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Focus On:

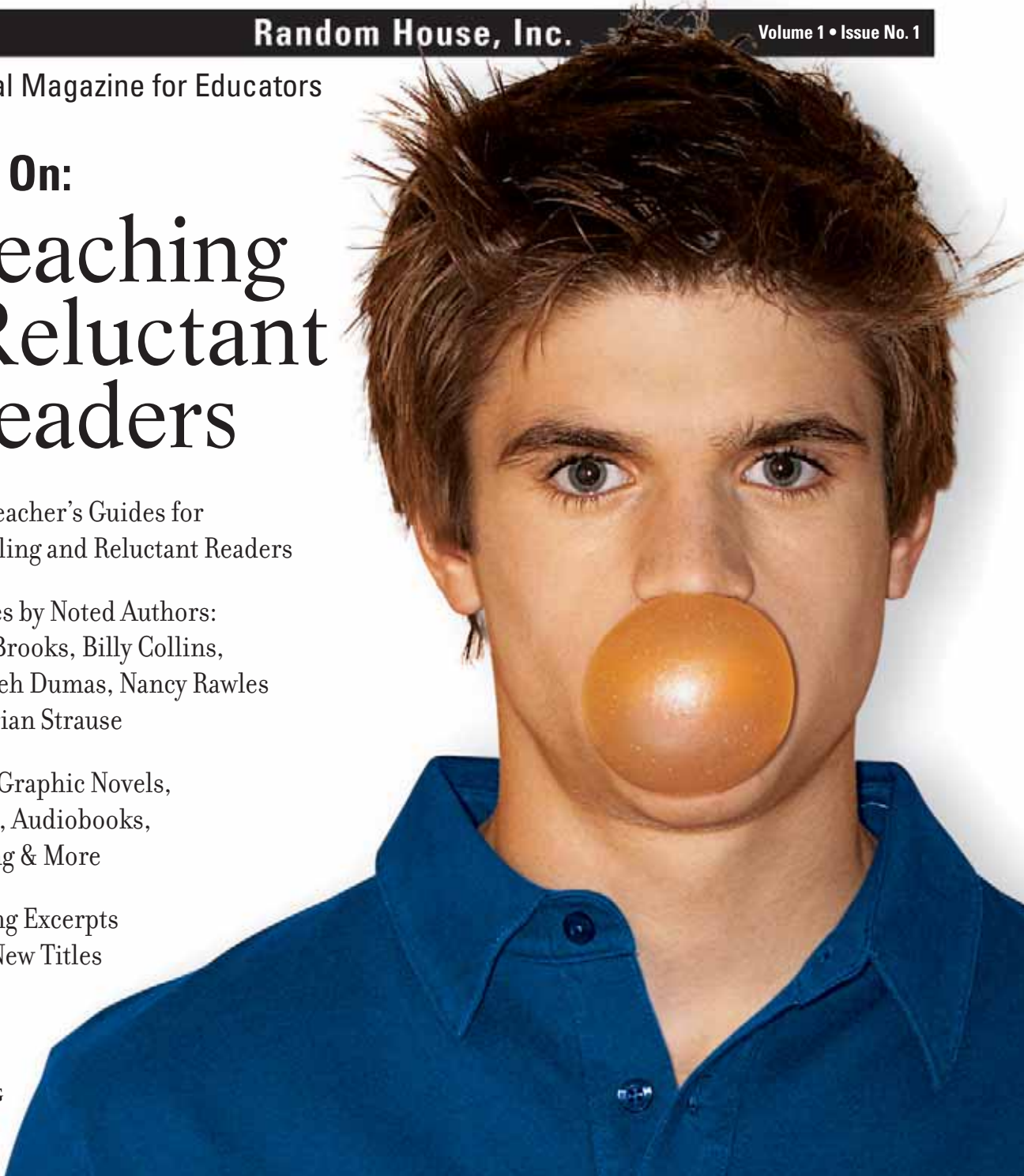
Reaching Reluctant Readers

New Teacher's Guides for
Struggling and Reluctant Readers

Articles by Noted Authors:
Terry Brooks, Billy Collins,
Firoozeh Dumas, Nancy Rawles
and Brian Strause

Using Graphic Novels,
Manga, Audiobooks,
Gaming & More

Reading Excerpts
from New Titles



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"Kids say that the #1 reason why they do not read more is because they cannot find books they like to read."

—*Kids and Family Reading Report* (June 2006), Scholastic/Yankelovich

The quote above presents a deceptively simple observation of a truly complex challenge: understanding and countering students' reluctance to read. When students claim they cannot find the right book to read, what factors determine whether any given book is "right"? Don't tastes and suitability vary from student to student? Just how *do* adults help students find, and actually read, the "right" books?

With these questions in mind, we welcome you to *RHI* (for Random House, Inc., naturally!), the premier issue of a magazine for educators. As the cover states, this issue focuses on reaching reluctant readers.

More and newer forms of entertainment, media, and distractions vie constantly for students' time; ultimately their attention is diverted from reading. As *RHI*'s contributors explain, however, many of your students' extracurricular activities—reading comic books, listening to CDs, even playing video-games—need not be interests to be combated: they can instead become special opportunities, to be used as springboards to reading.

Each section of *RHI* is introduced by a different member of our department—albeit via a superhero alter ego! Even with all of our special powers (does speed-reading count?), we cannot succeed in rescuing reluctant readers alone. Each section of this magazine therefore includes articles full of advice, instruction, experiences, and recommendations from leading authors, educators, librarians, editors, and other experts: professionals who either work with young people or produce literature or other materials for them. Their advice and ideas will help you make use of your students' interests in various media to spark a lifelong interest in reading.

We hope that *RHI* offers some new and helpful information and ideas. If you dog-ear this magazine, write in it, and use it as you see fit, we will be gratified. This issue of *RHI* was meant for you, the educator; it is our contribution to your efforts to reach your reluctant readers and to eliminate that "#1 reason," that barrier to their reading success.

P.S. All of the Random House, Inc. books mentioned throughout *RHI* may easily be ordered via the order form found in the center of the magazine.

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*Re-engaging Adolescent Readers and Writers with Meaningful Texts.
 Use critical literacy and texts drawn from popular culture to fight
 the progressive disengagement of struggling teen readers.*



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Winning Back Your Reluctant Readers by Pat Scales
*Creating "a nation of readers" calls for a flexible outlook
 as well as personal attention to students' choices.*



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**Fantasy: Why in the World
 Do Kids Read This Stuff?** by Terry Brooks
*By changing the rules, well-written fantasy teaches reluctant
 readers lessons about life and about the power of possibilities.*



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When Reading Ain't Natural by Nancy Rawles

My Jim, A "Talking" Novel. An ALEX Award-winning author demonstrates that using texts which mimic the natural rhythms of speech can spark the interest of struggling students.

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A Spoonful of Humor Gets the Pages Turning by Firoozeh Dumas

When a book can make a reader laugh, says an Iranian-American writer, being a reluctant reader may only be a temporary condition.



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Nothing Beats a Good Story by James Blasingame

Using the works of Louis L'Amour with reluctant readers a teacher recounts how the use of western novels in his Boys Town classroom produced readers whose successes surprised even themselves.



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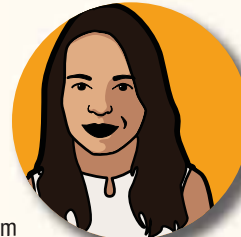


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TEACHER TALK

I HATE ASSIGNING SUMMER READING.

The English Department at our school, I'm glad to say, tries to assign books that will be fun to read.

When one of the designated books was Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, one rising senior (age 18) read it and loved it, even though he had never been much of a reader. In September he enrolled in my fiction-writing class because we were using *Things* as a model. One day he stayed after class to tell me he had read more of O'Brien's work. Once I see this kind of interest, I try to stoke it in little ways, to keep the fire going. I had a signed copy of one of O'Brien's books that

I'd gotten at a reading, so I gave it to him. You would have thought I had given him gold.

Perhaps, my favorite choice of all time was Laura Hillenbrand's *Seabiscuit*. We knew the kids would eat it up, and they did. It was assigned that summer to juniors (a group growing reluctant to read), but they read it in great numbers. On the day of their orientation, three days before the test on the book, I overheard one student telling another that he had not read it. The second boy demanded that the first boy read this "awesome" book.

On the testing day, I proctored the test that non-reader was taking. Before I handed out the exam, I overheard him telling another student what a great book *Seabiscuit* was and how he had read it in one night—on a weekend!

—ALLAN L'ETOILE, English Teacher, Gonzaga College High School, Washington, D.C.

ONE DAY after school, I was in my classroom, reading aloud the first chapter of *White Fang* and recording it for my eighth graders. I stopped what I was doing when I was joined by "Shane," one of my best students. Shane was adamant: He told me he did not want to read *White Fang* and he was not going to read *White Fang*. I asked Shane to take a seat; I told him I would be willing to talk to him if he would just wait for five minutes until I had finished reading the chapter. He agreed and sat down.

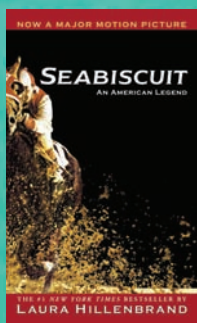
When I had finished, I shut off the recorder and looked up.

"Is that the book we're supposed to be reading?" Shane asked.

"Yes," I said "It's *White Fang*. Jack London wrote it."

Shane read the book.

—In 2003, JEAN COOK retired from teaching elementary school in Silver Spring, MD. She now teaches ESOL.



YEARS AGO, a study of reading habits reported that the best readers at the high school level had read comic books when they were young. I recalled that at the middle school I attended as a child, our teachers tried to interest us in the classics by giving us comic versions of *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Therefore, when I was volunteer at a library serving developmentally challenged kids, I added comic books to our library—in spite of our lack of a budget.

The older kids were grateful for the pictorial versions of books they'd been encouraged to read. Overall, however, the mad rush to the comic-book section of the library was motivated mostly by the latest Spider-Man comic! This was fine with us. The love of any kind of book fit right in with the mission statement the volunteers had created:

Our library is an energetic, fun, colorful adventure, which expands students' visions of themselves and the world.

—CAREY ANN STRELECKI, former Volunteer Library Coordinator at the Dubnoff Center for Child Development in North Hollywood, CA



OVER THE YEARS, I have struggled to find ways to engage reluctant readers when traditional methods (such as recommending books) have failed. I once asked a colleague of mine, an information-technology specialist, why a young person could spend an hour on the computer yet could not concentrate on a book for five minutes. He suggested that we look for ways to use technology to encourage reading. We had noticed that many students enjoyed being videotaped when presenting reports in the classroom; my colleague therefore suggested that we use this interest to our advantage by videotaping students as they gave their book reports.

To implement our program, we asked for volunteers willing to be videotaped while reporting on a favorite book. A surprising number of students chose to participate, and several students asked permission to work with a partner. Students were directed to think about or to write up a short summary of a book, including reasons why they liked the book, and to note whether they would recommend the book to a friend. We questioned these students during the taping so that they could look directly at the camera while giving the answers they had prepared.

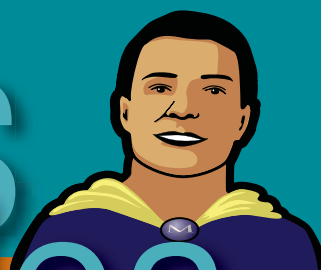
This year we plan to start a club so that students can learn videotaping and video editing. Working with faculty advisors, these students will videotape student book reports and then edit them for the web.

By engaging students in this process, we hope they will be motivated to enjoy both reading and technology.

—JOANNE STREAMO, Middle School Librarian, Ravenscroft School, Raleigh, NC

To order any of these titles mentioned on this page, please use the order form in the centerfold.

Teacher's Guides



Hi, I'm Super-Michael! With the help of some of your fellow educators and librarians, I will help you battle reluctant reading and come up with some good ideas to help your students reach their goals in school.

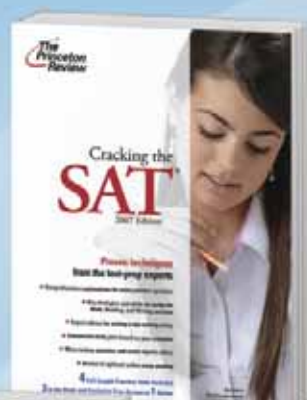
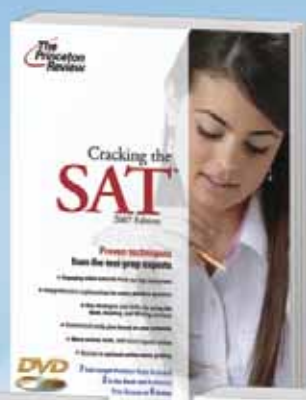
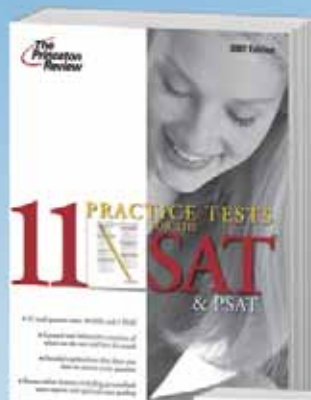
Who are the reluctant readers? Why do they struggle? How can we get them excited about reading again? In this section, experts in the field will apply an arsenal of tools to the problem of struggling readers in this first section.

One expert reminds us that giving young readers the freedom to explore different genres—and reacting positively to their choices—is a good way to start when attempting to reconnect with students. One teacher recalls using classics (including novellas, short stories, and banned books) to open up different worlds to her students. Another teacher talks about how to reach reluctant/struggling readers whose first language is one other than English. Two educators teach us how to incorporate elements of popular culture, such as graphic novels, *anime*, and music, that speak directly to the realities of young people. A librarian discusses booktalking as a teaching method designed to grab the attention of students and to encourage them to read further after hearing a chapter read aloud. There are also tips on building a library for reluctant readers, including a suggested reading list. ■

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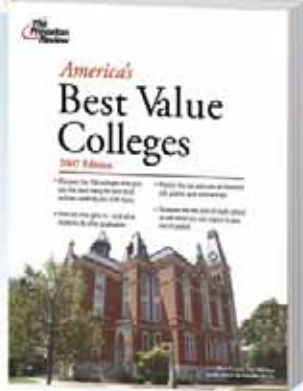
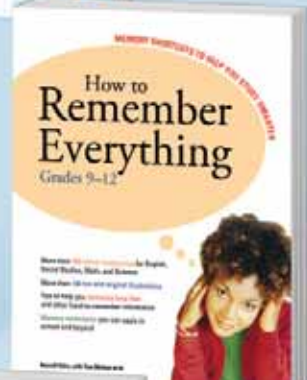
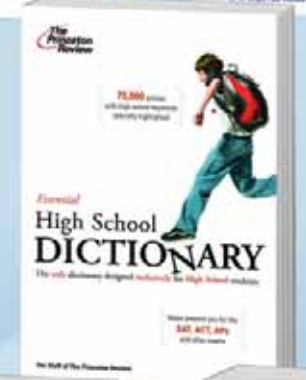
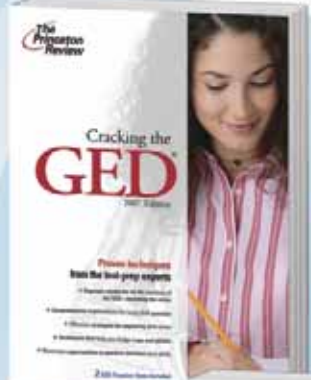
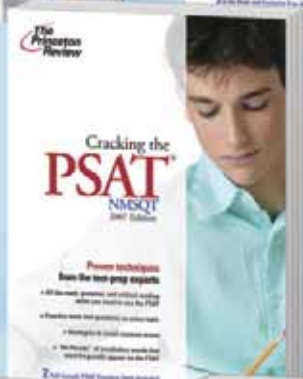
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The Princeton Review

“You Got More of These?”

Re-engaging Adolescent Readers and Writers with Meaningful Texts

BY NANCY FREY AND DOUGLAS FISHER

Our eyes were opened several years ago to the power of meaningful texts when we were teaching a writing class to a group of adolescents. You can imagine how excited these 32 ninth-grade students were to take this semester-long writing course. For 90 minutes every day, our students were put through their paces. Syntax, vocabulary, generative grammar—our students averaged 600 written words per day. Yet the atmosphere was not what you might expect: Despite the 7:30 A.M. starting time for this first-period class, we enjoyed excellent attendance. Behavioral challenges were minimal. We saw students who once defined themselves by their lack of performance become expressive thinkers and writers; one student, for example, used his writing to disclose a physically abusive home environment, and many others wrote earnestly of their struggles with personal relationships, with understanding the war in Iraq, and with difficult teachers.

What disrupted the conventional wisdom about adolescents and their lack of enthusiasm for school in general and for writing in particular? We believe an important element was our use of the texts of popular culture—graphic novels, anime, internet sources, and music—as tools to motivate and inspire creativity (Frey and Fisher, 2004). Although our class was focused on writing, our students engaged every day with nontraditional texts selected to spark interest and to serve as mentor texts for their writing. We debated content and then analyzed the ways in which artists and writers conveyed their points of view in powerful ways.

We knew we were on to something when Anthony, a struggling reader with high social capital among his peers and a reputation as a difficult student, strolled up to Doug one day. (“Strolled” is the word for it, too. Anthony never moved anywhere quickly. That would be so not cool.) We had introduced to the class the work of Will Eisner, known as the man who gave graphic novels their name. As the other students wrote dialogue for a wordless panel from an Eisner story, Anthony casually asked, “You got more of these?”

Engaging Adolescent Readers

Much has been researched and written about the unique qualities of the adolescent reader, that is, of students between the ages of 11 and 18 who are enrolled in sixth through twelfth grades. Not surprisingly, few of the findings are good news for secondary educators. For example, reading interest and motivation peak in first grade and decline steadily every year after that, with the largest one-year drop occurring when students move to middle school (McKenna et al., 1995). Difficulty with reading usually begins in the elementary grades, when some students fall behind and never catch up. Chall and colleagues (1990) described the “fourth grade slump,” a time when some students, especially those who live in poverty, exhibit a sudden decrease in reading comprehension. Even more troubling is that students who experience this decline in fourth grade are likely to be in the lowest quartile in eleventh grade (Chall et al., 1996).

These secondary students are commonly labeled as “struggling readers,” but they do not all struggle for the same reasons: Approximately 7% of 13-year-olds have serious reading difficulties that significantly limit their ability to understand written text (Campbell et al., 2000). The majority of struggling readers, our second category, are students who can decode efficiently but who do not effectively use comprehension strategies to support their understanding (Loranger, 1994; Paris et al., 1991). The vast majority of struggling readers, therefore, will not improve with a focus on phonics instruction alone. In fact, comprehension-strategy instruction has been found to be effective for the adolescent readers who are struggling most (Gersten et al., 2001). A third category of students includes those who lack the motivation to read. Motivation is an important factor not only in the volume of reading, which is important in and of itself, but also in students’ ability to comprehend (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Teacher's Guide

There has been a variety of explanations for the progressive disengagement of adolescent readers who struggle with reading. Some of this disengagement may be traced to the developmental factors that arise as young people navigate the middle ground between childhood and adulthood. Students may lack the requisite literacy skills and strategies that allow them to access the texts that might otherwise interest them. In addition, a significant group of adolescents is alliterate—that is, they can read but choose not to unless they are coerced. In the next sections, we address each of these elements and provide suggestions for the types of texts that may be used to re-engage adolescent learners in literacy learning.

The Role of Adolescent Development in Literacy

All readers are not created equal, and adolescent readers certainly differ from their younger peers. Their need for autonomy grows as these learners seek to try out the ideas they have been formulating. Worthy and colleagues (2001) call this the adolescent's "quest for independence and control," a phrase that aptly describes the recalcitrant teenager, determined to demonstrate his or her autonomy at all costs (p. 8).

Educational theorist Kieran Egan (1997) describes the learning of children and adolescents as a pursuit to find answers to three kinds of questions.

First, very young children seek to answer questions about themselves and are thus fascinated with the functions of the body and with themselves in general. Hence, we see lots of "All About Me" curricula in the earliest grades.

Second, as learners move into the middle grades, they take the measure of the world, asking how big? How long? How small? How wide? Children at this age are eager to soak up all the curious/amazing/gross facts about the world. They are collectors, and they build their collections of comics, video games, or obscure facts with a zeal that can be breathtaking. Is it any wonder that texts like the books in the *Guinness World Records* series [Guinness (2005, 2006)] are such hot commodities with learners at this age?

Third, as they move through middle school, students shift their focus to a third major pursuit that combines the knowledge they have gained from the first two questions into a third question: where do I fit into this world? Having gained a sense of themselves and of the span of the world, adolescents strive to find the niche that fits them best (Egan, 1997). Their eagerness to debate even the smallest issues should be viewed as a means to understand the details, contradictions, and shades of gray between positions and ideas. The problem is that this

need to challenge every assumption can be exasperating for adults. At precisely the time when secondary educators are feeling the pressure to pack as much information as possible into courses, they are met with students who have a developmental need to question everything. Hynds (1997) describes "negotiating life with adolescents," and the metaphor fits (p. 2). Insight into the developmental needs of adolescents should drive text selection in the classroom. Given the adolescent's need for negotiation, it is wise to incorporate texts that foster critical literacy.

Re-engaging Through Critical Literacy

Critical literacy is "an understanding of how social contexts and power relations work together in and through texts to produce unequal social practices" (Peyton, 2000, p. 312). In particular, critical literacy is the ability of a reader to understand who and what is represented in a text, what bias an author may possess, and how power influences the production of ideas that may or may not represent all viewpoints. McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) illustrate the principles of critical literacy that focus on:

- Issues of power that promote reflection, transformation, and action
- Problems and their complexity
- Disrupting the commonplace by examining it from multiple perspectives (pp. 15-16.)

Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) described a unit in their English class that juxtaposed hip-hop musical lyrics with selections from the works of English poets such as Coleridge and Donne. For example, they noted that students used the lyrics of Public Enemy's "Don't Believe the Hype" as a way to understand T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land." The intent was to move beyond literary analysis, and students in their class discussed the role of the apocalyptic poet's voice in a society. The discussions with students focused not only on the content of twelfth-grade English but also on discussions of current issues and social action.

The contrastable natures of texts can spur meaningful discussions about an author's intent and about the representation of cultures and ideas. For example, a critical-literacy unit that is focused on Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* (1868/2005) and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* (2004) can encourage dialogue about the expectations and challenges of finding and defining success in American society. Alger's morality tale of hard work, honesty, and good fortune embodied the spirit of the rags-to-riches promise of life in nineteenth-century

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The discussions with students focused not only on the content of twelfth-grade English but also on discussions of current issues and social action.

America. Students can compare this influential work with Obama's recounting of his life in the late twentieth century as he sought to accept his identity as the son of parents who divorced early in his life and as he struggled to find success in communities that did not always welcome him. The questions of identity and success resonate with adolescents who are seeking similar pathways. Additionally, these readers can be engaged through debate and discussion about representations of young men in American society as well as about the fairness of the expectations that an older generation places on young people.

The Role of Comprehension Difficulties in Literacy

As discussed earlier, a significant number of students read below grade level because they lack the ability to apply comprehension strategies in order to create meaning. This inability is exacerbated by a pattern of teaching in many secondary classrooms that circumvents the lack of students' comprehension through an "assigning and telling" model of instruction: teachers assign outside reading, then lecture on the content the next day (Smith and Feathers, 1983; Thomas, 1993). As a result, students implicitly learn that the content of the reading assignments they failed to complete will be explained in class, lessening their need to utilize their nascent comprehension skills.

Merely holding students accountable for reading assignments is not enough. All readers, not just those labeled as struggling, benefit from purposeful instruction in strategies that aid in comprehension of academic material (e.g., Alfassi, 2004; Dole et al., 1991; Frey and Fisher, 2006). These comprehension strategies include:

- Activating background knowledge
- Making and revising predictions
- Summarizing
- Forming mental images
- Questioning
- Determining importance
- Understanding the author's purpose

Effective secondary-school teachers use research-

based instructional strategies to teach these comprehension strategies, including graphic organizers, vocabulary instruction, reciprocal teaching, note taking, and examples of reading aloud (Fisher and Frey, 2004). These instructional routines become habits of mind for adolescent readers as they apply these comprehension strategies to their own reading. These strategies are best taught when using texts that are within the reader's level of understanding, since the use of texts that are too difficult will have limited effect. It is wise, therefore, to choose texts that are accessible to struggling readers while still possessing content that is meaningful to those readers.

Self-efficacy plays an important role in the life of a reader who struggles. Many students arrive at the secondary level already possessing a belief that they are not good readers and a certainty that they will never become good readers. Years of failure, often formalized through in-grade retention, remediation, and permanent membership in the "low" reading group, have provided them with ample evidence for these conclusions, at least in their own minds. A challenge of middle and high school educators is to interrupt this cycle of thinking and to replace it with a series of carefully constructed successes. Stahl (1998) points out that "[p]art of teaching children with reading problems is convincing them that they can learn to read, in spite of their experience to the contrary" (p. 183). Two effective measures for accomplishing these goals include using texts that match students' instructional levels and making use of their interests in order to provide authentic reasons to read (Margolis and McCabe, 2001). To achieve these ends, educators can look for ways to teach comprehension by using materials other than the traditional texts identified for middle and high school students.

Re-engaging Through Nontraditional Formats

We have had great success in using nontraditional formats (such as graphic novels and audiobooks) as tools for engaging students in the act of comprehension. Many of our students who struggle to read have had little experience with the kinds of understanding

Teacher's Guide

Educators can look for ways to teach comprehension by using materials other than the traditional texts

that their teachers and their more academically able peers discuss so easily. Consequently, we look for opportunities to reduce the amount of written text initially in order to create the experience of understanding at a sophisticated level. Many of our students have developed advanced comprehension skills for understanding visual formats, such as comic books, television, movies, and role-playing games. Graphic novels afford us with a technique that allows us to use the language of artists to analyze how a story is told in graphic form.

For instance, when using the graphic novel *Fagin the Jew* (Eisner, 2003) with our students, our discussions focus on how we come to understand the story as told in graphic form. Many of our students are surprised that the same cognitive strategies they use to understand what happens between the panels of a strip are similar to those used by readers to infer meaning from written words. Other comprehension strategies we model in this way include:

- The use of symbols and metaphors
- The use of typeface and font as tools for describing the tone of the speaker
- An emphasis on the importance of dialogue as a means for understanding plot and character
- The use of tone and of mood in the piece
- The connections made (personal, textual, and experiential)

As students become more metacognitively aware of how they understand, they are increasingly able to apply these strategies to more complex prose novels. We have found that once students notice how they comprehend, they are better able to monitor their understanding; they notice when they have lost meaning, and they then retrace their reading to regain comprehension. Such monitoring applies to both narrative and informational texts.

Audiobooks offer another conduit for teaching comprehension strategies while using meaningful texts. Books on tape provide struggling readers with a model of fluent and expressive reading, especially in the use of phrase boundaries, intonation, and punctuation. As Rasinski and colleagues (2005) remind us, fluency is related to comprehension and remains an instructional priority through high school.

Often these audiobooks are paired with the written text, so that the reader can follow along with the professional reader. For example, a middle school student listening to *The Chocolate War* [Cormier (1974, 2004)] is able to participate fully with his literature circle group as they read and discuss the story. The student then has the added benefit of associating fluent and prosodic reading with the written word.

Cunningham (2000) notes an additional advantageous result of audiobooks in the classroom: “[I]t will be impossible to continue to exclude listening from literacy” (p. 64). The importance of the spoken word has always been acknowledged, at least for some portions of the canon such as poetry and Shakespeare. The link between oral and written literacies can further be strengthened through experiences with audiobooks for all readers, not just for those who struggle to read.

The Roles of Motivation and Interest in Literacy

Not all secondary students who fail to read do so because they cannot. A significant number of students choose not to read even though they can. In particular, their motivation and interest in reading appears to wane with each progressive school year (McKenna et al., 1995). Motivation and interest in reading both play a part in the reading lives of these students.

Motivation can be described as the individual's impetus to read when he or she is not compelled to do so by academic assignments. For many secondary students, reading is not a habit of their daily lives. There have been some efforts that have used various rewards-based programs to encourage students to read daily, but these endeavors fail to address the goal of reading as an independent choice outside of the reward programs, owing to a fundamental flaw in the programs' design. The choice to read independently must ultimately be intrinsically motivated. As adolescents move into young adulthood, they have an increasing amount of autonomy in determining how they will spend their free time. Several decades' worth of research on intrinsic motivation shows that outside rewards do not increase intrinsic motivation (Cameron and Pierce, 1994). While extrinsically motivating programs can increase reading for the duration of the program, they have less impact on developing lifelong reading habits.

Closely related to the concept of intrinsic motivation is the development of autonomy, defined as a sense of independence and self-rule. Notably, adolescence is characterized by the drive for autonomy. The need for autonomy is essential to learning as well. A sense of autonomy has been found to be an important influence on academic outcomes (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Further, autonomy and intrinsic motivation work in tandem (Boggiano et al., 1992). The teacher in a secondary school has a great deal of influence in how autonomy will be fostered because he or she can determine the extent to which students can exercise choice. Several studies have found that teachers who exert high levels of control and who limit student choice undermine learners' autonomy and intrinsic motivation to learn (e.g., Connell et al., 1994; Deci et al., 1981). Thus, opportunities for choice and self-selection play an important role in developing a self-regulated desire to read outside of academic assignments.

Student interest is another factor in the choice to read. As adults, we can certainly understand this perspective. After all, it is unlikely that you would be reading this article unless you were interested in the topic. The same can be said for our secondary students. When it comes to voluntary reading, the subject of the text is critical. A book or article that matches a student's interest is more likely to be read. In addition, interest plays a role in comprehension, precisely because the reader is attending to the text more closely. Wigfield et al. (1998) note that "interest is more strongly related to indicators of deep-level learning, such as recall of main ideas, responding to deeper comprehension questions, and representation of meaning, than it is to surface-level learning, such as responding to simple questions or verbatim representation of texts" (p. 77). A book or article of interest is therefore more likely not only to be read but also to be understood.

Re-engaging Through Opportunities to Read

The survey by Ivey and Broaddus (2001) of more than 1,700 sixth-grade students identified independent reading as the favorite school activity. The opportunity to read during the school day has other benefits as well: it is associated with an increase in the volume of reading, which is a strong correlate to reading achievement (Allington, 2001). In addition, the positive effects are not confined only to the more effective readers. Adolescents who were identified as struggling readers identified time spent reading as a valuable activity that contributed positively to their efforts to become better readers (Stewart

et al., 1996). Clearly, providing opportunities each day to read texts of their own choosing can re-engage learners.

Free, voluntary reading has been re-energized at our high school through daily and schoolwide sustained silent reading (SSR). Each day, the school stops for 20 minutes as every student and adult reads a text of his or her own choosing (Fisher, 2004). The availability of a wide range of texts, varied in both difficulty and subject, has been critical to the success of this program. Every classroom at the school, from English to algebra to physical education to woodshop, is outfitted with texts that have been selected for their appeal. Pilgreen's (2001) meta-analysis of the factors associated with a successful SSR program identified appealing texts as one element, along with the following:

- Access to reading materials
- A comfortable environment in which to read
- Encouragement through discussion about reading
- Staff training on principles of SSR
- Non-accountability of students (i.e., no book reports or other formal assessments)
- Follow-up activities through shared experiences
- Distributed time to read each day, not just once a week

Finding interesting texts has been a challenge, and our school has formed a student SSR advisory committee to help identify materials and practices that encourage reading. The students on this committee have been integral to locating popular texts we might not have considered, including magazines and comic books, as well as free materials such as the driver-education manual from the state. These students have also provided us with a glimpse into what is perceived as interesting to males and females.

Much has been written of the differences in reading habits and interests between adolescent boys and adolescent girls. To be sure, there are differences, although the reasons for those variations may be more complex than was once thought. For instance, there has been great attention in the media about the decline in reading interest among boys. In particular, we have heard teachers explain that reading is perceived as a female activity and as such is an activity that many boys avoid. This observation, however, appears to be inaccurate. A recent survey of boys in Canada found that the majority of them reported that they liked to read but that they began to feel estranged from school reading as early as second grade (O'Donnell, 2005). McFann (2004) reported in *Reading Today* that a survey of 14-year-old boys designed to elicit their reasons for not reading revealed that 39.3%

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of them described reading as “boring” or “no fun.” Interestingly, the second most common reason (given by 29.8% of the boys) was that there was no time to read.

Research done by Smith and Wilhelm (2002) on reading and adolescent boys provides a more nuanced look at the unique needs of these learners. In particular, the boys’ interest in the type of text is paramount. The investigators found that many boys enjoyed reading texts that are less commonly sanctioned by the school, such as comics and graphic novels, as well as books containing humor. Appealing genres included science fiction and fantasy, as well as informational texts. Popular books at our school include *Shadow Divers* (Kurson, 2004), the story of the discovery of the mystery behind the sinking of a submarine during World War II, and *The Martian Chronicles* (Bradbury, 1954). In addition, we have added to our growing collection of graphic novels and *manga* each month, since these titles have proven to be among the most popular in our SSR program.

Taking inspiration from Pipher’s *Reviving Ophelia* (1994), a seminal work on adolescent girls, Sprague and Keeling (2001) argue for a “library for Ophelia,” where adolescent girls have access to texts told from a female perspective that challenge assumptions about the suppression of ideas (p. 45). Of course, they are not referring to a building but rather to the availability of texts that resonate with adolescent females who are in the process of defining themselves and their place in the world. At a time when the National Coalition for Literacy reports that 85% of teenage mothers possess low levels of literacy, it would seem that this is a wise investment (*USA Today*, 2000). To make certain that female authors are represented in our SSR collection, we have added titles such as *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (Nafisi, 2003); *The Devil Wears Prada* (Weisberger, 2006); and *Dreamland* (Dessen, 2002).

Responding to the Challenge: Re-engaging Adolescent Readers

Improving the reading performance of our youth is possible. Possible, yes, but no one promised it would be easy. In particular, improvement demands that we look

closely at who our students really are and at why they struggle. Every student who is reluctant to read resists for a variety of reasons. A small but significant portion of the student population lacks basic reading skills that would allow them to decode smoothly, which then interferes with their ability to attend to the meaning of the text. Many more adolescents have these skills in place, but such students have not learned to employ comprehension strategies that make texts come to life for readers. In both cases, these students are not going to be drawn to reading if they are given books designed for younger readers. Providing nontraditional texts (such as graphic novels, music lyrics, and audiobooks), however, can lower the barriers while engaging the students’ interest in the subject. A third, silent category of students includes those who can read but do not read by choice. Again, paying attention to their interests while providing opportunities to read texts of their own choosing can foster a rediscovery of what reading has to offer.

In addition to noting the positive results achieved by having educators select excellent texts for students, Ivey and Fisher (2006) found that having teachers use universal themes to organize their instruction produced better results. In other words, teachers who focused on ideas and then selected texts that spanned a range of difficulty (rather than focusing on a specific book as the *de facto* curriculum) saw increased engagement and achievement. In addition, Ivey and Fisher noted that the traditional English curriculum can be addressed in multiple text sets and with engaging books that adolescents want to and can read. That’s the big idea here as well. Matching students with books and providing them with instruction, where they are, in reading those books makes a difference.

Ultimately, the re-engagement of adolescent readers requires that they discover how meaningful reading can be in their own lives. Given their developmental need to define their place in the world, it would seem that the accomplishment of this task might be only a few good books, graphic novels, songs, or audiobooks away. When a student discovers that the answers to some of his or her questions might be found through reading, you’ll hear the words we heard: “Got more of these?” ■

About the Writers

NANCY FREY, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Literacy in the School of Teacher Education at San Diego State University. Her research interests include reading and literacy, nontraditional texts, assessment, intervention, and curriculum design. She teaches a variety of courses on literacy and on supporting students with diverse learning needs.

DOUGLAS FISHER, Ph.D., is a Professor in the Department of Teacher Education at San Diego State University and is the Co-Director of the Center for the Advancement of Reading.

For a list of works cited and resources go to www.randomhouse.com/highschool/RHI/

Teacher's Guide

Suggested Reading...

Books cited in this article include:

THE CHOCOLATE WAR by Robert Cormier
Laurel Leaf, MM, 978-0-440-94459-1,
272 pp., \$6.50/\$9.99 Can.

THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA: A Novel
by Lauren Weisberger
Broadway, TR, 978-0-7679-1476-5,
368 pp., \$13.95/\$18.95 Can.
Also Available: Movie Tie-In edition
by Lauren Weisberger
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368 pp., \$13.95/\$18.95 Can.

RAGGED DICK or, Street Life in New York
with the Boot-Blacks by Horatio Alger
Introduction by David K. Shieler
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-8129-7358-7,
192 pp., \$8.95/\$12.95 Can.

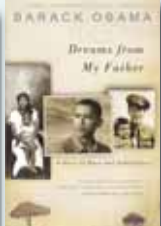
DREAMS FROM MY FATHER
A Story of Race and Inheritance
by Barack Obama
Three Rivers Press, TR, 978-1-4000-8277-3,
480 pp., \$14.95/\$21.00 Can.
Audio Available: Read by Barack Obama
Random House Audio, Abridged CD,
978-0-7393-2100-3, \$25.95/\$35.95 Can.

FAGIN THE JEW: A Graphic Novel
by Will Eisner
Doubleday, TR, 978-0-385-51009-7,
128 pp., \$16.95/\$23.95 Can.

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS 2006
Edited by Claire Folkard
Bantam, MM, 978-0-553-58906-1,
656 pp., \$7.50/\$9.99 Can.

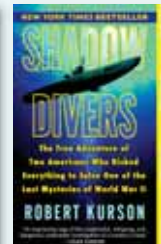
REVIVING OPHELIA: Saving the Lives of
Adolescent Girls by Mary Pipher
Audio Available: Read by Mary Pipher
Random House Audio, Abridged
Cassette, 978-0-553-47694-1,
\$18.00/\$28.00 Can.

SHADOW DIVERS: The True Adventure of Two
Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve
One of the Last Mysteries of World War II
by Robert Kurson
Random House, TR, 978-0-375-76098-3,
416 pp., \$14.95/\$21.00 Can.
Ballantine, MM, 978-0-345-48247-1,
416 pp., \$7.50/\$10.99 Can.
Audio Available: Read by Campbell Scott
Random House Audio, Abridged CD,
978-0-7393-2083-9, \$14.99/\$21.00 Can.



THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES
by Ray Bradbury
Spectra, MM, 978-0-553-27822-4,
192 pp., \$7.99/\$11.99 Can.

READING LOLITA IN TEHRAN
A Memoir in Books by Azar Nafisi
Random House, TR,
978-0-8129-7106-4, 384 pp.,
\$14.95/\$21.00 Can.



A Glorious Adventure of Pirates on the High Seas

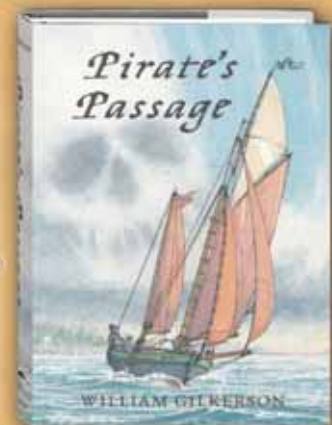
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Teacher's Guide

Generating Enriched Literacy Experiences For Older English Language Learners

BY DR. R. CIPRIANI-SKLAR



Meeting the needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in today's classrooms, especially in the upper grades, poses a special challenge for veteran and novice teachers alike. English language learners (or ELLs, as they are commonly known) have an increasingly difficult time understanding the printed word and achieving on today's high-stakes standardized tests. As a result, these struggling readers, who are new to the English language, face considerable obstacles not only in literacy classrooms but also in content-area classrooms; these students' difficulties prevent their academic advancement in areas such as science, social studies, math, and the arts.

To meet the diverse needs of these students, the role of the literacy teacher (as well as that of content teacher) must expand beyond traditional definitions of how information is presented to ELLs. A print-rich learning environment in all classrooms, complete with flexible groupings and a varied exposure to literature in the content areas, can meet the interests, abilities, and learning needs of ELLs.

Here are just a few ideas to consider when teaching both literacy and content curricula to the ELL student.

Tap into Students' Background Knowledge

Students need to connect with literature on three basic levels: text to text, text to self, and self to the world. All students bring something to the classroom. Becoming familiar with the backgrounds and/or prior knowledge of ELL students allows a teacher to begin engaging students in literacy experiences that connect with their diverse backgrounds, thereby building on this knowledge.

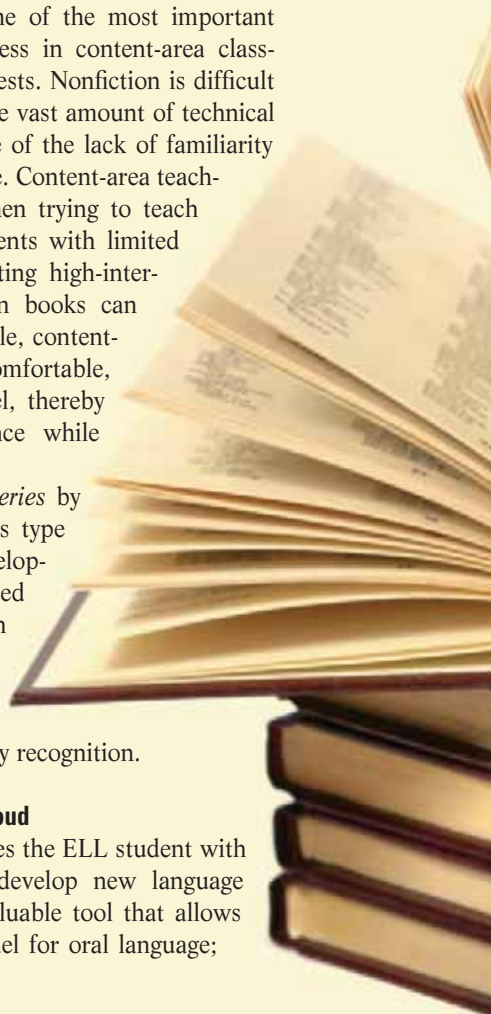
Match Books to Readers

Nonfiction is arguably one of the most important genres needed for success in content-area classrooms and on standardized tests. Nonfiction is difficult to comprehend because of the vast amount of technical vocabulary used and because of the lack of familiarity with content many ELLs have. Content-area teachers face great challenges when trying to teach the core curriculum to students with limited English literacy skills. Selecting high-interest/low-vocabulary nonfiction books can provide students with valuable, content-embedded information at a comfortable, comprehensible reading level, thereby allowing learning to advance while reading skills are developed.

The Landmark Books Series by Random House provides this type of content-area literacy development, and it can easily be used by literacy teachers to teach specific, nonfiction literacy skills, such as summarizing, sequencing, text structure, and core-vocabulary recognition.

Read aloud

Listening to stories provides the ELL student with many opportunities to develop new language skills. Reading aloud is a valuable tool that allows students to hear a good model for oral language;



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to develop capacity vocabulary (which usually develops at a faster rate than sight vocabulary); to become part of a group listening experience; and to initiate the practice of accountable talk. Books to be read aloud should be chosen for specific skills purposes or for content learning. Pictures and drawings within the book assist in the ELL student's understanding of the oral language and content instruction. Especially enjoyable read alouds are books such as *Hatchet* (a favorite among students) by Gary Paulsen. *Hatchet* is a great book to read aloud when teaching visualizing, predicting, inferencing, and setting.

Use Traditional, Culturally Diverse Tales and Legends

The ELL students are drawn to books that depict tales and legends with cross-cultural themes. This genre is sorely neglected in classrooms with older ELL students. Many ELLs have heard similar sto-

The ELL students are drawn to books that depict tales and legends with cross-cultural themes.

ries in their own countries. (After all, tales and legends spread because people travel.) Many students will connect with this genre, which will eventually open up a world of comparison/contrast literacy skills and an appreciation of a shared cultural genre.

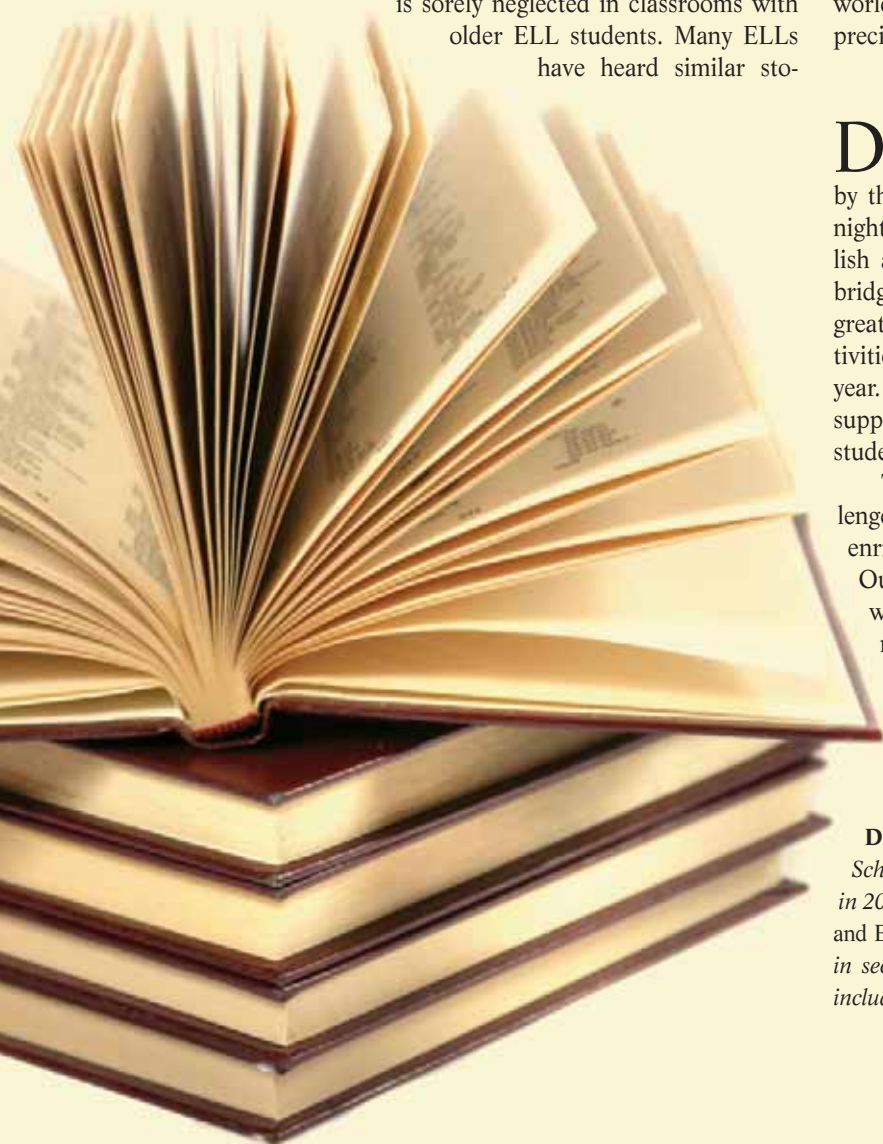
Promote the Home/School Connection

Don't forget about involving the parents of ELLs. Family literacy will help sustain the progress made by these students. Schools that provide family literacy nights, lending libraries for parents, and classes in English as a second language for parents provide a solid bridge between school and home and generally have greater success in helping the struggling ELLs. Such activities are relatively easy to organize during the school year. Book-publishing companies are more than eager to supply schools with appropriate books for young adult students and parents who are just learning English.

The ELLs in today's classrooms may pose great challenges to teachers, but in return these students offer an enriched classroom experience for the other students. Our ELLs are thus like windows to many parts of the world. We owe it to them to provide an equally enriched classroom experience, one filled with a truly varied, print-rich environment in both literacy and content-area classrooms. ■

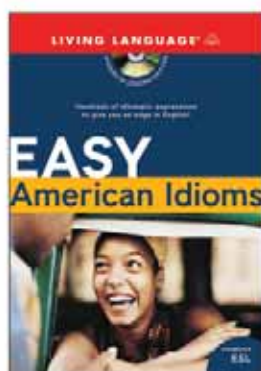
About the Writer

DR. R. CIPRIANI-SKLAR is Principal of the Fairview School in Corona, NY, and was named Principal of the Year in 2001. She was selected for Who's Who among Professionals and Executives in 2006. Dr. Cipriani-Sklar has taught English in secondary schools, and her educational research interests include gender issues and the education of girls.

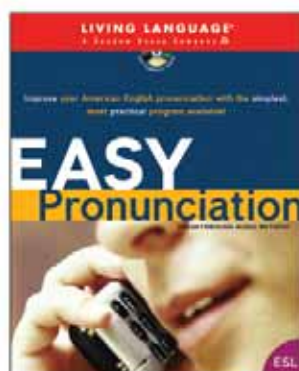


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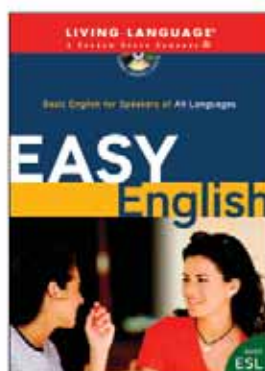
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Consider the Classics

Time-Tested Titles for Even the Most Reluctant Readers

BY REBECCA SHAPIRO

In the movies, getting kids excited about learning seems dramatic, alluring, and, if you put your nose to the grindstone, not even all that difficult. Who wouldn't want to be the one who made every kid in a troubled South Central Los Angeles high school pass the AP Calculus BC exam, as Edward James Olmos (playing teacher Jaime Escalante) did in the film *Stand and Deliver*? Or, more poignantly for me, who wouldn't want to inspire failing students to wade through the works of Dylan Thomas and thus to understand literature's relevance to their own lives, as Michelle Pfeiffer (portraying teacher Louanne Johnson) did in the movie *Dangerous Minds*?

As a graduate student in education, I watched these favorite inspirational stories and couldn't wait to create my own. I wanted my students not only to engage in the material that I gave them in class but also to experience reading as something fun and exciting. I wanted to share with them my own favorite classics, from *Madame Bovary* to *Light in August* to *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*.

Of course, I found that it wasn't as easy as Michelle Pfeiffer made it look. It was a good day when my students at Charlestown High School in Boston remembered to come to class, let alone remembered to come prepared and ready to discuss literature. Even while I was working for Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (a nonprofit organization for highly motivated students in New York City public schools), I found that outside the classroom, my students were about as interested in Jane Austen as I was in their hip-hop moves.

As frustrating as my attempts were, however, teaching only reinforced exactly how important it was to instill in students a love of reading. For the first time, I could see that getting my kids to read classics outside of the classroom would have concrete effects far beyond



the warm, fuzzy feeling I had in my stomach when I watched *Stand and Deliver*.

Reading is important in helping students strengthen not only their imaginations but also their vocabularies, their writing skills, and their experiences of living. Research has shown that the best way for students to pre-

pare for the verbal section of the SATs is not by studying flashcards or vocabulary but by consistently reading. While it helps for students to read anything, classics tend to expose them to different words and situations. The classics provide a context that will help young adults to understand other texts, to participate in a wider variety of conversations, and to see beyond their own worlds.

The question, however, remains: Is it possible to get adolescents interested in classics? If so, how?

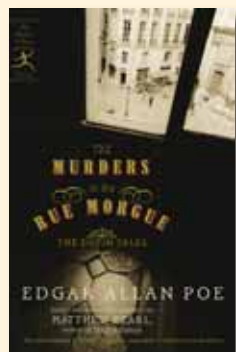
Appeal to Their Interests

The first great lesson I learned as a teacher is that it wasn't my responsibility to create a classroom of my protégées. It actually didn't matter at all if my students were reading the books that *I* loved. It mattered that they were reading books that *they* loved. Though I never liked Herman Melville when I was in school, he could become for my students what Faulkner and Fitzgerald became for me. It is essential to let students make their own, guided choices and to give them options that will fit with their interests.

For those who have expressed an interest in the military, *The Red Badge of Courage* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* are full of energetic battle scenes. *Moby Dick*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The Three Musketeers* will appeal to those with a sense of adventure. Travel and outdoor enthusiasts will enjoy the works of Jack London and Rudyard Kipling.

Include Some Skinny Books

When it comes to classics, for many people, size does matter. Give one adolescent boy *The Count*



Above: Rebecca Shapiro and class

Teacher's Guide

of *Monte Cristo* at 1,488 pages and another *Charlotte Temple* at 144 pages, and the one with *Charlotte Temple* is sure to think he's got the better end of the deal. *Charlotte Temple* is certainly important and is not to be missed

in the classroom, but teenage boys would be far more likely to get into Dumas's epic tale of treason, prison breaks, and sword fights. Most, however, would never figure that out, because they wouldn't look past the thick spine and the hefty page count.

Using size as an advantage, though, can help students get excited about reading. Short books, novellas, and even short stories won't intimidate students and can be great introductions to an author's writing. For example, the Ray Bradbury story

"All Summer in a Day" is a great precursor to his classic *Fahrenheit 451*. Similarly, *Notes from Underground* is good way to give students a taste of Dostoyevsky before they plunge into *Crime and Punishment*.

Get Inspired by Banned Books

Most students have at least a small rebellious streak, and at first glance, reading—particularly reading the classics—doesn't quite fit into that attitude. Helping students to understand that some classics were long considered edgy can make many books more appealing. Nathaniel Hawthorne, for example, seems a bit more dangerous after students find out that in many town squares, *The Scarlet Letter* was burned for its sexual deviance.

Also, the category of historically banned books is simply a great place to start when thinking about reading material for reluctant readers. Books generally incite controversy because they are on the vanguard of intellectual discourse, which means that they are energizing, provocative, and downright exciting. From *Frankenstein* to *The Jungle* to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, banned books represent some of the richest, most fun literature available.

Make Them Think That They're Missing Out...

For the better part of a school year, whenever my student Jim raised his hand, I would call him "Lord Jim"

(after the Joseph Conrad title). Almost every day after class, he would ask me about the origin of the nickname. My response was always the same: "Go find out, and come tell me." I wasn't overly optimistic, but one day in March, he waited after school and announced proudly: "It's a book, Miss! What's it about?" Again, I figured that if I continued to use the nickname and if he got curious enough, he might actually read the book. My ploy worked: Jim slugged his way through, and by the end of May, he was clumsily referencing Conrad in his papers.

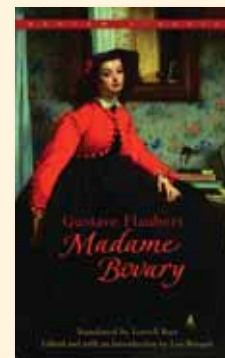
The moral of my story about Jim isn't that giving out nicknames will necessarily get kids to read. Rather, I found that no one likes to be on the outside of an inner circle—be it of friends, jokes, or even knowledge. When Jim thought that the whole world except for him knew why he had a nickname, it motivated him to do some investigation of his own. His story is indicative not only of a way to get kids to read classics but, again, of why it's important. Classics are consistently referenced in any number of sources, and students who understand these references will have a leg up in and out of the classroom.

After two years of teaching, I became an editor. I have been lucky enough to be in a position at the Modern Library that allows me to think about books, and particularly classics, in a new way. I now spend my days thinking about the definition of a classic, about what is missing from the canon of classics, and about what introducers and translators and editors can do to help bring out the best of these classics.

I still firmly believe in the importance of the classics, and after spending time in the classroom, I have seen the impact that these great books continue to have on students. I know now that it is extraordinarily challenging to inspire young minds. Not every classroom story has a neat Hollywood ending like those of the movies I admired. With the right tactics and with some extra patience, however, it is certainly possible to help students build a lifelong relationship with reading, both inside the classroom and out. ■

About the Writer

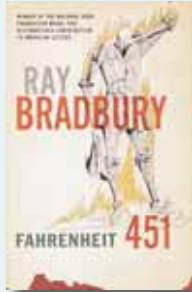
REBECCA SHAPIRO has worked as a writer for Kirkus Reviews; as a writing instructor at Charlestown High School; and as a teacher and counselor at Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, a nonprofit organization for motivated students in New York City public schools. She holds a B.A. in English from Brown University and an M.Ed. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



Teacher's Guide

Suggested Reading...

Books cited in this article include:



FAHRENHEIT 451

by Ray Bradbury
Ballantine, TR, 978-0-345-41001-6, 192 pp.,
\$13.95/\$21.00 Can.
Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-34296-6, 208 pp.,
\$6.99/\$10.99 Can.



THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE

by Stephen Crane
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21011-8,
160 pp., \$3.95/\$5.99 Can.

THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE & "THE VETERAN"

by Stephen Crane
Introduction by Shelby Foote
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-679-78320-6,
336 pp., \$8.95/\$13.95 Can.

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

by Alexandre Dumas
Introduction by Lorenzo Carcaterra
Modern Library, MM, 978-0-345-48354-6,
1,488 pp., \$8.95/\$12.95 Can.
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-76030-3,
1,488 pp., \$12.95/\$19.95 Can.

THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO

by Alexandre Dumas
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21350-8,
544 pp., \$6.95/\$9.95 Can.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

by Alexandre Dumas
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21337-9,
656 pp., \$5.95/\$7.95 Can.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

by Alexandre Dumas
Translated by Jacques Le Clercq
Introduction by Alan Furst
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-75674-0,
640 pp., \$11.95/\$15.95 Can.

LIGHT IN AUGUST

The Corrected Text
by William Faulkner
Modern Library, HC, 978-0-679-64248-0,
528 pp., \$21.95/\$29.95 Can.

MADAME BOVARY

by Gustave Flaubert
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21341-6,
512 pp., \$5.95/\$7.95 Can.

THE SCARLET LETTER

by Nathaniel Hawthorne
Introduction by Kathryn Harrison
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-679-78338-1,
304 pp., \$5.95/\$8.95 Can.

THE SCARLET LETTER

by Nathaniel Hawthorne
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21009-5,
256 pp., \$3.95/\$5.50 Can.

MOBY-DICK

by Herman Melville
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21311-9,
704 pp., \$4.95/\$7.50 Can.

MOBY-DICK or, The Whale

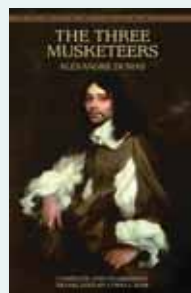
by Herman Melville
Introduction by Elizabeth Hardwick and
Rockwell Kent
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-679-78327-5,
896 pp., \$11.95/\$17.95 Can.

THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

THE DUPIN TALES
by Edgar Allan Poe
Introduction by Matthew Pearl
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-679-64342-5,
160 pp., \$8.95/\$11.95 Can.

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

by Erich Maria Remarque
Ballantine, TR, 978-0-449-91149-5, 304 pp.,
\$13.95/\$21.00 Can.
Ballantine, MM, 978-0-449-21394-0, 304 pp.,
\$6.99/\$9.99 Can.



CHARLOTTE TEMPLE

by Susanna Rowson
Introduction by Jane Smiley
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FRANKENSTEIN

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THE JUNGLE

by Upton Sinclair
Afterword by Anthony Arthur
Introduction by Jane Jacobs
CENTENNIAL EDITION
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400 pp., \$5.95/\$8.95 Can.

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

by Mark Twain
Afterword by Alfred Kazin
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21079-8,
304 pp., \$4.95/\$7.50 Can.

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

by Mark Twain
Ivy Paperback, MM, 978-0-8041-1571-1,
384 pp., \$4.99/\$5.99 Can.
Fawcett, TR, 978-0-449-91272-0, 384 pp.,
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THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

by Mark Twain
Introduction by George Saunders
Modern Library Classics, TR,
978-0-375-75737-2, 304 pp., \$6.95/\$9.95 Can.

Winning Back Your Reluctant Readers

BY PAT SCALES

In 1985, the Commission on Reading (funded by the U.S. Department of Education) issued a report called *Becoming a Nation of Readers*. The purpose of this small book was to address issues related to literacy in the nation's schools. Two decades later, educators and parents are still trying to figure out how to deal with reluctant readers—those who can read but don't. I have worked with a number of reluctant readers over the course of my career, and it is obvious to me that it isn't always books, or even the act of reading, that reluctant readers are rejecting.

The real problem seems to be with the methods we, as educators, use to get our students to read and with the requirements that we place upon them. For example, millions of dollars are spent by school districts each year to purchase computerized reading programs; these programs test students on the novels they have read and reward them with points that ultimately lead to prizes and other incentives. Often, however, there is very little personal attention offered to readers in schools that use such programs. Students who are naturally competitive may thrive when such techniques are used, but for the most part, these programs do little to make students lifelong readers. Computerized reading programs simply turn students into reading robots with one goal—winning points for themselves and for their classes. Winning is not a bad goal, but the question remains: What are we attempting to win?

Almost all of my friends are readers, but in a recent conversation with a college friend, I found that although she is a reader now, she didn't enjoy reading as a child or as a young adult. When I asked her why, she related a dismaying story. The librarian at her school laughed at her, in front of her peers, when she chose to read *The Bobbsey Twins* in sixth grade. While my friend's choice may have seemed immature to her librarian, it was still a personal choice, and she shouldn't have received that type of response from a professional whose job it was to inspire. A negative response to a reader is far more damaging than no response at all. My friend was certainly capable of reading a much more challenging novel, but the truth is that no adolescent wants his or her immaturity or reading taste made public

to others, especially in a disapproving way. A better conversation might have gone something like this: "I see you like *The Bobbsey Twins*. I would like to suggest a similar book when you finish that one." Approaching young readers in such a way validates their desire to read and often serves to pique their interest in other related titles.

How should teachers and librarians respond to students who have little motivation to read and who therefore do not ask for guidance? The answer is simple: Know the students, know the books, and seek creative ways to connect the two. Some students are more challenging than others, but all students respond when they think an adult knows them well enough to suggest just the right book. Find out what movies the students watch, and lead them to books that deal with similar themes or topics. If they like war movies, give them *The Gift of Valor* by Michael M. Phillips or *Flags of Our Fathers* by James Bradley with Ron Powers. Then lead them to *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien. If they are caught up in fantasy movies, give them Christopher Paolini's *Eragon* or Donita K. Paul's *DragonSpell* and *Dragon-Quest*. If they like horror movies, give them *The Book of Skulls* by Robert Silverberg. Perhaps they prefer movies and novels that deal with the realities of life—stories to which they may relate in some way. Suggest *The Book of Bright Ideas* by Sandra Kring, *Maybe a Miracle* by Brian Strause, *Prep* by Curtis Sittenfeld, *The Great Santini* by Pat Conroy, or *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier. When a student has a positive response to a book, it is the role of the teacher or librarian to supply another sim-





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ilar title. In this way, we are guiding the reluctant reader on a journey toward success.

I have spoken with middle and high school students who say that they have never liked a novel that they studied as a class. Sometimes they react to the length of time that a teacher spends on a novel study. At other times it is the actual novel that they don't like. Reluctant readers may respond better to a short book (such as *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou or *A Day No Pigs Would Die* by Robert Newton Peck) so that the reading and the literature analysis can be completed in one or two weeks. Allow students the opportunity occasionally to make a personal reading choice for a novel study. Provide them with a list of novels from which they may make their selections. The emphasis should be placed on what we want students to gain from a novel study rather than on what book is read.

Reluctant readers should be turned loose to explore genres until they find just the right book that pulls them into the story.

Some readers will discover historical fiction, such as Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels*, which describes the four most important days in the American Civil War. Other readers may seek contemporary young adult fiction: *How I Live Now* by Meg Rosoff is a story of love and hate set during a fictional war in England. *Bucking the Sarge* by Christopher Paul Curtis tells the story of 14-year-old Luther, a boy who seeks to better his life and to escape the corruption of the projects in Flint, Michigan. Sittenfeld's *Prep* is a contemporary novel that will attract girls, whereas boys may migrate toward a book like *My Losing Season* by Pat Conroy.

Perhaps some students will discover that they like reading about other cultures. These readers will look for books like *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* (set in 19th century China) by Lisa See; *Funny in Farsi* by Firoozeh Dumas; or *Burnt Bread and Chutney: Growing Up Between Cultures—A Memoir of an Indian Jewish Girl* by Carmit Delman.

Mysteries and crime novels like *Dead Men Rise Up Never* by Ron Faust, *Don't Look Behind You* by Lois Duncan, and *The Face on the Milk Carton* by Caroline B. Cooney are enormously accepted by both avid and reluctant teenage readers.

Nonfiction is especially popular with reluctant readers. Many are drawn to sports books like *Bat Boy: My True Life Adventures Coming of Age with the New York Yankees* by Matthew McGough; to chronicles of science expeditions like *Carnivorous Nights: On the Trail of the Tasmanian Tiger* by Margaret Mittelbach and Michael Crewdson; to technical books like *Electric Universe* by David Bodanis; to tales of personal journeys like Pulitzer Prize-winner Sonia Nazario's book *Enrique's Journey*; to stories of social struggle like *Last Chance in Texas: The Redemption of Criminal Youth* by John Hubner; and to books about war heroes like the aforementioned *Flags of Our Fathers*.

These high-interest books will almost always lure adolescents into reading and will send them to seek similar titles. The key is, give reluctant readers a choice; they will then begin trusting us to help them make book selections.

Reluctant readers want to win. They need us to help them win. They can only win if educators alter the ways in which we guide and teach them. Only then can we expect to become a nation of readers. ■

Helpful Hints in Winning Reluctant Readers

- Offer reading choices.
- Refrain from being judgmental of students' reading selections.
- Tap into students' outside interests.
- Use shorter, high-interest books for novel studies.
- Link novels to other types of reading materials, such as newspapers, magazines, and nonfiction books.
- Read aloud the first chapter of a novel to get readers hooked.
- Include a variety of genres in the English curriculum.
- Instruct students to stop reading a book if it doesn't interest them by the second chapter.
- Allow students to help shape a reading list for the class.
- Ask students to suggest books for you to read. Read as many of the books as possible. Let students know when you read their suggestions.

Teacher's Guide

Teaching Ideas

1 Discuss the following quote by Raymond Chandler: "A good title is the title of a successful book." Ask students to browse the library or a book store and to write down the ten best titles they see. Have them bring their lists to class and discuss why they chose these particular titles. Then have each student read the book that most appeals to him or her.

2 Ask students to read both *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou and *A Day No Pigs Would Die* by Robert Newton Peck. Then have them write a short essay that compares the voices in the two novels.

3 Everybody has a different sense of humor. Some like sarcasm; others respond to farce. Some like funny characters; others prefer absurd plots. Have students discuss the funniest novel they have ever read. Encourage them to read a novel like *10th Grade* by Joseph Weisberg or *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer: A Road Trip into the Heart of Fan Mania* by Warren St. John. Prepare an interview with one of the authors that highlights the humor in the novel.

4 Have students try their hands at writing. Ask them to write a description of a funny scene from their own lives or of something they have seen on television. Ask for volunteers to read aloud what they have crafted. How difficult is it to capture humor on the printed page?

5 Engage the class in a discussion of some classic adventure stories, such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain or *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville. Then ask the students to read a modern adventure, such as Robert Kurson's *Shadow Divers: The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II*. Have the

students write a brief paper that explains why the novel they selected is considered an adventure.

6 Engage students in a discussion about the meaning of courage. Divide the class into small groups, and ask them to read the newspaper and identify articles about a person or a group of people who have shown courage. Share the articles in class. Then send the students to the library to find a biography or an autobiography about someone who has demonstrated courage.

7 C. S. Lewis once said, "We read to know we are not alone." Ask students how this is especially true when we read realistic novels and memoirs. Discuss how a memoir is similar to realistic fiction. What are the differences? Introduce students to books like *Love in the Dusty Season: A Family Memoir* by Neely Tucker or *Polite Lies: Memoir of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter* by Kyoko Mori. Ask students to write a brief paper that discusses how the emotions in these memoirs are similar to emotions expressed in realistic novels they have read.

8 Encourage students to keep a year-long reading journal in which they can record the names of the books that they have read for recreation; have them comment on the books that they have abandoned and on the books that they have enjoyed. Once a month, give them a chance to share some of their journal entries.

9 Ask students to think about all the novels that they have read in school. What character would they most want to engage in conversation? Have students write a brief essay called "A Conversation with..."

10 Introduce students to the genre of graphic novels, then ask them to take a favorite short story and develop it as a graphic novel. Bind the book and place it in the classroom so that other students will be able to read it.

11 Ask students to share the names of books that were their favorites when they were young children, then have them find those books and bring them to class. Invite each student to read his or her book aloud and to discuss why it was a childhood favorite. Have them read the book to a young child (perhaps to a family member or a neighbor). Ask them to write a very brief account of how the child responded to the book.

12 Share six or eight books with the class. Divide students into small groups and ask them to select one of the books for the group to read. For example, one group might read *Miss Black America* by Veronica Chambers, and another might read *Don't Orbo* by Brendan Halpin. After reading the books, each group should be given three minutes to sell the book to the class. The sales pitch must include every member of the group.

13 Bring sample book reviews to class and discuss the elements of a good book review. Encourage students to write book reviews for the school newspaper or simply for the classroom bulletin board.

14 Engage the class in a discussion about how much fact is in fiction. Introduce students to good historical fiction. Have them record the facts that they learn from reading the novel, then send them to the library to verify the facts. Ask them to cite their sources.

15 Most schools require middle and high school students to read during the summer months. Invite young readers to participate in shaping a summer reading list for their school. Make sure that the list includes different genres to accommodate the varied reading tastes of students. Ask students to develop writing prompts for responding to summer reading. ■

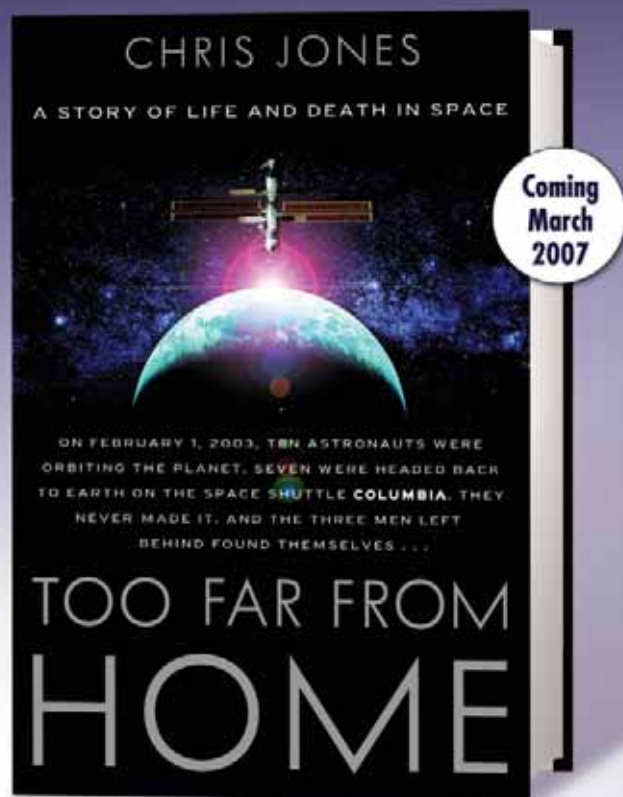
About the Writer

Pat Scales is an independent consultant and freelance writer who has recently retired as Director of Library Services at the South Carolina Governor's School for Arts and Humanities, Greenville.



For a list of works cited and resources go to www.randomhouse.com/highschool/RHI/

Transport Your Students to Deep Space & Deep Sea



Too Far From Home

A Story of Life and Death in Space

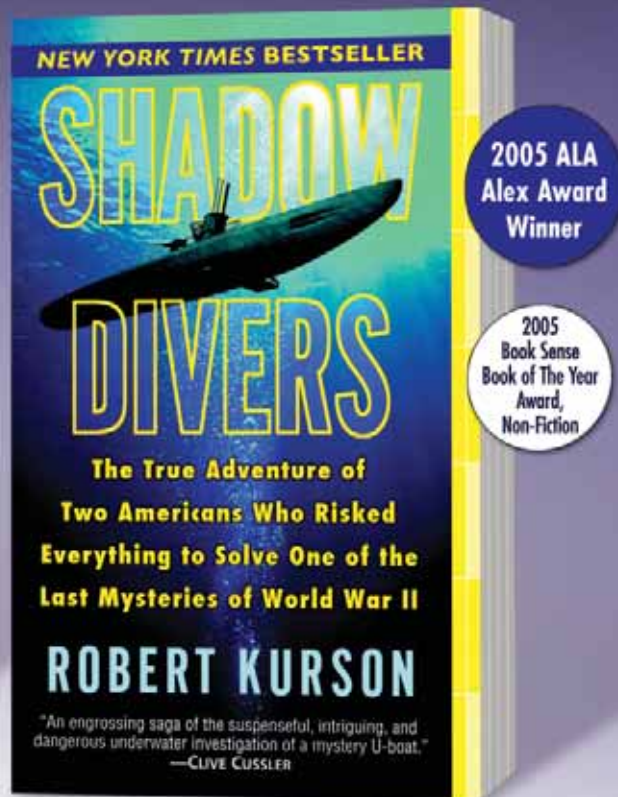
by Chris Jones

Every time an astronaut makes the trip into space, he faces the risk of death from the slightest human error or mechanical malfunction. For a special breed of individual, the call of space is worth the risk...

In February 2003, two American astronauts and a Russian flight engineer suddenly lost their ride back to earth when the space shuttle Columbia exploded far beneath them as it attempted to return after a routine mission to the International Space Station.

Too Far From Home chronicles the efforts of mission control crews in Houston and Moscow as they work against the clock to bring their men home. Written with immediacy and an attention to detail, this book rivals the finest narrative nonfiction and vividly captures the dangerous realities of space travel.

Doubleday | HC | 978-0-385-51465-1 | 304 pp | \$24.95/NCR



Shadow Divers

The True Adventure of Two Americans Who Risked Everything to Solve One of the Last Mysteries of World War II

by Robert Kurson

In the tradition of Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* and Sebastian Junger's *The Perfect Storm*, comes a true tale of riveting adventure in which two weekend scuba divers risk everything to solve a great historical mystery—and make history themselves.

For John Chatterton and Richie Kohler, deep wreck diving was more than a sport. But in the fall of 1991, not even these courageous divers were prepared for what they found 230 feet below the surface, in the frigid Atlantic waters sixty miles off the coast of New Jersey: a World War II German U-boat.

Over the next six years, an elite team of divers embarked on a quest to solve the mystery. Chatterton and Kohler, at first bitter rivals, were drawn into a friendship that deepened to an almost mystical sense of brotherhood with each other and with the drowned U-boat sailors—former enemies of their country. As their dives grew more daring, each realized that he was hunting more than the identities of a lost U-boat and its nameless crew.

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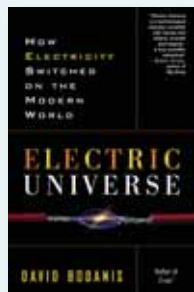
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by Maya Angelou
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Also available in Audio:
Read by Maya Angelou
Random House Audio, Abridged CD,
978-0-679-45173-0, \$22.95/\$32.95 Can.

ELECTRIC UNIVERSE: How Electricity

Switched on the Modern World
by David Bodanis
WINNER 2006: New York Public Library
Books for the Teen Age
Three Rivers Press, TR, 978-0-307-33598-2,
320 pp., \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.



FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

by James Bradley with Ron Powers
WINNER: ALA Alex Award
Bantam, TR, 978-0-553-38029-3, 400 pp.,
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FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS: Movie Tie-In Edition

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THE CHOCOLATE WAR

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Best Books for Young Adults
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BURNT BREAD AND CHUTNEY : Growing Up Between Cultures—A Memoir of an Indian Jewish Childhood

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DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU

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Laurel Leaf, MM, 978-0-440-20729-0,
192 pp., \$5.99/\$7.99 Can.

DEAD MEN RISE UP NEVER

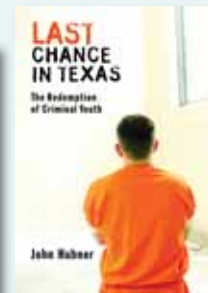
by Ron Faust
2005 Edgar Award Nominee
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DONORBOY: A Novel

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The Redemption of Criminal Youth
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by Matthew McGough
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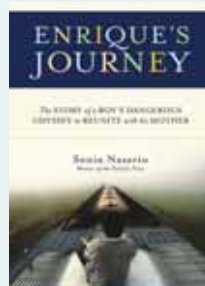
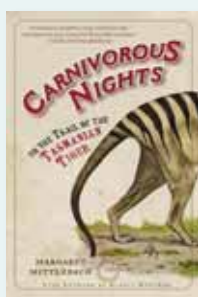


Teacher's Guide

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Illustrated by Rockwell Kent
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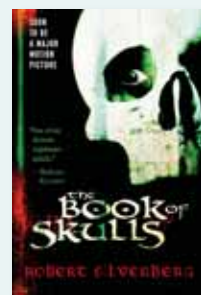
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ALA Best Books for Young Adults.
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Teacher's Guide

10 Ways to Build a Reluctant Reader Library

BY MONIQUE DELATTE AND DEBORAH ANDERSON
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

1 Ask young adults (YAs): What do you think? Incorporating teen advice lends peer credibility to selections and should increase turnover. Form a YA advisory board to gain input about their reading interests.

2 Include books that reflect pop culture. As a book selector, make time to track teen trends. Don't order books reflecting outdated interests; appeal to their desire for all things new or current. *Hip Hoptionary* by Alonzo Westbrook; *So You Wanna Be a Rock & Roll Star* by Jacob Slichter; and *Masters of Doom* by David Kushner are fun, hip titles that will keep your collection edgy and current.

3 Select alternate formats. Mix things up with *manga* (see page 70 for more on manga); audiobooks (see page 87 for more on audio); e-books; zines; magazines; school newspapers; teen news media—anything without a library binding!

4 Read. Read. Read. Be the go-to gal (or guy) for good literature! Keep on top of titles by reading the newest and hottest books to hit the stores. If you don't know the content, you cannot enthusiastically pitch a book to an already-uninterested teen.

5 Pair movie titles and books. When you find a cool movie/book tie-in, think *merchandising*. For example, the buzz right now

is that *Batman II* is in the works. "Merchandise" your Batman collection with face-outs featuring DVDs; video games; graphic novels; and books such as *Batman Inferno*, *Batman Begins*, and the *Batman Beyond* series. In addition, with the expected release of the third *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie in Summer 2007, new books such as *Pirate's Passage* and classics such as *Treasure Island* would make a great foundation for any collection that covers pirates.

6 Be their connection for addictive series. Introduce your hesitant readers to can't-quit series that keep them coming back for more. Offer girls *The Princess Diaries* (available through Random House as an e-book or audiobook) and Megan McCafferty's *Sloppy Firsts*. Push a guy-friendly series by Jeff Stone or David Eddings. For nonfiction fans, try *National Geographic's American Documents* series.

7 Poetry, plays, prose, chat-style books, short stories, essays— give them books they didn't know counted as books. Revive a collection by replacing low-circulating monographs with literature that breaks up the traditional book format. Add short stories, such as Dan Chaon's *Among the Missing*; anthologies, such as *Short Stories by Latin American Women: The Magic and the Real* and *Short Shorts: An Anthology of the Shortest Stories*;

and poetry, such as *Poetry 180* (edited by Billy Collins) and *Cool Salsa* (edited by Lori Carlson).

8 Collect nonfiction. Nonfiction is generally visual; thus it can help reluctant readers make the connection between an idea and the written word. Pat Conroy's *My Losing Season* (an ALA Alex Award-winning title) and Jon Katz's *Geeks: How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet Out of Idaho* are excellent titles to include in your collection. In addition, look for Osprey's graphic-novel series (see page 69) covering individual wars and battles; this series is geared specifically to the YA set.

9 Rotate your collection. Teens' interests and tastes change quickly. A newer, fresher-looking collection is more engaging and interesting than the same thing every day. To ensure access to new titles for rotation, buy fewer titles but buy more frequently. Stay current on the latest titles by signing up for the *Random House High School e-newsletter* at www.randomhouse.com/highschool/newsletter.

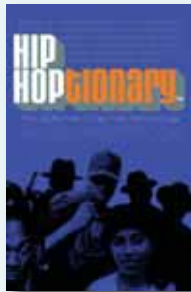
10 Visit publisher websites to request exam copies.

Searching for an easy way to familiarize yourself with the latest in teen literature? Visit www.randomhouse.com/highschool for more information on and requirements for obtaining exam copies. ■

Teacher's Guide

Suggested Reading...

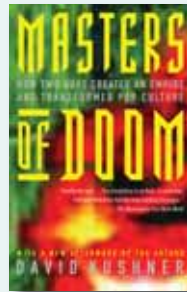
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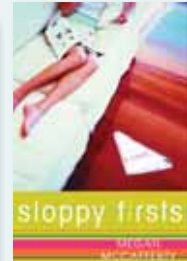
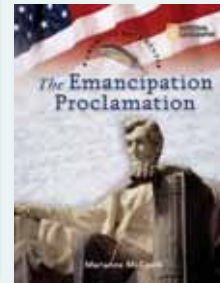
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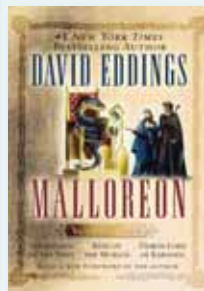


BATMAN™ INFERNO by Alex Irvine
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GEEKS: How Two Lost Boys Rode the Internet
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Booktalking: Get Your Reluctant Readers To Listen Up!

Booktalking can develop in our students a passion for reading while at the same time encouraging them to explore new titles.

BY **TERRENCE E. YOUNG, Jr.**, M.Ed., M.L.S.

Booktalking may be the most successful way to show a young adult that reading is fun, interesting, and valuable. Many parents read stories and books to their children, usually starting when the child is very young. When the child starts preschool, the teacher continues this practice, but it is now called story time. At the elementary level, School Library Media Specialists (SLMSs) and teachers are constantly reading books of 32 pages or less to their pre-K–3 classes for entertainment, curricular enrichments, or subject content. When the children progress to the upper elementary levels and beyond, their self-motivation and interests are the usual factors that prompt them to read books. Many other students, however, need some encouragement to read a good book. For both groups of students, booktalks can provide the impetus needed to read more books.

What is a Booktalk?

A booktalk is like a movie preview—it piques a student's interest in reading a book. Booktalking can be a formal presentation to a class of students or an informal presentation to a few students who are looking for something to read. The goal of using this technique is to entice our students into reading a book that we have read and designated as valuable. Booktalks can be used to stimulate interest among individuals and ultimately to match the right readers with the right books. All SLMSs should strive to master the art of booktalking—our students can become excited about reading because of our efforts.

Enthusiasm and creativity are key elements of this technique. If the SLMS does not like a book, he or she cannot promote it in a credible way. A good presentation conveys the passion from the booktalker to the student. It doesn't matter what type of personality you have—there are as many different styles of booktalks as there are booktalkers.

Books can be grouped according to themes or subjects and can be “talked” in the classroom or in the library media center. Teachers can collaborate with SLMSs and invite them to their classrooms to present books that would augment their lessons.

Booktalks also provide students with an opportunity to discuss literature. Elementary students can participate in discussions about a different genre each month. Secondary teachers can post their own topics and assignments for students. Students can read each other's thoughts and can reply. The discussion can continue over days or weeks.

Most booktalks are for fiction titles, but nonfiction presentations can also promote reading and increase content-area knowledge. Look over the Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children [from the National Council of Teachers of English <http://www.ncte.org/elem/awards/orbispictus>] and select a title to booktalk. Teachers and librarians may be surprised to see how these nonfiction titles are received by their students. An excellent starting point for finding award-winning titles is the Children's Book Awards and Other Literary Prizes website <http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/awards.htm>). Many publishers, from the conglomerates to the independents, now maintain a presence on the internet. Typical information on publisher websites includes images of book covers, an online catalog, publicity announcements, press releases, lists of award-winning books, author biographies, and ideas and bibliographies for holidays. Many of the sites provide a way to sign up for e-mail newsletters and booktalks. Random House has two sites of interest: one for use by high school teachers that features books for young adults (<http://www.randomhouse.com/highschool/>) and one specializing in children's titles (www.randomhouse.com/teachers/librarians/booktalks/booktalks.html). ■

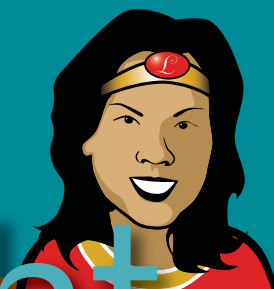
About the Writer

TERRENCE E. YOUNG, Jr., M.Ed., M.L.S., is a school library media specialist at West Jefferson High School in New Orleans, LA, and Adjunct Instructor of Library Science at both the University of New Orleans and LSU School of Library and Information Science.

© 2006 Terrence E. Young, Jr. (Revised article originally published in *American Association of School Librarians' (AASL) Knowledge Quest*, 32(1), 2005.

For a list of works cited and resources go to www.randomhouse.com/highschool/RH/

Author Spotlight



I'm Wonder-Leila, and I'd like to introduce you to five remarkable authors, each a hero in his or her own way!

In this section, five noted authors talk about the responsibility of understanding the adolescent audience. In an article by best-selling author Terry Brooks, we learn that fantasy is entertaining but that the genre lends more than pure escapism: Students can relate to strong protagonists dealing with conflicts.

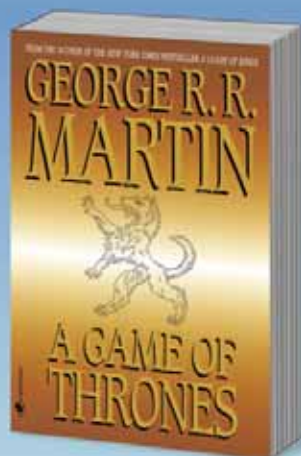
Nancy Rawles, author of the Alex Award-winning book *My Jim*, talks about why she chose to write this important "sequel to *Huck Finn*" and why it has touched so many young readers. Brian Strause similarly discusses how his coming-of-age novel *Maybe a Miracle* resonated deeply with reluctant readers who identified with the main character, a teenage male. Former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins asks that we reintroduce poetry in high schools but also that we find an accessible way to do it so that students will want to participate. Firoozeh Dumas, author of *Funny in Farsi*, uses humor to describe her own experiences in a new country; a brief excerpt from her book was all it took to get students hungrily asking for more.

Fantasy: Why in the World Do Kids Read This Stuff? by Terry Brooks	31
When Reading Ain't Natural: <i>My Jim</i> , A "Talking" Novel by Nancy Rawles	38
"It Doesn't Take a Miracle..." by Brian Strause	40
Poetry Rocks: Inspire Your Students with Dazzling Poetry by Billy Collins	43
A Spoonful of Humor Gets the Pages Turning by Firoozeh Dumas	51

Page-Turning Science Fiction & Fantasy Books Your Converted Reluctant Readers Can Sink Their Teeth Into

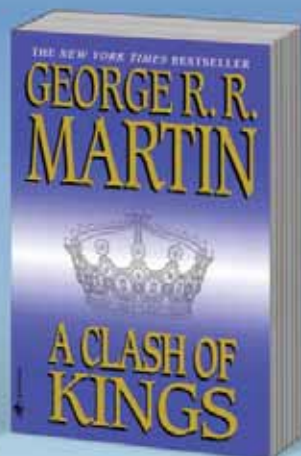
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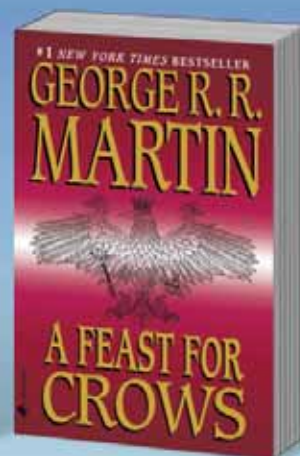
A Clash of Kings
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Un Lun Dun
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Del Rey | HC | 978-0-345-49516-7 | 448 pp | \$17.95/\$22.00 Can.



FANTASY

Why in the World Do Kids Read This Stuff?

BY TERRY BROOKS

I have more than a passing interest in the answer to the question in this article's title. As a writer of "this stuff," I have been dealing with the corollary for more than 30 years: Why in the world do you *write* this stuff? This is not exactly how the question is asked, but I can intuit the thinking behind the words. *Fantasy is for kids. Fantasy is lightweight reading. Who cares about elves and dwarves and dragons? Why don't you write about something important?*

Kids never ask this question; they get it right away. It is the adults who ask. Adults, I am sorry to report, don't always get it. Even adults who should (teachers and librarians and—horror of horrors—parents) don't always get it. Why are kids so enamored with these stories? Why don't they read something worthwhile, like Dickens or Melville or Thomas Hardy or . . . well, you fill in the blank. Fantasy, they think, is just a waste of time.

I heard this same argument 50 years ago when I was a kid, as various well-meaning adults were trying to wean me off comics and series books about space exploration with robots and aliens. My own parents weren't involved in this nonsense, I am happy to report, but some of my teachers were, as were the parents of some of my friends. Some things never change.

One thing I've learned about kids is that they are not afraid to tell you, as the author, how they feel about what you are doing—good or bad.

Okay, so I've made my point about my feelings concerning books of fantasy, but do I have anything to back up my opinions? It's easy enough to say that anyone who doesn't think fantasy is worthwhile reading for kids is misguided, but what sort of argument would I offer in support? Am I just blowing smoke?

I have talked about kids and books with librarians and teachers at national, state, and local conferences, and I have spoken privately at library and school appearances for most of my career. I do it in large part because I believe in the importance of what I write; however, I also do it because many of my readers are kids. If you are a writer, you'd better have some understanding of your audience. One thing I've learned about kids is that they are not afraid to tell you, as the author, how they feel about what you are doing—good or bad. They don't do it so much in person, but they are wellsprings of opinion when they resort to e-mails and letters.

What they tell me has much to do with my understanding of their reading choices. It starts with their passion: They love fantasy. They love adventure stories. Many tell me the first book they ever read was a fantasy. Many tell me they read only fantasy because only fantasy speaks to them, satisfies their reading needs, and doesn't disappoint them.



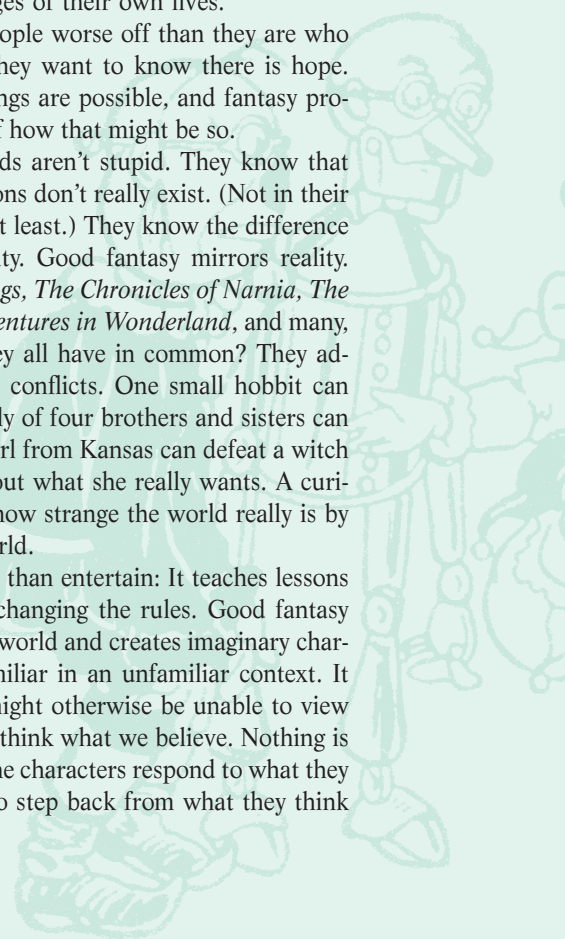
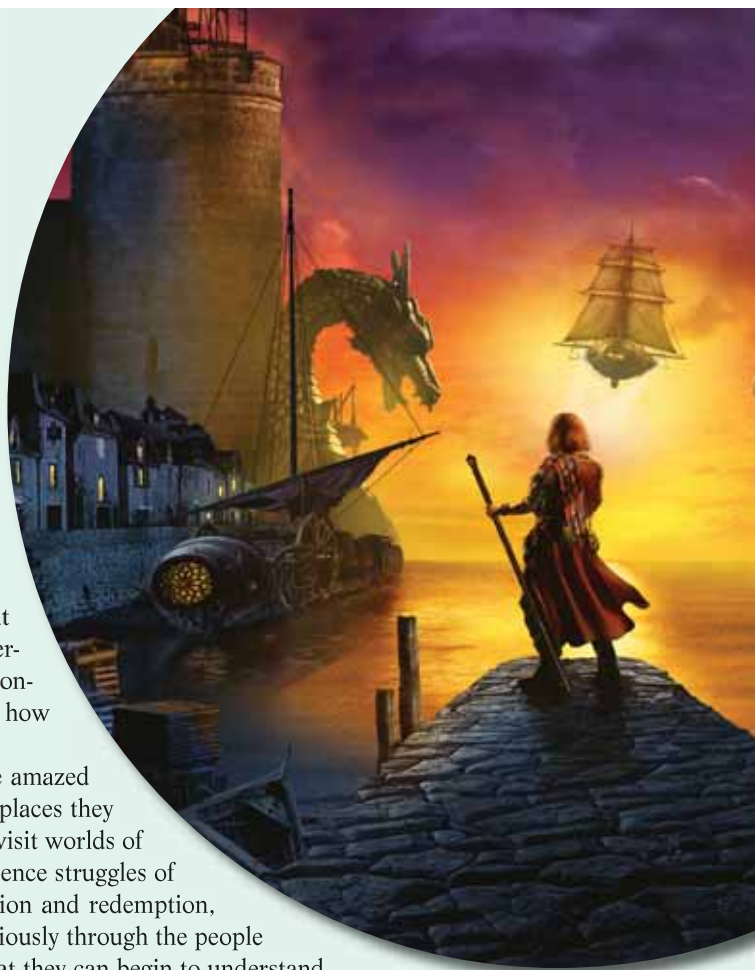
Over the years, I've developed an understanding of what draws them in and what keeps them coming back for more. They are starting out in life, still learning, trying to understand, and wrestling with issues and ideas; as a result, they like reading about characters who are doing the same. They are growing up, turning into adults, and there are no road maps to show them the way. They are looking for books that offer insights into how this transformation from childhood into adulthood might happen, so that they can feel connected. They aren't, however, looking for small stories or even for stories that too closely mirror their own lives. They want to read about larger-than-life experiences with life-threatening confrontations and conflicts that transcend their own struggles while giving insight into how those struggles might be overcome.

Most of all, they don't want to be bored. They want to be amazed and energized. They want to be taken out of their own lives to places they have never seen—places that may not even exist. They want to visit worlds of good and evil. In addition, they want to experience struggles of endurance and victory, transformation and redemption, and love and heartbreak vicariously through the people they meet in books, so that they can begin to understand how they might respond to the challenges of their own lives.

They want to know that there are people worse off than they are who can overcome worse problems. They want to know there is hope. Kids want to believe that all things are possible, and fantasy provides archetypal illustrations of how that might be so.

Don't get me wrong: Kids aren't stupid. They know that elves and dwarves and dragons don't really exist. (Not in their more recognizable forms, at least.) They know the difference between fantasy and reality. Good fantasy mirrors reality. Think *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and many, many more. What do they all have in common? They address real life issues and conflicts. One small hobbit can change the world. A family of four brothers and sisters can save a kingdom. A little girl from Kansas can defeat a witch and discover the truth about what she really wants. A curious child can teach us all how strange the world really is by visiting an even stranger world.

Good fantasy does more than entertain: It teaches lessons about life, and it does so by changing the rules. Good fantasy places the story in an imaginary world and creates imaginary characters, allowing us to see the familiar in an unfamiliar context. It gives us a fresh look at things we might otherwise be unable to view objectively. We are given a chance to rethink what we believe. Nothing is immediately recognizable except the way the characters respond to what they encounter. Such re-imaginings allow readers to step back from what they think they believe and take a second look.





I write about dysfunctional families; about how secrets kept can destroy families from within; about taking responsibility for yourself and sometimes, even when you don't want to, for others; and about the ways in which power corrupts and destroys, even when intentions are good. Other writers of fantasy explore other, equally compelling issues. We all try to tell a good story first, but we know that good writing demands something more—we must make our readers think.

It isn't a coincidence that so many fantasy protagonists are kids themselves. It isn't a coincidence that these protagonists are dealing with familiar difficulties. They are loners. They are different from everyone else. They have secrets to keep. They have immense parental or adult pressures to overcome. They are threatened by bullies. They are desperately in love, and their love is often unrequited. They are secretly better informed than everyone thinks. They know how they want to live their lives, but they aren't allowed to do so. They are smarter than adults know but are given few opportunities to show it.

Think *Harry Potter*. Think *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Think *Eragon*. Then advance in age range a bit and think of the works of Susan Cooper, Garth Nix, and Philip Pullman. If I'm lucky, you might even think of *Shannara* and of me.

Fantasy is all about the wider world, about life lived large, and about escaping the smallness of our own existence to explore what lies beyond. The size of the canvas on which the stories are painted is limitless. No other type of fiction can make this claim. There are literally no boundaries to what is possible. Fantasy in its various forms embodies everything we might expect to find in other forms of fiction. Mystery, romance, science fiction, horror, combat, and even contemporary fiction—you can find bits and pieces of them all.

Most young readers begin their reading lives with fairy tales, myths, talking animals, dinosaurs, pirates, and dozens upon dozens of imaginary beings. Fantasy is immediately familiar to them and is therefore much easier to access. Even the most reluctant readers seem to be able to find a home. Of course, it requires lining up the right book or author with the right reader, but you have a better chance of doing this with fantasy than you do with anything else.

I can talk myself blue in the face about this, but it won't do any good if you don't read the books yourselves. I say this to teachers, librarians, and parents all the time. Whatever the kids are reading, you have to read, too. You can't recommend for or against something if you don't know what it is about. Sure, everyone has read *Harry Potter*, but sooner or later you have to move on. You need to have a clear awareness of what else is out there in fantasy, of the kinds of stories and their appeal, if you are to be in a position to make recommendations that might change a child's life.

When you have gained that awareness, then you will better understand what it is that young readers find so captivating.

You can do this. You might even be surprised at how much you will enjoy it. ■

About the Author

A writer since high school, Terry Brooks published his first novel, *The Sword of Shannara*, in 1977. It was a New York Times bestseller for more than five months. He has published 17 consecutive bestsellers since, including *The Voyage of the Jerle Shannara: Ilse Witch and the novel based upon the screenplay and story by George Lucas: Star Wars®: Episode I The Phantom Menace™*. His novels *Running with the Demon* and *A Knight of the Word* were each selected by the Rocky Mountain News as one of the best science fiction/fantasy novels of the twentieth century.



© Judine Brooks

Suggested Reading...

Books cited in this article include:



LAND OF OZ by L. Frank Baum
Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-33568-5, 288 pp.,
\$6.99/\$10.99 Can.

WIZARD OF OZ by L. Frank Baum
Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-33590-6, 240 pp.,
\$5.99/\$7.99 Can.

A WONDERFUL WELCOME TO OZ
The Marvelous Land of Oz, Ozma of Oz, & The
Emerald City of Oz by L. Frank Baum
Edited by Gregory Maguire
Illustrated by John R. Neill
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-8129-7494-2,
624 pp., \$15.95/\$22.95 Can.

THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ
by L. Frank Baum Introduction by Ray Bradbury
Preface by the author
Modern Library Classics, TR,
978-0-8129-7011-1, 224 pp., \$9.95/\$14.95 Can.

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND AND THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

by Lewis Carroll
Introduction by Morton N. Cohen
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21345-4,
256 pp., \$3.95/\$4.95 Can.
Introduction by A. S. Byatt
Illustrations by John Tenniel
Modern Library Classics, TR,
978-0-375-76138-6, 304 pp.,
\$8.95/\$13.95 Can.

ERAGON by Christopher Paolini
Knopf Books for Young Readers, TR,
978-0-375-82669-6, 528 pp.,
\$9.95/\$13.95 Can.
Also available in Audio:
Read by Gerard Doyle
Listening Library, Unabridged CD,
978-1-4000-9068-6, \$39.95/\$54.95 Can.



A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

by Lemony Snicket Read by Tim Curry
Available in Listening Library (Audio),
Unabridged CD
#1: The Bad Beginning
978-0-8072-1990-4, \$14.99/\$21.00 Can.
#2: The Reptile Room
978-0-8072-1991-1, \$14.99/\$21.00 Can.

"HARRY POTTER" AUDIO

by J.K. Rowling and read by Jim Dale
Available in Listening Library Unabridged CD:
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets
978-0-8072-8194-9, \$49.95/\$77.95 Can.
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
978-0-8072-8232-8, \$54.95/\$86.95 Can.
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
978-0-8072-8195-6, \$49.95/\$77.95 Can.
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
978-0-8072-8259-5, \$69.95/\$109.95 Can.
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince
978-0-307-28365-8, \$75.00/\$105.00 Can.
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
978-0-8072-2029-0, \$75.00/\$115.00 Can.

THE LORD OF THE RING SERIES

by J.R.R. Tolkien
Available in Del Rey MM:
The Hobbit
978-0-345-33968-3, 320 pp., \$7.99/NCR
The Fellowship of the Ring
978-0-345-33970-6, 480 pp., \$7.99/NCR
The Two Towers
978-0-345-33971-3, 416 pp., \$7.99/NCR
The Return of the King
978-0-345-33973-7, 512 pp., \$7.99/NCR

ENTER THE WONDROUS WORLDS OF TERRY BROOKS

NEW! In *Armageddon's Children*, Brooks brings his gifts as a mythmaker to the timeless theme of the unending, essential conflict between darkness and light—and carries his unique imaginative vision to a stunning new level. Prepare for a breathtaking tour de force. To those who are new to Terry Brooks, welcome. And to those who have read him for many years: prepare for a dramatic surprise.

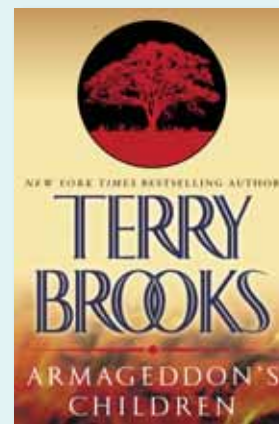
ARMAGEDDON'S CHILDREN Del Rey, HC, 978-0-345-48408-6, 384 pp., \$26.95/\$35.95 Can.

Excerpt from *Armageddon's Children*

Panther grew up playing at survival and quickly passed into practicing the real thing. In the brave new world of collapsed governments and wild-eyed fanatics, of plagues and poisons and madness, of bombs and chemical strikes, childhood in the traditional sense was soon over. By the time he was seven, he already knew how to use all the community weapons. He knew how to protect himself. He knew about the Freaks and their habits. He could hunt and forage and read tracks. He knew which medicines counteracted which sicknesses and how to recognize when places and things were to be avoided. He could keep watch all night. He could stand and fight if it were needed.

He grew up fast, athletic and strong, a quick study and an eager volunteer. By the time he was twelve, it was already accepted that one day he would be a leader of the community. Even his older brothers and sisters deferred to his superior judgment and skills. Panther worked hard at being accepted, at being the best. In the back of his mind, he knew that he would need to be. Talk of the armies that were sweeping the eastern half of the country continued to surface. Everyone knew that things were getting worse, that the dangers were growing.

Excerpted from *Armageddon's Children* by Terry Brooks Copyright © 2006 by Terry Brooks. Excerpted by permission of Del Rey, a division of Random House, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.



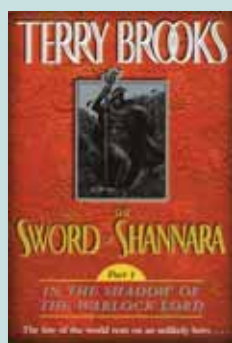
THE WORLD OF SHANNARA

The Sword of Shannara

Twenty-five years ago, *New York Times* bestselling author Terry Brooks wrote a story that brought to life a dazzling world that would become one of the most popular fantasy epics of all time, beloved by millions of fans around the world. His phenomenal epic trilogy of good and evil is a thrilling introduction to Shannara.

The Sword of Shannara: In the Shadow of the Warlock Lord

Tucked away in peaceful Shady Vale, the young half-elf Shea Ohmsford gives little thought to the outside world. Yet far to the north, the evil Warlock Lord has dispatched shadowy Skull Bearers, creatures twisted by dark sorcery, to hunt him down. At the same time, a black-cloaked giant of a man appears in Shady Vale. He claims to be the mysterious Druid known as Allanon, a wizardly wanderer of vast knowledge and power—and he has come to see Shea. For Shea, he says, is the last descendant of an ancient Elven king. Only he, in all the world, can wield the fabled Sword of Shannara. And only the Sword can stop the Warlock Lord from destroying all that lives.

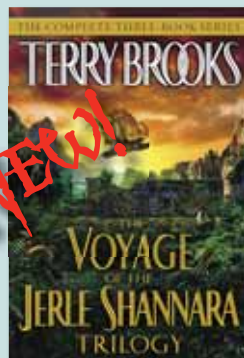


Del Rey, TR, 978-0-345-46146-9, 240 pp., \$6.99/10.99 Can.

The Sword of Shannara: The Druid's Keep

Without the Sword of Shannara, the evil Warlock Lord cannot be defeated. Yet the quest for the mysterious talisman lies in ruins. The intrepid company of warriors assembled by the Druid Allanon to recover the magic Sword has been shattered, dispersed by the Dark Lord's power. And young half-elf Shea Ohmsford, the last, best hope of all the races, is missing, perhaps captured . . . or worse.

Del Rey, TR, 978-0-345-46145-2, 240 pp., \$6.99/10.99 Can.



The Voyage of the Jerle Shannara Trilogy

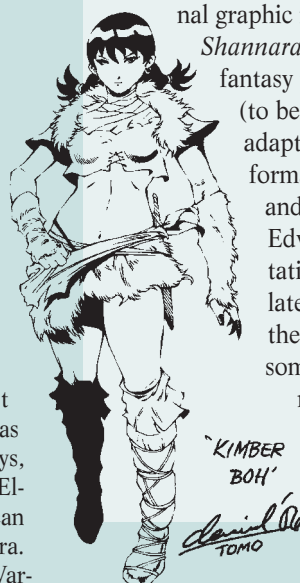
This stunning collector's omnibus volume contains the text of all three novels in the bestselling trilogy: *Ilse Witch*, *Antrax*, and *Morgawr*.

Del Rey, HC, 978-0-345-49286-9,
1,248 pp., \$35.00/\$47.00 Can.

FORTHCOMING IN FALL 2007

Terry Brooks Shannara Graphic Novel

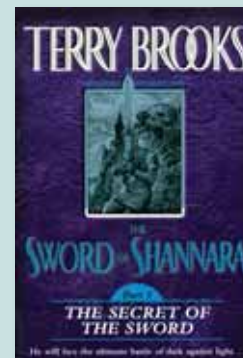
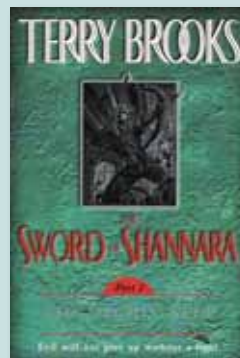
New York Times bestselling author Terry Brooks will create Del Rey's first original graphic novel, *Dark Wraith of Shannara*, set in his famous fantasy universe. The book (to be created by Brooks, adapted to the comics format by Robert Napton, and illustrated by artist Edwin David), is tentatively scheduled for late 2007. Please visit the link below to view some sketches: http://www.randomhouse.com/features/shannara/dark_wraith_sketches.html



The Sword of Shannara: The Secret of the Sword

The Druid Allanon has dispatched Menion, the Prince of Leah, to aid in the defense of Tyrsis while he himself continues to search for Shea Ohmsford, the young half-elf who bears the awesome burden of wielding the only weapon capable of destroying Brona: the mysterious Sword of Shannara. Yet magic of the fabled weapon makes it as dangerous to Shea as it is to the Warlock Lord. Now, in the very heart of the Dark Lord's domain, Shea is about to unlock the deadly secret of the Sword—and come face to face with his destiny.

Del Rey, TR, 978-0-345-46144-5, 240 pp., \$6.99/10.99 Can.



Recommended Series by Terry Brooks...

THE WORD & VOID TRILOGY

A Knight of the Word, John Ross is plagued by nightmares that tell him someone evil is coming to unleash an ancient horror upon the world. He has struggled against the forces of the Void and his minions for twenty-five years. Nest Freemark is a gifted young girl who senses that something is terribly wrong, but she has not yet learned to wield her budding power. Their lives collide in the midst of the firestorm of evil, as they struggle to prevent Ross's visions from coming true.

THE MAGIC KINGDOM OF LANDOVER SERIES

The Magic Kingdom of Landover is the saga of former Chicago lawyer Ben Holiday, who purchased Landover from the wizard Meeks. But Holiday discovers a few details the ad failed to mention. The kingdom is in ruins, and he must prove his right to be King to an unwilling populace. As he grows from naïve outsider to High Lord, he faces countless arduous challenges, including dueling with the Iron Mask, lord of the demons; winning the love of the lady Willow; and going to war with Rydall, king of lands beyond the fairy mist. Terry Brooks's five-book series is a gripping tale of mystery, magic, and adventure and is sure to delight fantasy readers everywhere.

BLACK UNICORN

Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-33528-9, 320 pp., \$7.99/\$11.99 Can.

MAGIC KINGDOM FOR SALE—SOLD!

Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-31758-2, 384 pp., \$7.99/\$11.99 Can.

TANGLE BOX

Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-38700-4, 368 pp., \$7.99/\$11.99 Can.

WIZARD AT LARGE

Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-36227-8, 320 pp., \$7.99/\$10.99 Can.

WITCHES' BREW

Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-38702-8, 352 pp., \$7.99/\$11.99 Can.

Running with the Demon

Sinnissippi Park, in Hopewell, Illinois, has long hidden a mysterious evil, locked away from humankind by powers greater than most could even imagine. But now the malevolent creatures that normally skulk in the shadows of the park grow bolder, and old secrets hint at a violent explosion. Now the future of humanity depends upon a man haunted by his dreams and a gifted young girl—two souls who will discover what survives when hope and innocence are shattered forever...

Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-42258-3, 448 pp., \$7.99/\$10.99 Can.

A Knight of the Word

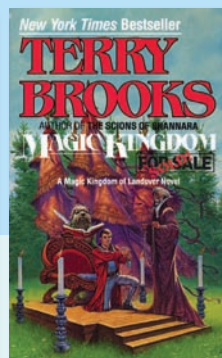
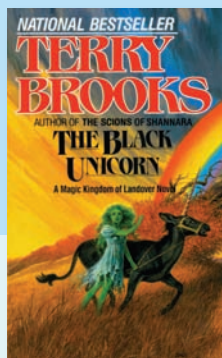
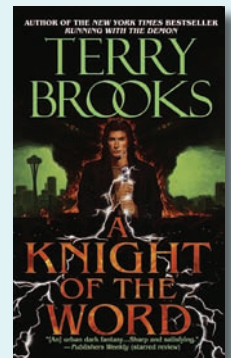
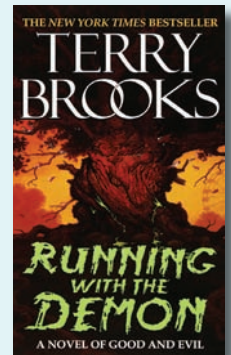
After decades of service to the Word, an unspeakable act of violence shatters John Ross's weary faith. Haunted by guilt, he turns his back on his dread gift, settling down to build a normal life, untroubled by demons and nightmares. But a fallen Knight makes a tempting prize for the Void, which could bend the Knight's magic to its own evil ends. Ross's only hope is Nest Freemark, a college student who wields an extraordinary magic all her own.

Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-42464-8, 408 pp., \$6.99/\$9.99 Can.

Angel Fire East

The birth of a gypsy morph, a rare and dangerous creature that could be an invaluable weapon in the fight against the Void, brings John Ross and Nest Freemark together again. Twice before, with the fate of the world hanging in the balance, the lives of Ross and Nest have intersected. Together, they have prevailed. But now they will face an ancient evil beyond anything they have ever encountered, a demon of ruthless intelligence and feral cunning.

Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-43525-5, 384 pp., \$7.99/\$11.99 Can.



Feast your eyes on one of the bestselling novels of all time

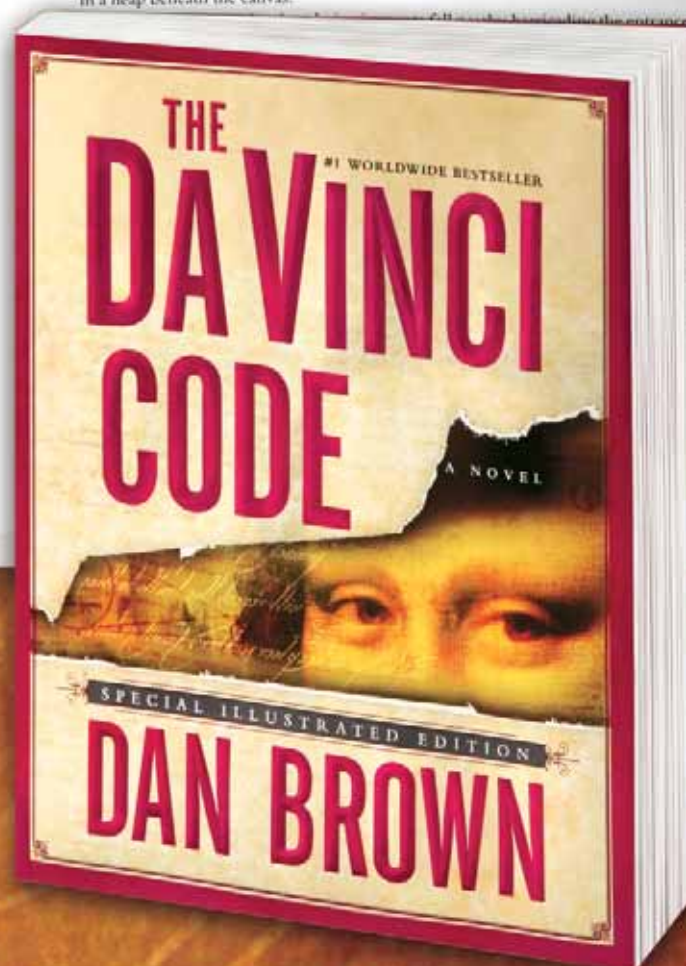


THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN, CARAVAGGIO



LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS
10:46 P.M.

Renowned curator Jacques Saunière staggered through the vaulted archway of the museum's Grand Gallery. He lunged for the nearest painting he could see, a Caravaggio. Grabbing the gilded frame, the seventy-six-year-old man heaved the masterpiece toward himself until it tore from the wall and Saunière collapsed backward in a heap beneath the canvas.



The #1 bestselling sensation is also perfect for the classroom! Your reluctant reader will appreciate this special full-color edition of *The Da Vinci Code*, featuring the complete text accompanied by more than 150 photographs and illustrations of all the artwork, architecture, and symbols from the novel.

The Da Vinci Code: Special Illustrated Edition
A Novel by Dan Brown
Broadway | TR | 978-0-7679-2603-4 | 480 pp. | \$22.95/\$32.95 Can.

The Death of the Virgin, Caravaggio, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

When Reading Ain't Natural

MY JIM, A "Talking" Novel

BY NANCY RAWLES

"My name is Charles Baker Harris," he said. "I can read."

"So what?" I said.

"I just thought you'd like to know I can read. You got anything needs readin' I can do it. . . ."

"How old are you," asked Jem, "four-and-a-half?"

"Goin' on seven."

"Shoot no wonder, then," said Jem, jerking his thumb at me. "Scout yonder's been reading ever since she was born, and she ain't even started school yet."

—FROM *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* BY HARPER LEE

This exchange from the first chapter of Harper Lee's famous novel sums up the difference between folks for whom reading is "natural" and folks who have to work at it. I place myself in the latter group.

As far as I'm concerned, talking is natural. Singing is natural. Tasting, smelling, touching, feeling, laughing, crying, and playing are natural. Reading and writing are about as natural as singing opera and playing the violin.

My favorite books and poems are the ones that take me to a sensual world more primal than words. In other words, I like writing that makes me forget I'm reading, that makes me think I'm seeing or hearing or, better yet, eavesdropping. I like characters who seem so full and real that they continue to live with me after their book journey has ended.

I wrote *My Jim* for readers like me. It's a story of slavery and freedom told by the wife of Mark Twain's famous Jim character in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. I've named her Sadie, and her story of love and longing is so palpable that I hope readers can identify with her losses. Many readers have told me the novel caused them to do just that. Some of these readers have been students, and the book seems to have resonated with them. Here's a sample of some of the comments (sent to me by teachers) that high school students have made about the book.

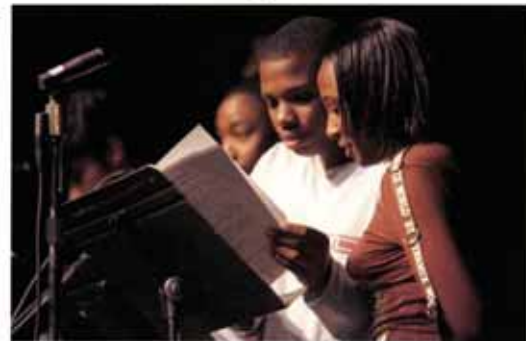
Heather "With this book you got to see this whole other world. It's a great story about Sadie and her life. It was a very sad and heartbreaking story. Sadie went

through a lot but she always stood up for what she believed in, and she was always strong no matter what. I really liked her character because of that."

Dustin "Toward the end of this book I couldn't put it down. I think it is a much better book than *Huckleberry Finn* and should be required to be read rather than *Huck Finn*. It has good historical information but isn't as boring or hard to understand as *Huckleberry Finn*. The book was poignant and moving."

Dixie "When I had finished reading this book I couldn't believe how amazing this story was. Sadie's life with Jim and her struggles and heartache without Jim. Sadie wonders if Jim will be in the next life waiting for her or the other way around and all I can say is that I hope there together again someday. When a book can make you feel nothing compassion for the people in the story real or not, means that the author sure knows what they are doing."

Melissa "I like how Nancy Rawles chose to show the treatment of slaves under two different owners. What I love is that she has them explain why they treat their slaves differently. The reasoning is very intense with Mr. Stevens, he works his slave to death, literally. He thinks Mr. Watson is a fool for treating his slaves so well. In history there was never just one or the other. There's always middle ground. I think that Mr. Watson is that middle ground and Mr. Stevens is one of the far extremes. The other extreme would probably be abolitionists, in my opinion."



Berkeley High School students David Thompson, center, and Nickesha Brice read at the school in Berkeley, Calif., excerpts from "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and from a new novel, "My Jim," by Nancy Rawles.—AP Photo/Ben Margot

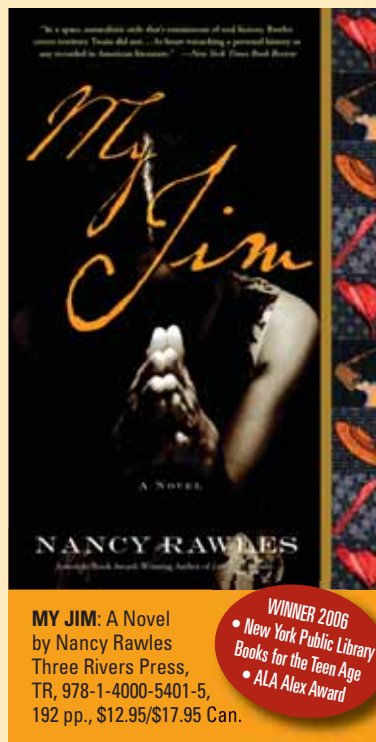
Kanisha “What I didn’t like (I hope most people didn’t) was how the Mas Stevens would try to get to Sadie by giving her daughter a ribbon. It liked when she told him ‘If you touch my daughter I says your hand gonna fall off. your teeth gonna fall out. then every living part of you gonna fall off till you aint nothing but memory of flesh.’ (pg.112) If I was a slave I would never say that to my mas ever. This part made Sadie seem even braver. She only wanted to protect her daughter.”

Megan “There was a quote I read early in the book on page 24. ‘But Mas make them dig a hole for her belly. So they can beat her without killing the baby.’ I thought it was terrible that people would want to beat a pregnant woman even though she was a slave and its ridiculous to go to such measures as digging a special hole so that the baby wont be hurt just so that they can beat her. It’s really sad to read how things were in the past. I don’t see how it could’ve ever been ok with people.”

Surinthia “I never thought you could get so much detail in this size of a book. It strikes me sad when Sadie loses her mother, because I can relate to that. Also when she become the healer lot of the slaves turn on her, Which is awful. I have a questions after reading both books, and it is freedom. Even if they didn’t have a master, were blacks free? For that fact does anybody actually have true freedom?”

Chelsea “From the moment I started reading this book, I realized something that I really appreciate: Jim’s personality was portrayed in a different way then in Huck Finn. I really like this, because in Huck Finn although the reader could see Jim’s intelligence, he or she never caught a glimpse of Jim’s intense personality. In this book he has a fire within him, and a strong heart and will for freedom.”

Reading these comments makes me very happy. Even “natural” readers are reluctant to read books about slavery. I consider it an accomplishment when readers relate to Sadie’s



story. Students who are reluctant to read novels may have trouble relating to fictional characters. *My Jim* is filled with historical facts and events (including events from Samuel Clemens’ childhood) and is told by a fictional character who is herself based upon the lives of countless slave women. I’m honored that *My Jim* received a 2006 Alex Award from the American Library Association. The Alex Award is given to adult novels that appeal to teen readers.

My Jim is written with a minimum of punctuation and includes grammatical mistakes common for people with limited formal education. Many readers feel they’re listening to a story rather than reading one.

Reluctant readers are often people who learn with their ears more readily than they do with their eyes.

The physical act of reading is stressful for them. *My Jim* has the cadences of speech and the rhythms of music:

“Folks think freedom gonna look one way but it look all kind of ways. Sometime it look like slavery. Folks think freedom something like a button or a tooth. Something you can hold onto aint gonna break. But you can break a button with a tooth and a tooth with a button. And both of them real easy to lose. Even when you know right where they drop you still gonna look and cant find them. If freedom a place its a place you pass through.”

—From *My Jim*, page 140

A good story, simply told, is still the best way to hook me as a reader. If it gives me insight and information, if it makes me care about people who seem remote, if it carries me along to a satisfying conclusion, the time my eyes have spent focusing on letters seems well worth the effort. It’s my hope that even reluctant readers will feel this way about *My Jim*. ■



© Spike Mafford

About the Author

Nancy Rawles writes plays as well as novels. All of her writing is grounded in history. She is the recipient of a Starbuck’s Foundation Leading Voices Award for her work teaching writing to children.

"It Doesn't Take a Miracle. . ."

BY BRIAN STRAUSE

Many teachers think it would take a miracle to get some of the teenaged boys in their classes to read a book for the sheer pleasure of it, and maybe they're right. After all, today's young male student is simply overwhelmed by too many distractions to spend time reading. In a fast-paced world featuring the immediate gratification provided by videogames, DVDs, cable television, and the internet, how can reading possibly compete? That's the conventional wisdom.

I don't buy it.

I was a teenager in the '80s, and even in that culturally challenged era, we still had all the same basic distractions. People like to think that each new generation is shockingly unlike their own. The fact is, teenagers are no different today—only the gadgets have changed. Whether we're talking about a first kiss, a first unchaperoned party, or a first love—it's still a first. Maybe these milestones happen a little sooner than they did in the past, but the emotions behind them remain the same.

Just as when I was a kid, a certain segment of boys will always be particularly reluctant to read. As I recall, reading for pleasure was an easy way to invite abuse from my male peers. Still, I persevered and became a voracious reader, albeit a stealthy one. We're often told that girls are more interested in reading, whereas boys are more interested in blowing things up. Surely, I thought, there is some sort of scientific study to support this well-worn assertion. While I searched the internet for some sort of supporting evidence, I found myself sidetracked by that favorite teen online forum, MySpace; as I expected, teenage boys posting there had little regard (to put it lightly) for reading and readers. These boys, I suspect, are "reluctant readers."

Yes, it is true that many girls also regard books with a mixture of hostility and contempt. As a writer, it hurts me to acknowledge their blasphemy. I can only hope that these girls are aping the offensive language that can be found at MySpace and elsewhere only because certain boys find illiteracy so attractive. I like to think these young ladies are secretly buying armloads of books, which they read clandestinely while their boyfriends are busy playing videogames.

Since the publication of my novel *Maybe a Miracle* last fall, I've been able to test my theory: Kids don't change all that much from generation to generation. My novel is told in the voice of Monroe Anderson, a male high school student, but the truth is, I haven't talked to many high school students since I was one myself. (It's not exactly socially acceptable for men in their mid-30s to hang out with teenagers.) With that gap in mind, I was naturally afraid that I might be exposed as a fraud when I was invited to visit with a group of AP English students from Dublin, Ohio (which happens to be a suburb of Columbus quite similar to the fictional suburb where my story unfolds).

It turned out that the kids bonded with the book to an extent that I never allowed myself to imagine. After the class, several boys came up to me and said, "How did you get inside my head?" and "This is exactly the way I think." and "This is the best book they've ever had us read." (I realize this praise may just have been an overly polite response to the Barry Larkin baseball cards I was handing out.) My favorite comment, though, was a courtesy of a lanky, somewhat nerdy kid; I recognized his look as an echo of my younger self. He said, "The thing I like about Monroe is that nobody even notices him, but he's got so many wonderful things going on in his head." I liked that observation more than any other, because this young reader wasn't really talking about the book he was talking about himself. That's what I enjoy so much about reading: Books give us not only a look into worlds we don't know but also the opportunity to take a closer look at ourselves.

Of course, the kids I met on this visit were AP students—hardly reluctant readers. Reluctant readers at Dublin



Jerome High School would only be reached later in the year, when I was invited to return and speak with a group of sophomores. Unfortunately, that visit was canceled when the principal banned *Maybe a Miracle*, a decision based on the objection of one parent to what most people consider to be a very benign sex scene between the narrator and a leukemia patient.

At first it seemed to me that banning my book was a draconian decision, but now I understand how brilliant that principal really was. Reverse psychology has long been an effective method for bending the will of stubborn teenagers. Make it sound as if you don't want impressionable youth to read a book, and it's certain they will read it. In an act of astonishing foresight, this pioneering principal also revealed that if you pull a book from the school bookstore and offer refunds by a fixed deadline, kids can't read the book fast enough; in this way, they get the benefit of indulging in illicit material with the added bonus of not having to pay for it. In one case, I understand, three students read a single copy in the three days before the refund deal expired. So although I initially thought that the principal was a neofascist, the interest in reading that ensued in the aftermath of his decision revealed what a genius he truly was.

Meanwhile, Valerie Acton, a high school English teacher in Grandview (another suburb of Columbus) took a less diabolical tack to reach a reluctant reader. On Mondays, her freshmen read in class, with the caveat that she gets to approve the books they choose. Ms. Acton described one student, "Andrew," as "a typical fourteen-year-old male who doesn't look favorably upon reading as an acceptable pastime"; he even failed to finish reading several books based on movies. Unbowed, Ms. Acton gave him a copy of *Maybe a Miracle* and said, "Try this one. . . . Read the first two chapters and then decide. . . ."

For the next seven Mondays, this student, once so disruptive, sat quietly and read. Ms. Acton ventured, "You like that book, don't you?"

"I love it!" he answered.

In an essay he later wrote, this student described how he especially enjoyed all the "cuss words" because "that's how kids really talk when no one else is around." He also appreciated the occasional use of marijuana mentioned in the book; according to Ms. Acton, this "rang true to his picture of a typical teenager pastime." Of course, I like to flatter myself and believe that there is a bit more to the book than cuss words and pot smoking. If, however, those are the hooks that helped one reluctant reader become transported by the rest of the story, I'm not going to complain. In fact, I would venture that any sane parents would be overjoyed to have a teenager holed up in a bedroom and reading, even if he or she is reading a banned or purportedly controversial book.

Ms. Acton continued: "Because so few kids read any book beyond what is accepted by the curriculum, and even then they 'fake read' to get a decent grade, it is important to guide them in the important task of finding out what turns them on in terms of reading. . . . *Maybe a Miracle* is the latest book I've found that more kids than just 'Andrew' devour and share with their friends. *Holes* was, years ago, the book I used to get boys to read. Now, it's *Maybe a Miracle*."

In short, when it comes to reaching the reluctant reader, it takes a little cunning. These kids who proudly belittle reading are a notoriously inflexible bunch. In many cases, they have dedicated their lives to not reading. Of course, this self-imposed intellectual blind spot makes them susceptible to trickery. I recommend you use it. Who knows?

Maybe a miracle will happen, and that ever-reluctant reader will become your star student. After all, stranger things happen all the time. . . or so I've read. ■

I was a teenager in the '80s,
and even in that culturally
challenged era, we still had all
the same basic distractions. . .

The fact is, teenagers are
no different today—only
the gadgets have
changed.

Photo: Sean Twomey



About the Author

BRIAN STRAUSE was born in Columbus, Ohio and lived there until he was 15. He majored in American Studies at Grinnell College in Iowa. After working as an associate producer for the PBS-TV series "The 90's," he moved to Los Angeles and earned an M.F.A. in producing, but he decided to pursue screenwriting.

Fiction to Talk About

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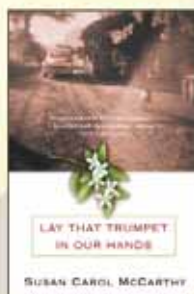
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RANDOM HOUSE, INC.

MY JIM

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by Nancy Rawles

A New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age

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An ALA Alex Award Winner



SNOW FLOWER AND THE SECRET FAN

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by Lisa See

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This absorbing novel takes place in nineteenth-century China when girls had their feet bound, then spent the rest of their lives in seclusion with only a single window from which to see. Illiterate and isolated, they were not expected to think, be creative, or have emotions. But in one remote county, women developed their own secret code, *nu shu*, painting letters on fans, embroidering messages on handkerchiefs, and composing stories.

Reading Level: 9th Grade

Reader's Guide Available

Random House • TR • 978-0-8129-6806-4 • 288 pp. • \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.



PREP

A Novel

by Curtis Sittenfeld

A New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age

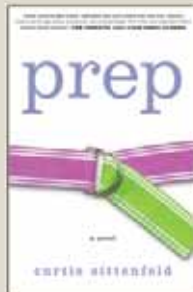
Curtis Sittenfeld's debut novel, *Prep*, is an insightful, achingly funny coming-of-age story as well as a brilliant dissection of class, race, and gender in a hothouse of adolescent angst and ambition.

"Sittenfeld neither indulges nor mocks teen angst, but hits it spot on....

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Reading Level: 6th Grade

Random House • TR • 978-0-8129-7235-1 • 448 pp. • \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.



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Poetry Rocks!

Inspire Your Students with Dazzling Poetry

BY BILLY COLLINS

A few years ago I found myself on a circuit of readings, traveling around the Midwest from podium to podium. One stop was at an enormous high school south of Chicago. Despite its daunting size—picture a row of lockers receding into infinity—the school holds a “Poetry Day” every year featuring an exuberant range of activities, including poems set to music by students and performed by the high school chorus and a ninety-piece orchestra. As featured poet that year, I found myself caught up in the high spirits of the day, which seemed to be coming directly from the students themselves, rather than being faculty-imposed. After reading to a crowded auditorium, I was approached by a student who presented me with a copy of the school newspaper which contained an article she had written about poetry. In that article, I found a memorable summary of the discomfort so many people seem to experience with poetry. “Whenever I read a modern poem,” this teenage girl wrote, “it’s like my brother has his foot on the back of my neck in the swimming pool.”

Poetry 180 was inspired by the desire to remove poetry far from such scenes of torment. The idea behind this printed collection, which is a version of the Library of Congress “180” website, was to assemble a generous selection of short, clear, contemporary poems which any listener could basically “get” on first hearing—poems whose injection of pleasure is immediate. The original website, www.loc.gov/poetry/180, which continues to be up and running strong, is part of a national initiative I developed shortly after being appointed United States

Poet Laureate in 2001.

The program is called “Poetry 180: A Poem a Day for American High Schools.” In creating it, I had hoped the program would suggest to young

people the notion that poetry can be a part of everyday life as well as a subject to be studied in the classroom. On the website, I ask high school teachers and administrators to adopt the program by having a new poem read every day—one for each of the roughly 180 days of the school year—as part of the public announcements. Whether the poems are read over a PA system or at the end of a school assembly, students can hear poetry on a daily basis without feeling any pressure to respond. I wanted teachers to refrain from commenting on the poems or asking students “literary” questions about them. No discussion, no explication, no quiz, no midterm, no seven-page paper—just listen to a poem every morning and off you go to your first class.

High school is the focus of my program because all too

The Hand by Mary Ruefle

The teacher asks a question.

You know the answer, you suspect

you are the only one in the classroom

who knows the answer, because the person

in question is yourself, and on that

you are the greatest living authority,

but you don’t raise your hand.

You raise the top of your desk

and take out an apple.

You look out the window.

You don’t raise your hand and there is

some essential beauty in your fingers,

which aren’t even drumming, but lie

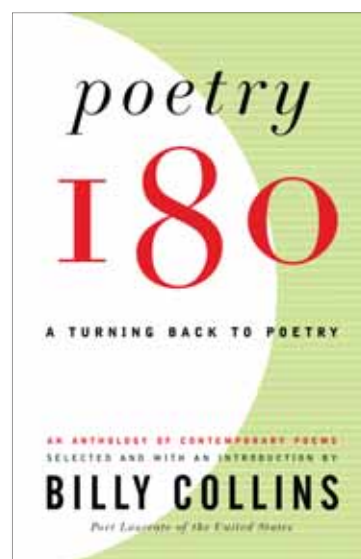
flat and peaceful.

The teacher repeats the question.

Outside the window, on an overhanging branch,

a robin is ruffling its feathers

and spring is in the air. *



Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry
Edited by Billy Collins
Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-6887-3,
352 pp., \$13.95/\$21.00 Can

Rain by Naomi Shihab Nye

*A teacher asked Paul
what he would remember
from third grade, and he sat
a long time before writing
“this year sumbody tucthed me
on the sholder”
and turned his paper in.
Later she showed it to me
as an example of her wasted life.
The words he wrote were large
as houses in a landscape.
He wanted to go inside them
and live, he could fill in
the windows of “o” and “d”
and be safe while outside
birds building nests in drainpipes
knew nothing of the coming rain.**

for ambiguity, it offers difficulty a place to be dramatized if not solved. “Even in our games,” asserts John Ciardi, “we demand difficulty.” Which explains why hockey is played on ice and why chess involves more than two warring queens chasing each other around the board. During the heyday of Pound, Eliot, Stevens, and Crane—that Mount Rushmore of modernism—difficulty became a criterion for appraising poetic value. The difficulty of composition was extended to the compass of the reader’s experience. Opacity became so closely associated with modernist poetry that readers fled in droves into the waiting arms of novelists, where they could relax in the familiar surroundings of social realism. Of course, the conceptual demands some poems make on their reader can provide an essential pleasure, but this is hardly a recommended starting place for readers interested in reclaiming their connection to poetry. Lacking the experience to distinguish between legitimate difficulty and obscurity for its own sake, some readers give up entirely. Randall Jarrell said that poetry was so difficult to write, why should it be difficult to read. Clarity is the real risk in poetry. To be clear means opening yourself up to judgment. The willfully obscure poem is a hiding place where the poet can elude the reader and thus make appraisal impossible, irrelevant—a bourgeois intrusion upon the poem. Which is why much of the commentary on obscure poetry produces the same kind of headache as the poems themselves.

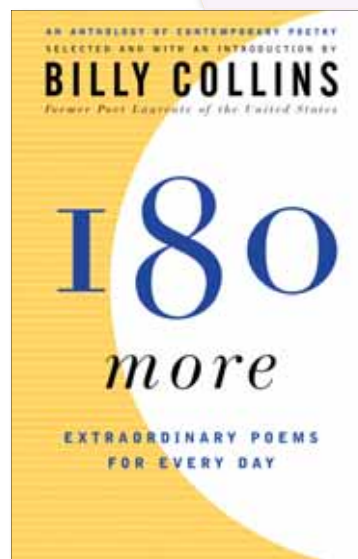
Of course, the more difficult the poem, the more dependent students are on their teachers. Knotty poems give teachers more to explain; but the classroom emphasis on what a poem means can work effectively to kill the poetry spirit. Too often the hunt for Meaning becomes the only approach; literary devices form a field of barbed wire that students must crawl under to get to “what the poet is trying to say,” a regrettable phrase which implies that every poem is a failed act of communication. Explication may dominate the teaching of poetry, but there are other ways to increase a reader’s intimacy with a poem.

often it is the place where poetry goes to die. While poetry offers us the possibility of modulating our pace, adolescence is commonly driven by the wish to accelerate, to get from zero to sixty in a heartbeat or in a speed-shop Honda. And despite the sometimes heroic efforts of dedicated teachers, many adolescents find poetry—to use their term of ultimate condemnation—boring. What some students experience when they are made to confront a poem might be summed up in a frustrating syllogism:

I understand English.
This poem is written in English.
I have no idea what this poem is saying.

What is “the misfit witch blocks my quantum path”? a reader might well ask. What’s up with “a waveform leaps in my belly”? What’s a reader to do in the face of such unyielding obtuseness?

But let us hear from the other side of the room. If there is no room in poetry for difficulty, where is difficulty to go? Just as poetry provides a home



180 More
Extraordinary Poems for Every Day
Edited by Billy Collins
Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-7296-2,
400 pp., \$14.95/\$21.00 Can.

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“Poetry can and should be an important part of our daily lives. Poems can inspire and make us think about what it means to be a member of the human race. By just spending a few minutes reading a poem each day, new worlds can be revealed.”

A reader can write the poem out, just as Keats or Frost did, or learn how to say a poem out loud, or even internalize a poem by memorizing it. The problem is that none of these activities requires the presence of a teacher. Ideally, interpretation should be one of the pleasures poetry offers. Unfortunately, too often it overshadows the other pleasures of meter, sound, metaphor, and imaginative travel, to name a few.

Poetry 180 was also meant to expose high school students to the new voices in contemporary poetry. Even if teachers try to keep up with the poetry of the day, textbooks and anthologies typically lag behind the times. My rough count of one popular introductory text has dead authors beating out living ones at a ratio of nine to one. And oddly enough, many of the poems that are still presented as examples of “modern” poetry—Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” or Williams’s “The Red Wheelbarrow”—were written more than seventy-five years ago. With a few exceptions, the poems selected for the Poetry 180 website and this book were chosen with the idea of catching the sounds, rhythms, and attitudes of poetry written much more recently. Some of the poems culled from literary magazines are no more than a year or two old. I ruled out any poem that had become a standard offering in textbooks and anthologies. I wanted also to include voices that were not well known. Quite a few of these poems were written by poets I had not heard of before I started scouting for the poems that would suit the purposes of Poetry 180. Assembling this anthology gave me a chance to further the cause of some of my favorite poems and also to discover poets who were new to me. The more I searched for poems, the more I became convinced that regardless of what other kinds of poems will be written in years to come, clear, reader-conscious poems are the ones that will broaden the audience of poetry beyond the precincts of its practitioners.

For my own part, Poetry 180 has been a pleasure and a challenge. Finding the first one hundred poems was fairly easy. I just spun my mental Rolodex of contemporary poems that I liked well enough to remember. Locating the remaining eighty was harder, which might say something about the narrow bounds of my taste or the limited store of smart, clear, contemporary poems. I experienced the privilege of any anthologizer of being in control of the selections and thus being able to express through publication the kind of poetry I favor. With its original focus on high school audiences, Poetry 180 has a public service ring to it, but it is also, admittedly, a big bouquet of poems that I happen to like. To borrow Fran Liebowitz’s musical aesthetics: good poems are poems I like and bad poems are poems I don’t like. Putting that egocentric position aside, welcome to Poetry 180. Flip through the book and pick a poem, any poem. I know every one is an ace, or at least a face card, because I personally rigged the deck. ■

The Student Theme

by Ronald Wallace

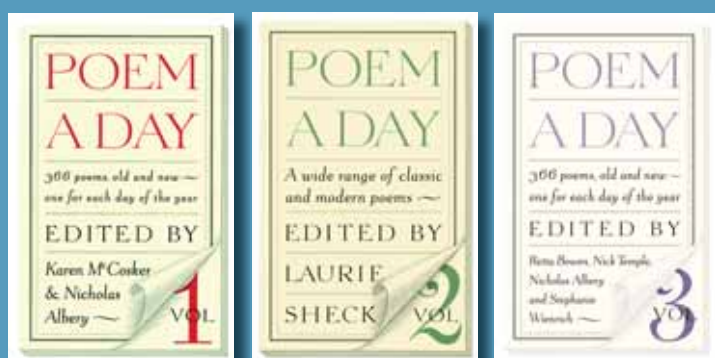
*The adjectives all ganged up on the nouns, insistent, loud, demanding, inexact, their Latinate constructions flashing. The pronouns lost their referents: They were dangling, lacked the stamina to follow the prepositions’ lead in, on, into, to, toward, for, or from. They were beset by passive voices and dead metaphors, conjunctions shouting But! or And! The active verbs were all routinely modified by adverbs, that endlessly and colorlessly ran into trouble with the participles sitting on the margins knitting their brows like gerunds (dangling was their problem, too). The author was nowhere to be seen; was off somewhere.**

Visit the official website of the *Poetry 180* project at <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>.
For a FREE Poetry Teacher’s Guide and poster, write to highschool@randomhouse.com.

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Edited by Karen McCosker and Nicholas Albery
Zoland Books, TR, 978-1-883642-38-9, 484 pp., \$19.95/NCR

POEM A DAY: Volume Two
Edited by Laurie Sheck
Zoland Books, TR, 978-1-58642-031-4, 500 pp., \$19.95/\$27.95 Can.

POEM A DAY: Volume Three
Edited by Retta Bowen, Nick Temple, Nicholas Albery, and Stephanie Wienrich
Zoland Books, TR, 978-1-58642-081-9, 485pp., \$19.95/NCR

I SHALL NOT BE MOVED

by Maya Angelou

This volume of poetry captures the pain and triumph of being black and speaks out about history, heartbreak, and love. Here are three volumes of classic Maya Angelou—including her first poetry collection, *Just Give Me a Cool Drink of Water 'Fore I Diie*, and favorite poems like “Our Grandmothers.” These poems are vintage Angelou, full of love and rage, warmth and vitality.
Bantam, TR, 978-0-553-35458-4, 64 pp., \$11.00/\$16.00 Can.
Random House, HC, 978-0-679-45708-4 (0-679-45708-9), 64 pp., \$16.95/\$23.95 Can.

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by Lori Carlson

With an Introduction by Oscar Hijuelos. Here is a collection of thirty-six poems, in English and Spanish, which capture the sights, sounds, and smells of Latino culture in America.

Contributors include Sandra Cisneros, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Gina Valdes, E.J. Vega, Johanna Vega, Luis Alberto Ambroggio, Sandra M. Castillo, Cristina Moreno, Abelardo B. Delgado, Alfonso Quijada Urias, Claudia Quiroz, and many others.

“Excellent enrichment. . . . Whether discussing the immigrant’s frustration at not being able to speak English...the familiar adolescent desire to belong, or celebrating the simply joys of life, these fine poems are incisive and photographic in their depiction of a moment.” —*School Library Journal* (starred review)

Fawcett, MM, 978-0-449-70436-3, 160 pp., \$6.99/\$10.99 Can.



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Spotlight on **BILLY COLLINS** America's Poet Laureate (2001–2003)

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NINE HORSES: Poems by Billy Collins

Traveling by train, lying on a beach, and listening to jazz on the radio are the seemingly ordinary activities whose hidden textures are revealed by Collins's poetic eye. With clarity, precision, and enviable wit, Collins transforms those moments we too often take for granted into brilliant feats of creative imagination. *Nine Horses* is a poetry collection to savor and to share.

Random House, TR, 978-0-375-75520-0, 144 pp., \$12.95/\$19.95 Can.

SAILING ALONE AROUND THE ROOM: New and Selected Poems by Billy Collins

These poems show Collins at his best, performing the kinds of distinctive poetic maneuvers that have delighted and fascinated so many readers. These poems may begin in curiosity and end in grief; they may start with irony and end with lyric transformation; they may, and often do, begin with the everyday and end in the infinite. Possessed of a unique voice that is at once plain and melodic, Billy Collins enriches American poetry while greatly widening the circle of its audience.

Random House, TR, 978-0-375-75519-4, 192 pp., \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.

POETRY 180: A Turning Back to Poetry Edited by Billy Collins

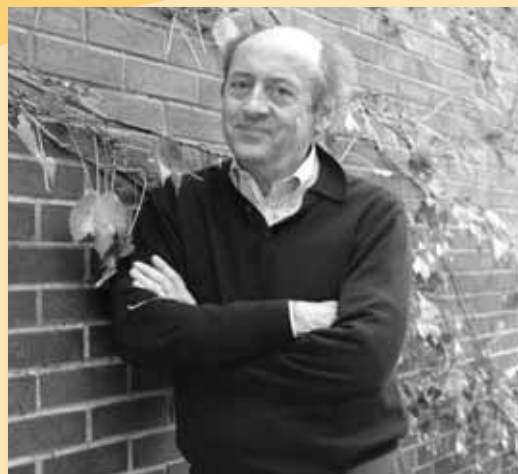
Introduction by Billy Collins. A 180-degree turn implies a turning back—in this case, to poetry. A collection of 180 poems by the most exciting poets at work today, *Poetry 180* represents the richness and diversity of the form; it is designed to appeal to students with a selection of poems that are new and contemporary yet also very accessible. Inspired by Billy Collins's poem-a-day program with the Library of Congress, *Poetry 180* is the perfect anthology for students who remain resolutely unconvinced about the value of poetry.

Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-6887-3, 352 pp., \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.

180 MORE: Extraordinary Poems for Every Day Edited by Billy Collins

Inspired by Billy Collins's poem-a-day program with the Library of Congress, the original *Poetry 180: A Turning Back to Poetry* was a gathering of clear, contemporary poems aimed at a wide audience. In *180 More*, Collins continues his ambitious mission of exposing readers of all ages to the best of today's poetry. Here are another 180 engaging poems that offer surprises and delights as well as a wide range of literary voices—comic, melancholy, reflective, and irreverent.

Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-7296-2, 400 pp., \$14.95/\$21.00 Can.



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"Young writers have plenty
to learn from his clarity
and apparent ease."

—The New York Times Book Review

THE TROUBLE WITH POETRY: And Other Poems by Billy Collins

In this collection of all new poems, Collins continues to charm and delight readers. Like the book's title, these poems are filled with mischief, humor, and irony, but also with quiet observation, intense wonder, and empathy. With simple, direct language, Collins does away with the notion that poetry has to be difficult.

Random House, HC, 978-0-375-50382-5, 128 pp., \$22.95/\$32.95 Can.

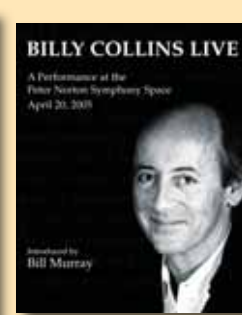
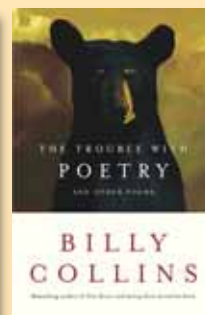
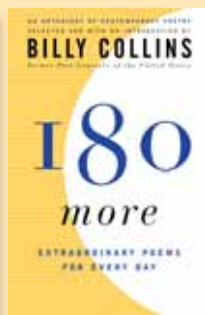
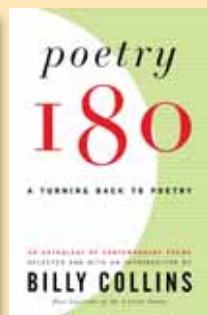
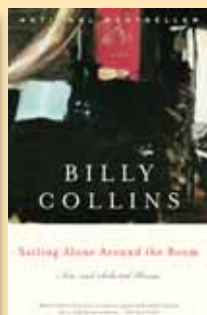
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A *Library Journal* Best Books of 2001 for Nonfiction

A 2001 *New York Times* Nonfiction Notable Book

Written in the tradition of *Hunger for Memory* by Richard Rodriguez, this is an informative and resonant portrait of a child coming to terms with her bicultural identity. Throughout, Arana provides an unforgettable look at her two worlds: the diverse terrain of Peru, redolent with ghosts of Incan history and mythology, and the vast prairie lands of Wyoming.

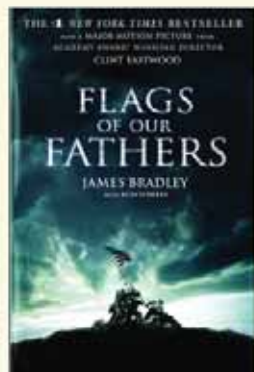
"The top rank of memoir...Arana's writing skills elevate the book to outright lyricism in chapter after chapter."—*The Denver Post*

Dial Press • TR • 978-0-385-31963-8 • 320 pp. • \$10.00/\$13.00 Can.

Reading Level: 9th Grade

Also available in a Spanish edition:

Random House Espanol • Tr. Pbk • 978-1-4000-0199-6 • 352 pp. • \$16.95/\$25.95 Can.



FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS

by James Bradley with Ron Powers

**Now a Major
Motion Picture**

In this unforgettable chronicle of perhaps the most famous moment in American military history, James Bradley has captured the glory, the triumph, the heartbreak, and the legacy of the six men who raised the flag at Iwo Jima. Here is the true story behind the immortal photograph that has come to symbolize the courage and indomitable will of America.

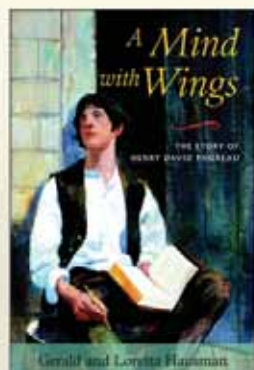
Reading Level: 8th Grade

Bantam • TR • 978-0-553-38415-4 • 384 pp. • \$14.00/\$18.95 Can.

Bantam • MM • 978-0-553-58934-4 • 576 pp. • \$7.99/\$10.99 Can.

Also available in Audio:

Random House Audio • Abridged CD • 978-0-553-71246-9 • \$29.95/\$45.95 Can.



A MIND WITH WINGS

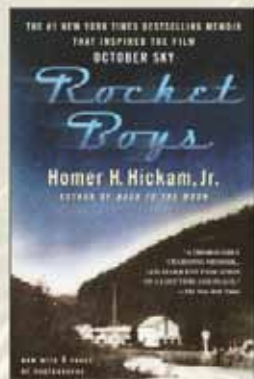
The Story of Henry David Thoreau

by Gerald and Loretta Hausman

Thoreau's works, such as *Walden*, are written in a style that can be tremendously difficult for young readers. *A Mind with Wings* will help young people gain access to Thoreau's influential ideas by bringing readers inside the key relationships and events that shaped his thought as a teenager.

Reading Level: 6th Grade

Trumpeter • HC • 978-1-59030-228-6 • 160 pp. • \$15.95/\$22.95 Can.



ROCKET BOYS

by Homer Hickam

Brought to the screen in the acclaimed film "October Sky", *Rocket Boys* is a uniquely American memoir—a powerful, luminous story of coming of age at the dawn of the 1960s; of a mother's love and a father's fears; of a group of young men who dreamed of launching rockets into outer space...and who made those dreams come true.

Reading Level: 10th Grade

Teacher's Guide Available.

Delta • Tr. Pbk • 978-0-385-33321-4 • 384 pp. • \$14.00/\$21.00 Can.



www.randomhouse.com/academic

HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

ENRIQUE'S JOURNEY

The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother

by Sonia Nazario

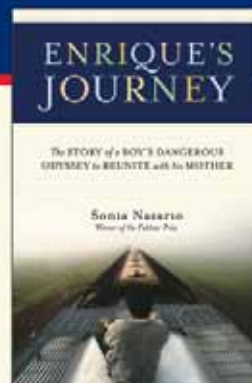
Enrique's Journey recounts the unforgettable odyssey of a Honduran boy who braves unimaginable hardship and peril to reach his mother in the United States. It presents a riveting, narrative treatment of the hardships immigrants must face on their way to the U.S. and of the inevitable difficulties they must endure once they reach their destination.

Enrique's Journey can provide challenging and appropriate study for grades 6-12 in both social studies and language arts curricula.

Reading Level: 6th Grade

Teacher's Guide Available

Random House • TR • 978-0-8129-7178-1 • 336 pp. • \$14.95/\$19.95 Can.



DREAMS FROM MY FATHER

A Story of Race and Inheritance

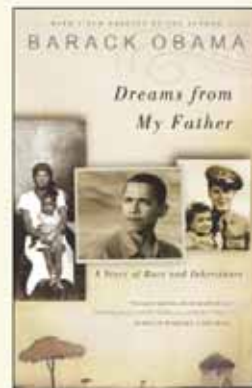
by Barack Obama

In this lyrical, unsentimental, and compelling memoir, the son of a black African father and a white American mother searches for a workable meaning to his life as a black American. Obama's book is an invaluable glimpse into the background of an up-and-coming politician.

"Fluidly, calmly, insightfully, Obama guides us straight to the intersection of the most serious questions of identity, class, and race."—*Washington Post Book World*

Reading Level: 12th Grade

Three Rivers Press • TR • 978-1-4000-8277-3 • 480 pp. • \$14.95/\$21.00 Can.



THE RADIOACTIVE BOY SCOUT

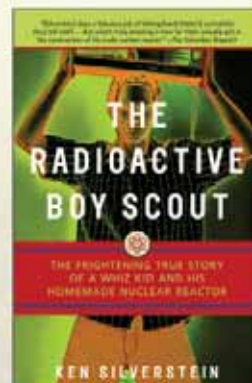
The Frightening True Story of a Whiz Kid and His Homemade Nuclear Reactor

by Ken Silverstein

Growing up in suburban Detroit, David Hahn was fascinated by science. While he was working on his Atomic Energy badge for the Boy Scouts, David's obsessive attention turned to nuclear energy. Throwing caution to the wind, he plunged into a new project: building a model nuclear reactor in his backyard garden shed.

Reading Level: 10th Grade

Villard • TR • 978-0-8129-6660-2 • 240 pp. • \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.



BLOOD DONE SIGN MY NAME

A True Story

by Timothy B. Tyson

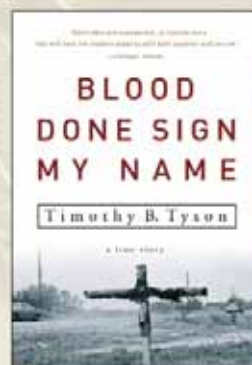
In the tradition of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Blood Done Sign My Name* is a classic work of conscience. Tim Tyson's riveting narrative of a fiery summer of racial conflict and of one family's struggle to build bridges in a time of destruction brings gritty blues truth, soaring gospel vision, and down-home humor to this complex rendering of a true story; violence and faith, courage and evil, despair and hope all mingle here to powerful effect.

Reading Level: 10th Grade

Three Rivers Press • TR • 978-1-4000-8311-4 • 368 pp. • \$14.00/\$21.00 Can.

Also available in audio:

Random House Audio • Abridged CD • 978-0-7393-1177-6 • \$27.50/\$39.95 Can.



Order Form in the Center of this Catalog



A Spoonful of Humor Gets the Pages Turning

BY FIROOZEH DUMAS

When *Funny in Farsi* was published in the summer of 2003, I started receiving lots of e-mails from readers. The e-mails had a common theme: "Your family is just like my family!" followed by "But 'I'm Mexican,' 'Chinese' or 'third-generation American from Minnesota.'" I was thrilled to see that the theme of my book, shared humanity, was reaching such a diverse audience.

Then I started receiving e-mails from an entirely different group—educators—who told me that *Funny in Farsi* was a great classroom tool, particularly with "reluctant readers." I had never heard that expression, and I didn't know what it meant. So when the term "reluctant reader" entered my life, I was intrigued.

As a kid, I was an eager reader, one of those people who always checked out the maximum number of books allowed at the public library. In fact, books saved my life. When I was growing up, my family moved constantly. By sixth grade, I had attended eight different schools. The only constant in my life was the love of reading. I often felt that I had more in common with the characters in books than with anyone I actually knew. And as long as I had a good book to read, I never felt alone. So I couldn't understand how anyone could be reluctant to read when there are so many great books out there. What does the phrase even mean? Little did I know that the biggest clue would come from my own son.

When my son entered sixth grade, he came home from school one day and asked me if books have to be depressing to be on school reading lists. I looked at the list handed to him that day. It was certainly an impressive compilation, but every single book was, indeed, depressing. That year, my son, who loves to read, barely made it through the chosen books. I was amazed that a kid who, every single night, has to be told repeatedly to turn off the lights and stop reading, could be given a series of books that did not interest him at all. All of a sudden I realized that my son had become, with that particular reading list, a reluctant reader. A light bulb went off in my head: If a kid who every year for his birthday asks for gift certificates to bookstores can become a reluctant reader, then the opposite must be true. There must be a way to turn reluctant readers into avid ones.

The e-mails from educators continued. A common theme emerged. "Every one of my students loved reading your stories, even the ones who normally refuse to read." I heard from teachers in inner city schools; affluent private schools; a school in California for teenage mothers; a high school on an Indian reservation; and junior highs, high schools and colleges from California to New York. The students wrote to me themselves, telling me how much they laughed at my stories and how much they related to my experiences. Who, after all, has not been an outsider? It's not an experience limited to Iranian immigrants. If you've gone through puberty, you've experienced being an outsider.

Soon I started receiving invitations to speak in schools and educational conferences. I love the opportunity to meet the students firsthand, especially the reluctant readers. Oddly enough, they often are the most enthusiastic group because for many of them, *Funny in Farsi* is the first book they ever enjoyed. Although, as a writer, that is a big compliment, as a reader, it makes me sad. I always tell the students to keep looking for books that they love, and I assure them that there are many.

In the last chapter of my book, I say that everyone has a story and everyone's story counts. Teachers often tell me that after reading my book, students often want to write

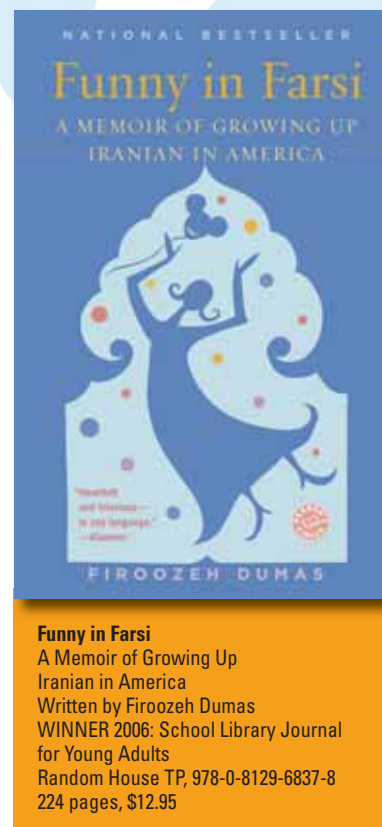


Photo by Stephanie Rausser



their own stories. Yes, these are the same students who were reluctant to read, and now they want to write. I often receive stacks of these stories.

In my book, I write, among other things, about being seven years old and becoming lost at Disneyland. I write about my odd relatives, about wanting to go to college, especially since my mother never graduated from high school. I write about kids making fun of my nose, and I write about outsmarting the kids who always wanted me to teach them “bad words” in my language. I have received stories from students about their experiences being lost somewhere, about their disappointments and dreams, about their quirky families. We all have embarrassing relatives, and how fun it is to write about them and describe them in words and bring them to life on a printed page!

Boy, do students love writing about things that interest them. And they should. After all, one does not have to be English and dead to be a writer. I can’t explain how thrilling it is to read a story written by a student who claims, “I never like to read or write but I want to tell you a story.” After all, isn’t that what reading and writing are all about, exchanging stories?

I firmly believe that being a reluctant reader is a temporary state. It reminds me of people who claim they don’t like Chinese food. “But have you tried every Chinese dish there is?” I ask them. Of course they haven’t, but the two they did try, did not appeal to them. I tell teachers with reluctant readers, “Read the story about my first name, Firoozeh, to your class out loud. It’s the chapter entitled ‘The F-word.’ If they don’t want to read the rest of book, I will take you all out for Chinese food.”

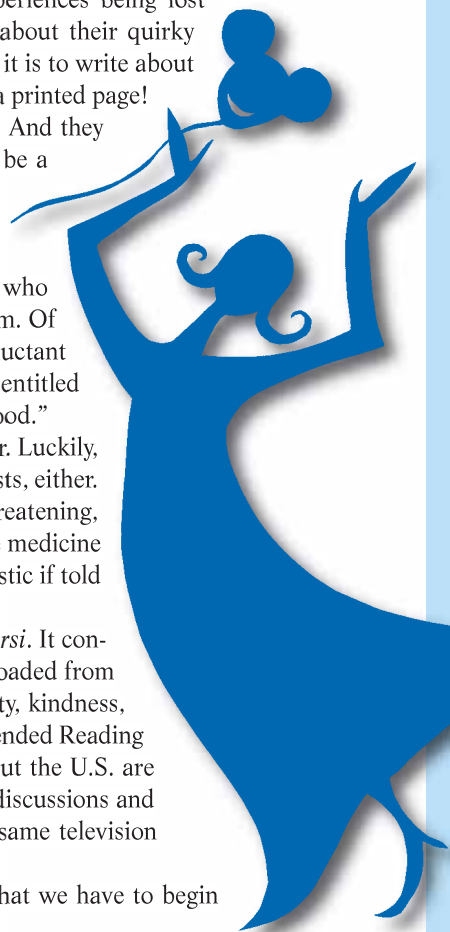
For educators, the hard part is finding stories that a diverse group of students want to hear. Luckily, most students love any book that makes them laugh; there are not too many on their reading lists, either. Humor is very powerful. It allows me, the writer, to discuss a wide variety of topics in a non-threatening, accessible manner. Remember Mary Poppins singing about “a spoonful of sugar” making “the medicine go down”? One can easily argue that humor has the same effect. Readers may not be enthusiastic if told to read a book about an immigrant family, but tell them it’s funny and see what happens.

At the request of educators, I wrote a discussion guide that can be used with *Funny in Farsi*. It contains questions for each of the 27 stories in the book, plus general questions. It can be downloaded from www.firoozehdumas.com. Teachers tell me that every topic they care to discuss, be it diversity, kindness, plastic surgery or humor, is in the book. *Funny in Farsi* is currently on the California Recommended Reading List for grades 6-12 and is being considered for other states’ reading lists. Schools throughout the U.S. are also using it for All School Reads projects, where every student reads the book and various discussions and activities are borne from it. Educators tell me that that finally, instead of talking about the same television show, students are talking about the same book.

Can the love of reading be instilled with just one book? I don’t know, but I do know that we have to begin somewhere. ■

About the Author

FIROOZEH DUMAS was born in Abadan, Iran, and moved to Whittier, California, at the age of seven. Firoozeh grew up listening to her father, a former Fulbright Scholar, recount the many colorful stories of his life. In 2001, Firoozeh decided to write her stories as a gift for her two children. Random House published these stories in 2003. *Funny in Farsi* was on the San Francisco Chronicle and Los Angeles Times bestseller lists; it was a finalist for the PEN/USA award in 2004 and a finalist in 2005 for an Audie Award for best audiobook. She was also a finalist for the prestigious Thurber Prize for American Humor, the first Middle Eastern woman ever to receive this honor. *Funny in Farsi* is now on the California Recommended Reading List and is used in many junior highs, high schools, and universities.



BOOK EXCERPT Chapter 1: Leffingwell Elementary School

When I was seven, my parents, my fourteen-year-old brother, Farshid, and I moved from Abadan, Iran, to Whittier, California. Farid, the older of my two brothers, had been sent to Philadelphia the year before to attend high school. Like most Iranian youths, he had always dreamed of attending college abroad and, despite my mother's tears, had left us to live with my uncle and his American wife. I, too, had been sad at Farid's departure, but my sorrow soon faded—not coincidentally, with the receipt of a package from him. Suddenly, having my brother on a different continent seemed like a small price to pay for owning a Barbie complete with a carrying case and four outfits, including the rain gear and mini umbrella.

Our move to Whittier was temporary. My father, Kazem, an engineer with the National Iranian Oil Company, had been assigned to consult for an American firm for about two years. Having spent several years in Texas and California as a graduate student, my father often spoke about America with the eloquence and wonder normally reserved for a first love. To him, America was a place where anyone, no matter how humble his background, could become an important person. It was a kind and orderly nation full of clean bathrooms, a land where traffic laws were obeyed and where whales jumped through hoops. It was the Promised Land. For me, it was where I could buy more outfits for Barbie.

We arrived in Whittier shortly after the start of second grade; my father enrolled me in Leffingwell Elementary School. To facilitate my adjustment, the principal arranged for us to meet my new teacher, Mrs. Sandberg, a few days before I started school. Since my mother and I did not speak English, the meeting consisted of a dialogue between my father and Mrs. Sandberg. My father carefully explained that I had attended a prestigious kindergarten where all the children were taught English. Eager to impress Mrs. Sandberg, he asked me to demonstrate my knowledge of the English language. I stood up straight and proudly recited all that I knew: "White, yellow, orange, red, purple, blue, green."

The following Monday, my father drove my mother and me to school. He had decided that it would be a good idea for my mother to attend school with me for a few weeks. I could not understand why two people not

speaking English would be better than one, but I was seven, and my opinion didn't matter much.

Until my first day at Leffingwell Elementary School, I had never thought of my mother as an embarrassment, but the sight of all the kids in the school staring at us before the bell rang was enough to make me pretend I didn't know her. The bell finally rang and Mrs. Sandberg came and escorted us to class. Fortunately, she had figured out that we were precisely the kind of people who would need help finding the right classroom.

My mother and I sat in the back while all the children took their assigned seats. Everyone continued to stare at us. Mrs. Sandberg wrote my name on the board: F-I-R-O-O-Z-E-H. Under my name, she wrote "I-R-A-N." She then pulled down a map of the world and said something to my mom. My mom looked at me and asked me what she had said. I told her that the teacher probably wanted her to find Iran on the map.

The problem was that my mother, like most women of her generation, had been only briefly educated. In her era, a girl's sole purpose in life was to find a husband. Having an education ranked far below more desirable attributes such as the ability to serve tea or prepare baklava. Before her marriage, my mother, Nazireh, had dreamed of becoming a midwife. Her father, a fairly progressive man, had even refused the two earlier suitors who had come for her so that his daughter could pursue her dream. My mother planned to obtain her diploma, then go to Tabriz to learn midwifery from a teacher whom my grandfather knew. Sadly, the teacher died unexpectedly, and my mother's dreams had to be buried as well.

Bachelor No. 3 was my father. Like the other suitors, he had never spoken to my mother, but one of his cousins knew someone who knew my mother's sister, so that was enough. More important, my mother fit my father's physical requirements for a wife. Like most Iranians, my father preferred a fair-skinned woman with straight, light-colored hair. Having spent a year in America as a Fulbright scholar, he had returned with a photo of a woman he found attractive and asked his older sister, Sedigeh, to find someone who resembled her. Sedigeh had asked around, and that is how at age seventeen my mother officially gave up her dreams, married my father, and had a child by the end of the year. ■

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LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE...For Reluctant Reading

Humor Books from Random House, Inc.

STRANGE RED COW

and Other Curious Classified Ads from the Past
by Sara Bader

Classified advertisements have always been the most ephemeral of artifacts, tossed and forgotten without a second thought. Until now.

While researching a historical documentary, Sara Bader stumbled upon something that transported her back in time: an eighteenth-century classified ad about a lost red cow. Her evocative discovery inspired a search for more of these fascinating snippets, past and present. In *Strange Red Cow*, Bader presents a sampling of ads from 1704 to contemporary Internet postings, sorted and assembled thematically. This book captures, in colorful detail, scenes of everyday life in the first-ever overview of the nation's unofficial history text: the classified ads.

Clarkson Potter • HC • 978-1-4000-5120-5 • 224 pp. • \$18.00/\$26.00 Can.



SLOPPY FIRSTS: A NOVEL

by Megan McCafferty

A YALSA Best Books for Young Adults

A New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age

When her best friend moves away from Pineville, New Jersey, sixteen-year-old Jessica Darling is devastated. A fish out of water at school and a stranger at home, Jessica feels more lost than ever now that the only person with whom she could really communicate has gone. How is she supposed to deal with the boy- and shopping-crazy girls at school, her preoccupied parents, and her nonexistent love life?

Three Rivers Press • TR • 978-0-809-80790-3 • 304 pp. • \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.



THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE THUNDERBOLT KID

A Memoir

by Bill Bryson

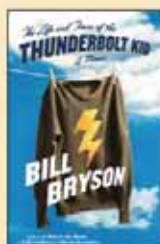
Some say that the first hints that Bill Bryson was not of Planet Earth originated from his discovery, at the age of six, of a woolen jersey of rare fineness.

Across the moth-holed chest was a golden thunderbolt. It was obviously the Sacred Jersey of Zap, and proved that he had been placed with this innocuous family in the middle of America to fly, become invisible, and wear his underpants over his jeans in the manner of Superman.

Bill Bryson's first travel book opened with the immortal line, "I come from Des Moines. Somebody had to." In this hilarious new memoir, he travels back to explore the kid he once was and the weird and wonderful world of 1950s America.

Broadway • HC • 978-0-7679-1936-4 • 288 pp. • \$25.00/NCR

NEW



MY UNCLE NAPOLEON: A NOVEL

by Iraj Pezeshkzad

Translated by Dick Davis

Introduction by Azar Nafisi

"God forbid, I've fallen in love with Layli!" So begins the account of our narrator's life in an extended Iranian family lorded over by the blustering, paranoid patriarch, Dear Uncle Napoleon. When Uncle Napoleon's least-favorite nephew falls for his daughter, Layli, family fortunes are reversed, feuds erupt, and complications ensue.

First published in Iran in the 1970s and adapted into a hugely successful television series, this beloved novel is now "Suggested Reading" in Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. *My Uncle Napoleon* is a timeless and universal satire of first love and family intrigue.

Modern Library • TR • 978-0-8129-7443-0 • 528 pp. • \$13.95/\$21.00 Can.



A WALK IN THE WOODS

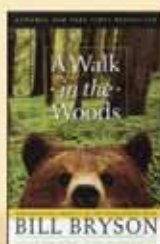
Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail

by Bill Bryson

Back in America after twenty years in Britain, Bill Bryson decided to reacquire himself with his native country by walking the 2,100-mile Appalachian Trail, which stretches from Georgia to Maine. Bryson travels with gloriously out-of-shape Stephen Katz, a buddy from Iowa along for the walk. On the trail they meet an assortment of hilarious characters.

Bryson's acute eye takes in the beautiful but fragile trail, and as he tells its fascinating history, he makes a plea for the conservation of America's last great wilderness. An adventure, a comedy, and a celebration, *A Walk in the Woods* is destined to become a modern classic of travel literature.

Broadway • TR • 978-0-7679-0252-6 • 304 pp. • \$14.95/NCR



MARK TWAIN'S LIBRARY OF HUMOR

by Mark Twain

Beginning with the piece that made Mark Twain famous—"The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County"—and ending with his fanciful "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper," this treasure trove of an anthology, an abridgment of the 1888 original, collects twenty of Twain's own pieces, in addition to tall tales, fables, and satires by forty-three of Twain's contemporaries, including Washington Irving, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ambrose Bierce, and William Dean Howells.

"Old pieces of humor are like antique toys... when you find one that does still work after, say, a century and a half, if you are like me you say things like 'Look at that workmanship'."—from the Introduction by Roy Blount, Jr.

Modern Library • TR • 978-0-679-64036-3 • 608 pp. • \$15.95/\$23.95 Can.



A DOG YEAR

Twelve Months, Four Dogs, and Me

by Jon Katz

A *Dog Year* shows how a man discovered much about himself through one dog (and then another), whose temperament seemed as different from his own as day from night. It is a story of trust and understanding, of life and death, of continuity and change. It is by turns insightful, hilarious, and deeply moving.

Random House • TR • 978-0-8129-6690-9 • 240 pp. • \$12.95/\$19.95 Can.



10TH GRADE: A NOVEL

by Joe Welsberg

An ALA Alex Award Winner

Teenager Jeremy Reskin chronicles everything in his own novel—a disastrously ungrammatical but unflinching look at sophomore year. First novelist Joe Welsberg touches on an array of coming-of-age scenes such as family conflicts, peer pressure, romance, and hanging out.

"This is a difficult, painful, and painfully funny novel. And just like tenth grade."—*Booklist*

Teachers, note that this book contains some mature subject matter. Random House • TR • 978-0-8129-6662-6 • 272 pp. • \$12.95/\$19.95 Can.



For more HUMOR TITLES, visit www.randomhouse.com/highschool • To order copies, please use the order form in the centerfold.

Genre Media Offerings



Hi, I'm Josh-man, and I'll show you how different genres can open up exciting new worlds for your reluctant readers.

From gunslinging westerns and dank dungeons to the worlds of manga and skateboarding, the next pages explore how one teacher's class fell in love with the Louis L'Amour series; how and why the graphic novel is an important literary and educational art form; what manga is and why one editor has literally submerged himself within this genre in order to explain it fully; and how you can use your students' interests in sports, videogames, music/audio, and the internet as springboards to reading. Bottom line: The genres and media offerings discussed in this section were all found to be beneficial tools in a teaching environment.

- Nothing Beats a Good Story: Using the Works of Louis L'Amour with Reluctant Readers
by James Blasingame 56
- Graphic Novels: A New Art Form
by Chris Schluep 64
- Graphic Novels: Books that Matter
by Dr. Rocco Versaci 67
- Reading Manga, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Just Love Reading
by Dallas Middaugh 70
- Worlds So Wide: How Dungeons & Dragons® Taught Me to Use the Library
by Peter Berbergal 77
- What Thrasher Magazine Means to Me
by Ryan Henry, Managing Editor, *Thrasher Magazine* . . . 84
- Young Adult Audiobooks: The Audio Answer for Reluctant Readers
by Tim Ditlow 87
- Audiobooks & Literacy: An Educator's Guide to Utilizing Audiobooks in the Classroom
by Dr. Frank Serafini 90
- The Reluctant Reader, Gaming Environments, and the Future of Teaching and Learning
by Kate Wittenberg 93

NOTHING BEATS A GOOD STORY

Using the Works of Louis L'Amour with Reluctant Readers

BY JAMES BLASINGAME

In the early summer of 1991, I was preparing to teach summer school in Boys Town, Nebraska, the world-famous community for troubled youth (now known as Girls and Boys Town). I found myself in a situation very different from that of the college-preparatory school in an affluent suburb where I taught during the regular school year. As I discussed the summer school program with Jim Casey, Boys Town High School assistant principal, he explained what I would be facing and the curriculum they had designed for the summer:

For any number of reasons, most of your students will read below grade level. It could be a reading problem, but it also might be that they have never been in an environment that encouraged reading or even made it available. Before they come to us, many of our kids have been surviving by their wits on the streets for years. For most of them, it's probably a combination of things, but the bottom line is:

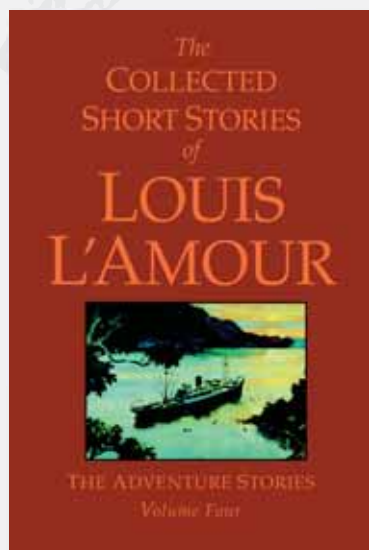
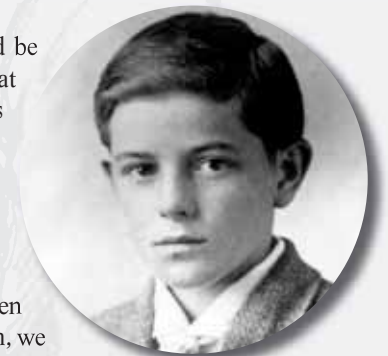
We need to raise their reading levels, and at the same time, make reading fun for them, and hopefully, even turn it into a lifetime habit.

Rather than use the kind of packaged literature anthology most high schools use for a given grade level, and rather than using some kind of “drill-and-kill” remedial worksheet program, we are using high-interest paperback novels, specifically, westerns by Louis L'Amour. They have lots of action, protagonists with strong moral values, and school-appropriate portrayals of sex and violence.

Dr. Casey went on to explain the philosophy of Bob Vacca, one of their veteran teachers and the chair of Boys Town High School's English Department. Bob believed that reading paperback novels with lots of action, excitement, adventure, and suspense would do far more to pique kids' interest in reading than marching them through the classics (i.e., *Hamlet*, *Moby Dick*, *Antigone*, *The Scarlet Letter*), all the while having to paraphrase the language and explain what was going on in the story and why it was significant. He was right.

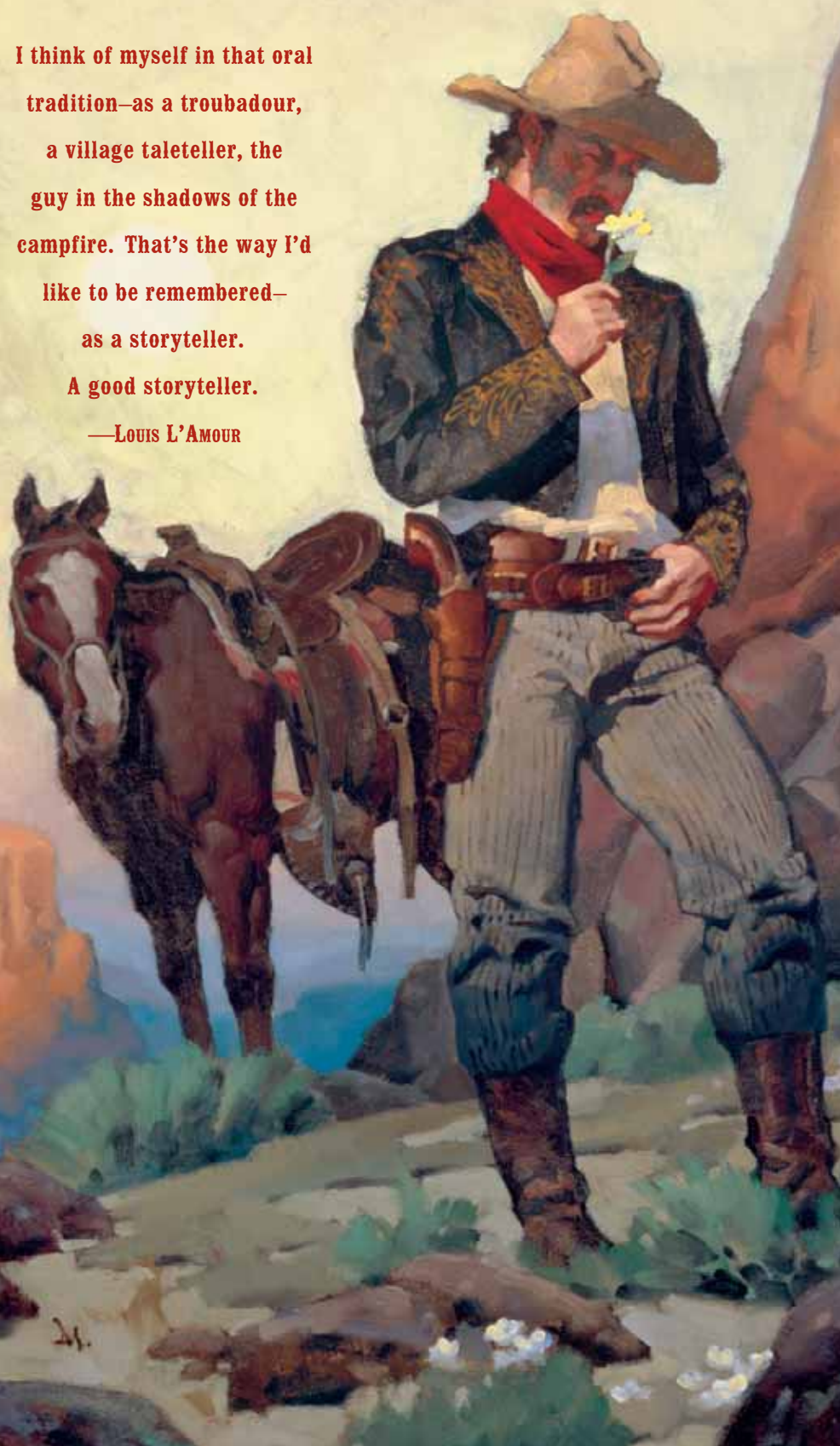
I met a lot of wonderful kids at Boys Town that summer. Often they were kids whose life stories would bring a tear to the eye, but just as often they were kids who were determined to make lemonade out of life's lemons. Just as I had been told, these were high school students who not only read below grade level but also had little prior experience with reading, especially reading novels. Their lives included few successful experiences or pleasant memories revolving around reading; in fact, I often gathered that many of them had come to regard reading as a painful reminder of how they were different from other kids, or even to view reading as a source of punishment.

When the kids met Louis L'Amour, however, all that changed. Perhaps I should instead say, when the kids met Hondo Lane, Vittoro, Angie Lowe, Conn Conagher, and Tell Sackett (among others), all that changed. Over the course of the summer, we read nothing but Louis L'Amour: *The Cherokee Trail*, *Crossfire Trail*, *Hondo*, *The Proving Trail*, *The Shadow Riders*, *Sackett*, and more. I will admit that we did have a lot of problems as we read these books, very serious



ABOVE: Louis L'Amour, age 12. RIGHT: Cover art from the audiobook *Love and The Cactus Kid*, painting © Gregory Manchess. All author photography courtesy of the L'Amour family.

I think of myself in that oral
tradition—as a troubadour,
a village tale-teller, the
guy in the shadows of the
campfire. That's the way I'd
like to be remembered—
as a storyteller.
A good storyteller.
—LOUIS L'AMOUR





problems. We had problems with stagecoach robbers; problems with dishonest Indian agents; problems with professional gunfighters; problems with wild horses and stampeding cattle; problems with cattle rustlers; problems with rattlesnakes, mountain lions, and drunken cowboys. We even had a few problems with unrequited love, BUT—we had very few reading problems. Students ate these books up like candy, spending most of class time engrossed in the stories' conflicts and characters while spending very little time expressing frustration over words they didn't know or plot events to which they couldn't connect. We read so many books that some of the students expressed surprise at their own accomplishments. We wrote, discussed, compared and contrasted, and found relevance in the lives lived by L'Amour's characters to the lives of the students. It was a successful summer.

The works of scholars of literacy, reading, and adolescent literature provide explanations for our success and also give some advice on implementation. The works of Louis L'Amour (and, in general, any carefully selected novel with high-interest content and a reading level appropriate to the reader's reading skills) set kids up for success for a number of reasons:

1. They provide a means for teen readers to improve their reading skills/literacy, because teens can interact/engage more deeply with them than with other kinds of literature.
2. They complement/intersect with teens' emotional/psychological/moral development as identified by adolescent developmental psychology.
3. They harness teens' needs for excitement, adventure, and entertainment as well as their need for

resolution of life's ambiguities and conflicts.

4. They provide entry points for teachers to address critical literacy, literary interpretation, and tangential issues such as the ecology, issues of race and gender, etc.

One of the most satisfying pieces of evidence supporting the efficacy of using high-interest novels comes from a study done by Arthur Applebee and his colleagues at the prestigious National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement, a federally funded institution. Although skeptics might like to contend that young readers need challenging reading material to develop high literacy competencies, Applebee [Applebee et al. (2003)] found that it is not whether or not students read the literary canon (the "classics") that determines how literacy skills grow, but what activities accompany their reading. In a 2003 study of "classroom instruction and student performance," which involved 974 middle and high school students in 19 schools across five states, Applebee and his colleagues found that it was the approach to teaching (and not the genre of literature they used) that made the difference in how students improved from fall to spring in their ability to perform "complex literacy tasks" (Applebee et al., p. 722). Literary genres most often reflected students' ages and reading abilities, but the elements Applebee found to be "significantly related to literacy performance" were "high academic demands and discussion-based approaches" (Applebee et al., p. 722). Students need to be engaged in frequent, challenging, and meaningful thinking, discussion, and writing about their reading.

Are the L'Amour books well suited to this dialogic approach recommended by Applebee's research? From my experience with my summer-school students at Boys Town, I would have to say, "Absolutely," and reading/literacy scholars provide ample explanations of why and how this is so. For many years, reading experts have ascribed to what is known as *reader-response theory*. The basic premise of this theory is that readers are not passive vessels into which a text is poured; instead, readers are interacting with a text as they read it—actively thinking about it, comparing it to their personal experiences, and trying to make sense/meaning of it—as well as using the text to make sense of their own lives. Teachers grounded in reader-response theory ask their students to form their own opinions of what a text means, to trust their own ideas about what is important, and to make meaning for themselves.

ABOVE: L'Amour and Oak shortly after arriving in Choctaw, Oklahoma, from Oregon. RIGHT: Detail of the cover art from *High Lonesome*, painting © by Gregory Manchess.

Surely, reluctant readers must be reluctant to trust their own ideas and especially to talk about them in public. No! Actually, in their quintessential work on male teen reluctant readers, “Reading Don’t Fix No Chevys’: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men,” Michael W. Smith and Jeffrey D. Wilhelm (2002) found quite the opposite. Reluctant readers did want to talk about what they read; in fact, they were frustrated when they were not given an opportunity to do so. Smith and Wilhelm reported that in their case studies of 20 reluctant readers who were male teenagers, a repeated complaint was that school didn’t let these students go into any real depth on a topic but just kept “jumping” from one thing to another. The boys wanted to spend enough time on each topic to feel that they had reached a level of competency (Smith and Wilhelm, p. 107). Sharing thoughts and ideas about a book was not anathema to them at all; they wanted to air their opinions about their reading.

Logically, the best books for this kind of activity would be books to which young readers can relate, books with conflicts and characters with which young readers can strongly identify and connect. Such connection is a reflection of young readers’ growing relationship with the world around them. As Robert Probst puts it, the young reader “wants to understand work, love, hate, war, death, vengeance, responsibility, good, evil—in other words, he is interested in the themes of the literature that has established itself as worth reading and discussing” (Probst 4).

“Worth reading and discussing”? No author ever made the themes mentioned above more lively, appealing, or reader friendly than Louis L’Amour. This brings up another issue of choosing literature for reluctant readers: reading level. The reading has to be accessible; it has to fall somewhere in developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, meaning it needs to be just hard enough so that the student can successfully digest it with a minimum of help. Impenetrable text is actually counterproductive in this regard. Tolstoy surely does

great justice to the themes of love and hate, good and evil, war and (you know what goes here, I’ll bet) in his 1,400-plus pages of *War and Peace*, but not at a reading level appropriate for reluctant teen readers. Books of inappropriate reading level and subject matter are a train wreck waiting to happen for reluctant readers, as Nicholas Karolides (1992) points out:

The language of a text, the situation, characters, or the expressed issues can dissuade a reader from comprehension of the text and thus inhibit involvement with it. In effect, if the reader has insufficient linguistic or experiential background to allow participation, the reader cannot relate to the text, and the reading act will be short-circuited (Karolides, p. 23).

Attempts to decipher unfamiliar, polysyllabic words; struggles with unwieldy sentences; and other reading troubles quickly bog the reluctant readers down and set them up for failure.

The very first page of L’Amour’s *Sackett*, on the other hand, has a Flesch-Kincaid readability grade-level rating of 5.4, or roughly sixth grade (about the same level as that of the majority of popular fiction one would find at a popular bookstore). The Flesch-Kincaid readability rating is not based on the complexity of the ideas or on the literary quality of a piece of writing; rather, it is simply an arithmetical calculation based on statistics, such as the average length of sentences and the average length of words. A bonus here is that reluctant readers engrossed in a Louis L’Amour novel find themselves in the company of millions of adult readers all over the world. The United States Congress awarded Louis L’Amour the National Gold Medal, and President Ronald Reagan presented him with the Medal of Freedom for his work. No stigma here for the kid with *The Cherokee Trail* stuck in a back pocket!

From the point of view of an



**For one who reads, there is no limit
to the number of lives that may be
lived, for fiction, biography, and history
offer an inexhaustible number of lives
in many parts of the world, in all
periods of time.**

—LOUIS L’AMOUR

adolescent psychologist, Louis L'Amour is a healthy dose of just what teen readers need, right when they need it. Erik Erikson, the psychologist famous for his eight stages of human development, has described the growth of the human psyche in terms of steps through which human beings progress. Each step is characterized by tension between two opposite pressures. Erikson characterized the experience of teenagers from ages 12 to 18 (in what he called *Stage Five*) as "Identity vs. Role Confusion"

[Robert Myers (2005)]. In this stage, teens separate themselves from their peers and develop a sense of their own values and beliefs—not an easy thing to do. In this stage, the adolescent experiments with different roles, trying on various identities and experiencing what has come to be known as an *identity crisis*, a term coined by Erikson [Myers (2005)]. Erikson saw this time in life as one where kids should be able to experiment safely with their identities before arriving at their true selves [Myers (2005)].

Moral development is another aspect of adolescent growth and development, and Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) is well known for his schematic of this development. Kohlberg's ideas about how people develop a sense of right and wrong, or what we would call a conscience, progress through stages much like Erikson's. Kohlberg suggests that as a young person's conscience evolves, decisions will be made independently, fairly, and with consideration for others. According to Kohlberg, by the time a person has moved out of childhood (when decisions are based on personal gain or loss) and through adolescence toward adulthood and beyond, the following evolution should occur in the healthy, moral human being:

- Moral choices based on what is best for family, friends, peers, or cultural group in order to improve or maintain standing within these groups
- Moral choices based on maintaining the present social order
- Moral choices based on a democratic view of individual rights and agreed-upon social contracts

- Moral choices based upon the individual's abstract idea of justice and morality, not superseded by established laws and subject to relative situation

[Adapted from Kohlberg (1981)]

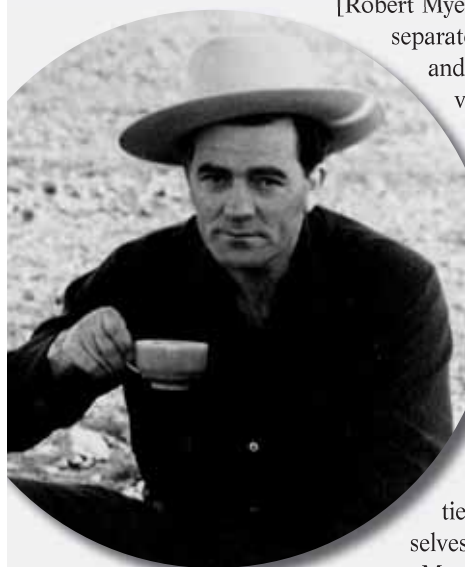
Erikson and Kohlberg have identified the important benchmarks for emotional, psychological, and moral development for teenagers, but what does this have to with kids and reading? Good question! Experts in literature for young adults suggest that the best way to experiment with life, trying on identities and experiencing the consequences of choices, is vicariously through literature. In literature, young readers experience all the crises of life through characters—characters to whom they have become attached and with whom they identify when the writing is done well. As Chris Crutcher, family therapist and best-selling author of fiction for young adults, says: "Stories can help teenagers look at their feelings or come to emotional resolution, from a safe distance [. . .]. I have never met a depressed person, or an anxious person, or a fearful person who was not encouraged by the knowledge that others feel the same way they do. 'I am not alone' is powerful medicine." (Crutcher, *Author's Insights*, p. 39).

Louis L'Amour's characters face all the crises of life—crises teens are facing, some for the first time—as they stand on the fringe of adulthood.

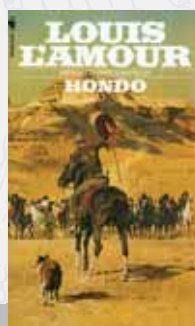
Let's look at some examples.

Hondo: Hondo Lane finds himself caught between the tragedy he sees befalling the Apache Nation, a people he finds to be honest and brave, and his responsibility to the Army. He also struggles with his feelings for Angie, a settler whose immoral husband Hondo will ultimately have to kill. How can Hondo tell Angie's young son that he, Hondo, is the man who killed the boy's father?

Kiowa Trail: Kate Lundy seeks revenge on the cowtown she holds responsible for the death of Tom, her younger brother. The inhabitants of these towns liked



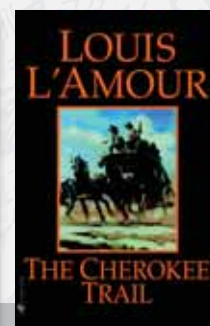
ABOVE: L'Amour on a camping trip in Arizona, early 1950s.



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the money the cattle drives brought them but didn't accept the cowboys as human beings.

Kilkenny: Lance Kilkenny would rather not fight, but his reputation with a gun and his conflict with a greedy rancher may make it inevitable.

Bowdrie: Chick Bowdrie is a young man torn between two fates. He must choose between the right side and the wrong side of the law.

Crossfire Trail: A less-than-moral protagonist honors his oath to a dying man to protect the man's family and ranch from those who would steal it. This is an ironic story about finding the best in oneself.

Sackett: A series book about the Sackett brothers. William Tell Sackett (his real name) cannot escape his past actions, no matter what good luck befalls him.

The Cherokee Trail: After the Civil War leaves them destitute, the Breydon family heads for Colorado to manage a stagecoach station. When her husband is murdered along the way, Mary Breydon decides that she and her daughter, Peg, will take on a task deemed inappropriate for women and will run the station anyway. Her husband's murderer soon appears, but so does a mysterious gunman.

The Daybreakers: This work is held by many readers to be the best of the Sackett series. Brothers Tyrel and Orrin are at the center of the novel. Even when the brothers don't look for trouble, it always seems to find them. Largely a story of people trying to find a new life in the West, this book concerns the decisions Orrin must make as he enforces the law in a lawless land. This book has multiple plot lines and tons of action.

End of the Drive: In this collection of short stories, L'Amour touches upon every aspect of life from romance to death. Most often, however, he shows how people un-

der pressure generally find the best in themselves. Humor and ecological themes are also present in this volume.

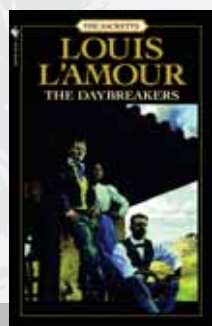
A note about series books is appropriate here. *The Sacketts*, for example, is a L'Amour series, and many of the L'Amour books are very similar in plot, characters, and setting. Series books are often appealing to reluctant readers. Although appealing openings are hardly a problem for Louis L'Amour (bullets and Cupid's arrows are often in full flight before the reader turns the first page), openings are often hard for reluctant readers; understanding the mindset of a new group of characters, picturing a new setting, and so on can be a challenge for them. For this reason, being able to take advantage of their previous successes in getting to know what Will Sackett is like as the oldest brother, how Orrin Sackett is different, how Ty Sackett is likely to react in a given situation, and so on will put the reluctant reader in an expert position as he or she begins a new novel in the Sackett series. Readers turn to Louis L'Amour series books (and probably to all his westerns) like old friends. Finding an enjoyable genre and a favorite author within that genre also goes miles toward establishing reading as a lifelong habit.

In my experience, the fiction of Louis L'Amour has proven successful with reluctant readers, especially when it is used thoughtfully and with a carefully conceived curriculum that includes rigorous discussion and writing, thus placing demands on students to think critically and to examine their own thinking. L'Amour's ability to spin an exciting tale does wonders for the reluctant reader, and the life themes on which he focuses are just right for teenagers.

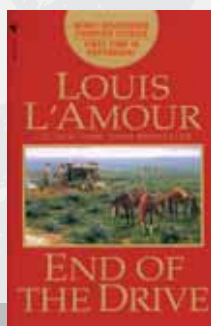
In the final analysis, it's as sure as a bullet from Will Sackett's rifle. ■

About the Writer

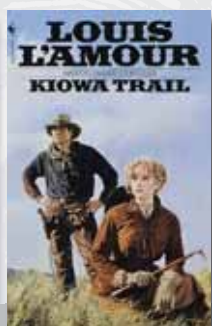
JAMES BLASINGAME, Jr., is an Associate Professor of English at Arizona State University (ASU) in Tempe, Arizona. He is co-editor of *The ALAN Review* and creates the "Books for Adolescents" section of the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. Dr. Blasingame was a high school English teacher for 18 years before joining higher education.



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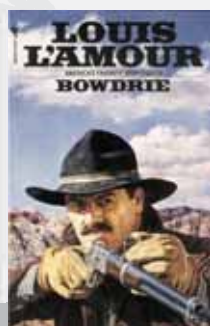
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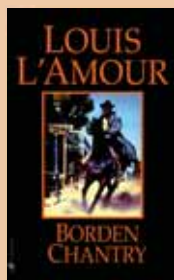


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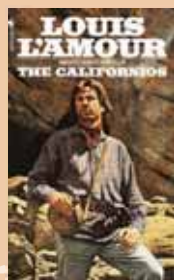
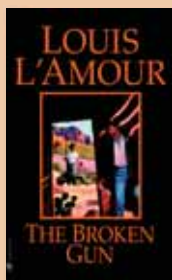
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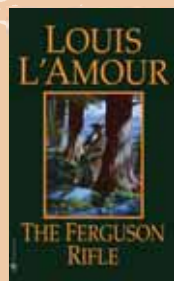
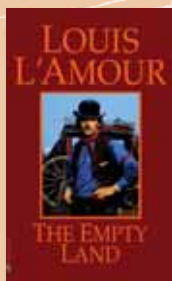
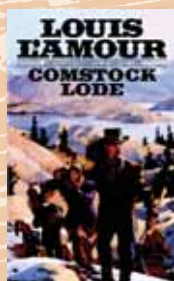
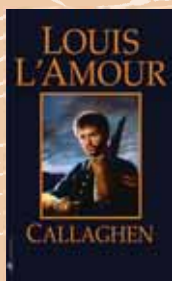
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"One day I was speeding along at the typewriter, and my daughter—who was a child at the time—asked me, "Daddy, why are you writing so fast?" And I replied, "Because I want to see how the story turns out!" —LOUIS L'AMOUR

ABOVE: Photo by John Hamilton—Globe Photos, Inc.

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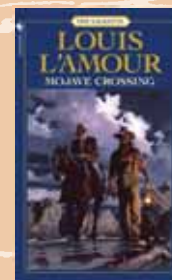
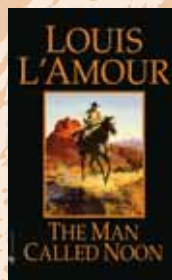
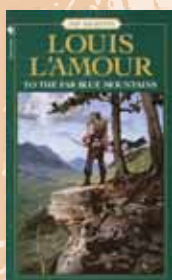
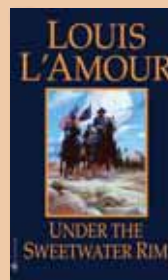
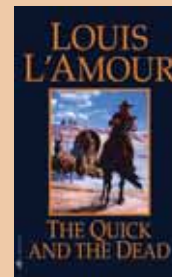
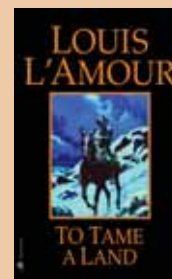
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GRAPHIC NOVELS

A NEW ART FORM

BY CHRIS SCHLUEP, EDITOR,
BALLANTINE DEL REY

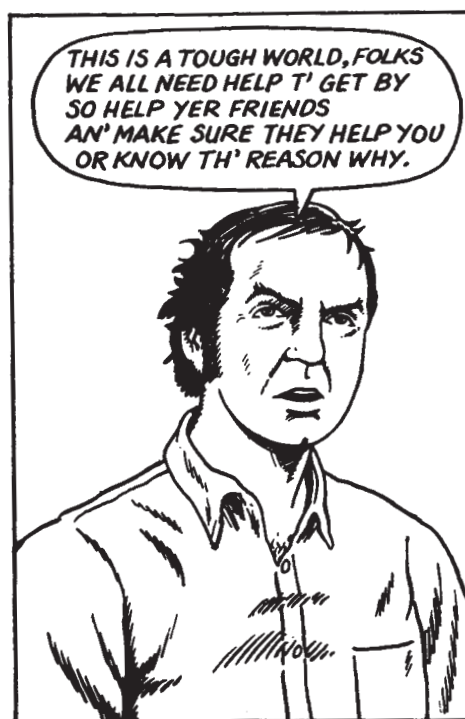
AT THIS POINT, it should come as no surprise that one of today's fastest growing categories in book publishing is that of the graphic novel. Partly because of this rapid growth, there is a great deal of confusion and uncertainty as to what exactly constitutes a graphic novel and where (if at all) graphic novels fit into our greater literature. In this essay, I'll try to explain how we publishers define the term; I also certainly hope to show why this blossoming category is exciting readers, especially *young* readers, and how it's opening up the world of books to a whole new generation of bibliophiles.

What are graphic novels and where did they begin? The truth is that graphic novels have been around—in one form or another—for many, many years. Most people associate the graphic novel with comic books, and that is indeed how the form got its start (although the form has greatly matured and expanded since then). Traditionally, graphic novels were nothing but a series of comics gathered together and bound into long book

form—a practice that started in the U.K. in the 1870s. Since then, generations of Europeans have grown up with the form, with the most well-known early examples being *Tintin* and *Asterix*. While graphic novels have been around in this country, too, they weren't officially recognized as such—and didn't really start getting much attention from mainstream readers—until 1978, when Will Eisner published his groundbreaking *A Contract With God*. Eisner's book, although it was filled with pretty pictures, was unquestionably meant to be

read along the lines of literature. With this more serious goal in mind, Eisner sought to establish some distance between his own work and traditional comics. He therefore came up with the idea of pitching his work as a "graphic novel" in the hope that it wouldn't be dismissed outright by traditional trade-book publishers. Eisner has been quoted as saying that while pitching the book to an editor at a big New York publishing house, "a little voice inside me said, 'Hey, stupid, don't tell him it's a comic or he'll hang up on you.' So I said, 'It's a graphic novel.'" Sadly, the gambit failed, and Eisner was still turned down by the big publisher. A smaller publisher did end up accepting his work, and *A Contract With God* became the first book to arrive on shelves with the term *graphic novel* printed on its cover. The designation has stuck ever since.

THESE DAYS, big publishers are finally catching up with the smaller houses. The number of graphic novels on bookshelves has skyrocketed, and so have sales. In fact, if big publishers were initially slow to accept graphic novels as a serious art form, the category's impressive sales numbers have caused many a grim publisher to reconsider the merits of the visual narrative, and I believe we're all better served as a result. I can look to no better source than John Updike, an author who once harbored dreams of becoming a cartoonist. In 1969, he declared, "I see no intrinsic reason why a



American Splendor
by Harvey Pekar
Ballantine, TR, 978-0-345-46830-7,
320 pp., \$16.95/\$23.95 Can.

doubly talented artist might not arise and create a comic strip novel masterpiece.” Thankfully, his words ring true today. There are masterpieces to be had.

As an editor, I tend to divide the graphic-novel field into three subcategories: superhero comics, popular entertainment, and literary fine art. Although I have no quantifiable evidence, I *suspect* that, as they mature as readers, those who enjoy graphic novels tend to follow a natural progression from reading about superheroes to reading the popular entertainment graphic novels to reading the more literary works. While there are examples of great works in each of these subcategories, I tend to prefer the graphic novels at the literary/fine-art end of things (as do most “big” publishers). If you look at the works that have really helped to established graphic novels as a serious field, you’ll find some of my favorite examples of what makes the visual narrative so compelling: Art Spiegelman’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus*, Marjani Satrapi’s *Persepolis*, and Harvey Pekar’s *American Splendor*, among others.

To understand graphic novels in a comprehensive sense, it’s important to start at the beginning—with superhero comics. Most graphic novels from this subcategory are simply collections of previously published periodical material put into long book form. (Think serialized comics, such as Superman, Batman, Spiderman, X-Men, and so forth. Interestingly, most of these properties have also been made into movies, which surely helps to lure young readers to the graphic-novel aisles.) Companies such as Marvel and DC Comics have always been very strong in this subcategory; in the last decade or so, other companies have entered the field to push comic graphic novels into worlds that are decidedly less superhero oriented. On the whole, however, there’s a real “genre” feel to these comics, and readers tend to be younger than those who read, say, *Maus*.

I single out as particularly noteworthy two superhero graphic-novel releases. Both originated in 1986 (by anyone’s standards, a banner year for the graphic-novel industry), and both are considered real masterpieces. The first is *The Watchmen*, written by Alan Moore and illustrated by David Gibbons. *The Watchmen* was the first superhero comic book to present itself as serious literature, a move that did much to popularize the adult-oriented graphic-novel format. Set in an alternate 1985, where the U.S. is edging toward nuclear war with the Soviet Union, *The Watchmen* was one of the first graphic novels to present superheroes as real people with depth, as people possessing normal personal issues and perhaps not-so-normal ethical dilemmas. *The Watchmen* was so well accepted that it was the only graphic novel to appear on *Time* mag-

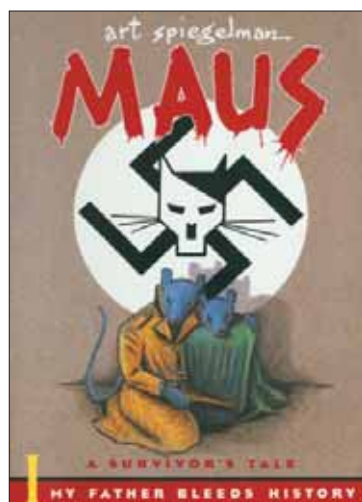


azine’s list of the “100 best novels from 1923 to present.” Another graphic novel from the year 1986 (and the one that first made me realize that not all graphic novels were schlock) is *The Dark Knight Returns*. In this work, set during the Cold War, Bruce Wayne (who is now 55 years old and retired from his Batman days) is drawn back into the maelstrom that was once his life. The art is beautiful, the writing is pristine, and I couldn’t imagine the story being told in any other format.

For lack of column space, I’ll quickly move on to graphic novels that fall into what I term the *popular entertainment* subcategory. To be honest, this is more of a catch-all group for those graphic novels that don’t fall decidedly into the “superhero” or “literary” groupings—but it’s also today’s fastest growing subcategory. In many ways, this group presents a perfect marriage of the comic and the literary traditions of graphic novels. Although you’ll find work that hearkens back to traditional comics, when you look closer, you’ll often find that the words and messages aren’t quite as they first appear. There’s generally a real subversive quality to the art and writing that

ABOVE: A page from Harvey Pekar’s *American Splendor*.

resonates with today's youth. Much of this subcategory is published by the myriad small presses out there (and there are *many*), which essentially amount to fly-by-night operations. As the field continues to grow, however, look for standouts to rise above the crowd. Recent examples (which have subsequently moved on to big publishing houses) include the anthology of artists in *Flight* (edited by Kazu Kibuishi); *Elk's Run* (written by Joshua Hale Fialkov and illustrated by Noel Tuazon); and Daniel Clowes's *Ghost World* (which was even made into a movie).



Maus I
A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History
by Art Spiegelman
Pantheon, TR, 978-0-394-74723-1,
160 pp., \$14.00/\$21.00 Can.

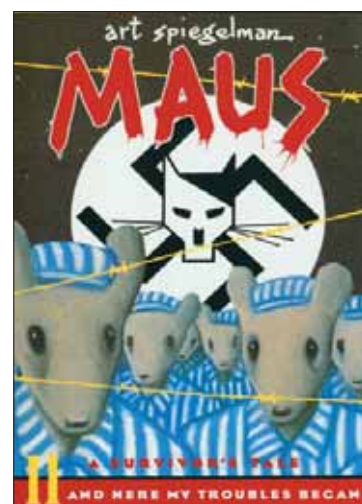
FINALLY, we come to the cream of the crop (at least in my humble opinion): the literary graphic novels. Perhaps the greatest known graphic novel of all time is Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, in which the author/illustrator recounts his father's struggle to survive the Holocaust as a Polish Jew. A winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Spiegelman's work incorporates stunning symbolism with biting prose. *Maus* truly is a masterpiece, one that can be read on a number of levels. (By the way, *Maus* came out in 1986, with *The Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*. I told you it was a banner year.) Another example is Marjani

Satrapi's *Persepolis*, the story of a young Iranian girl's life under an Islamic Revolution. When one reads the words, coupled with Satrapi's evocative drawings, it becomes nearly impossible to imagine her story told in any other way. The same goes for Joe Sacco's *Safe Zone—Goradze*, a graphic novel about war in Eastern Bosnia. Of this graphic novel, *Publishers Weekly* said, "It is difficult to look away and impossible to forget." On the other end of the spectrum is Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor* work, which seeks to take mundane life and make it worthy of readers' attention. For that, Pekar has been compared to Dreiser, Dostoyevsky, and Lenny Bruce. Alas, there are far

too many others to include here, but trust me, the list is growing.

For me, the real thrill in working with graphic novels is the chance to see a new art form coming into its own. We live in a world where media are combining at rates previously unimaginable. I love prose—that's why I first got into publishing. I appreciate the time and effort it takes to sit down with a good novel, and I appreciate the depth of experience that I gain from doing so. I also love the immediacy of the visual arts. In some ways, the combining of art and prose is a natural marriage. This is something that makes sense to young readers of today, and I think it partly explains why graphic novels have taken off in popularity. Something else is at work, too. There are great artists doing great work in the field. This is the cutting edge of book publishing, as well as a growing field of art where the true masters are just rising to the surface, and I can't wait to see what they do next.

As you might have imagined, graphic novels are also a lot of fun. ■



Maus II
A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began
by Art Spiegelman
Pantheon, TR, 978-0-679-72977-8,
144 pp., \$14.00/\$21.00 Can.



ABOUT THE WRITER

CHRIS SCHLUEP is an editor at the Random House Publishing Group, where, among other things, he acquires graphic novels. Some of his more recent graphic novel projects include *Flight* by Kazu Kibuishi, et al. and *Ego & Hubris: The Michael Malice Story* by Harvey Pekar.

ABOVE: A panel from Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor*.

GRAPHIC NOVELS: BOOKS THAT MATTER

BY DR. ROCCO VERSACI

I TEACH ENGLISH at a community college, and so I get to know a great many students who might be classified as “reluctant readers.” They are revealed early each semester when, as a first-day activity, I give all my students a written prompt designed to elicit information about their writing styles and their reading habits. Invariably, the vast majority respond to questions about the latter with some variation of the following: “I don’t really read much.”

Sadly, my students are not unique. Their attitudes about reading are shared by large numbers of students in high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools, many of whom are either uninterested in or intimidated by the books routinely handed to them by people like me in classrooms across the country. My desire to change these attitudes is not unique; like my fellow English teachers, I want my students to embrace the bedrock value of our profession: books matter. As we all know, in order to share this value, students need to be engaged by the act of reading. The trick, of course, is knowing how to foster such engagement.

I have found that one answer lies in graphic novels.

Simply put, these books interest students and get them reading. Being accustomed to a complex visual culture, today’s students find the “graphic” part of graphic novels to be very inviting. Students are also surprised and intrigued by the maturity of these books and by the relevance of the storylines to their own lives and to the world in which they live. In addition, reading this “disreputable” material is slightly subversive and allows students to see themselves as readers outside of a sometimes stifling academic setting. All of these factors engage readers and, importantly, provide teachers with opportunities to sharpen their students’ analytical skills.

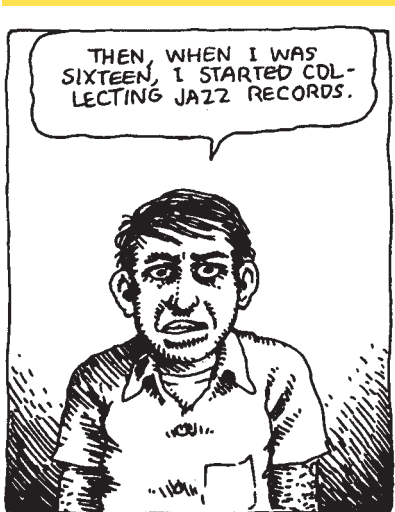
The outcomes are hard to ignore. I am routinely told by our college’s librarians that the circulation activity of graphic novels remains consistently high.

Anyone with an internet connection and a little time can quickly find other librarians’ testimonials to the popularity of the graphic novels in their collections, along with lists of some of the more popular and engaging titles, which are grouped by age appropriateness.

My own firsthand experience has revealed more specific results. In the classes in which I include graphic novels, I have found that students do amazing things: they consult the syllabus and then read ahead, they reread the books, and they read new books on their own initiative. One of my “reluctant readers” recently flagged me down on campus to tell me that he was reading all of the graphic novels (there are many) in our library; he exhorted me to “keep ordering them.” Another student e-mailed me from the four-year school to which she had transferred; she wanted to let me know that she had found the graphic-novel shelves in her school library’s stacks and that she liked to kill time there, reading between her chemistry classes. My favorite reaction, however, came during a section of freshman composition: We were reading Chester Brown’s *I Never Liked You*, a comic-book memoir of his adolescence. After one particularly active discussion, in which my students had expressed surprise at how such simply rendered words and pictures could move them so profoundly, one student held up her copy and asked, “Are there more books like this around?”

There sure are. So let’s get them into the hands of our students. ■

“Many people tend to dismiss comics as lowbrow and juvenile but, in fact, comics are a complicated format that can express ideas, create characters, address issues, and tell stories in ways unmatched by other forms, such as literature and film. Because comics are both textual and visual... they can explore the rich ground upon which these two means of expression collide. In my classes I always try to use at least some comic book material, be it a complete work or an excerpt.”



ABOUT THE WRITER

DR. ROCCO VERSACI is an Associate Professor of English at Palomar College in San Marcos, California, where he teaches various composition, creative writing, and literature courses. In addition, he has written about the educational use of graphic novels and is currently at work writing a book about the literary merit of comics.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

Graphic novels spark student interest. They promote discussion—and your students will love them.

As the call to address literacy at all levels becomes more imperative for schools, high-interest reading materials like graphic novels can play a key role in both motivating reluctant readers and adding variety to your curriculum. Books like *Fagin the Jew*, a reinterpretation of Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, are excellent supplementary texts. And, as many educators have already discovered, graphic novels like *Maus* are complex enough to serve as primary texts.

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READING MANGA

or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Just Love Reading

BY DALLAS MIDDAUGH,
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, DEL REY MANGA

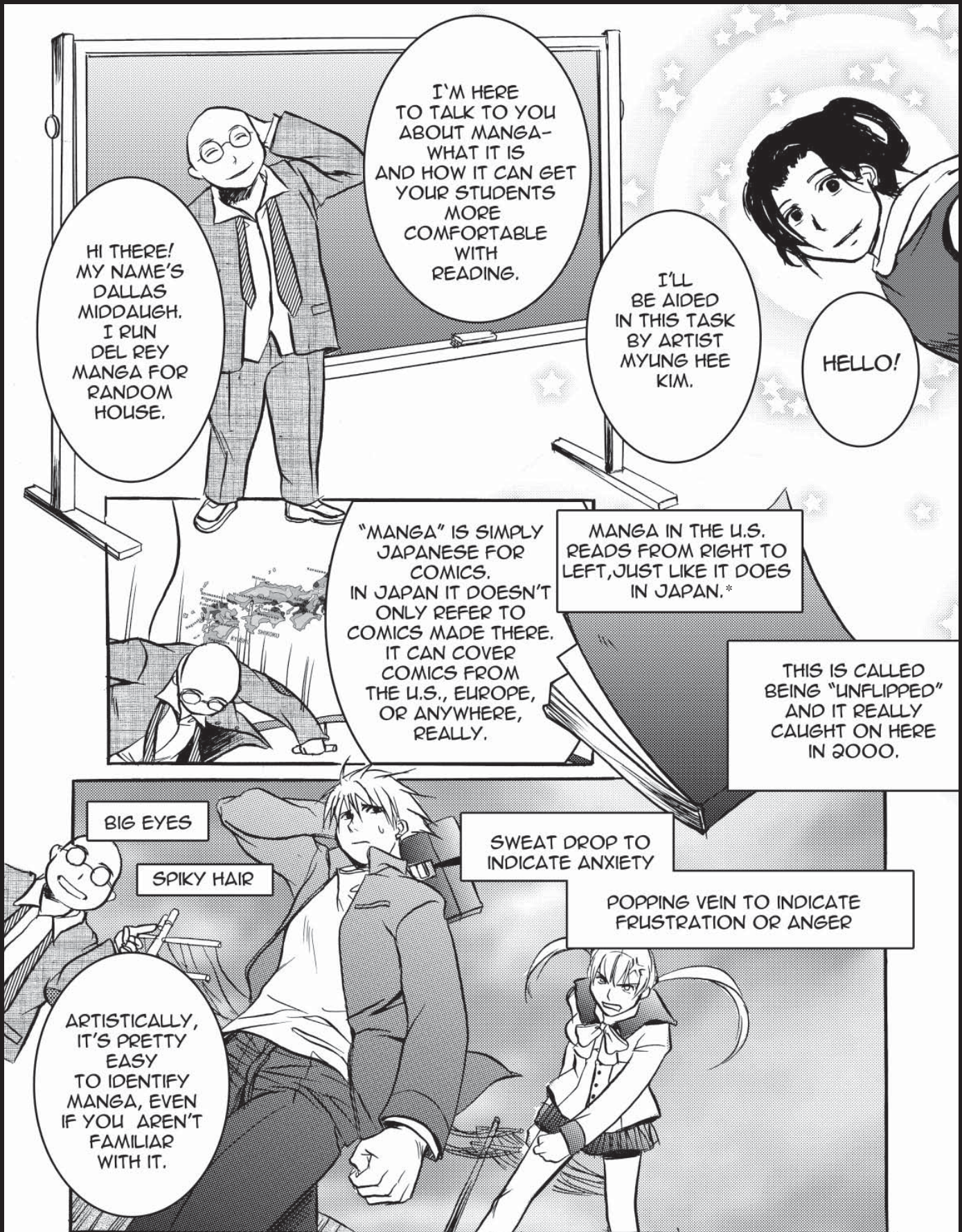
LET'S GET ONE THING OUT THERE before we get started: I love *manga* and graphic novels. You can do things with sequential art as a medium that just can't be done with prose or film. When I was a boy, I learned to read by reading comics. I now read a variety of genres, from popular fiction to literature, from history to astronomy, and I love books. Through it all, however, my passion and preference for comics and graphic novels has never left me.

Manga, an especially interesting subset of the general category of graphic novels, has captured the imaginations of many teens today, and with good reason: The best manga are highly creative, exciting, intelligent, and dramatic. Some are even quite literate.

When the manga explosion started back in 1999, most girls didn't read comics. And no wonder—there really weren't any comics out there for them, since most were retellings of the same superhero rescue fantasies that have dominated the medium for so long. Manga was different. Some of it was written for girls and some for boys, but all manga used storytelling techniques substantially different from those used in American comics: no thought balloons; no long passages of exposition to tell you what a character is thinking; just a perfect mesh of art and dialogue, along with healthy servings of drama, action, and romance.

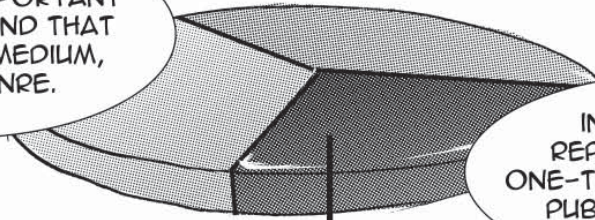
You already know that kids like to read manga, so what better way to encourage them to read in general? I hope that kids (and adults) will always read manga the way that I do. I hope that as teens grow up, we'll be able to provide them with the more sophisticated stories that are available in Japan. But most of all, I hope that manga can serve as an early step on the path to creativity and expanding one's mind and that it ultimately leads to a lifelong love of books, just like comics did for me many years ago.

If you're not familiar with manga, fear not—just join me for a little primer, with artist Myung Hee Kim, on the pages that follow. . . .





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TO UNDERSTAND THAT
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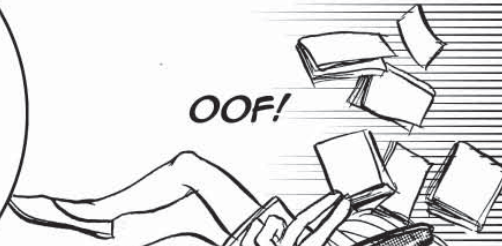
AS YOU CAN
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OF DIFFERENT
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WOBBLE
WOBBLE



AND KIDS
LOVE TO READ
THIS STUFF WITH
GOOD REASON.
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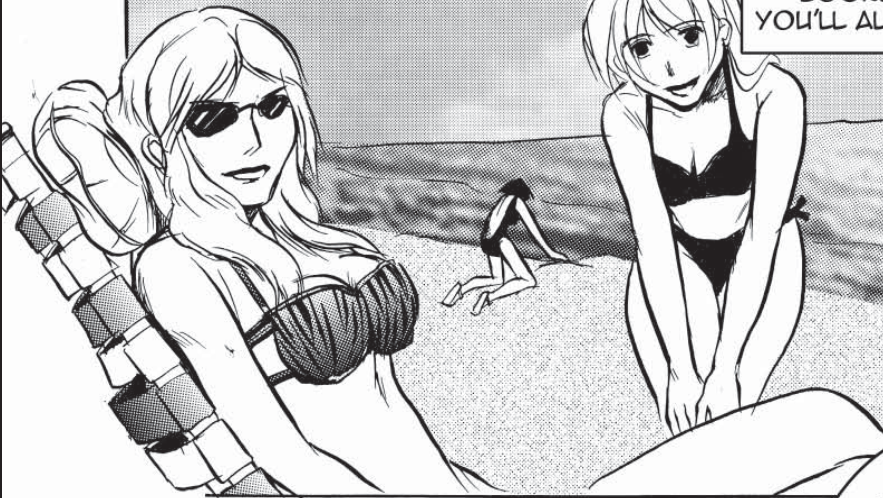
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DIFFERENT TYPES
OF MANGA.
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POPULAR
IN AMERICA ARE
SHONEN AND SHOJO.

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WORLDS SO WIDE

How Dungeons & Dragons® Taught Me to Use the Library

BY PETER BERBERGAL

When I was 11, my favorite escape was fiction. The kinds of books I liked—*The Hobbit*, *The Martian Chronicles*, and *Animal Farm*—sharpened my appetite for imaginative adventure. Some of my best friends were also readers, but we really didn't discuss novels—that would have been too geeky. Then, magically, DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® (D&D) entered our lives.

It was the late 70s, a time of split-level houses and wood paneling, when a finished basement den was the preferred teen hangout. This was still the pre-electronic era; incredibly, all we needed to have fun were a few books—a Dungeon Master's Guide, a Player's Handbook, and a Monster Manual—a set of dice, and graph paper borrowed from my father's office. Light homemade props helped the realism. A torn paper bag stood in for a magic parchment. A piece of my mother's costume jewelry was a queen's ransom.

For weeks before we met, I would map out dungeons with dimly lit rooms and fiendish traps. I imagined a whole world for the players to inhabit, populated by ancient dragons and armies of orcs preparing for battle. My friends were busy too, dreaming up personal histories for such characters as "Gordrund the Great," and "Mightor the Monk."

A typical game was full of surprises, as I slowly revealed the world I had forged. Depending on how the dice landed, a door might trigger poison darts—or not. Either way, the party was bound to wake the giant spider waiting in the ceiling above. Gotcha!

As our individual temperaments and interests enlivened the games, our friendships deepened. We knew more about each other because we had played out so many dramatic situations in the game. As in life, certain characters (and players) were steadfast and true; others weren't so reliable.

LORE IN THE LIBRARY

One thing for sure: the more we read, the better our games were. Our questions about history, architecture, warfare, and language sent us racing to the stacks, eager for answers. When our party needed to cross a river, books about shipbuilding taught us how we could construct a sail. Books on architecture helped us envision a castle turret up close. Sadly, we discovered medieval taverns rarely had indoor bathrooms. We found that D&D owed a lot to real history, folklore, and literature. It was a small revelation to discover that myths in the game are drawn from collections of world mythology. A great D&D game is enriched by

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WEAVE A GOOD TALE WITH DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

A brief overview of the game concept and history

Military strategy games have existed for hundreds of years. From centuries-old chess to contemporary online simulations such as *Call of Duty*, these games have thrived and evolved to ever-heightening levels of historical realism. But what if you wanted a game that involved military strategy but that wasn't limited by the constraints of historical accuracy? What if you preferred a game that had realistic strategies in a fantastical setting? In 1972, two creative minds, Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, created such a game and called it *Dungeons and Dragons*® (D&D). Although D&D had all of the trappings of a military strategy game (terrain, armies, and heroic challenges), its creators populated its game boards with knights, goblins, elves, and giants instead of modern humans. Instead of mechanical weapons, Gygax and Arneson gave their armies magic and dragons. Instead of an omniscient narrator, one of the game players was appointed as creator.

The first D&D product was published in 1974. Thirty-two years and several editions later, D&D has reached new heights of popularity and awareness in the marketplace. Having gone through many changes, D&D is no longer simply a game that involves moving pieces from one side of the board to another: It has become more of a storytelling device that challenges players to overcome obstacles while crafting a tale in which each character begins as a journeyman and grows into a hero.

Remember those books from the 1980s in which readers chose their own adventures? The game of D&D is similar to those books except that an actual person, called a Dungeon Master, takes the place of the book. The Dungeon Master sets the stage by creating a story full of challenges and options. All other participants are Player Characters; they interact by choosing actions that help guide them toward the completion of the story. Initially, the Dungeon Master has only a loose idea of the story's beginning, middle, and end.

Before the game is over, the Players will have a huge influence on how the game evolves, based on their actions and on their reactions to the scenarios presented by the Dungeon Master. The participants often play in character, acting out their wizard's mannerisms or communicating their rogue's motivations.

All this storytelling is guided by a set of rules and a twenty-sided die. Rules and dice act as impartial moderators and add a compelling element of chance. It is not good enough for the player to say, "I want to kill the dragon." Each player's worth must be proven with a toss of the die! The rules let the player know what the role needs to be in order to prevail: The rules allow the Dungeon Master to know, for example, what the dragon needs to roll to protect his treasure hoard successfully.

Many fans gravitate toward D&D because of its strongly cooperative nature. Reluctant readers who are unwilling to sit alone with a book enjoy the camaraderie and excitement of facing a challenge. With a group

of friends, they go on a mission to overcome obstacles and achieve a goal. The engrossing appeal of social interaction draws them; the game's goal, challenge, and mission are experienced through a dramatic and coherent narrative that they generate themselves. Players create a unique hero's quest, an expression of a universal facet of the human experience. It could be said that they are playing with literature. In the end, everyone wants to defeat the monster and win the gold, but more importantly, everyone wants to weave a good tale!





each player's knowledge. For example, a player interested in the history of warfare might understand the exact way a knight on horseback would have held a lance. A lover of the outdoors might know something about poisonous plants, which could come in handy when playing a druid. Many teens, however, discover it is the game that exposes them to things they may not have thought about much before playing. A regular D&D game in the library can be just a safe place to hang out after school. Players can have a good time simply wandering around a dungeon, fighting monsters, disabling traps, and finding treasure. As a librarian, you can offer more than a big round table.

PLAYING OUTSIDE THE BOX

The basic boxed set provided in this kit is really all you need to play. But the thrill of D&D is thinking and playing outside the box. The most basic elements of any D&D game are drawn from history, literature, mythology, and architecture. Before and after a game, players will likely find themselves hungry to know more about something they may have encountered during a campaign. Below are various aspects of the game and some ways librarians might show players the real world antecedents of these elements. I've also suggested books players may find interesting. These lists are by no means exhaustive; they simply offer examples of books readily available in a library.

EXPLORING

Lots of D&D players take it for granted that dungeons appear to be self-sustaining locations, filled with traps and treasures. But a dungeon must have some context. Is the dungeon being explored the subterranean catacombs

A VIKING VOYAGE: In Which an Unlikely Crew of Adventurers Attempts an Epic Journey to the New World
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Ballantine, TR, 978-0-345-42004-6, 320 pp., \$14.00/\$21.00 Can.

NORMAN STONE CASTLES (1): The British Isles 1066-1216
by Christopher Gravett Illustrated by Adam Hook
Osprey, TR, 978-1-84176-602-7, 64 pp., \$16.95/\$23.95 Can.

FINDING ATLANTIS: A True Story of Genius, Madness, and an Extraordinary Quest for a Lost World
by David King
Three Rivers Press, TR, 978-1-4000-4753-6, 320 pp., \$13.95/\$18.95 Can.

BEYOND THE EDGE OF THE SEA: Sailing with Jason and the Argonauts, Ulysses, the Vikings, and Other Explorers of the Ancient World
by Mauricio Obregon
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-679-78344-2, 144 pp., \$11.95/\$17.95 Can.

SEAWORTHY: Adrift with William Willis in the Golden Age of Rafting
by T. R. Pearson
Crown, HC, 978-0-307-33594-4, 304 pp., \$24.95/\$32.95 Can.

of a castle? Or is the castle itself the dungeon, long ago overrun by orcs and goblins and left to rot and crumble? Maybe the dungeon is the temple of an ancient religious order or a monastery that once housed the cult of a strange god. Giving a dungeon a little more context will not only make game play more interesting but can offer the players a chance to step outside the game to learn something more about the construction of castles, the development of cities, the architecture of cathedrals.

Even outside of dungeon exploring, the opportunity for enriching game play and nurturing natural curiosity is easy. If a group of players needs to cross a body of water, it's one thing to make sure they have enough gold pieces

Even a simple game of D&D can draw out the bookworm in the most reluctant reader.



to buy a boat or other seafaring vessel. It's another to talk a little about what really goes into building a ship.

Also, a game can be a place where kids share their own knowledge. In the case of a sea adventure, for example, a particular player might have experience sailing. His or her character may not know how to sail, but the player can still relate what he or she knows.

A D&D game is also a game of maps; of dungeons, forests, cities, and even whole provinces and continents. Geography is a subject many find dry, but players might want to know more about principles of mapmaking (as well as the history of longitude and latitude).

MONSTERS

The creatures and races that players will meet have their basis not only in fantasy literature but also in mythology and legends from a great variety of cultures. An adventure can be an opportunity to tell the stories where these fantastic denizens were originally found. For example, an encounter with a centaur can present



BULFINCH'S MYTHOLOGY

by Thomas Bulfinch Foreword by Alberto Manguerra
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-75147-9, 888 pp
\$17.95/\$25.95 Can.
Also: Gramercy, HC, 978-0-517-27415-6, 1040 pp.,
\$14.99/\$21.98 Can.



FAERIES

by Brian Froud Edited by David Larkin Illustrated by Alan Lee
Bantam, TR, 978-0-553-34634-3, 192 pp., \$22.00/\$30.00 Can.

a moment to step outside the game and do some storytelling and discussion about Greek mythology. If no one knows the story of the centaur, a book is readily available in the stacks or reference area. Once the original context of the centaur is discovered, many players will be excited to learn about the related stories and in turn to encounter the whole spectrum of Greek myths.

Even the obscure creatures have their beginnings in myth and folktale. The often-encountered *kobold* has its origins in German folklore and was believed to live in caverns or to hide in people's homes. Troglobytes are actually believed to be ancient or prehistoric people that lived in caves. That these creatures have been given fantastic characteristics for the purposes of the game does not mean that their original context needs to be disre-



garded. In fact, the game itself might be the first time the player hears about such a creature. The ability to use the resources of the library to further educate and illuminate is a wonderful opportunity.

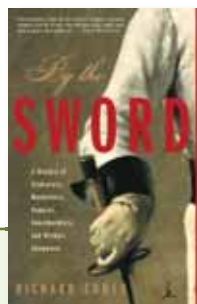
Shadowing almost every part of the game are the myths and stories of real traditions. When an adventurer enters the lair of a dragon, what kind of dragon is it? Is it a dragon from western stories or from eastern fables? What is the difference between a Chinese dragon and the dragon of Beowulf? Steer players towards books that can draw attention to the richness of these creatures. Turn a generic session of D&D into a seminar on mythology.

CHARACTERS

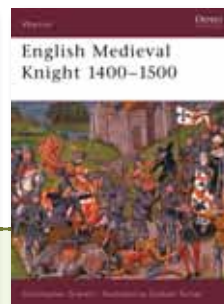
FIGHTERS: Often imagined as knights or rangers, the fighter character is generally the most common choice for new players, largely owing to their recognizable traits: armor, swords, etc. The history of feudalism and the Crusades are the cornerstones for these classes. The art of heraldry and the chivalry codes can help players to more fully imagine their own characters while teaching them something about early European history.

CLERICS: Clerics might also inspire a deeper look into history. Originally used to mean someone belonging to a medieval religious order, the generic term “cleric” applies to the whole history of religious belief. The player who chooses to be a cleric is likely interested in discovering more about the various religions of the world, beginning with the ancient Near East beliefs with the gods such as Ishtar and Inanna. Players need not choose alignment with a deity “known” in the real world, as the internal mythology of the game offers a whole host of gods, but, they are still opportunities to learn about all the ways people have worshipped their deities.

MAGIC USERS: The supposed practice of magic in the Middle Ages occurred in a fascinating period of Western history. Isaac Newton himself wrote more about alchemy than physics, and those who were considered knowledgeable in magical arts were often themselves experts with medicinal plants and other scientific innovations. There is a great deal of scholarship on the subject, and you can lead players toward a wealth of resources on corollary subjects, such as the history of witchcraft, paganism, and even the development of stage magic. Many “magicians” were likely illusionists of the highest order.



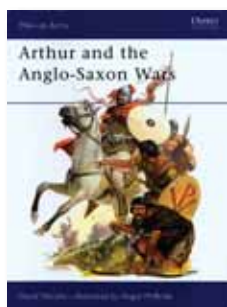
BY THE SWORD: A History of Gladiators, Musketeers, Samurai, Swashbucklers, and Olympic Champions
by Richard Cohen
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-8129-6966-5, 544 pp., \$16.95/\$22.95 Can.



ENGLISH MEDIEVAL KNIGHT 1400-1500
by Christopher Gravett Illustrated by Graham Turner
Osprey, TR, 978-1-84176-146-6, 64 pp., \$17.95/\$25.95 Can.

COMBAT

Much of what goes on during a D&D game is fighting. The rules of combat, however, are based on a specific type of fighting, usually involving medieval weapons. Most people are familiar with the standard weapons, but many players will be interested in learning some of the details. What is the difference between a regular bow and a crossbow? What kinds of hand-to-



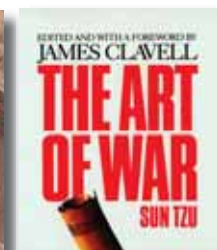
ARTHUR AND THE ANGLO-SAXON WARS
by David Nicolle Illustrated by Angus McBride
Osprey, TR, 978-0-85045-548-9, 48 pp., \$15.95/\$22.95 Can.



MEDIEVAL SIEGE WEAPONS (1): Western Europe AD 585-1385
by David Nicolle Illustrated by Sam Thompson
Osprey, TR, 978-1-84176-235-7, 48 pp., \$15.95/\$22.95 Can.



BATTLGROUNDS: Geography and the Art of Warfare
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National Geographic, HC, 978-0-7922-3374-9, 288 pp., \$35.00/\$55.00 Can.



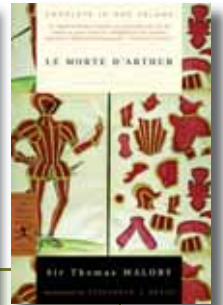
THE ART OF WAR
by Sun Tzu
Delta, TR, 978-0-385-29985-5, 96 pp., \$12.95/\$19.95 Can.

hand combat would a character use? How did siege weapons really work?

While deeply akin to fantasy, D&D is also cousin to wargaming: Combat is not just about rolling a die but also concerns learning a little about strategy. Weather and terrain are real-world conditions to discover and can add a level of realism to the game. The D&D rules for combat found in the sourcebooks covers almost every conceivable situation. If players find they are interested in strategy gaming, there are a number of good resources available.

THE WORLD OF D&D

There is no doubt that D&D evolved directly out of the fantasy literature tradition. You can safely assume the people who are showing up to play the game have some interest in the worlds that D&D draws from. J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* is the obvious corresponding book, but there is a history of literature other than Tolkien that can be made known to the players: the legends of King Arthur found in T.H. White and Malory; the Gormenghast trilogy by Mervyn Peake; and Ursula LeGuin's Earthsea books. Surprisingly, even Shakespeare is in many ways a perfect complement to D&D, especially if players want to move beyond the basic set into real world-building. Court intrigues, castles, witches, ghosts, and swordfights fill the pages of the Bard's plays. Most players will display a curiosity about the surrounding "culture" of a D&D campaign. A significant opportunity presents itself to introduce literature that might otherwise have been considered boring or merely



THE MISTS OF AVALON

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BEOWULF

Translated by Constance Hieatt

Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21347-8, 192 pp., \$4.95/\$7.50 Can.

THE CANTERBURY TALES

by Geoffrey Chaucer

Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21082-8, 688 pp., \$5.99/\$7.99 Can.

LE MORTE D'ARTHUR

by Sir Thomas Malory

Introduction by Elizabeth Bryan

Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-75322-0, 992 pp., \$14.95/\$20.95 Can.

what is taught in school in a new and exciting way. In addition, otherwise overlooked (yet important) fantasy novels, having been overshadowed by Tolkien and his imitators, can be brought to the light. ■

About the Writer

PETER BERBERGAL teaches humanities at Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts and is a book reviewer for The Boston Globe.



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What Thrasher Magazine Means to Me

BY RYAN HENRY, MANAGING EDITOR, *THRASHER* MAGAZINE

“When I was a kid, *Thrasher* was the instruction manual for a life that seemed bigger and better than the one in which I was stuck. It was a lifeline to a world where the streets were lined with quarterpipes, where punk bands played in every basement, and where dudes with names as far-fetched as “Lester Kasai” and “Lance Mountain” blasted 10-foot airs above fantastic ramps and pools. The skateboard world was as big as the Vision Pro Skate Escape and as small as a ditch contest (in nearby Pflugerville, Texas!). I studied each new mag as if it were the Torah and, after breaking my leg in eighth grade, memorized all the back issues, too, thanks to an older skater who lent me his prized collection.

As an adult working for *Thrasher*, I imagine kids like I was, and I try to provide them with all the important things I remember about the mag—wild photos, a few laughs, and stories about the people, both famous and underground, who make skateboarding so special. I’m not sure if there are skaters who pore over *Thrasher* the way I did (what with the internet and *The Bam* and all), but if there are, I want to show them that world—a world rife with adventure and opportunity, but one that they can only get to by riding their skateboards. ” — MICHAEL BURNETT

A YALSA Quick Picks
for Reluctant Young
Adult Readers, 2002



The testimonial you’ve just read was written by one of *Thrasher* magazine’s editors, Michael Burnett, for our new book *Skate and Destroy—The First 25 Years of Thrasher Magazine*. The most comprehensive skateboard book ever printed, *Skate and Destroy* is a 288-page retrospective put together by the magazine’s staff, past and present, in which they left no ramp unturned or old concrete park unscored in seeking out the lost photos, the covers that never were, the untold stories of secret skate missions, and the accounts from skateboarding’s top riders of what *Thrasher* magazine has meant to them. Along the way, *Skate and Destroy* illustrates and recounts all of skateboarding’s milestones, twists, and turns of the last quarter century.

Published monthly since January of 1981, *Thrasher* magazine has long been praised by librarians, parents, and teachers for its ability to unite hard-to-reach students and their reading requirements. *Skate and Destroy* continues this tradition and goes even further: reluctant readers not only will find themselves immersed in the profiles of their favorite skateboarding pros and in tales of skate adventures but also will find inspiration in the biographies of *Thrasher*’s founders and staff. These biographies detail unconventional paths to success: within the pages of *Skate and Destroy* are the stories of accomplished artists, writers, and photographers—even of doctors and lawyers and businessmen—who may have been

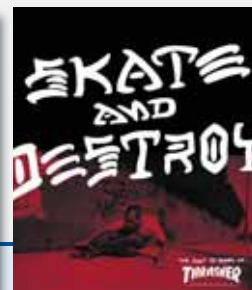
reluctant readers themselves at one time. What we've learned over the years is that to unlock a young person's ambition, you just need the right key.

Take, for example, the chronicles in *Skate and Destroy* of the architects and builders of today's massive concrete skateboard parks. These visionaries are a select group of adults who, as children, spent their classroom days drawing in their copies of *Thrasher*, daydreaming up images of skateboard ramps and obstacle courses that even Salvador Dali would have approved as impossibly surreal. These kids, skateboarders all, triggered a revolution by turning their one-dimensional sketches into three-dimensional realities. After school, they'd talk local construction crews into dropping off excess cement at the base of an unused public property, such as on the underside of an overpass. Their teachers would stop by to help with the labor. With trowels and shovels, they would begin to shape the concrete into skate-worthy works of art. Although their efforts were primitive and shoddy at first, their skills evolved into those of professional artisans. Now, years away from those classroom drawings, these skater-builders are in high demand in communities all over the world, hired by city govern-



ments to construct skateboard parks for their children.

Skateboarding can turn reluctance into ambition, and *Skate and Destroy* documents this drive. It also shows the potency of connecting kids with their interests, in this case turning reluctant readers who are also avid skateboarders into avid readers as well. ■



THRASHER

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THRASHER SKATE AND DESTROY

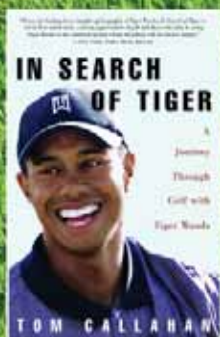
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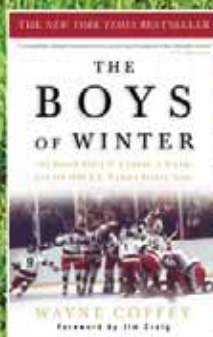


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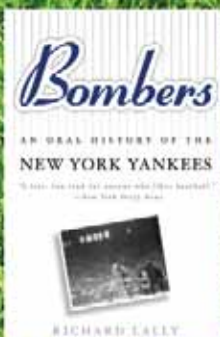


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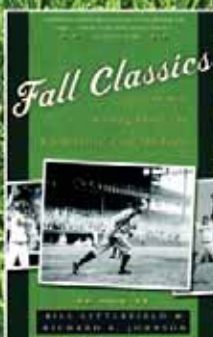


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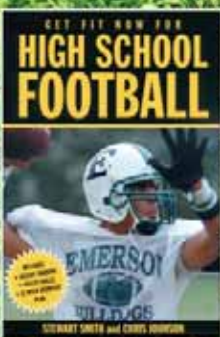


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by Warren St. John

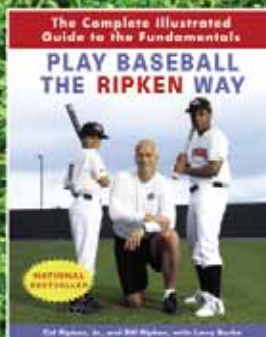
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Young Adult Audiobooks

The Audio Answer for Reluctant Readers

BY TIM DITLOW

In recent years, educators and librarians have championed the audiobook format as a great way to reach young readers, regardless of their reading level, background, or even language. Listed below are some recent examples of this newfound interest and excitement.

- At the 2006 American Library Association (ALA) Conference in Washington, DC, the ALA's young adult (YA) division held the first-ever pre-conference event to focus solely on audiobooks.
- The ALA has announced the creation of the Odyssey Award, which will be given to an outstanding audiobook produced for children up to the age of 18.
- Schools are actively integrating audiobooks into curricula as downloadable media available on class and course websites and through the use of devices such as the iPod® and other digital music players.

The overall message is quite clear: The educational benefits and advantages of audiobooks are being discussed and celebrated by librarians and educators nationwide.

So why are audiobooks receiving such attention now, when the industry has existed for over fifty years? First, audio technology is now more affordable and more widely available. Second, today's young people are more comfortable using non-print formats than any other previous generation has been. (A quick trip to your local public library will show you that the shelves of YA audiobooks are often empty because of high circulation rates.) Finally, the numbers do not lie: Sales of audiobooks both on CD and via digital download continue to grow exponentially each year.

In fact, the best way to understand why audiobooks are currently in the spotlight is to review recent articles about YA audiobooks. Written by some of the top names in the fields of reading education and library science, these articles provide the background information you need to help your students start listening. If you

are already using audiobooks in the classroom, then read on; new research can offer innovative ideas on expanding audiobook listening in your curriculum.

All of the articles cited below are easily accessible on the Books on Tape/Listening Library website (www.school.booksontape.com):

First, a quick quiz: True or False

1. You can't learn to listen. You are either good at it or not.
2. Listening requires very little effort.
3. We use speaking skills more than listening skills.
4. Good listeners are usually not good readers.
5. You listen better as you get older.

(DiStefano, Dole, and Marzano, 1984)

Believe it or not, each of these statements is false!

Let the tour begin!

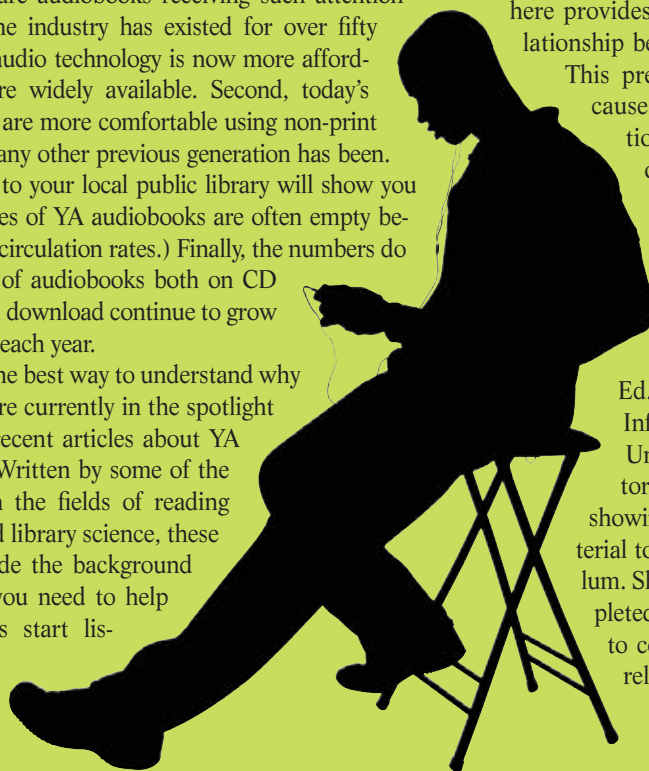
"Audiobooks 101: How Listening Promotes Literacy"

Sylvia Vardell, Ph.D. (of the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University), here provides a powerful snapshot of the direct relationship between listening and key literacy skills.

This presentation is a good springboard, because Dr. Vardell clearly outlines the educational benefits of audiobooks for children of all ages and reading levels, providing the educational framework on which educators can continue to build.

"Why Listen?"

Next on the article tour is "Why Listen?" by Teri S. Lesesne, Ed.D. (Associate Professor of Library and Information Studies, Sam Houston State University). Dr. Lesesne provides a history of the classroom use of the audiobook, showing its transformation from ancillary material to key component of the reading curriculum. She highlights research studies, both completed and ongoing, that influence educators to consider using audiobooks as an aid for reluctant and struggling readers. Finally,



she lists practical suggestions and recommendations both for beginning an audiobook collection and for building the collection into a vibrant addition to any classroom or school library.

"Open the Way to New Stories, New Interests, and a New Language: Using Audiobooks with English Language Learners"

Children can be reluctant readers for a variety of reasons. For educators, one area of challenge is students who are English language learners (ELLs). If you are working with this population at your school, a great resource is "Open the Way to New Stories, New Interests, and a New Language: Using Audiobooks with English Language Learners" by Francisca Goldsmith [Collection Management and Promotion Librarian at the Berkeley (CA) Public Library]. In her community, Ms. Goldsmith has created a highly successful program that she calls "Earphone English." She explains how audiobooks offer ELL students the opportunity to listen to oral English that presents correct pronunciation of words and statement inflection. She also highlights the different approaches ELL students may have during their initial listening experiences.

"The Pleasure of a Culturally Authentic Listening Experience"

The aspect of cultural experiences reflected in YA literature and audiobooks is also highlighted in "The Pleasure of a Culturally Authentic Listening Experience," written by Professor Junko Yokota (of National-Louis University, Chicago, IL). Prof. Yokota explores multicultural literature in the audiobook medium and discusses how and why educators should select audiobook programs that reflect the cultural and linguistic background of the book's setting and characters. She believes that this authenticity is an important tool if an audiobook is to serve as a "mirror or window to a culture." Both Ms. Goldsmith and Prof. Yokota agree that the life experiences of ELL students can be validated by listening to literature, which can also be an avenue for inspiring a reluctant reader to become a lifelong reader.

Reluctant readers come in all shapes and sizes and speak many different languages. One common denominator,

however, for all reluctant readers is that each year they dread the assignment of the summer reading list.

"Summertime: Children's Books Hit the Road" / "Listen to the List"

Although schools may not be in session during the summer months, teens should not take a vacation from reading. Many school districts now allow students to listen to the books on their summer reading lists as long as the students listen to the unabridged versions. Isn't the thought of young adults listening to MP3 players filled with recordings by Philip Pullman, Richard Peck, and Tamora Pierce a delightful image? Two articles that discuss the role that audiobooks can play to help teens stay connected to books and reading in the summer are "Summertime: Children's Books Hit the Road" by Joan Kindig, Ed.D. (University of Virginia), and "Listen to the List" by Sharon Grover (Head of Youth Services, Hedberg Public Library, Janesville, WI).

Congratulations! If you have read all of the above articles, you know how YA audiobooks are being used in today's classrooms.

Don't let your students have all the fun! On your trips to and from work, take time to listen to the remarkable works of

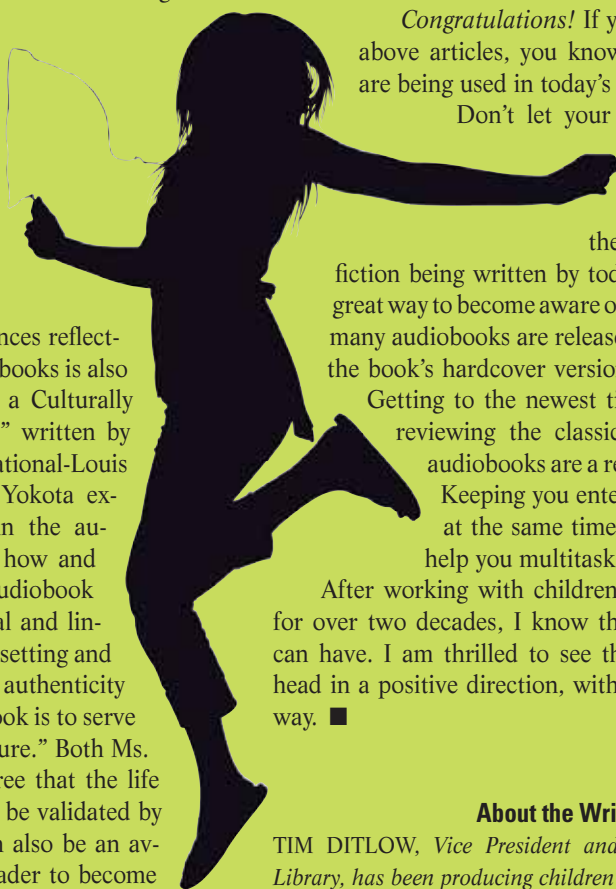
fiction being written by today's YA authors. It's a great way to become aware of all the new releases, as many audiobooks are released simultaneously with the book's hardcover version. Educators are busy:

Getting to the newest titles while periodically reviewing the classics is a challenge, but audiobooks are a reader's best kept secret. Keeping you entertained and up-to-date at the same time, audiobooks can truly help you multitask.

After working with children's and YA audiobooks for over two decades, I know the lifelong impact they can have. I am thrilled to see that audio continues to head in a positive direction, with educators leading the way. ■

About the Writer

TIM DITLOW, *Vice President and Publisher of Listening Library, has been producing children's and YA audiobooks for over 25 years. Listening Library was founded by his parents in 1955, and his father produced such YA classics as Lord of the Flies; Goodbye, Mr. Chips; and A Separate Peace.*



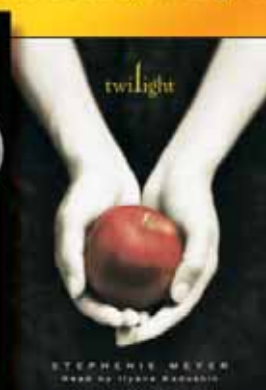
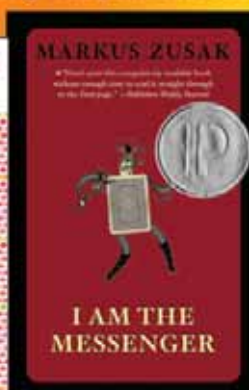
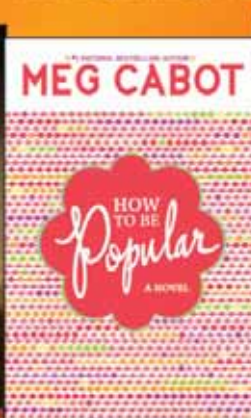
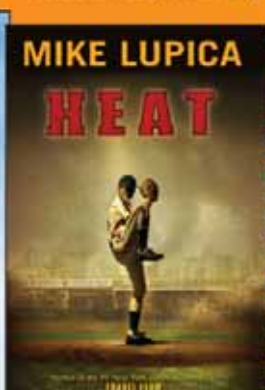
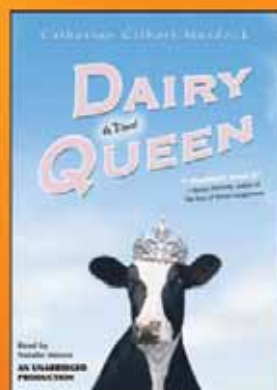
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—Rose Brock, Library Media Specialist, Irving Independent School District, Irving, TX



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AUDIOBOOKS & LITERACY

An Educator's Guide to Utilizing Audiobooks in the Classroom

BY DR. FRANK SERAFINI

The challenges facing individuals in today's society who are unable to read are well documented, and classroom teachers struggle every day with students who come to school unprepared to meet the challenges of literacy instruction. More and more young children have not had access to books, have not been read to regularly, and have not had exposure to the elements of written language. When the experiences that are necessary for becoming literate are absent from a child's experiences, it is the role of the classroom teacher to provide them. In an overcrowded curriculum, teachers are being asked to do more for each student with less time and fewer resources. This is where audiobooks can play a significant role in developing reading abilities in young readers.

To educators, it often seems that the success of literacy instruction programs is measured by standardized tests. The ability to succeed on these tests depends primarily on a child's ability to read and comprehend what has been read. With current legislation (in particular the No Child Left Behind Act) and high-stakes testing, there is a push for even greater amounts of standardized achievement testing. Effective tools for helping children learn to read are critical, and one important tool is audiobooks.

The Many Benefits of Audiobooks

- The Milken Family Foundation has investigated the effects of audiobooks on children's reading ability and found that programs that include the use of audiobooks improved children's reading proficiency more than programs that did not use them.
- Barbara Baskin and Karen Harris reported in an article in the *Journal of Reading* that audiobooks have a legitimate place in reading programs and provide alternatives to struggling readers unable to read independently.

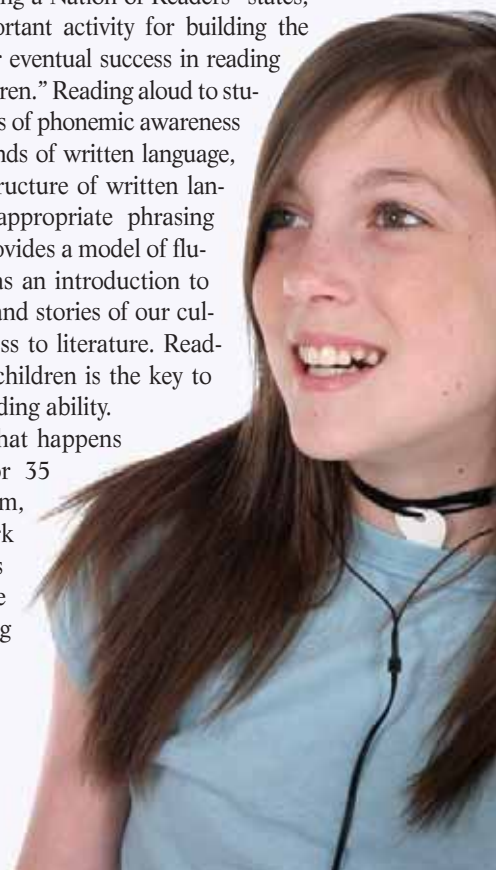
Teachers and parents are encouraged to use audiobooks because they:

- Expose readers to new vocabulary. As new words are heard in the context of a story, they become part of a child's oral and eventually written vocabularies.
- Provide demonstrations of fluent reading and appropriate phrasing, intonation, and articulation.
- Expand access to materials for readers. Experienced readers and those struggling with decoding can listen to stories well beyond their independent reading levels and can comprehend more complex literature.
- Create opportunities for readers to discuss literature. Reading comprehension is enhanced through discussion, and audiobooks provide a perfect opportunity for classes to share these stories.
- Support struggling readers. As developing readers listen to audiobooks and follow along with a printed version of the story, they learn to match the sounds of oral language to their written counterparts. This matching of sounds to symbols is the basis for reading instruction.
- Invite children into the world of reading and literature. One of the most important roles of classroom teachers and librarians is exposing children to quality literature.

THE ROAD TO BECOMING A READER

Experts agree that reading aloud is the single most important activity for developing proficient reading skills. The road to becoming a reader begins with hearing stories read aloud. In fact, a Commission on Reading report entitled "Becoming a Nation of Readers" states, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children." Reading aloud to students fosters the process of phonemic awareness by introducing the sounds of written language, allows access to the structure of written language, demonstrates appropriate phrasing and intonation, and provides a model of fluent reading. It serves as an introduction to the important lessons and stories of our culture and provides access to literature. Reading aloud with young children is the key to developing lifelong reading ability.

Many question what happens when there are 30 or 35 children in a classroom, or when parents work two jobs to make ends meet. Who has the time to spend reading



to children as much as is necessary for their success as readers? Consider those parents who are unable to read to their children. In these situations, audiobooks are an important tool for exposing children to stories and developing literacy.

IDEAS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Audiobooks are an important component of a comprehensive reading framework in elementary school, middle school, and high school classrooms. Here are some examples of how teachers can use audiobooks as tools in the classroom:

READING CENTERS Audiobooks can be used in reading centers, where children are invited to listen to their favorite stories read aloud by talented performers and to follow along with a copy of the book. These shared reading experiences provide vocal support along with visual confirmation as young readers learn to match the oral language with the printed text.

BOOK BACKPACKS Audiobooks and a printed copy of the book can be included in a book backpack that students can take home and enjoy with their families. Students take turns using the book backpacks, and teachers may choose to include learning activities that relate to the story. Book backpacks involve parents and family members in a young reader's development.

SHARING AUDIOBOOKS IN THE CLASSROOM The whole class can listen to a selection together. This sharing of ideas deepens readers' interpretations and develops their ability to comprehend and analyze literature. It also offers these research-based reading-comprehension strategies: visualizing the characters and setting of a story; Teach young readers to ask themselves questions while reading in order to monitor their understanding of the story; drawing inferences; summarizing; and predicting and anticipating events.

BOOK CLUBS Children of varying reading abilities often want to read the same book together and to discuss it in a book club. Many struggling readers would be left behind without some support for their independent reading of stories. Audiobooks help readers understand the text and discuss the book with classmates. Audiobooks level the playing field, allowing struggling readers to participate in discussions.

TEASERS Play a section from an audiobook to entice readers to read the book on their own. These book teasers can be used to motivate reluctant readers

Audiobooks Serve the Classroom by:

- supplementing teachers' and parents' ability to read to their children and students
- providing access to new vocabulary, a key to success in reading
- providing demonstrations of fluent reading
- providing readers access to books they are unable to read for themselves
- creating opportunities for discussing stories, in order to better comprehend them
- supporting struggling readers by helping them focus on meaning rather than the decoding of text
- inviting children to enter the magical world of literature
- fostering a love of literature and reading.

by introducing them to new stories and interesting them in stories they would not ordinarily choose for themselves.

AUDIOBOOKS AS A TOOL FOR TEACHERS An enormous number of children's books are published each year, and one great way for classroom teachers to remain current in their knowledge of children's literature is through audiobooks. Listening to books as they drive to and from school, teachers can review approximately 25 new books each school year without taking time out of their busy schedules to read them.

IN CONCLUSION

Audiobooks help children become better readers and develop a desire to read for themselves. With parents' and teachers' time at a premium, audiobooks can help readers explore new worlds through literature. If we want children to read for themselves, they must have stories read to them and must have the opportunity to discuss what they hear. There is no such thing as a child who hates to read; there are only children who have not found the right book. ■

About the Author

DR. FRANK SERAFINI is an Assistant Professor of literacy education and children's literature at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

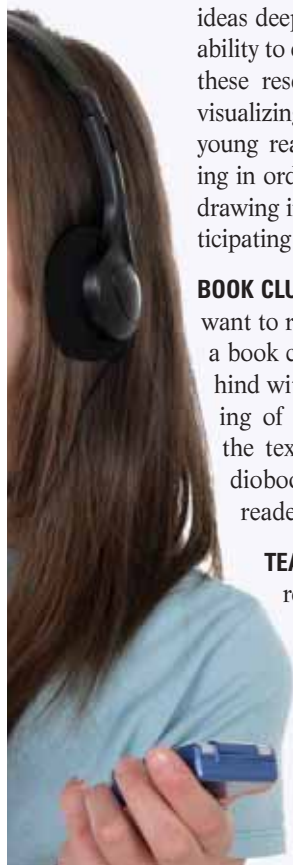


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RHI: Reaching Reluctant Readers

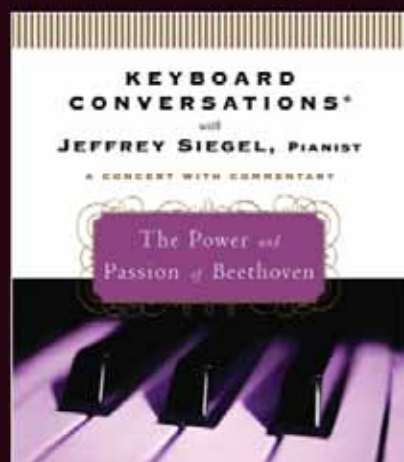


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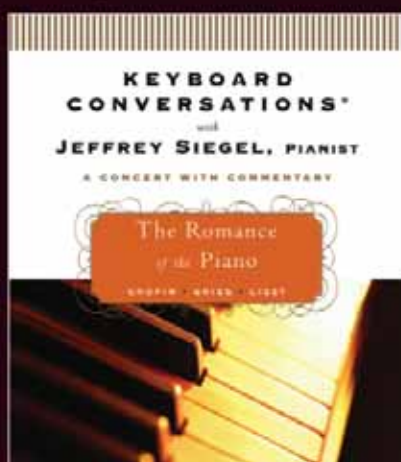
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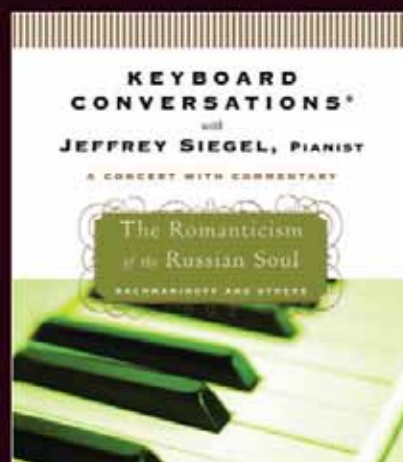
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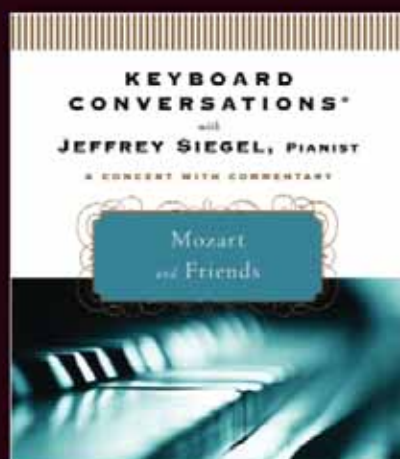
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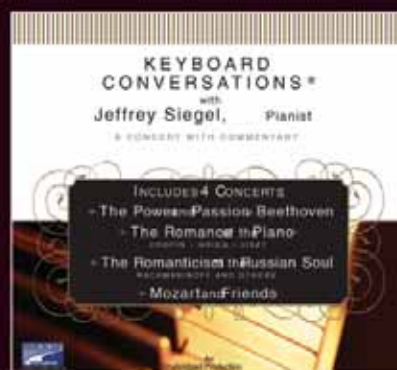


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The Reluctant Reader, Gaming Environments, and the Future of Teaching and Learning

BY KATE WITTENBERG

What are the implications of the reality that most students arrive in school assuming that a Google Search is the way to do research; that MySpace is the place to “meet” friends; and that video games are the model for practicing strategic thinking, teamwork, and leadership skills? If this is how students are using the online environment, then what does this mean for teachers? If these digital natives are our audience, should we be thinking about new ways of using games in an educational setting? Instead of scolding students for spending too much time on digital “entertainment,” maybe we should instead start to think creatively about how to meet them on their own turf by using gaming environments toward educational goals.

To move in this direction, we must first understand the ways in which this generation of learners interacts with, and benefits from, these gaming environments. The next step is to change our behavior accordingly. Gaming companies, manufacturers of electronic devices, and middle and high school students will soon become our advisers and collaborators. To understand the world in which students live and work, we must talk with teenagers; must observe students socializing, studying, and relaxing; and must purchase (and play) video games. As teachers, we now need to understand not just the content that we wish to convey to students but also the ways in which they process and use information.

Video and online multiplayer games are already beginning to attract significant attention among professionals in industries looking for young employees. Employers sometimes see experience and success with video games as a positive addition to a résumé. With rich role-playing environments capable of fascinating so many users, games can be a powerful medium for learning and a valuable tool for building skills necessary in today’s workplace. Video games such as *Dungeons and Dragons*® and multiplayer games like *World of Warcraft*® require participants to develop skills in leadership, strategic thinking, team building, conflict management, and problem solving—skills valued in teaching students and training professionals in a variety of fields. Using these games in a teaching environment may engage students who tune out when confronted with traditional learning materials but who spend hours outside of class in these gaming environments.

Users of these games report that they often engage in elaborate strategizing and discussion before attempting a battle or quest; they claim that success often hinges upon repeated trials or on working with a team of players. Teachers could create scenarios in which students work as an online team, “playing” games that, for example, allow them to test leadership styles, develop strategies, or take on decision-making roles during a crisis. Readings could be assigned before the game is used in the classroom, and teachers could build curricula around the experience, focusing on leadership, cooperation, teamwork, analysis of information, and communication with peers. Once gaming companies see how these products are being used, they will likely begin to develop games specifically aimed at teaching particular skills, thus creating additional resources for teachers.

Students have adapted to communicating in sophisticated, interactive, and collaborative gaming environments. The traditional forms of educational materials could therefore be at risk of



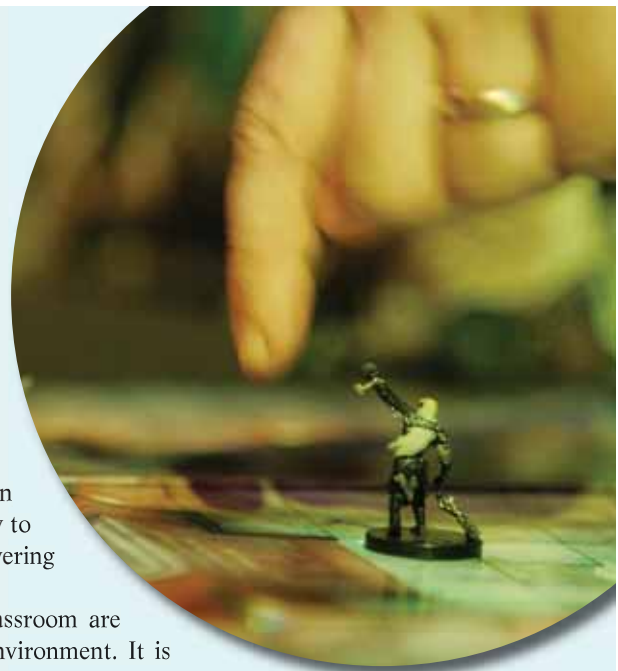
becoming irrelevant if they do not evolve. Although the first reaction of teachers and parents is often to scold students for “wasting” time on entertainment when they should be “learning,” I believe it is worth taking a closer look and considering the possibility that the use of an online, “virtual” environment could actually be an important and positive change. As this engagement with gaming environments evolves, we may see a broader transformation, one in which learning becomes a process of participation in a community rather than of receiving knowledge from an “expert.” If this is the case, we will then have to confront the issue of how to allow participation and interaction to take on increasing value without lowering standards or risking the dissemination of erroneous information.

Mechanisms for engaging students both inside and outside the classroom are undergoing rapid development and change within the current digital environment. It is unclear, however, who will creatively use these changes for a positive learning outcome. Will the traditional arbiters of content quality (such as educational publishers and teachers) step up to propose and use new models, or will younger users themselves establish systems for learning from these games? Teachers and publishers have an opportunity to incorporate students’ fascination with online collaboration and gaming strategies as they design curriculum and educational resources; these professionals can thus become central players in the digital environment as it evolves. Developing these new approaches, however, will require a change in mindset within the teaching and publishing communities. Professionals in these fields will need to initiate conversations with new players and new partners. Developers of video games, manufacturers of electronic devices, and middle and high school students will necessarily become advisors and collaborators. Market research for publishers, in order to understand the world in which students live and work, will now include arranging focus groups with teenagers, becoming familiar with video games and social networking sites, and observing students socializing and studying in their digital communities. The resulting conversation needs to include a focus on less technical but perhaps more intractable issues: changing assumptions about learning, and acknowledging users—especially those representing the younger generation—as active collaborators in the creation of new teaching resources.

As teachers and publishers, we must try to understand the processes at work and to define our roles more broadly as leaders who integrate an understanding of the user, the learning process, and the value of digital information in our work. Even though such redefinition does not mean catering to every preference expressed by students regarding their educational structure, it does mean seeing these users as partners who can lead the innovation process because they understand the new ways in which they communicate, learn, and engage with material. By combining this vital user perspective with the expertise we bring as teachers and publishers, it may be possible to create useful new models for learning resources. At times it will be difficult to grapple with the new assumptions and habits ingrained in younger information users. By dismissing their perspective or ignoring this challenge, however, we will lose an opportunity to make an important contribution to the new world of learning and information that this new generation of students will create. ■

About the Writer

KATE WITTENBERG is Director of the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia (EPIC), where she developed and directs the electronic publications Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO); Columbia Earthscape; and the Gutenberg-e online History Series. Other recent projects include a digital teaching resource in anthropology and the Core Integration system for the National Science Digital Library. Her work focuses in particular on sustainable organizational and business plans for online publications and on collaborative organization models for online publishing.



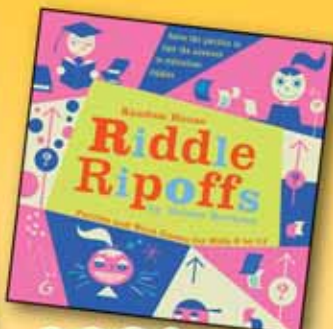
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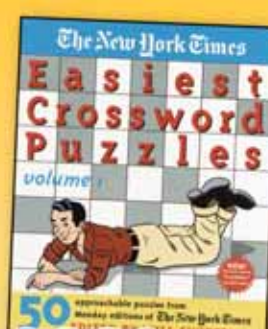
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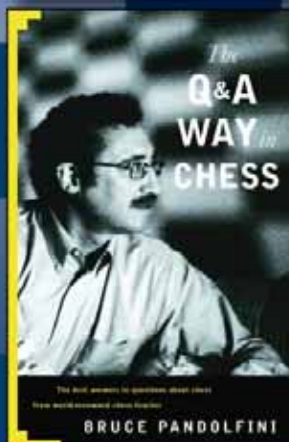
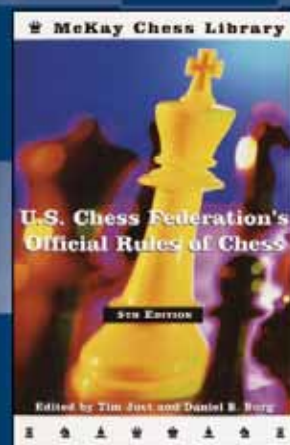
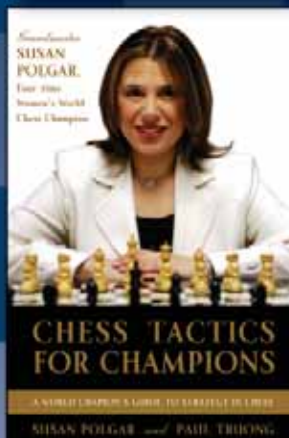
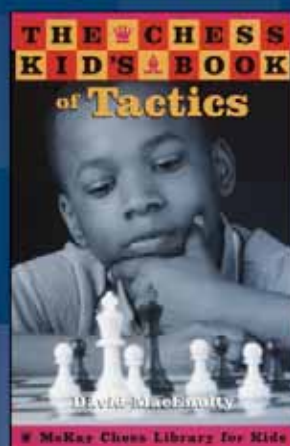
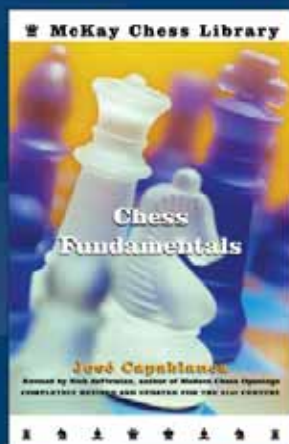


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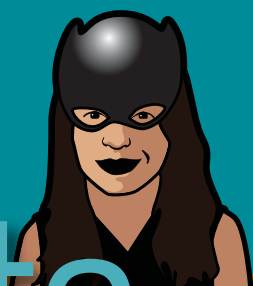
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Reading Excerpts



My name is Lani-Cat, and I will use my x-ray vision to peer through some amazing books and provide you with some sneak-peek excerpts of books that you may wish to adopt for your classroom! Also, please visit our website (<http://www.randomhouse.com/highschool/RHI/>) to check out the recent awards page, which notes the honors given to many of our distinguished authors. We have also included a listing of titles from a variety of categories—choices for a perfect start that will help your reluctant readers fall in love with books. Happy Reading!

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Literary Excerpt

CHAPTER 1

Pub licenem y.Events at the Jewel The ate rar erecoun ted.The bab ytha t fell off a wagon. Scienc e fiction. Alg er in Smallville. Mr. and Mrs. Kent.

Our version of the story opens on the last Saturday of May 1935 with the arrival of Sheriff Bill Dutcher at the police station in Smallville, Kansas. A craggy man with steel-gray hair and long sideburns, he's wearing tan slacks and a barn jacket over a maroon polo shirt. His star is pinned to the pocket. He brought along his pistol belt and holster but leaves that in the trunk with his 12-gauge. Those won't be necessary. . . Then he speaks privately with Doug Parker, the local chief of police, both of them turning together to cast brief looks at the farm boy, seventeen years old and hunched low in a varnished chair near the chief's desk. Judging by the kid's shiny eyes and heavy breathing and the tense fist that he rubs back and forth on his thigh, any minute he'll put birdie to his dinner plus whatever Jujubes or Raisinets he had earlier at the picture show. "You might think of giving Sergeant York, there, a wastepaper basket," says the sheriff, "while I go and see Jiggs."

"Straight back. You can't miss him."

Beyond the lavatory door with its tractor calendar stands a long saw-buck table where Mr. Jiggs Makley, for some years a presence both on wanted posters and in rotogravures, has been laid face up. A chunk of that face, however, is blown off, and the rest of it, including a cheap theatrical mustache, is covered with blood, not all of it dry. His big eyes are open and staring.

Hands deep in his pockets, idly jiggling coins and keys, the sheriff stands alongside of the table thinking, Poor dead hillbilly. . . he looks

CHAPTER 1

I should have known that summer of 1961 was gonna be the biggest summer of our lives. I should have known it the minute I saw Freeda Malone step out of that pickup, her hair lit up in the sun like hot flames. I should have known it, because Uncle Rudy told me what happens when a wildfire comes along.

We were standing in his yard, Uncle Rudy and I, at the foot of a red pine that seemed to stretch to heaven, when a squirrel began knocking pinecones to the ground with soft thuds. Uncle Rudy bent over with a grunt and picked one of the green cones up, rolling it a bit in his callused palm before handing it to me. It was cool in my hands. Sap dripped down the side like tears.

"Here's somethin' I bet you don't know, Button," he said, using the nickname he himself gave me. "That cone there, it ain't like the cones of most other trees. Most cones, all they need is time, or a squirrel to crack 'em open so they can drop their seeds and start a new tree. But that cone there, it ain't gonna open up and drop its seeds unless a wildfire comes through here."

"A wildfire?"

"That's right," Uncle Rudy said, scraping the scalp under his cap with his dirty fingernail. "See them little scales there, how they're closed up tight like window shutters? Underneath 'em are the seeds—flat little things, flimsy as a baby's fingernails—with a point at one end. If a fire comes along, the heat is gonna cause those scales to peel back and drop their seeds, while the ground is still scorching hot. Then that tiny seed is gonna burrow in and take root."

I was nine years old the summer Freeda and Winnalee Malone

IT'S SUPERMAN! A Novel

by Tom De Haven

Ballantine, TR, 978-0-345-49392-7,
432 pp., \$13.95/\$18.95 Can.

Reading Level: 7th Grade

This artfully re-imagined coming-of-age novel brings the reader from the budding superhero's teenage years in 1930's Kansas to New York City.



completely flabbergasted. Thinking: Good pair of Florsheims. Hardly been worn. Brown pleated trousers, he thinks, but no belt. That figures. Dutcher removes one hand from a pocket and fingers the shirt collar away from Makley's neck. Essley brand. Size 16. Top, second, and third buttons missing. Plucked off, it looks like. And no cufflinks, either. Surprise, surprise. "Chief," he says realizing that he's been joined, "tell me again. What was it your boy said? The craziest gun?"

"Stupidest. He said Makley must've owned the world's stupidest gun."

"Meaning?"

"That it had to've fired backwards."

Dutcher laughs. "I know you told me his name, but—"

"Kent," says Chief Parker. "Clark Kent."

Excerpted from *It's Superman!* by Tom DeHaven Copyright © 2005 by DC Comics. Excerpted by permission of Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.

THE BOOK OF BRIGHT IDEAS

by Sandra Kring

Delta, TR, 978-0-385-33814-1, 320 pp.,
\$13.00/\$17.00 Can.

Reading Level: 7th Grade

Much to her mother's dismay, Button is fascinated by the Malone sisters, especially Winnalee, a feisty scrap of a thing who carries around a shiny silver urn containing her mother's ashes and a tome she calls "The Book of Bright Ideas." It is here, Winnalee tells Button, that she records everything she learns: her answers to the mysteries of life. But sometimes those mysteries conceal a truth better left buried. And when a devastating secret is suddenly revealed, dividing loyalties and uprooting lives, no one—from Winnalee and her sister to Button and her family—will ever be the same.



rushed across our lives like red-hot flames, peeling back the shutters that sat over our hearts and our minds, setting free our sweetest dreams and our worst nightmares. Too young to know at the onset that anything out of the ordinary was about to happen. . .

Excerpted from *The Book of Bright Ideas* by Sandra Kring Copyright © 2006 by Sandra Kring. Excerpted by permission of Delta, a division of Random House, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.

Literary Excerpt

GREEN STONES

I was once a child, growing up in Entebbe, spending most my time with Rusi, the housegirl, especially during the holidays, while my older sisters were away at boarding school. I followed Rusi around the house in the mornings as she cleaned up. She complained that I disturbed her, didn't help at all, that I just followed her around like an irritating little dog. Couldn't I find something useful to do, she would moan. Oh, when would school start again so she could have her quiet house back.

The room I loved most was my mother and father's bedroom, mostly because we were not allowed into it. The room was kept dim, its thick curtains patterned with blood-red roses closed to keep the heat out. This red glow added to its sacredness, as if it were a quiet, empty cathedral or mysterious fortune-teller's den.

At night in bed, sucking my thumb furiously, I went over imaginary fears; they were an irresistible itch I scratched again and again. What if I was caught sneaking around the forbidden room opening drawers, reading letters, sniffing the faint mysterious smells of Maama and Taata; cigarettes, polish, powder, perfume, sweat, and more? I imagined suddenly hearing Taata's heavy ringing footsteps. They got louder as he came down the corridor. I was trapped!

I froze, then as I hastened to hide, tripped over a chair and fell. Down crashed the wooden chair right on top of me. Maama's bright jewelry flew out of my hands and colored the air like fat butterflies, before cascading down and shattering repeatedly, spreading tiny cutting shards all over the floor. Precious beads rolled under the wide bed, joining lost brushes, coins, and dust, never to be found again. The door creaked open... delicious terror. Why did I dread and dream about this? Why did I fear Taata?

When Rusi bustled in to clean my parents' room, however, with me

TROPICAL FISH: Tales From Entebbe

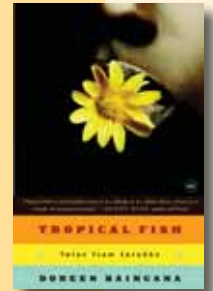
by Doreen Baingana

Harlem Moon, TR, 978-0-7679-2510-5,

208 pp., \$10.95/\$14.50 Can.

Reading Level: 8th Grade

In the tradition of the acclaimed novel *Purple Hibiscus* comes Doreen Baingana's *Tropical Fish* which presents the stories of three young women coming of age in Uganda after the Idi Amin regime.



trailing behind her, the room became ordinary. Russi pushed the huge mound of her breasts like pillows ahead of her as she energetically marched in. She pulled back the thick curtains and flung open the windows to the startling sunshine outside, the squawk and trill of birds, the shouts and the escape of raggedy kids surprised to be seen stealing mangoes from the tree nearest my parents' bedroom. With Rusi there and the dark red glow gone, the solemn church became a rowdy marketplace. My parents' huge throne of a bed, still unmade, was just a bed, ruffled and somehow smaller. Sprinklings of dust floated in the sunlight as Rusi shook out the sheets and dusted the coffee-colored bedside tables and mirror. Her talk and laughter filled the air, offending me. Had she no sense of the room's sacredness?

Excerpted from *Tropical Fish: Tales From Entebbe* by Doreen Baingana. Copyright © 2005 by Doreen Baingana. Excerpted by permission of University of Massachusetts Press. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.

THE KEY OF THE PARLOUR

Elfrida was behind the secret panel, and the panel had shut with a spring. She had come there hoping to find the jewels that had been hidden two hundred years ago by Sir Edward Talbot, when he was pretending to be the Chevalier St. George. She had not had time even to look for the jewels before the panel closed, and now that she was alone in the dusty dark, with the door shut between her and the bright, light parlour where her brother was, the jewels hardly seemed to matter at all, and what did so dreadfully and very much matter was that closed panel. Edred had tried to open it, and he had fallen off the chair. Well, there had been plenty of time for him to get up again.

"Why don't you open the door?" she called impatiently. And there was no answer. Behind that panel silence seemed a thousand times more silent than it ever had before. And it was so dark. And Edred had the matches in his pocket.

"Edred! Edred!" she called suddenly and very loud, "why don't you open the door?"

And this time he answered.

"Because I can't reach," he said. I feel that I ought to make that the end of the chapter, and leave you to wonder till the next how Elfrida got out, and how she liked the not getting out, which certainly looked as though it were going to last longer than any one could possibly be expected to find pleasant.

But that would make the chapter too short—and there are other rea-

THE HOUSE OF ARDEN by E. Nesbit

New York Review Children's Collection,

HC, 978-1-59017-202-5, 248 pp.,

\$17.95/\$23.95 Can.

Reading Level: 6th Grade

The famous Arden family treasure has been missing for generations, and the last members of the Arden line, Edred, Elfrida, and their Aunt Edith, have nothing to their names but the crumbling castle they live in.



sons. So I will not disguise from you that when Elfrida put her hand to her pocket and felt something there—something hard and heavy—and remembered that she had put the key of the parlour there because it was such a nice safe place, where it couldn't possibly be lost, she uttered what is known as a hollow groan.

"Aha! you see now," said Edred outside. "You see I'm not so stupid after all."

Excerpted from *The House of Arden* by E. Nesbit. Used by permission of The New York Review Children's Collection, a division of NYREV, Inc. All rights reserved.

Literary Excerpt

CHAPTER 1

The road to Commonwealth was long and forbidding, stretching for miles beyond Timber Falls and leading deep into the evergreen woods, where the trees grew taller still as if trying to reach the sun that teased them with the paucity of its rays. Douglas fir loomed over the rock-strewn road like two warring armies perched on opposing cliffs. Even those travelers who all their lives had been reminded of their insignificance felt particularly humbled by that stretch of road and the preternatural darkness that shadowed it.

Some number of miles into the woods, the road curved to the right and the trees backed off a bit, the brown dirt and occasional stumps evidence that the woods had been cleared out only recently, and only with extreme tenacity. The clearing rose along a gradual incline; at the base of the hill, a tree that had recently been chopped down blocked the road. Into its thick bark a sign was nailed: a warning to travelers who didn't exist, a silent cry into deaf woods.

A crisp wind picked up atop the bare hill, carrying the combined exhalations of millions of fir and pine. Philip sucked in his breath.

"Cold?" Graham asked.

"I'm fine."

Graham motioned back to the town. "You need to get yourself a warmer jacket, go ahead."

"I'll stay."

"Suit yourself." Philip did look cold in his thin jacket and khaki pants—pencil-pusher attire—whereas Graham was clad in his usual blue overalls and a thick wool coat.

"Look like it's gonna snow to you?" Philip Worthy was sixteen, tall de-

THE LAST TOWN ON EARTH: A Novel

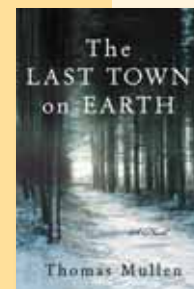
by Thomas Mullen

Random House, HC,

978-1-4000-6520-2, 416 pp., \$23.95/\$31.95 Can.

Reading Level: 6th Grade

Set against the backdrop of one of the most virulent epidemics that America ever experienced—the 1918 flu epidemic—Thomas Mullen's powerful, sweeping first novel is a tale of morality in a time of upheaval.



spite the limp that made people think he was shorter, but not as brawny as most of the men in that town of lumberjacks and millworkers.

"It's not going to snow."

Graham, twenty-five, was what in many ways Philip aspired to be: strong, quietly wise, the man of his house. While Philip felt he needed to be polite and conversational to ingratiate himself with people, Graham seemed to say the minimum necessary and always won respect. Philip had known him for two years, and he still wanted to figure out how a fellow did that.

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CHAPTER 7—Of Queens and Princes

When Sunday lesson time arrived, I again went to the gate to meet Jenny, whose reluctance had been overcome by her curiosity about the golden link to a pirate queen. Her entrance was stormy. She fairly leapt from the car when her mother pulled up to drop her off, slamming the door with tears in her eyes. Jenny was in an embattled period with her parents, particularly her mother, over what she considered her overprotectiveness.

"I can't even go to the library alone!" she fumed. "Nowhere. They're so afraid something will happen to me. So nothing ever happens to me."

Inside, the captain was by his fire, this time with no pointer, tweed, book, or map in sight, just his macramé, and a warm greeting for Jenny.

"I'm so pleased you've come back," he beamed.

"What is this?" Jenny asked, producing the link. She had found a little jewelry box for it. The captain insisted she hold it in her hand, close her eyes, and just feel it.

"I've already done that," she said.

"And did you feel the presence of Granuaile in it?" He pronounced it "Gran-you-ale." Jenny looked uncertain. "You should have done, because it's from a chain she wore, a Spanish chain, brought to her by a nobleman. He was a survivor from one of the galleons that went onto the rocks of her coast in the great gale that wrecked much of the armada there, after Drake and his friends had done with it. Jim here is Drake, by the way, so let's let you be her, Grace O'Malley, daughter of Dubhdara, who was chieftain of Murrisk, and descended from the old kings. He was a very good sailor. All of the O'Malleys were, along with their friends the Burkes and the O'Flahertys, and they ruled the coasts

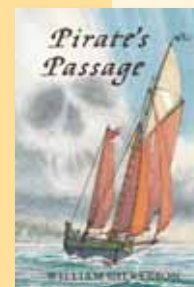
PIRATE'S PASSAGE

Written and Illustrated by William Gilkerson

Trumpeter, HC, 978-1-59030-247-7, 400 pp.,

\$17.95/\$25.95 Can. Reading Level: 6th Grade

Off the coast of Nova Scotia in 1952, fierce winds force a small boat into port. The boat's pilot, an eccentric old sea captain, takes residence at a small inn run by young Jim and his mother. The captain's presence soon becomes invaluable—and Jim and his mother will never be the same again.



in much the same way that modern nations do. That is, they patrolled their inshore waters and regulated the coastal shipping according to their laws. They provided local pilots for a price, taxed vessels, or took them if they were deemed enemies.

Jenny commented that that sounded reasonable enough. He nodded.

"They thought so, too, but it was all very informal. You captured a ship, decided how much of what they were carrying was yours, and took it. Simple as that. You were in your own waters. The only difference these days is, when a government confiscates a ship, or a cargo, there's a lot of paperwork, eh?" Jenny asked where the piracy was in that.

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Literary Excerpt

EXCERPT

"People. Always too many people."

Only the leathery beat of Greer's dragon wings answered Bardon's observation. Cool air rushed against Bardon's face, blowing away the cares of three intense years of training and study.

He squeezed his knees into the riding hooks and leaned forward across the major dragon's neck. Brisk mountain air rose off the snow-topped mountain and blew his dark hair back from his pale face. Soon he should be able to spot the valley Sir Dar had recommended. He needed time alone. The first part of his sabbatical would be spent in isolation.

Bardon put a hand on Greer's purple scales and communicated his desire to locate a lake shaped like a boot.

Looking down at the forested slopes, he speculated on how many of the seven high races populated the area. A smile spread across his face. It was likely that not one civilized being walked this southern part of the Morchain Mountain Range for a hundred miles in any direction.

He saw a ropma scurry across a rocky stream.

"Don't worry, fella. I won't bother you if you don't bother me. I'm taking a break from everyone, both high and low races."

Greer rumbled in his throat, and Bardon placed a hand on the amethystine scales of his dragon's neck. "No, I'm not running away from you, my friend. And in truth, I'm not really running away from civilization. I just need a sabbatical, a long sabbatical."

Ahead, two peaks stood taller than the rest. Bardon mentally guided the major dragon toward the landmark Dar had given him. He thought about the parting with the wise little doneel.

The room had bustled with activity like all the rooms in Castle Pelace. Dar had taken Bardon aside to speak words of encouragement and instruction, but the constant commotion intruded on their conversation.

"I'm proud of you, Bardon." Dar's small furry hand had rested on his squire's arm. "You've developed a gracious social presence. I know it's been hard for you, but I consider it one of your greatest accomplishments."

DRAGONKNIGHT by Donita K. Paul
WaterBrook Press, TR,
978-1-4000-7250-7, 400 pp., \$13.99/\$18.99 Can.
Reading Level: 8th Grade

Also available:

DRAGONSPELL by Donita K. Paul
WaterBrook Press, TR,
978-1-57856-823-9, 352 pp., \$12.99/\$19.99 Can.

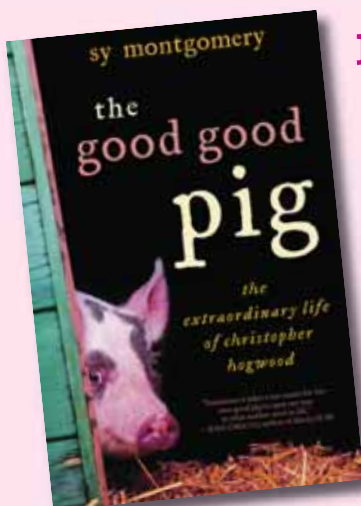
DRAGONQUEST by Donita K. Paul
WaterBrook Press, TR, 978-1-4000-7129-6, 368 pp.,
\$13.99/\$20.99 Can.

Trapped in an evil spell. . . can the knights of Paladin be rescued? Return to the land of dragons and magic that readers discovered in *DragonSpell* and *DragonQuest* in this finely crafted and memorable work of fantasy fiction with a core of eternal truth.



Inwardly, Bardon had cringed when a woman's piercing laugh rose over the clucking babble of a small group of ladies. Squire Bardon glanced at Sir Dar. He couldn't speak of his concern to the knight he admired so much. Every day Bardon underwent a great struggle to project that image of serenity Sir Dar assumed was real.

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Pig Out on Books!

In this enchanting memoir, Sy Montgomery reveals the valuable, life-changing lessons she and others learned from Christopher Hogwood, a generous soul who just so happened to be a pig.

THE GOOD GOOD PIG: The Extraordinary Life of Christopher Hogwood by Sy Montgomery
Ballantine, HC, 978-0-345-48137-5, 240 pp., \$21.95/\$29.95 Can.
Watch for the paperback edition coming in March 2007.

"Christopher Hogwood came home on my lap in a shoebox. He was a creature who would prove in many ways to be more human than I am."

—FROM *THE GOOD GOOD PIG*

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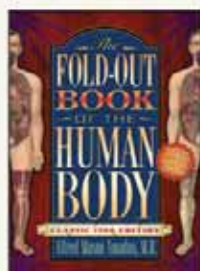
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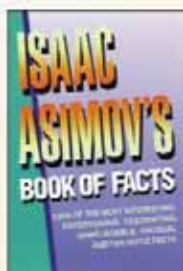
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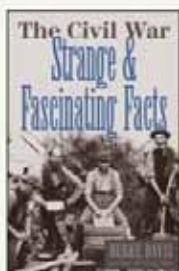
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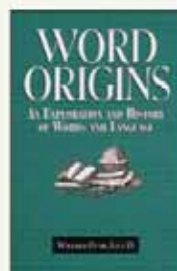
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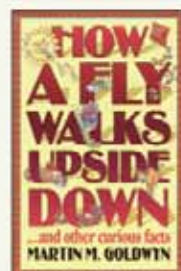
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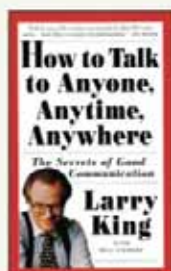
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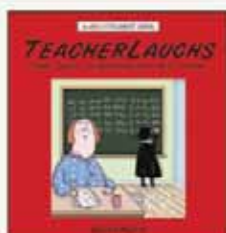
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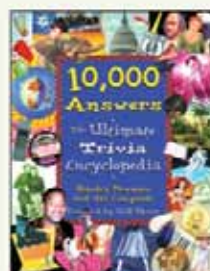
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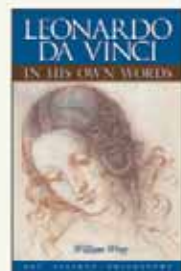
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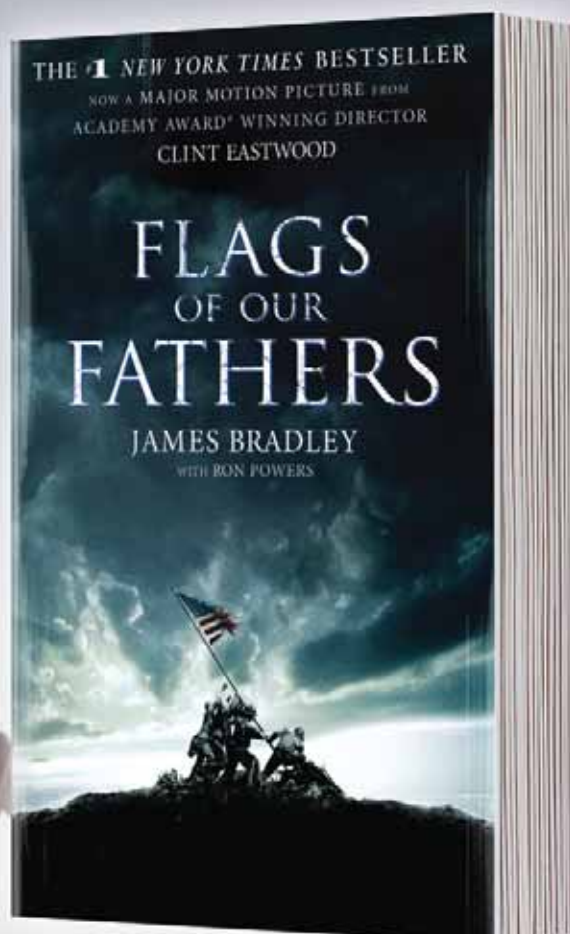


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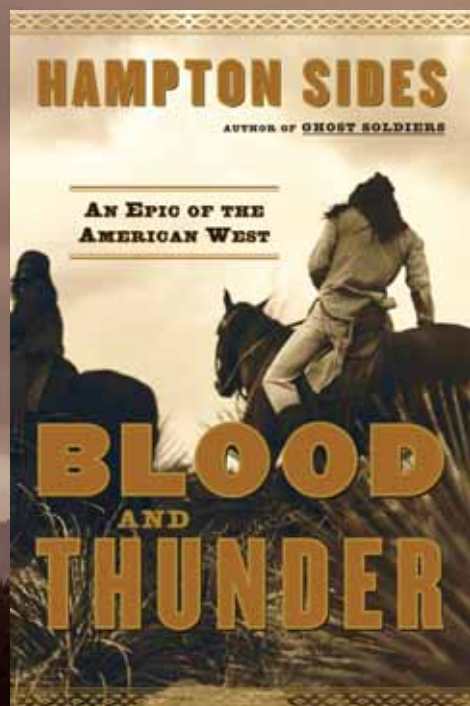
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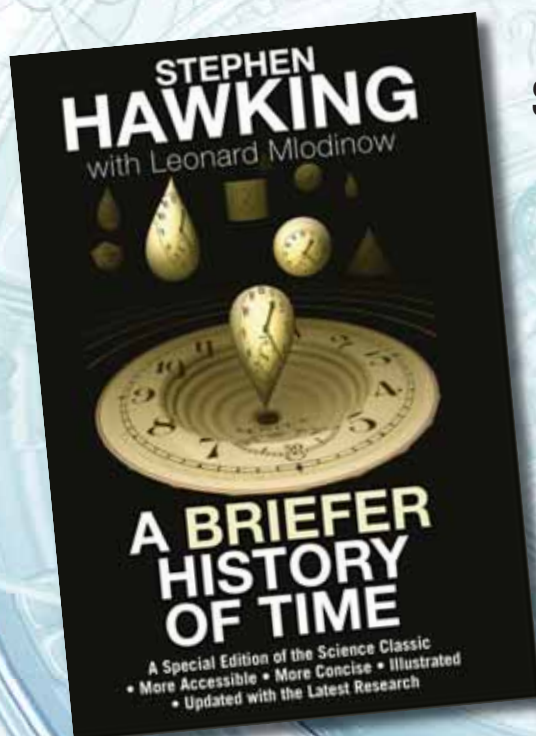
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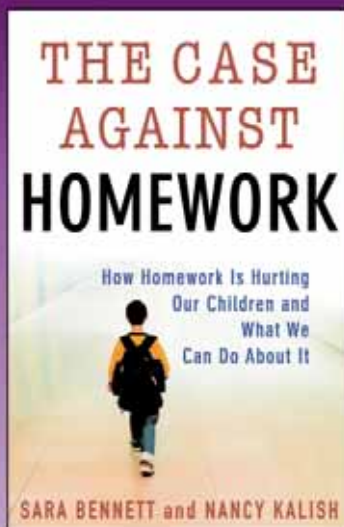
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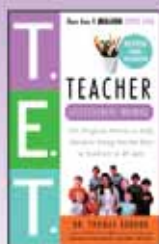
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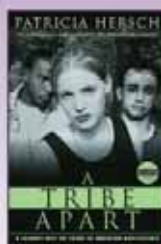
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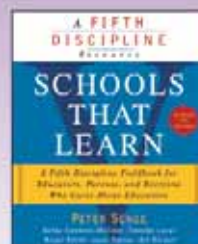
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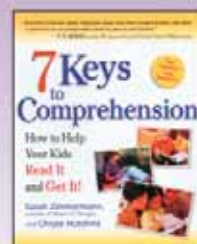
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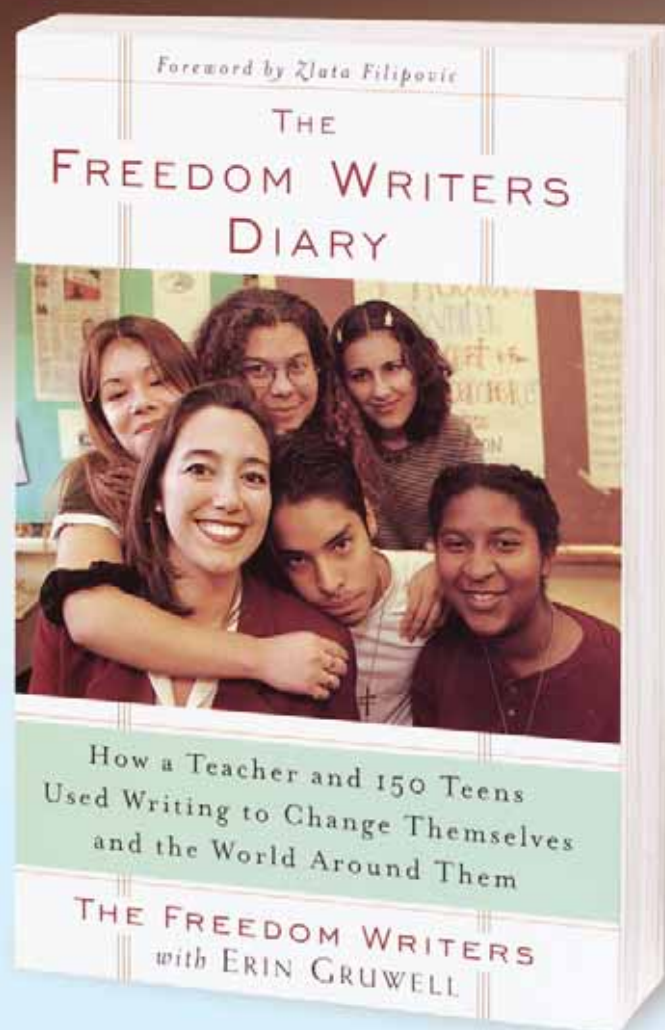
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Author's proceeds from the sale of this book support the Freedom Writers Foundation, a non-profit organization founded to share the Freedom Writers Method with schools around the world. Erin Gruwell is now the Founder and President of the Freedom Writers Foundation. Visit www.freedomwritersfoundation.org.

"It's not going to work. We all know she's going to treat us like everyone else has. The worst part is, I'm pretty sure she thinks she's the one who's going to change us."

—Diary 1, September 1994

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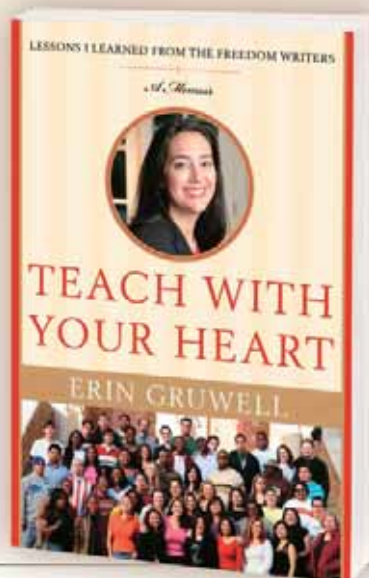
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This year, more than 1,200 entries were received from a diverse number of New York City public high schools. Among the judges who lent their time to this program include celebrated poet and Random House author **Billy Collins**, Executive Director of the National Book Foundation **Harold Augenbraum**, and Random House Chairman & CEO **Peter Oliva**.
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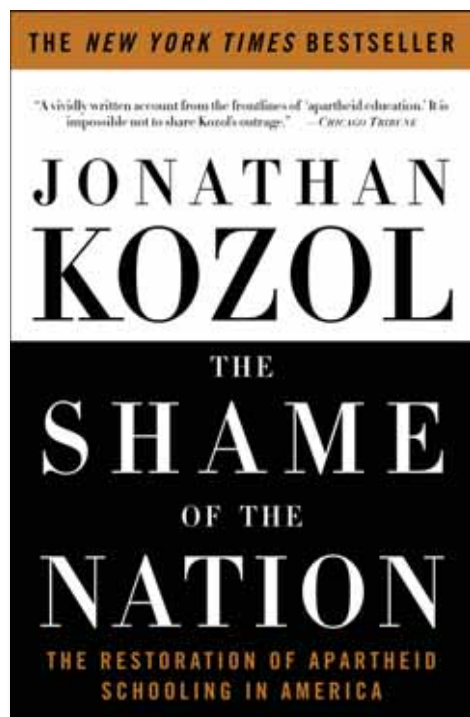
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