, the protagonist discusses contraception with someone else: a family member, a friend, or a professional, with the most common being a friend.

In seventeen percent of relationships, a protagonist engages in a conversation about contraception after her or his first sexual encounter.

### Information Provided

In fifty percent of relationships, readers will see at least one—or more—of three points covered: why contraceptives are used; how it is acquired; and/or how it is used. In thirty-four percent, protagonists hear the message or indicate they understand the importance of contraception. In fourteen percent, information is provided about how contraception is acquired. In twenty-four percent, readers find information on how contraceptives are used. There is overlap here. Given the fact that a book may feature multiple protagonists and/or multiple relationships, this information is only contained in fourteen of the twenty-five books examined.

### Contraceptive Use and Effectiveness

Contraception is used on at least one occasion in twenty (seventy-four percent) of the relationships that include sexual activity. Of the relationships where readers see contraception used, ninety percent show that contraception used consistently and correctly; ten percent indicate that contraception is not used consistently and/or correctly. Of the eighteen relationships where contraception is used consistently/correctly, eighty-nine percent show the contraceptive to be effective, meaning that in eleven percent of the cases, the method of

contraception fails. In seven relationships (twenty-seven percent), contraception is not used. In over half of these, it is a plot device for unwanted pregnancy.

### Conclusion

There is a body of YA fiction that portrays teens considering becoming or currently engaging in sexual activity. What appears to be lacking, though, are useful depictions of teens navigating the question of contraception and positive portrayals of contraception. It will come as no surprise to those familiar with *Forever*. . . that it meets all criteria to be considered an information source. Yet of the twenty-five books examined that were published over the last fifteen years, only six to eight (twenty-four to thirty-two percent) of them provide enough details that might helpful for a teen in need of information about contraception. Of these, only six books portrayed contraception somewhat positively (for even this number includes the outlier cases). So while YA fiction may be, as author Tanya Lee Stone suggests, “the safest place for [teens] to learn about sex,”<sup>18</sup> teens and those who work with them will need to look elsewhere for helpful information about contraception. It will be necessary to supplement the collection with appealing nonfiction, a subscription to a health database, and links to reputable web sites chock-full of information about sex, sexual health, and relationships. For ideas and resources, visit the Healthy Relationships for Teens page at <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/profdev/healthyrelationships.cfm>. YALS

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# the YALSA update

## ASSOCIATION NEWS

Find the latest YALSA news every Friday at the YALSA Blog, <http://yalsa.ala.org/blog>.

### Teens' Top Ten Voting Starts Aug. 15

Make sure your teens are up to speed for this year's Teens' Top Ten (TTT), in which teens across the world voice their choice for their favorite books. Download the 2011 Teens' Top Ten nominations and the Teens' Top Ten Toolkit at [www.ala.org/teenstopten](http://www.ala.org/teenstopten) to encourage teens to read them before voting starts in August.

Teens' Top Ten voting begins August 15 and ends September 19. The votes will determine the 2011 Teens' Top Ten booklist, which will be announced online during Teen Read Week, October 16-22.

Librarians seeking new titles for readers' advisory, collection development, or simply to give to their teens as part of summer reading programming can see the 2011 nominations at the TTT Web site at [www.ala.org/teenstopten](http://www.ala.org/teenstopten). In addition, the Teens' Top Ten toolkit offers customizable bookmarks and flyers, program ideas, and much more to encourage teens at your library to read the nominated titles.

TTT is a part of YALSA's Young Adult (YA) Galley Project, which facilitates access to advance copies of young adult books to national teen book discussion groups. Fifteen public libraries and school library media centers from across the country evaluate books from publishers and nominate books for TTT.

### YALSA 2011 Election Results

#### YALSA President

Jack Martin

#### YALSA Board of Directors

Sandra Hughes-Hassell

Gail Tobin

Christian Zabriskie

#### Fiscal Officer

Penny Johnson

#### Secretary

Sarajo Wentling

#### Edwards Award Committee

Charli Osborne

Ed Spicer

Jamie Watson

#### Printz Award Committee

Louise Brueggemann

Sharon Grover

Sharon Rawlins

Sarah Bean Thompson

#### Nonfiction Award Committee

Ruth Allen

Angela Manfredi

Judy Nelson

Laura Pearle

In addition, all proposals to amend YALSA's bylaws, create new reduced dues categories and increase dues passed by a majority vote. For details on the proposals

and what the changes entail, see the YALSA Election Results webpage, <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/electionresults.cfm>.

Interested in running for office or want to nominate a colleague? Contact Linda Braun, chair of the 2012 Nominating Committee at [lbraun@leonline.com](mailto:lbraun@leonline.com)

### YALSA Announces New Book

YALSA published *Outstanding Books for the College Bound: Titles and Programs for a New Generation* in June through ALA Editions. Edited by YALSA member and school librarian Angela Carstensen for YALSA, this completely revamped guide is a great collection development and readers' advisory tool for library staff. Listing over 400 books deemed outstanding for the college bound by the YALSA, this indispensable resource provides annotated lists, ideas for library programs and a variety of indexes. The title is available for purchase at [www.alastore.ala.org/](http://www.alastore.ala.org/) in print or as an e-book.

### Network for Research on Libraries & Teens

Visit <http://yaresearch.ning.com/> to connect with fellow researchers, access a

wealth of resources to support your research, share ideas and take part in an active community dedicated to advancing research in young adult librarianship. This resource was created by YALSA's Research Resources Clearinghouse Taskforce as part of an effort to achieve the research goal in YALSA's Strategic Plan. Anyone interested in joining and participating in this free resource is welcome to do so.

## Show Off Your Library!

Help elected officials learn about your library by participating in District Days! While our elected representatives are working hard in Washington DC, YALSA members and their libraries are changing lives and enhancing communities back home. Policy makers will not know all the good we do unless we tell our story. District days – the time when our representatives are back in the home district – present a great opportunity to get to know elected officials and to help them understand our important work.

Between Aug. 8 and Sept. 5 you can invite them into your library to see firsthand all the great work you do and what it means to the teens in your community. If bringing officials to your library isn't feasible, schedule a meeting with them at their local office. Members of Congress need to see firsthand how libraries are having a positive impact on the lives of teens so they understand how critical it is that libraries receive support and funding from Congress. YALSA's Legislation Committee has created some great tips and resources to help libraries participate in District Days at [http://wikis.ala.org/yalsa/index.php/District\\_Days](http://wikis.ala.org/yalsa/index.php/District_Days).

## Bring YALSA to Your Community

Help YALSA meet its goal of visiting every graduate school of library and information science in 2011! Students or faculty at library schools, or YALSA members who are near schools, are encouraged to host events and activities to raise awareness and connect with one another. The 2011 LIS

Road Trip aims to assist those interested in a career in teen services to have opportunities to get together with others who are passionate about working with adolescents in libraries. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/YALSAroadtrip11> to learn more and download a free toolkit to help you plan a successful visit. The toolkit includes information about how to plan and implement activities, such as:

- Host a social event, such as a happy hour or coffee klatch
- Host an educational event, such as a forum, speaker, panel discussion, etc.
- Write an article, column or blog post for a LIS newsletter or web site
- Feature YALSA at an existing LIS event, such as an open house or student chapter meeting
- Sponsor an outing, such as a library tour
- Conduct an advocacy or public awareness activity, such as an email campaign to Congress members or hosting a fundraiser for causes, such as YALSA's Books for Teens ([www.facebook.com/booksforteens](http://www.facebook.com/booksforteens))

## Teen Services Evaluation Tool for Public Libraries

This is a new tool for evaluating a public library's overall level of success in providing services to teens, aged 12-18. Access the free tool and supplementary resources at <http://tinyurl.com/4sq3yh>. Potential users of this tool include library administrators, library trustees, teen services librarians, and community members and job-seekers hoping to assess a library's commitment to teen services. The tool is not intended to be an evaluation of an individual teen services librarian, but rather of an institution's program; however, of necessity some things will apply specifically to teen services staff.

One page fact sheets geared toward specific audiences, such as library administrators and the general public, are also available from the web site. Download these free fact sheets and share them with your library constituents as a means of

starting a conversation about the importance of a strong teen services program.

Not every element of the rubric will apply to every library situation, but the tool can serve as a place to begin the conversation about what constitutes excellent public library service for teens. Thank you to Sarah Flowers and her Teen Services Evaluation Tool Taskforce for developing this invaluable resource.

For tools to evaluate school libraries, be sure to access AASL's resources at <http://tinyurl.com/ykzvqg8>.

## Stay Up to Date on Developments Impacting Teen Services

### Archived Webinars are Free to Members!

For those seeking short, interactive sessions, at a time that's convenient for you, YALSA's hour-long webinars provide discussion on a variety of topics, led by content experts chosen by YALSA. These archived webinars are commercial free, and are available 24/7 from YALSA's web site. To access them, visit [www.ala.org/yalsa](http://www.ala.org/yalsa) and click on the For Members Only tab. There are over a dozen webinars available on a wide variety of topics, including reaching reluctant readers, passive programming, using mobile devices to reach teens, advocating for teen services and more.

For those of you looking for a real-time, interactive learning experience, live webinars are hosted the third Thursday of each month at 2pm, eastern. Registration costs \$29 for students, \$39 for YALSA members, \$49 for individual nonmembers. Group registration is available for \$195 by contacting Eve Gaus, YALSA's program officer for continuing education, at [egaus@ala.org](mailto:egaus@ala.org) or 1-800-545-2433, ext. 5293. Upcoming webinars include:

- **August 18, "From 140 Characters to 10 Pages: Teens, Social Media and Information Literacy."** Join Laura Pearle for a discussion on how school and public librarians can help their teens use social media for research projects.



- **September 15, “Tweet, Like, Link: Creating a Social Media Policy for Your Library.”** This webinar will be presented by Linda Braun, an Educational Technology Consultant for Libraries and Educators Online.

To register, or learn more about YALSA’s webinars, visit [www.ala.org/yalsa/webinars](http://www.ala.org/yalsa/webinars).

## YALSA Seeks Volunteers for Selection Committees and Some Award Committees and Taskforces

YALSA will be making appointments to the following committees and taskforces during this latest round of appointments:

Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults
Best Fiction for Young Adults
Fabulous Films for Young Adults
Great Graphic Novels for Teens
Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults
Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers
Alex Award
Morris Award
Odyssey Award
2013 Midwinter Marketing & Local Arrangements Taskforce
2013 Midwinter Paper Presentation Planning Taskforce
Readers’ Choice List Taskforce

### How Committee & Taskforce Appointments Work & When They’re Made:

To serve on a committee or taskforce, you must be officially appointed by YALSA’s President-Elect, Jack Martin. YALSA is collecting volunteer forms from now through Sept. 30 for members who would like to serve on selection and award

committees as well as taskforces that begin work on Feb. 1, 2012. If you are currently serving on a selection or award committee and you are eligible to and interested in serving for another term, you must fill out a volunteer form. This is the only way the President-Elect knows for certain that you’re interested in continuing on the committee.

### What to Know Before You Volunteer:

Before you volunteer to serve on a committee or taskforce, you’ll want to learn what the group does and what your responsibilities will be. YALSA has created a free webinar with information about what it’s like to serve on a selection or award committee. Be sure to take the time to view it at <http://tinyurl.com/5s9g5uy>. It is also recommended that you contact the chair directly to let him/her know you’re interested in serving and to ask questions about what your involvement will entail. Names and contact information for all the committee chairs are available from the “Governance” link on YALSA’s homepage. From the Get Involved link on YALSA’s web site you’ll also find information about each of the committees’ functions, size, etc. Lastly, be sure to read through YALSA’s Handbook, especially the sections that list responsibilities for committee members. It’s online at [www.ala.org/yalsa](http://www.ala.org/yalsa). Just click on “Handbook” from the left menu.

### Completing the Committee Volunteer Form:

In order to be considered for a selection or award committee, you need to fill out a Selection Committee Volunteer Form by Sept. 30. It is online at:

<http://yalsa.ala.org/forms/selectionvolunteer.php>

If you’d like to be considered for one of the taskforces, please fill out this form:

[http://yalsa.ala.org/forms/process\\_com.php](http://yalsa.ala.org/forms/process_com.php)

When you fill out the form, please be sure to include the name of the committee(s) on which you’d like to serve.

If you don’t indicate a few that you’re interested in, it is very difficult for the President-Elect to find the best fit for you. Also, please be sure to take the time to list your qualifications. Forms are only kept on file for one year, so you will need to fill one out each year that you would like to serve on a committee.

Once you complete and submit the online volunteer form, you’ll receive an automated email message saying your form has been received. YALSA’s President-Elect, Jack Martin, will not make the appointments until after the deadline closes for volunteer forms, so you will not hear back about the status of your form until November.

### The Fine Print:

- Appointments are for either one-year or two-year terms, depending on the committee. Selection Committee members must attend all committee meetings at the ALA Annual and Midwinter conferences, for the entire term of their appointment. Upcoming conference dates and locations can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/l24t5h>.
- Please be aware that there are no virtual members on YALSA’s selection committees. YALSA does not pay travel expenses for committee members.
- Some Selection Committees require a heavy workload. For example, for the Best Fiction for Young Adults Committee, members are expected to read over 300 books per year.
- Certain Selection Committees are very popular and may receive dozens of Volunteer Forms for just two or three spots. If you’ve never served on a YALSA Committee before, it isn’t reasonable then, to expect to be appointed to committees like Printz or Best Fiction for Young Adults on your first attempt.
- As per YALSA policy, individuals may not serve on more than one award or selection committee at the same time. YALSA

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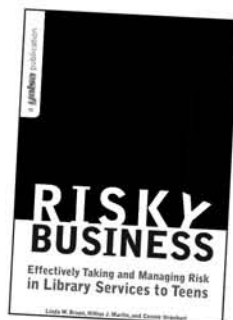
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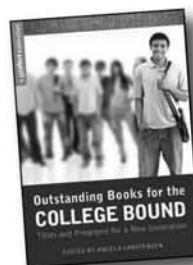
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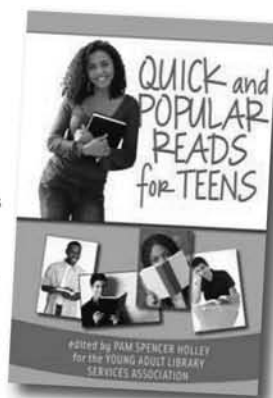
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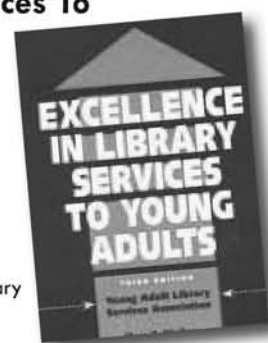
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- Fri. Jan. 20 from 8—10pm: YA Lit Trivia Night
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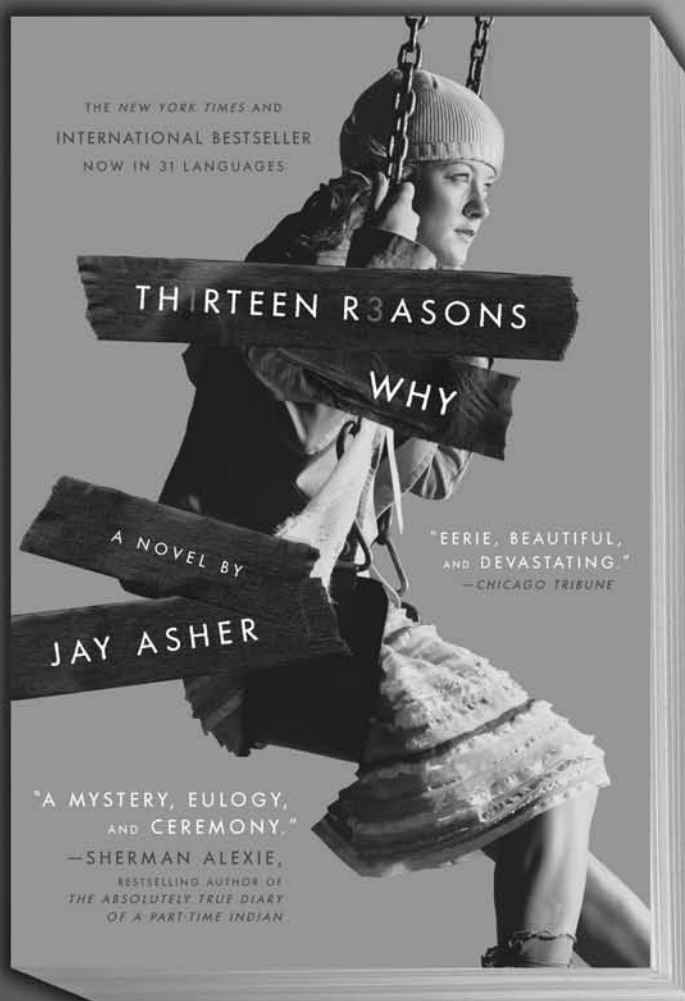
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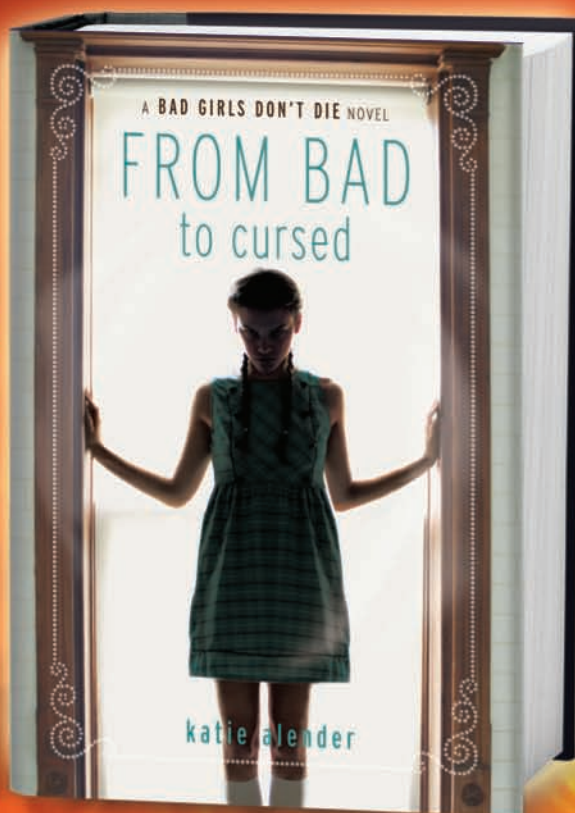
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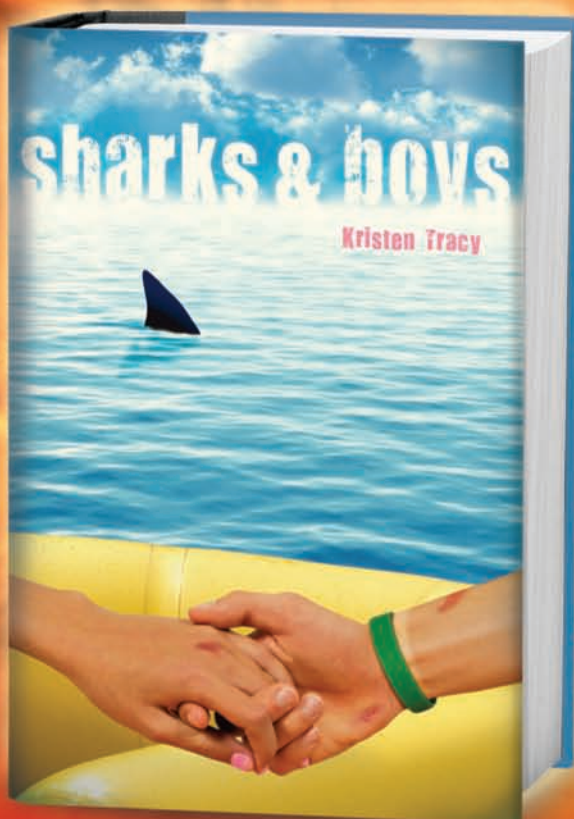


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