

Jennifer Thompson

YA Literature Journal, Part I

Literature and Literacy for Young Adults

Professor Loughran

October 24, 2006

1. Bauer, Joan (2000). *Hope Was Here*. New York, NY: Putnam.

Major Awards: 2001 Newbery Honor Book
2003 Young Reader's Choice Award

Hope and her aunt Addie move from town to town in search of helping different diner restaurants become the best they can be. After moving from Brooklyn, NY to rural Wisconsin, they not only discover and work at a great diner, but meet some amazing people. The diner owner, G.T. Stoop, becomes a father figure to Hope while he runs for mayor of the small town. First, I would like to state what an excellent book this is, for any pre-teen or teen between the ages of 12 and 17. I found it listed in Donelson, Chapter 1, as a "realistic quest" novel. I read it in just one day and tears were streaming down my face for the last 10 pages. The book's title has a double meaning. First, it describes how the main character, Hope, writes "Hope was here" at every diner in which she works. Second, it describes how the noun "hope" exists for each character. This theme prevails throughout the novel and the word "hope" is used as both a name and a description of the townspeople.

The characters are well rounded and vital to the story. Although some are more background characters, the majority of the main players feel real and easy to connect with. Hope, the main character, is a strong, dynamic force and an excellent role model for teen girls. The owner of the diner, G.T. Stoop, is one of the best characters I've come across in young adult literature. His positive nature while facing cancer as well as his bravery really grabbed me. His death, at the end of the book, felt like I had lost a friend.

I would recommend this book to any teen that came to the library. It has something for everybody to relate to— adoption, being raised by a relative, difficult relationships with parents and the death of a loved one. In library media centers and in public libraries, I would use the book in a display entitled "Loss." Although the story has many happy moments to it, the theme of loss in the book is the most prevalent to me. Hope's origins, her constant moving from one city to another, never knowing her dad and her mom giving her up to her sister are huge parts of the book's plot. However, the book never tries to pull the reader's heartstrings. Instead, it merely states these as facts of Hope's life and the reader doesn't realize, until towards the end, how "hope" has finally entered her life.

2. Beals, Melba Pattillo (1994). *Warriors Don't Cry*. New York, NY: Simon Pulse.

Major Awards: Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults, sponsored by YALSA (2004).
The Robert F. Kennedy Book Award.
ALA's Nonfiction Book of the Year Award (1994).
Notable Book Award from the American Booksellers' Association (1995).

One of the original nine teenagers who helped integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Melba Pattillo Beals tells the harrowing, although ultimately uplifting tale of her struggles as a black teenager during the Civil Rights movement in America. I read

the abridged version (found on the ALA Notable Books for 1995 list). Because it was abridged, and therefore shorter, this book would be excellent for any student in 7th or 8th grade. In particular, I think young girls would be the best audience because of Beals' struggles, not only as a black teen, but as a female teen. This book is an astonishing read, because Beals doesn't attempt to pull the readers' heartstrings. The story, told through her unpretentious writing, explains what happened to her in the segregated South. Although parts of the book are squeamish and heartbreaking, her writing rises above the gory details of her participation in the Civil Rights movement and provides for inspiration and perseverance.

I would highly recommend this book to be added to the collections of both in public libraries and media centers. In media centers, the book would be welcomed during the teaching of the Civil Rights movement in history or social studies class. For example, a teacher could read the chronological newspaper headlines (found on pages 31, 48, 54, 61, 69, 115, 117, 127, etc.) and have the students follow along with what other Civil Rights struggles were happening in the United States.

In a public library, however, I would do something different. I would include it on a "highly recommended reading" board for February's Black History Month. One of the programs I'd offer is a creation of your own diary. Since much of the text in *Warriors Don't Cry* is taken from Beals' own teenage diary, I'd encourage each teen to keep a diary for one month (February) and discuss everything that's happening to them – in school, at home, in the personal lives, etc. It would be great if the teens could look back on the book when they're 40 and reread what they thought were obstacles and challenges in their lives.

3. Cohn, Rachel (2002). *Gingerbread*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books For Young Readers.

Major Awards: ALA Best Books for Young Adults

ALA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers

Publishers Weekly Best Books

Sixteen year old Cyd Charisse has a full life – ditching school, hanging out with her boyfriend Shrimp and constantly dreaming and planning her future as a barista in San Francisco. However, her mom and step-dad see her as a "hellion" and send her to New York to meet her real dad and spend some time with him. This well-written book captures the over-caffeinated and hormonally crazy thoughts of a teenage girl. The frenetic first-person narration never stops and is always interesting and thought-provoking. Cyd reminds the reader of a friend – she's honest (almost too honest), hyper and hilarious.

I found the book in the ALA Best Books for Young Adults list. This book would appeal to girls between the ages of 14 and 16. Since the book is directed towards teenage girls, I would include this in a YA public library room. I'd also include it in a school library and have it marked as a display titled "Feelin' Rebellious? So Are These Guys and Gals." I'd include other books of rebellion by teens and preteens. However, in a public library, I'd put it in a display titled "Wild Child." I'd include other books that have rebellious teens with it as well as movies like *Rebel Without a Cause*. Teens and adults

are attracted to rebels and things outside of the norm, and I think this display would draw them in.

4. Cormier, Robert (1974). *The Chocolate War*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.

Major Awards: Margaret A. Edwards Award (for author)
ALA 100 Best Book for Teens (1966-2000)
ALA Best Book for Young Adults
ALAN Award (1982 for author)

Jerry Renault, a teenager attending an all-boys Catholic school, refuses to sell chocolate for a school fund-raiser. At first, he's pressured by the Vigils, a student society at the school, to refuse to sell, but soon he decides that he doesn't want to sell the chocolate, thereby starting a war with the Vigils and the rest of the student body. This exceptional book took my breath away. I think it would be best suited for 14-17 year olds, and I think both boys and girls would benefit from its story. Although there are no prominent female characters, and the ones that do exist are sexualized, I think the overall themes of the book are universally gripping.

The omniscient narrative works well. The author weaves between different characters' thoughts and actions, using different similes and metaphors to convey the characters' messages. The author presents numerous well-rounded characters, each one complex and honest in his own way. The mood of the book is amazing – dark, slowly paced and haunting. Even though the book was written in 1974, I feel it's just as relevant to teenagers today as it was when it was released. Because Cormier doesn't reference pop culture or fads of the day, the story has a timeless feel.

I found this book listed in Donelson's Chapter 1, and I would highly recommend this book for both library media centers and public libraries. I understand why this book has been consistently challenged and banned. Its powerful themes of violence and adolescence and its depressing ending strike the reader as something unique and honest to YA literature. For example, Chapter Six is one of the most harrowing, gut-wrenching pieces of writing that I've ever read. Brother Leon's accusations about Bailey's cheating are evil and manipulative, yet they ring true to many readers, including myself.

This book would make for excellent, frank discussions in high school English classes. The themes of manipulation, wrong vs. right and individualism would resonate with high school students. I think one of the key discussions should revolve around the TS Eliot phrase on the poster in Jerry's locker, "Do I Dare Disturb the Universe? (page 123)." This powerful question follows the majority of the characters, and each answers it in a different way.

As for a public library, I would probably put the book on a book list/bibliography of "banned books." When I was a teen, I loved anything that was banned or risky, whether it was a book, movie or television show. Surprisingly, I never found my way towards this book, and I wonder how I would've reacted to it as a teenager. I'm anxious to hear how teens react to this book now, and if they'd find it worth banning.

5. Farmer, Nancy (2002). *The House of the Scorpion*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books For Young Readers

Major Awards: National Book Award Winner (2002)
Michael L. Printz Honor Book
Newbery Honor Book

Matt Alacran is not a normal child; in fact, he's a clone of a sinister drug lord to be harvested for organs. Luckily, Matt escapes and finds what life is truly like outside of the estate in which he grew up. This book takes a very controversial issue, cloning, and discusses what could be our future in both medicine and science. This book (found as an ALA notable book) is best for 15-17 year olds who are interested in science fiction and/or humanitarian and ethics issues. I would definitely recommend this book for both media centers and public libraries.

The cloning issue is a very sensitive subject to many parents, especially those that are heavily religious. To use this book in a media center, the librarian needs to be cautious as to how he/she displays it and uses it. The book, although fictional, takes on some very heavy questions that teens will have a great time debating and discussing. I think this book would best be used in an ethics or debate class and would best be displayed in a science fiction themed arrangement. Taking examples from the book (definitions of the words "mother," "father," and "family"), arguing the evil of cloning and the treatment of a child clone (Rosa's abuse from Chapters 4-8) are all great launching pads for the ethics of cloning.

In a public library, I would put it in a display about the future. I would make sure the display's title read "The Future?" with a question mark, indicating that this is a possibility and not a confirmation of the way humanity will be in the coming years. I would also include, in this display, non-fiction works about cloning as well as other fiction books about the future.

6. Garden, Nancy (1982). *Annie on My Mind*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.

Major Awards: Margaret A. Edwards Award (2003)
ALA Best Book for Young Adults

Struggling with her sexual identity, 17 year old Liza forms a strong friendship with Annie during their senior year in high school. Their relationship's strength is tested when the girls are discovered in bed together, thereby creating rumors about their orientation and threatening Liza's chance at getting into Massachusetts Institute of Technology. This book is written for teenage girls between the ages of 14 and 17 and I found it listed in Donelson's Chapter 1. I found the book to be quite dated and full of stock characters. For example, the main character, Liza, may lose her position as Student Council President because she didn't report a girl who was piercing ears at the school! I understand that this book was revolutionary when it was written (1982), but I believe there are other lesbian fiction books that are more believable and honest for today's youth.

The depictions of the headmistress, Mrs. Poindexter, and the secretary Ms. Baxter really unnerved me. I had a very difficult time believing these two flat female characters existed. Although there are such people whose hatred and religious intolerance of gays exist, to include them in a book just as foils to the main character does a disservice to the reader. It would've been much more interesting had the foils been written with more complexity and humanity.

I would include this book in a library and media center, but it wouldn't be my primary choice when recommending lesbian/gay/transsexual books to a teen because it does feel so dated. I felt the relationship between the two girls was much more believable than any of the other characters and I would consider the book a romance. However, due to the romantic nature of the story, I'm sure that some girls struggling with their sexuality would take much away from the romance.

As for promoting the book, I think I would include it either in a display on romance or a book list about romance. I wouldn't single it out as a lesbian romance book, unless a teen specifically requested that theme.

7. Going, KL(2003). *Fat Kid Rules the World*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Major Awards: Michael L. Printz Honor Book
Best Book for Young Adults by ALA

Troy Billings is an overweight teenager contemplating suicide. A skinny homeless boy named Curt MacCrae stops Troy from throwing himself in front of a subway, and the two teenage boys form a bizarre, telling friendship while trying to form a punk rock band in New York City. This wonderfully written book is sad and frank, though ultimately uplifting. Going's unpretentious writing style, told from Troy's point of view, gives great insight into not only a teenage frame of mind, but an overweight teen struggling to fit in. Going's use of obnoxious and hilarious headlines, created in Troy's mind (e.g. *Fat Kid Gets Hit By a Bus*), give the reader a deep look into Troy's psyche.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this book for both a public library and a media center. I think the book would be popular for 14-16 year old boys who feel the weight of the world is on their shoulders. There aren't enough Young Adult books that depict the reality of an overweight teen, especially written this well (I located the book on the Printz list). The book is highly relatable for any teen that feels isolated from his peers, which makes it very easy to promote. No matter how popular or well-liked a teenager is, they always tend to feel like an outsider at one point or another. This book would fit on a book list distributed to teens, perhaps with a title referencing isolation or uniqueness. As for a media center, I would show the book in a case related to music and encourage any kid to pick up the book. It's a great recommendation for any teen that loves music, because music is a large focus of both Troy and Curt's lives.

8. Myers, Walter Dean (1999). *Monster* (C. Myers, Illus.). New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Major Awards: Michael L. Printz Award
Coretta Scott King Honor
National Book Award Finalist

Steve Harmon is a 16 year old on trial for felony murder. The book, written as a film script from Steve's point of view, as well as incorporating part of his journal entries, shows the court proceedings (as well as flashbacks) and provides the reader with an honest view of law and order. I found the book on ALA's Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers List, and I think this is a great list in which to market the book. I think it would appeal most to high school students, age 14-17. Because the subject matter is so intense, the book makes for a fast-paced read in which the reader becomes absorbed in the story by the first page. I finished this book in one day because I was so interested in the trial's outcome. Teens who are hesitant to pick up books will find not only the subject matter interesting, but the way in which the book is written. By composing the text as a film script, Dean Myers educates the reader not only on a young black man's life on trial (and the issues with the legal system), but in how a script is written for a film.

The murder of another person is fascinating to humans (for example, look at how many *Law and Order* shows are on television), and by putting a young person on trial, Dean Myers draws in reluctant teenage readers to this world. The ambiguity of Steve's guilt allows readers to draw their own conclusions and to discuss the workings of our legal system. Discussions of the book would work well in both public libraries and media centers. The book would benefit greatly by being included in urban public libraries because the story matter probably affects young urban teens more rather than suburban (however, I would definitely include it in all public libraries, no matter where they're located). I would put the book on display with other crime fiction books, perhaps shown with handcuffs and legal books. I would also put it on a list of books for film lovers (due to the scripted nature of the book), in order to draw in teens that don't normally read books.

As for media centers, the book could easily be included in high school discussions regarding our nation's legal system and its problems in a social studies class. There are so many layers to the book to have a lively discussion: the racial inequalities in our legal system, accessory versus the committing of a crime, guilty versus not guilty. It would be great to take a poll of the students to see who thought Steve was guilty and who thought he was innocent, and then have the teens explain, perhaps in an essay paper, their reasoning behind it.

9. Pullman, Philip (1995). *His Dark Materials, Book I: The Golden Compass*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.

Awards: An ALA Notable Book
An ALA Top Ten Best Book for Young Adults
A Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year
A Booklist Editors' Choice-"Top of the List"

Lyra Belacqua, a curious 11 year old girl living at Jordan College in Oxford, England, has never known the truth about who she is. After she and her daemon, Pantalaimon, overhear her Uncle Asriel's discoveries of a different world during a secret meeting, they begins a journey in which they encounter Gobblers, gyptians and armored bears in a struggle for freedom as well as an exploration of new worlds. I was surprised to discover that this book is for young adults and not kids. I think the best age group would be 7th through 9th grades. The main character is young and could be difficult to relate to by older teens. However, the complicated religious overtones mixed with the scientific theories do make for a challenging read. I also enjoyed the daemon characters. To make a person's spirit take the form of an animal is really interesting and made me think what form my spirit would take.

The book begins slowly and it takes a few hundred pages before becoming engrossing. Perhaps it's just me, but it's difficult to totally submerge myself into a fantastical world with unknown towns, creatures and words. However, once I get my bearings in its world, it's highly enjoyable and quite a mystery to figure out.

I found this book on ALA's 1997 Top 10 Best Books for Young Adults. I would include this book (as well as the two other parts of the trilogy) in a fantasy section in both the school and public libraries. As far as promoting this book, it would be fun to include it on a book list to be distributed over the winter holiday vacation. The book list title would be "Snowy Days." Since the latter half of the book takes place in the North, the book would be a great read during the snowy, cold holidays. The entire time I was reading it, I wanted to be next to a roaring fireplace with a steaming mug of hot chocolate. I think teens would enjoy this book as a nice break compared to their standard school texts!

10. Simmons, Michael (2005). *Finding Lubchenko*. New York, NY: Razorbill.

Awards: The Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award

Evan Macalister is obnoxious, sarcastic and has a wealthy father. Unfortunately, his tight-fisted, angry father has been arrested for murder, and it's up to Evan and his two friends to prove his father's innocence, even if it means staying in four star hotels in Paris. Appropriate for 14-16 year olds, this book has an engaging first person narrative, which often involves flashbacks told in the tone of a male teenage voice. The character vs. character conflict is apparent in numerous relationships, but the main conflict is between Evan and his gruff father. The father consistently berates Evan about school, money and his overall "slacker" attitude.

Although the book is marketed as a mystery, it definitely could be discussed as a relationship book. To me, the mystery was pushed to the side of the true plot – the struggle between a firm father and his lazy son. I would recommend this book to be included in both a public library and a school library. I found the book listed as a starred review in *School Library Journal*.

Father/son relationship books are tricky to promote. I think Simmons was creative in disguising the relationship in a murder mystery. As a teen, I was (well, truth be told, still am) attracted to any murder mysteries. Perhaps the book could be promoted on a book list entitled “All in the Family.” Numerous books could be included – tragedies, comedies and mysteries. Each book would involve parent/child or grandparent/grandchild relationships.

11. Werlin, Nancy (1998). *The Killer's Cousin*. New York, NY: Delacorte Press.

Major Awards: Edgar Allen Poe Award for Best Young Adult Novel
ALA Best Book for Young Adults
ALA Quick Pick: Top 10
Booklist Editor's Choice
Bulletin Blue Ribbon Book

After being acquitted of murder, 17 year old David moves to Massachusetts to repeat his senior year and begin putting his life back into order. However, his 11 year old cousin Lily's anger causes concern for David, and with the help of his other cousin's ghost, David tries to save Lily from doing harm to anybody, including herself. Although the majority of characters are older, I think this book would work well for a 12-15 year old audience. The mystery was unchallenging and obvious from the beginning. However, that could be because I've read too many books and seen too many movies that have *The Bad Seed* syndrome – creepy, intelligent child murderers.

However, the sympathetic narration by David was excellent. Although not easily relatable, it made you understand his thoughts and actions. David's overriding guilt for the murder as well as the textured psychological layers of the book (David's parents' guilt and confusion towards their son, his aunt and uncle's blindness towards Lily and her hurt, David's own guilt) help shape each character and give each character depth and balance. There are no stock characters here – only rich, well-developed humans with flaws.

I would include this in both a school and public library. In a school media center, I don't think this book needs much promotion. The ambiguous title is enough to draw in teens to read it. Maybe I would put it in a display about family, but I think this is the kind of book that spreads via word of mouth. In a public library, I would include it on a book list of mysteries. In the book list, I'd include a Sherlock Holmes novel, an Agatha Christie tale, and some more modern mysteries, such as *The Killer's Cousin*. I think promoting it along with older mysteries will give teens a chance to read older mysteries that they might enjoy!

12. Barrett, Tracy (1999). *Anna of Byzantium*. New York, NY: Delacorte Press.

Major Awards: ALA Best Book for Young Adults (2000)

Princess Anna Comnena is the first born daughter of the Emperor as well as the chosen successor to the throne in 11th century Byzantium. Because she refuses to follow her grandmother's manipulative directions and listen to her deceitful lies, Anna is refused the throne by her father and, ultimately, banished from the land and all that she knows. The appropriate audience for this book would be girls between the ages of 12 and 14.

Although the book strives to show a woman writer empowered during a time dominated by men, the book's characters lessen any strength of the true historical facts of the novel. Although the authenticity of the time and language was apparent, the main character's actions ruin the tale. The story is told through the eyes (and first person narration) of Anna Comnena, a spoiled, obnoxious, rude royal. I hated this character with a passion, and I could never once sympathize with her. Her worries and concerns meant nothing to me and I felt her snobbish and arrogant ways took away from any sympathy I was supposed to have felt for the character. When she is banished to a nunnery, all I could think was "well, thank god. Maybe they'll teach her humility." But no. She continued to whine about any duty she was given and she made numerous remarks about how she was a much better writer and much more intelligent than any of the nuns in the convent.

I don't know much about historical fiction (I found this book in Donelson, Chapter 1), but I cannot imagine that the majority of these books are written as poorly as this. Even though it was taken from facts, and even though Anna truly did exist, why Barrett chose to write her so unsympathetically is beyond me. The majority of the characters were one-dimensional and stock characters – the Emperor powerless under his mother's influence, the Empress who goes "crazy," the power-hungry brother and the weak, boring sister. I wish the book had been written from the point of view of Sophia, Anna's personal maid. She was lively, interesting and multi-dimensional. At the end of the novel, in the author's note, Barrett indicates that she made up the character of Sophia. Perhaps Barrett's strength lies with fiction and not historical fiction.

I would have this book on the shelves because it does touch a subject matter (female writers during the 11th century) that is not frequently written about. However, I would not promote this book. I feel the characters' one-dimensionalities and the overwhelming arrogance of the main character do more of a disservice to people of the 11th century. If a teen asked me if they should read the book, I would feel perfectly comfortable saying no, and that there are many more great books about real women in the library.

13. Ehrenreich, Barbara (2001). *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.

Major Awards: Alex Award (2002)

Nominated - National Book Critics Circle Award

Christopher Award

Inspired by "welfare reform," Barbara Ehrenreich travels to three different parts of the country - Florida, Maine and Minnesota- and embarks on a journey to see if she can live on minimum wage-like income. By working as a maid, waitress and an "associate" at Wal-Mart, Ehrenreich discovers that earning less than \$8 is a struggle that many Americans face today. I found this powerful, well-written book on the Alex Awards list as a "non-fiction adult book for young adults."

I think any teen who has held a job, even part-time (probably 15-18 year olds) will be interested in Ehrenreich's journeys as a struggling person trying to survive on such little earnings. I think teens could easily relate to the struggle as well. A good number of teens hold part time jobs, whether during the school year or on winter and summer breaks. When I was between the ages of 15 and 17, I worked as a hostess at a neighborhood restaurant and made minimum wage. This was "play" money for me. I can't imagine having to support a family, rent an apartment, pay bills and buy food with the little amount of money I made. Ehrenreich does an excellent job with her use of first-person narrative. Her prose is refreshing, and she acknowledges her many faults as well as what she succeeded in and what she failed at. The numerous descriptions of her coworkers and bosses were alternately hilarious and tragic.

This book would fit well in any library media center or public library. Library media centers could hold multiple copies of the book for classes, such as social studies. The book lends itself to spirited class discussions about the working class and the struggle to make ends meet nowadays, especially considering rising rent prices. In a public library, if I was able to order multiple copies, I'd put one copy in adult non-fiction and one book in YA non-fiction. Because her writing is so easy to follow and because it flows so well, I think teens would enjoy the book as well as learn something about welfare reform and why it doesn't work.

For a school library, I would use the book in a program, specifically social studies. It's important for teens to understand that many people in the United States struggle with money, and this book shows how different people handle the struggle, whether it is positively or negatively. It would be great for teens to read this along with similar books, such as "Fast Food Nation" by Eric Schlosser and "The Jungle" by Upton Sinclair. In a public library, it would be interesting to include this either on a display titled "Struggle" or on a book list with the same title. On the list, it would be mixed with fiction books about struggling Americans.

14. Glenn, Mel (1996). *Who Killed Mr. Chippendale?* New York, NY: Lodestar Books.

Major Awards: ALA Top 10 Best Book for Young Adults (1997)
ALA Best Book for Young Adults

At the beginning of a school day, one of the teachers, Mr. Chippendale, is shot down by a sniper's bullet. Students (both former and current), other teachers, counselors and policemen share their thoughts and concerns via short poems, until the murder is solved. I understand that Professor Loughran does not consider this book a "poetry book," but rather a novel told in poetic form. I can understand that, and even agree with it to an extent, but I will make an argument that this book is definitely a poetry book. First,

I found it in the 811 section at NYPL. And second, Mel Glenn is written about in our text book, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, as a highly intelligent and competent poet (for further reading, peruse pages 147-149 in the book). Therefore, to me, this book is a poetry book.

I must admit, I've never been a big fan of poetry. I get lost in the vague prose and I've never found much poetry that inspires me. However, I thought this book was incredible. It's the first poetry book that I've really grabbed onto and it kept me interested until the end. It's so creative to have a mystery book in poem shape, and Glenn succeeds with this thought-provoking, well-written selection of poems. Glenn does a great job of juxtaposing poems full of praise for Chippendale and praise for school versus hatred of Chippendale and anger towards the education system. He switches voices and the thoughts of characters with ease, changing from a highly intellectual and well educated student to a dropout who's suffering because he left school at an early age.

The ideal audience for this book spans 14-17 years old (I found the book on the ALA Best Books for Young Adults page). The book is written so that students of any age in high school can pull what they want from it. Older students will understand the depth of the characters a bit more because they will have experienced more. Freshman will find the mystery in poetic shape fascinating and easy to read. I would absolutely include this book in both a public library and a school library.

This book would go along well with poetry lessons in English class. It's a quick read and shows the creativity of poetry. It would be interesting to read an Edgar Allen Poe book and then follow it with murderous poetry. In a public library, it would be great to include it on a list of "mysteries." I'd include Sherlock Holmes novels and books by Agatha Christie as well as more modern fare. I think teens will really like this book because, being previously prejudiced to disliking poetry, it truly opened my eyes to different ways to tell a poem.

15. Koertge, Ron (2002). *Stoner & Spaz*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Major Awards: Winner of the PEN Center USA Literary Award for Children's Literature
ALA Best Book for Young Adults
ALA Quick Pick
A Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books Blue Ribbon Winner

Ben Bancroft, 16 years old and afflicted with Cerebral Palsy, lives a quiet life; he watches movies both in theatres and on television, studies hard and makes sure to never offend or worry his grandmother, with whom he lives. However, one night, while out at the movies, Ben runs into Colleen, a drug addled, tattooed misfit and his seemingly mellow, unsocial life turns into something much more interesting.

This humorous book, told from Ben's point of view, is a modern day *Harold and Maude*. Two people whom nobody understands find a connection with each other and form an unlikely friendship. The first person narrative works well. Ben's voice is honest, not self-pitying. His knowledge of film is a fun part of his voice and his insecurities about his body and his "loner" qualities will speak volumes to teens. Colleen's drug addiction

and Ben's reaction to it (doesn't try to make her quit; he just feels like it's a part of her) was refreshing and unique.

I found this book listed on the ALA Best Book for Young Adult's webpage, and I would highly recommend it to both school and public libraries for teens between 14 and 16 years old. It's a refreshing change to read a book with the voice of a Cerebral Palsy-afflicted teen. I think it'll help teens understand the thoughts of somebody they'd normally either avoid or speak patronizingly to. I also think that Colleen's open use of drugs could lead to interesting conversations about the legality of drugs, whether amongst teens, between teens and teachers or between teens and their parents. I think this book would fit into either a display or a book list about friendship. Their friendship takes normal twists and turns and leaves them both with a heightened sense of self. Although Colleen eventually starts using drugs again at the end of the book, (after a brief stint in rehab), Ben doesn't break off their friendship. I think teens will relate to their off-kilter friendship and see bits of themselves in both characters.

16. Marsden, John (1995). *Tomorrow, When the War Began*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Major Awards: Bilby Award for Older Readers
CYBER Award
ALA Best Book for Young Adults
Horn Book Fanfare Selection

Ellie and seven of her friends go camping during Commem week in Australia. When they return from their trip, they discover that their entire town has been invaded by a foreign country and they have to resort to guerilla-style fighting in order to reclaim their town. This adventure book is well-written and flows smoothly. The main protagonist, Ellie, provides a fine mixture of teenage puppy love with her struggle for survival. Her thoughts are well-balanced between the teen world she once knew and the forced maturity during the horrors of war.

I can understand how this book and its numerous sequels caused a sensation in Australia (I found the book on YALSA's What Teens Want list). This book is the beginning of *The Tomorrow Series*. The thought of a foreign country invading your land and capturing everybody you know is frightening, especially to children and teenagers. I think this book would be great for teens 14-17 years old. Marsden doesn't speak down to teens, and he makes the horror of warfare clear to the reader.

This book would be a welcome addition to both school and public libraries. In a school, this book should be used as an accompaniment to modern political or historical lessons. Although this story is fictional, I think it'll help the reader an honest portrayal of teens during wartime. It would also be great to read this book either before or after an autobiography of a Holocaust or war survivor, and compare their stories and their emotions of the war.

In a public library, this book would be great on a display about one of two things. The first is obvious – war. The second, however, is more ambiguous. I think either a display or book list on survival would be interesting. The book could be included along with non-fiction works about surviving in the woods or in the mountains with no shelter

or food. The teens in this book learned to survive without materialistic goods that we take for granted everyday. I think teens would really benefit from some “what if” knowledge about survival.

17. Moore, Alan (1986-1987). *Watchmen* (D. Gibbons, Illus. and Letterer; J. Higgins, Colorist). New York, NY: DC Comics.

Major Awards: Hugo Award Winner
Time Magazine’s 100 Best English-Language Novels from 1923-Present (2005)

In 1985, the United States is on the brink of war with the Soviet Union. A vigilante group, known as the Watchmen, re-group and try to bring down the panic of citizens as well as try to find out who is killing the Watchmen, one by one. This graphic novel was originally a twelve-part series of comic books. I found the book on the YALSA What Teens Want List, and, due to the depth of the graphic novel, I think this book would be good for 15-17 year olds. Each chapter begins with a clock and counts down to midnight, when a terrible thing happens in New York. This graphic novel is amazing, and perhaps one of the best tales I’ve read. The multiple tales of each character are woven brilliantly into one another, until the reader finally makes a connection as to what is happening. Each character is multi-dimensional, proving that superheroes have flaws, like humans. The storyline is complex and original and by using flashbacks to tell us the characters’ histories, helps the reader form relationships with the characters. The ending of the graphic novel is dramatic and heart-stopping.

The illustrations and the colors in the panels are breathtaking. There is a cinematic approach to the art rarely seen in comic books before *Watchmen*. The use of symbols in the artwork propels the story into unforeseen depth. Smiley faces and Egyptian symbols are just two of the numerous figures used to portray thoughts and actions of the characters and to propel the storyline.

I would absolutely include this book both in a public library and a school library. In a school library, this graphic novel would cause controversy, so I would have to prepare myself for a fight. The book is graphic and has limited nudity and I could easily see it erupting in controversy with the parents. In a public library, it would depend on how the library was set up as to where I would put it. Some libraries have a large graphic novel section, from which both teenagers and adults pick up books. Some separate them into two sections. If I could afford it, I would include one in each section. If not, I would probably put it in the adult section, just so it would get both the teenagers’ and adults’ attention.

I only know of one graphic novel ever being used in a public school for teaching purposes (*Maus* by Art Spiegelman, which I read in college). If *Watchmen* were taught to high school students, the novel would provide for much discussion about war, predestination, and amorality. It would be great if teens could read it in either an English or an Art class and then have discussions. Perhaps I would include it in a display of controversial books at the school. As for a public library, I would put this book on display with the title “Who Watches the Watchmen?” I think it would provide questions from teens that are unaware of the book and affect their curiosity.

18. Niffenegger, Audrey (2003). *The Time Traveler's Wife*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.

Major Awards: British Book Awards: Popular Fiction Award (2006).
Alex Award (2004)

Henry DeTamble suffers from chrono-displacement disorder, which means he is a time traveler. He originally meets his future wife, Clare, when she is six and he is in his 30s, and they continue to have peculiar and untraditional meetings throughout the course of their lives while getting married and having a child. I located this book on the Alex Awards list at YALSA as an “adult book for young adult readers.” This book will be loved by 16-18 year old teenage girls. Niffenegger’s romantic, melodramatic writing will soothe the lovesick teenager. Her imaginative prose and interesting scenarios captivate the reader and make the book easy to read and, somehow, easy to imagine. Although the book is much too long (around 540 pages), it’s well crafted and absorbing.

I would include this book in both a library media center and a public library. In the public library, I would put the book in the adult fiction area, but I would definitely recommend it to a lovesick teen. I think the book will intrigue teens curious about time travel and genetic disorders. However, I don’t see teenage boys longing to read the book, since it’s essentially a love story told through a science fiction scenario. If it were to be read during a class (for example, an English class), I think it would be fun to map out each time that Henry and Clare meet in a chart of some sort. At the beginning of each chapter, and sometimes within the chapter, Niffenegger says the exact date and how old the characters are. It would be interesting to see if the class could make sense of the entire book via a time line. In a public library, this book would be suitable for either a “romance” display or a romance list. However, I think the book would also work on a science fiction display or list, and maybe that would pull in both boys that don’t normally read romances and girls that don’t normally read much science fiction.

19. Wallace, Rich (1996). *Wrestling Sturbridge*. New York, NY: Knopf: Distributed by Random House.

Major Awards: ALA Top Ten Best Book for Young Adults
ALA Quick Pick for Young Adults
ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers

Ben, a 135 pound varsity wrestler, is anxious to leave Sturbridge and begin his life post-high school. However, before he leaves town (if he can leave town), he wants to be the state champion while trying to figure out what he wants to do with his life. The first person narrative by Ben is excellent. Ben isn’t the smartest guy, but he’s real, and I think every teen will relate to his struggles with acceptance and what to do for the future. The simple story line revolving around the state championship is well written, and the characters are wonderfully complex in an unpretentious way. The girl Ben dates, Kim, tries to understand him while wanting to leave town. His father works at the plant and wants something better for his son, although both know that’s not going to happen. And his grandma is a devoutly religious woman trying to pressure Ben to be “more Christian.”

I found *Wrestling Sturbridge* on the YALSA What Teens Want list. This book is

great for both teen boys around 14-16 year old as well as reluctant readers. The simple storyline and the complex, three-dimensional characters are easy to relate to and understand. I would highly recommend this book to teenage boys who are reluctant to read as well as any boy interested in sports. I would definitely include the book in both a school library and a public library. For a school library, I think an English project revolving around the book would be fun. At the beginning of each chapter, Ben has a short list of things to do and things not to do. For example, before Chapter 4, he has a list of “places I want to go and places I don’t want to go.” It’d be great for teens to replicate a handful of these lists. They could learn more about themselves, and the teachers would learn more about their students.

In a public library, this book would be best included on a book list titled “Books for Reluctant Readers.” I think the storyline, the length of the book, and the genuineness of Ben’s character would appeal to boys that don’t read much. I think it’s a great segue book and would provide a good channel to open up the eyes of reluctant readers to other books.

20. Woodson, Jacqueline (1998). *If You Come Softly*. New York, NY: Putnam's.

Major Awards: Coretta Scott King Award (author)
Margaret A. Edwards Award for Lifetime Achievement
ALA Best Book for Young Adults
Bulletin Blue Ribbon Book

Ellie, a sophomore at prestigious Percy Academy in Manhattan, falls in love with a fellow classmate named Jeremiah (AKA Miah). Because she is Jewish and white, and he is black, their interracial love story provokes society to regard them in racist and skeptical ways, ultimately leading to a tragic finale. Woodson has done a remarkable job of writing a romance that will appeal to both teenage boys and girls (I found the book listed on the ALA Best Book for Young Adults). This tragic romance, appropriate for ages 13-16, will resonate and make any teen think about relationships in general. The book is incredibly well-written - it's gentle and thoughtful, with a depth rarely seen in teen romance novels. The two separate kinds of narrative work incredibly well, because it provides the reader with insight into the main characters' thoughts as well as the secondary characters' voices. Ellie's first person narrative is honest and sad. The limited omniscient narrative for Jeremiah’s story isn't jarring to the storyline; in fact, I think it enhances his story by allowing the reader to focus on both Miah and his mom’s characters. The two main characters, Ellie and Miah, form a wonderful, complex partnership that is not only beautiful, but realistic. Their discussions about their futures after high school are especially realistic. Although the ending was a bit obvious, I still felt upset enough to shed a tear or two.

Due to the subject matter of the novel, this book could be used and promoted in a number of ways. In a school library, the book could be taught in accordance with civil rights and history. Although many people believe that interracial relationship concerns are a thing of the past, I think bringing it out into the open will help teens discover how these relationships are still controversial in today's society. This book would also work well in an English class dealing with poetry. The title of the book comes from an Audre

Lord poem of the same name. Also, Miah occasionally speaks to Ellie in poetic terms. It would be fun to analyze the poetic inspiration to Woodson and her novel's approach to interracial dating.

In a public library, I would include this book on two separate lists or displays. The first would be poetry, because I think Woodson's use of the Audre Lord poem is especially thought provoking. Second, it would be good to include an interracial romance on a romance list or display to remind teens that love comes in all shapes and sizes, and when we're least expecting it.