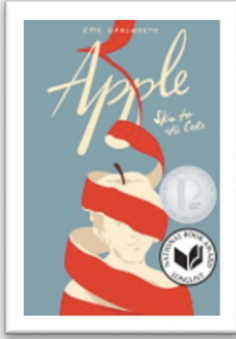


Young Adult Literature Book Evaluations



Maria Houston
SLM 504
May 6, 2021



Title: *Apple: Skin to the Core*

Gansworth, Eric. *Apple: Skin to the Core*. New York, Levine Querido, 2020.

Grade Level:

8th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Authors; Native American men; Indians of North America; Indian reservations; Racism, **Autobiographies** and memoirs; **Biographies**—Identity—Native Americans; Poetry; Nonfiction

Related Books:

New Poets of Native Nations by Heid E. Erdrich, *African Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song* edited by Kevin Young, *The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation* by Anna Malaika Tubbs.

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

Michael L. Printz Honor Book, 2021, National Book Award Longlist, 2021, Starred Review: School Library Journal (December 2020), Middle and Junior High School Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation, Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation

Summary: Gansworth—a member of the Onondaga tribe, but raised at the Tuscarora Nation—uses poetry and prose to write about the tragic history and current lives of Indigenous people in the United States. He re-tells his grandparents’ experiences at government boarding schools and how the United States tried to erase their culture. He describes the devastating economic, social, and cultural impacts that losing their traditions had on the family for future generations. He describes his experiences of racism in school, the difficulties his siblings faced after leaving home, the poverty on The Rez, and the breakdown of his family and culture. Gansworth uses the term “Apple” —a slur to describe Natives as being Red-on-the-outside-White-on-the-inside—to describe how his people must act if they are to survive in a White world. Using The Beatles as inspiration—particularly Apple Records- Gansworth structures his book through art, poetry and prose, to resemble their albums and music history.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners IV. Curate A. Think Learners act on an information need by: 2. Identifying possible sources of information.

Government boarding schools—including the one in Carlisle, Pa—were real. They were created to separate children from their families—preventing the passing down of Native American traditions—and causing children to assimilate more quickly into White culture. How would you find more information about government boarding schools? Explore the school’s databases and search for reliable websites—ending in .edu or .org—to find information sources of information. On a Google Slide, create a list of resources that you will use for an upcoming project on this topic.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: I found Gansworth’s work both creative and sobering. After reading the Liner Notes in the back, I had a greater appreciation for how he used his fascination with The Beatles to structure his book. It was heart-breaking to learn about the injustices and abuse that took place in Carlisle, PA and the other government boarding schools across the Nation. I found it disturbing to read how White people desired to strip the Indigenous people of their culture and traditions and found it equally disturbing to read how effective they were in reaching their goal. I found the entire book to be bleak, offering very little hope of rectifying the irreversible damage and the long-lasting implications which these boarding schools brought on families economically, culturally, and socially for generations.

Appeal to Young Adults: Teens may be interested in what life is like for children and teens on Indian reservations because they are starting to become aware of community groups outside their own (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Structure: Gansworth uses his knowledge of the Beatles and their Apple Records recording label to structure his work. Art: He incorporates his artwork within his writing.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Students will experience *Level 5–Venturing Beyond the Self* by learning about how the United States government treated Indigenous families and how that impacted subsequent generations of Indigenous people. Readers will contemplate racism, discrimination, conformity, social pressures, and justice (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: Gansworth’s use of words, art, and structure, show students the possible artistry in literature.

Negative Aspects: Students may find this book very sad and without much hope.



Title: *Almost American Girl: An Illustrated Memoir*

Ha, Robin. *Almost American Girl: An Illustrated Memoir*. New York, Blazer + Bray, 2020.

Grade Level:

8th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Comics and **Graphic novels**; Comic book writers; Mothers and daughters; Korean Americans; Single Mothers; South Korea; Autobiographies and memoirs

Related Books:

The Times I Knew I Was Gay by Eleanor Crewes, *Come Home, Indio: A Memoir* by Jim Terry, *Ordinary Girls* by Blair Thornburgh

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

ALA Notable Children’s Book, 2021, School Library Journal Best Books, 2020, YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, 2020, YALSA Great Graphic Novels for Teens, 2021, Starred Reviews: Booklist (November 15, 2019), Kirkus (November 15, 2019), Publishers Weekly (November 4, 2019), School Library Journal (November 2019), Graphic Novels Core Collection (H.W.Wilson) Essential Recommendation, Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation

Summary: In her auto-biographical graphic novel, Robin Ha shares her real-life experiences growing up in Korea with her mother—who had never been married—and who supported the two of them by working as a hairstylist. She is confused when her mother surprises her with a trip to Alabama. Assuming she will only be gone for a few weeks, Robin says goodbye to her friends with the intention of seeing them soon. Little did Robin know that they were moving to Alabama permanently. Her mother was actually going to marry a man whom she had met when he was visiting Korea on a business trip throwing Robin into a new family, a new school, a new culture, and a new language. Robin describes her adjustment to life in the United States, how her love of comics saved her, and how she ended up understanding why her mother made the choices she did.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners II Include. C. Share Learners exhibit empathy with and tolerance for diverse ideas by: 1. Engaging in informed conversation and active debate.

We can assume the author used a graphic novel format to write her memoir because comics played an important role in her life growing up. In learning groups discuss these questions: Would the story have had the same impact if it were written as a traditional novel? What did the reader gain or lose from it being a graphic novel? If you were to write a memoir, would you choose a graphic novel format? Explain the reasons for your choice. In the style of a graphic novel, try drawing about a day at school. Share it with your learning group.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: I was pleasantly surprised with how Robin Ha effectively portrayed her emotional journey through illustrations and words. I was amazed at how much empathy I could feel for characters in a graphic novel. I truly was swept up in the story and was eager to find out how Robin ended up finding a place where she felt like she could belong. Ha’s work demonstrates that graphic novels have earned their place in the world of quality Young Adult literature.

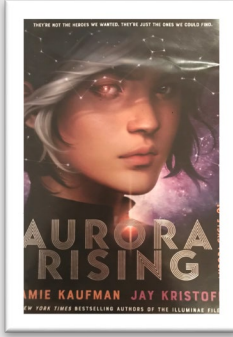
Appeal to Young Adults: Teens will enjoy this story because the issue of “fitting in” socially at school is relevant to their lives and they will be able to identify with Robin’s struggle. By experiencing her situations vicariously, students may feel supported and understood if they are facing similar situations in their own lives.

Memorable Literary Element: Structure and Language: Ha uses blue font when the characters are speaking Korean and uses Black font when the characters are speaking English.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story* and “escape” into the story of Robin’s new life in America (Shesman). Readers may experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* because they may empathize with Robin’s difficulty in finding friends and in fitting in at her new school (Shesman). Readers will respect that the story is genuine and the characters’ authentic feelings (Shesman). Readers may experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* because they will consider issues of peer pressure, conformity, and social pressures (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: Ha provides a wonderful example of how teens can persevere through hard situations.

Negative Aspects: None



Title: *Aurora Rising*

Kaufman, Amie, and Jay Kristoff. *Aurora Rising*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2018.

Grade Level:

8th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Science Fiction, Military cadets, Stowaways, Space Vehicles, Space

Related Books:

Brightly Burning by Alexa Donne, *Rabbit & Robot* by Andrew Smith, *The Golden Flame* by Emily Victoria

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

Aurealis Awards, Best Science Fiction Novel, 2019, Aurealis Awards, Best Young Adult Novel, 2019, YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2020, Starred Reviews: Booklist (May 1, 2019), Middle and Junior High School Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation, Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation

Summary:

Aurora was headed from Earth to Octavia to join her father and the other colonists when an incident occurred in The Fold causing her to be asleep in her cyropod for two hundred twenty years. When Tyler—top student of Aurora Academy—discovers the *Hatfield* and thousands of cyropods, he notices that Aurora is the only one still alive, rescues her, misses the important Draft (which determines the future of his career), and must now lead a team of misfits. Aurora finds herself in the year 2380, in outer space, with aliens, space discoveries, and inventions which did not exist when she last closed her eyes. However, when she discovers that no one has heard of the Ocatvia space mission and that there are no records of her father, she grows suspicious. When the academy commanders give Tyler a mission more deserving of a First-Class squad leader, he also grows suspicious. Tyler, Aurora and the squad are determined to discover the truth.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners I. Inquire II. Create Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes 3. Generating products that illustrate learning.

Aurora wakes up 220 years in the future. Research the effects of climate change and what earth could look like in the year 2241, if we don't take steps to address it seriously now. Explore Nasa website: <https://climate.nasa.gov> and other school resources of your choice. Use Google Slides to display your findings.

Evaluation:

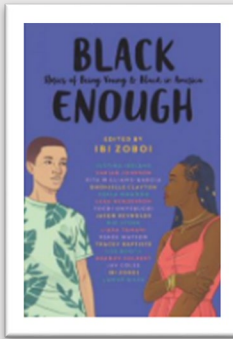
Personal Reaction: From the beginning, I was very intrigued with who Aurora was, why she was a danger, and what happened to the Octavia expeditions. However, since the story was told from six different perspectives, it was difficult to remember what had previously occurred with each character when it was time to read from his/her perspective again. The narration was often bogged down by too much detail or there was not enough explanation provided, which made it difficult to remain invested in the story. I found the flirty banter entertaining but often distracting because it occurred during pivotal moments in the storytelling. However, I will still promote this book because I realize other readers may enjoy the literary choices the authors made.

Appeal to Young Adults: Teens will enjoy that the story features mostly teenage characters who are completely independent from adults (Shesman). Teens can join the squad—vicariously—on their adventures in outer space (Shesman). Teenage readers will also enjoy the flirty teenage banter between the characters and the characters discussions of sexuality, other community groups (aliens), discussions of future careers, and what societal beliefs they want to hold onto (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Narrative mode: The story is told from six different perspectives- Aurora, Tyler, Cat, Zila, Kal, and Finian.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story* and “escape” into this novel about space, aliens, and intergalactic space travel. Readers may experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* because they may identify with the squad members’ desires to accomplish incredible feats in life and discover where they fit in the universe. Readers may experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* as they think about the social issues the squad members face—the desire for justice and doing what is right even if it’s against authority. Readers may enjoy the characters’ honest display of strengths and weaknesses.

Positive Aspects: The authors provide a positive example of individuals from different backgrounds and abilities working together for a common goal. **Negative Aspects:** Maybe too confusing to follow for some readers.



Title: *Black Enough: Stories of Being Young and Black in America*

Edited by Ibi Zoboi. *Black Enough: Stories of Being Young and Black in America*. New York, Blazer + Bray, 2019.

Grade Level:

9th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Short Stories; African American teenagers; Ethnic Identity; African American fiction; Anthologies; Books for reluctant readers

Related Books: *19 Love Songs* by David Levithan, *A Phoenix First Must Burn: Sixteen Stories of Black Girl Magic, Resistance, and Hope* edited by Patrice Caldwell, *It's a Whole Spiel: Love, Latkes, and other Jewish Stories* Edited by Katherine Locke and Laura Silverman.

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

School Library Journal Best Books, 2019, YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, 2020, Starred Reviews: Kirkus (November 1, 2018), Publishers Weekly (October 22, 2018), School Library Journal (November 2018), Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation

Summary: Ibi Zoboi edited seventeen short stories from various authors to provide a comprehensive look of what it means to be Black in America. These stories cover a variety of Black experiences, including those from upper class wealthy families, middle class families, and financially struggling families. Early romantic and sexual experiences are explored including heterosexual, homosexual, bi-racial, and different socio-economic backgrounds. These coming-of-age stories discuss how these teens come to terms with their bodies, sexual feelings, professional goals, beliefs, and what it means to be Black. Through these slice-of-life stories, teens are wrestling with what it means to be Black, and with reconciling their personal goals with the Black image they are expected to uphold.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners V. Explore A. Think Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by:

Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes.

On a Google Slide, write a letter to a character from one of the stories expressing your thoughts about their experiences.

Depending on the story, you may offer advice, share your similar or different experiences, or express your opinions.

Share your letter with another classmate.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: This book would make a wonderful addition to any library because the short stories are both engaging and interesting. While the stories can be read independently of one another, there is power in reading all of them because the readers see that all the Black teenagers face the same question: How can I be myself without abandoning my Black family and community? In some stories the teens were worried about being successful in school for fear of being called an Oreo—Black on the outside and White on the inside. In other stories, teens were worried about falling in love with the wrong person—someone White, someone who is the same-sex, or someone who is from the bad side of town. The writers portrayed with integrity how Black teens desperately want to discover who they are and what they believe apart from their families and their Black community but are often fearful they will let them down if they truly express themselves.

Appeal to Young Adults: Teens will enjoy reading about the experiences of other teens told from the first-person point-of-view. The characters in the book ponder questions teens are known for exploring such as: Can I accept the way my body looks? How are boys and girls expected to behave? Am I beginning to understand sexuality? Can I function independently without my parents? Do I know what career I want to pursue? What do I believe in? (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Structure: Short stories

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story* by “escaping” into seventeen engaging short stories (Shesman). Readers may compare and contrast their experiences with the characters’ experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story*. Readers may be experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* by thinking about issues such as racism, discrimination, socio-economic differences, struggling to belong, homophobia, and first sexual experiences (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: The short stories work together to create a unified voice describing the experiences of Black Americans.

Negative Aspects: None



Title: *Dig*

King, A.S. *Dig*. New York, Dutton Books, 2019

<p>Grade Level 9th-12th</p>	<p>Genre & Topics General Fiction, Racism, Discrimination, Families, Poverty, Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, White Supremacy</p>	<p>Award or List 2020 Michael L. Printz Award Best fiction for Young Adults: 2020</p>	<p>Related Books <i>Recipe for Hate</i> by Warren Kinsella <i>Devils Within</i> by S. F. Henson <i>Island</i> by Patrick Downes</p>
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Summary

The reader peeks into the lives of five teenagers—Loretta, CanIHelpYou?, Malcom, The Shoveler, and the Freak—who each come from dysfunctional families. The teenagers have their own personal struggles due to their up bringing and are trying to make sense of who they are despite their families. When an old white woman hires The Shoveler to paint her house, the reader learns how a blood transfusion the old white woman received as a child—from a Black donor—affected her marriage, how she raised her children, and impacted her grandchildren. At the end of the story, the characters discover they are each related to the old white woman. The teenagers are determined to support each other and break the bonds of racist thinking which has plagued their family.

Reading Promotion Strategy

The librarian will collaborate with the English or Social Studies teacher to use this book and related materials in the classroom. Students will watch videos about the racial tensions in the 1970s, read articles on how donated blood was separated for whites and blacks, and discuss how the grandmother’s racist thinking created a dysfunctional family.
I. Inquire A. Think Learners display curiosity and initiative by: 2. Recalling prior and background knowledge as a context for new meaning (AASL Standards and Framework for Learners).

Evaluation

Personal Reaction: I found this book very uncomfortable to read, which was the author’s intention. All of the teenage characters are struggling with complex and serious issues. I felt disturbed for Loretta, frustrated for CanIHelpYou?, sad for Malcom, disappointed for The Shoveler, and confused about The Freak. While this book was not an enjoyable read, King writes a creative story showing how racist thinking can affect future generations in a variety of ways. The book provides a satisfying ending with the reader finally understanding how all the characters all fit together.

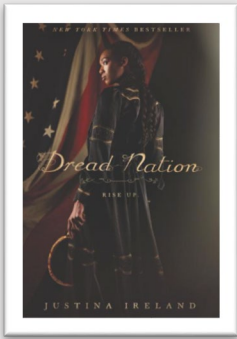
Appeal to Young Adults: The characters in this book are trying to figure out who they are and what they believe apart from their parents. Teenage readers will be able to identify with the desire each character has to find his or her own voice.

Memorable Literary Element: The story is told through the perspectives of each character.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story* because they are intrigued about The Freak and want to know how all the characters fit together. Readers will experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* because they will both want to know why the characters are the way they are and will be able to identify with the characters’ desires to live differently than their parents. Readers will experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* by thinking about racism and its effects on families and societies.

Positive Aspects: King masters showing and not telling, letting the reader understand for themselves how a grandmother’s racist thinking created a dysfunctional family.

Negative Aspects: There should be a trigger warning due to the sexual and physical abuse in the book. The jacket cover spoils the ending by revealing that all the characters are in the same family.



Title: *Dread Nation*

Ireland, Justina. *Dread Nation*. New York, Balzer + Bray, 2018.

Grade Level:

9th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Horror Fiction, Historical Fantasy, Zombies, African Americans, America Civil War Era (1861-1865), 1880s, United States, Missing Persons, Oppression (Psychology)

Related Books:

Deathless Divide by Justina Ireland, *Elatsoe* by Darcie Little Badger, *The Gilded Ones* by Namina Forna

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

Locus Young Adult Book Award, 2019, School Library Journal Best Books, 2018, YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2018, Starred Reviews: Booklist (November 15, 2017), Publisher's Weekly (January 29, 2018), School Library Journal (February 2018), Kirkus (February 15, 2018), Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation

Summary:

Jane McKeene is a bi-racial, bi-sexual teenager girl whose father was a white man and a major in the Civil War and whose mother was a light-skinned African American woman who passed as a white slave owner of the Rose Hill Plantation. Jane is sent to Miss Preston's School of Combat in Baltimore where she learns how to kill the undead (the shamblers), who have been rising from their graves since the War between the States. She has hopes of becoming an Attendant (a personal protector from shamblers) for a wealthy white woman. While blacks are free after the war, they are definitely not treated equally; they are thought of as sub-human and are used for experimental vaccine research. When Jane, Katherine (a fellow student at Miss Preston's), and Jackson (Jane's former love) discover the mayor's secret, they are sent out West to a town called Summerland. Together they must try to escape brutal mistreatment, fight the undead, and finally be free.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards and Framework for Learners IV. Curate. Learners gather information appropriate to the task by: 1. Seeking a variety of sources.

In learning groups, research information for the following question and present your findings using Adobe Spark or Microsoft Sway: How were Blacks in the U.S. treated after the Civil War? Research Emancipation Proclamation, Reconstruction, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, the Black Codes, Jim Crow Laws, and Civil Rights Act of 1866. Consider using the History Channel's website www.history.com/news/black-codes-reconstruction-slavery for background information before accessing the school databases.

Evaluation:

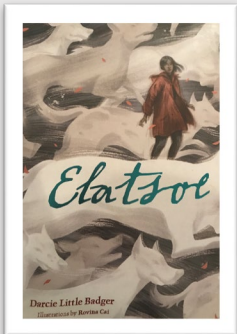
Personal Reaction: Ireland's spell-binding novel kept me in suspense from the first sentence until the last. Her thoughtful word choices, phrases, and sentences made the terrifying book enjoyable to read. While the shambler (zombie) scenes were frightening, the racist actions of the townspeople were far more horrifying. Ireland haunts the reader by showing how the real evil in our society comes not from the dead but from the living.

Appeal to Young Adults: Teens will enjoy this book because it contains "characters with whom they can identify" and "situations they can experience vicariously" (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Structure: Unread letters between Jane and her mother included at the top of every chapter foster an emotional bond between the reader and the characters. The letters also add a sense of realism to an unrealistic story.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story* and experience "Unconscious Delight" due to the shamblers, combat training, and fight scenes (Shesman). Readers will experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* because they will be curious about the horrific sides of life as means of comparison to their own lives (Shesman). Readers may identify with Jane and how she challenges the status quo. Readers will experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* by considering issues of slavery, racism, conformity, social pressures, and justice. Teens may think about our current racial issues and their response to those issues.

Positive Aspects: Ireland, a master writer, beautifully weaves a story which evokes compassion, empathy, and fear, and haunts the reader long after the book is closed. Concepts of slavery, racism, discrimination, and same-sex attraction are explored. **Negative Aspects:** None



Title: *Elatsoe*

Badger, Darcie Little. *Elatsoe*. Illustrated by Rovina Cai. New York, Levine Querido, 2020.

Grade Level:

9th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Fantasy Fiction, Ghosts, Magic, Murder, Mystery, Native American women, Vampires

Related Books:

Dread Nation by Justina Ireland, *Healer of the Water Monster* by Brian Young, *Tigers, Not Daughters* by Samantha Marby

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

ALA Notable Children’s Book, 2021, YASLA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2021, Golden Kite Honor Book for Fiction, 2021, Starred Reviews: Booklist (July 1, 2020), Kirkus (June 15, 2020), Publishers Weekly (June 22, 2020), Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation

Summary:

Elatsoe- also known as Ellie to her friends- is an a-sexual teenage girl of Lipan Apache descent with paranormal gifts like raising animal ghosts and accessing the underworld. Paranormal life is the norm in America with vampires, fairies, coyote people, ghosts, and opportunities to pursue paranormal education at Herotonic University. Tragedy strikes when Ellie’s cousin—Trevor—is killed in a car crash leaving behind a wife and baby. When Trevor contacts Elatsoe in a dream, he asks her to keep his family safe, and informs her that he was murdered by a man named Abe Allerton. Determined to avenge her cousin, Elatsoe travels to South Texas to investigate what really occurred the night Trevor died. With the help of Ellie’s parents, her friend Jay (who is of fairy descent and can access fairy portals), her ghost dog Kirby, and the inspiration of her six Great-Grandmothers, Elatsoe discovers the truth about the beloved Doctor Allerton of Willowbee, Texas and the type of medicine he practices.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards and Framework for Learners III. Collaborate. B. Create Learners participate in personal, social, and intellectual networks by: 1. Using a variety of communication tools and resources.

Storytelling is an important aspect of Elatsoe’s family and culture. Greek Mythology also plays an important role in the novel. Using library resources, find either a Native American story or a Greek Myth that you will read and re-tell either live or using Chromebook recording apps Voice Recorder, Twisted Wave, or Mic Note.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: I enjoyed how Darcie Little Badger creatively mixes Indigenous stories, Greek Mythology, vampires, fairies, ghosts, coyote people, the underworld, and paranormal activity in this thrilling young adult novel. While the story is fantasy, I felt that the characters, writer’s voice, and plot unfolded realistically, making the story feel genuine and not exaggerated. Badger’s use of detail makes this alternate America feel like a real place.

Appeal to Young Adults: Teens will identify with characters’ desires to bring about justice and will enjoy experiencing the paranormal situations vicariously.

Memorable Literary Element: Conflict: The vampire fight scene at the end of the novel holds the reader in suspense.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in a Story* and experience “Unconscious Delight” due to the vampires, fairies, ghosts, coyote people, and a vivid trip to the underworld (Shesman). Readers will experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* due to the respectable story line—even though it is pure fantasy—and realistic speech patterns between the characters (Shesman). Readers who are “curious about other sides of life (bizarre, unbelievable, and grotesque) as a means of comparison” will enjoy this book filled with interesting characters (Shesman). Readers will experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* and will consider the similarities between our America and Elatsoe’s America, and how we both encounter issues of justice, human weaknesses, and human strengths (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: *Elatsoe* sheds light on the Lipan Apache tribe and on a-sexuality. **Negative Aspects:** None



Title: *The Enigma Machine*

Wein, Elizabeth. *The Enigma Game*. New York, Hyperion, 2020.

Grade Level:

7th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Historical Fiction, Codes (Communication), War Stories, World War II-Cryptography, Thrillers and Suspense, Second World War era (1939-1945), Bi-racial Characters

Related Books:

Lovely War by Julie Berry, *Rebel Spy* by Veronica Rossi, *They Went Left* by Monica Hesse

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

YASLA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2021. Starred Review: Kirkus (March 1, 2020), Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation

Summary:

The novel is told through the perspective of three different characters: Louisa (a newly orphaned, fifteen-year-old, Jamaican-born, teenage girl whose Mom was white and whose Dad was black), Jamie (a nineteen-year-old flight lieutenant for the Royal Air Force), and Ellen (an eighteen-year-old volunteer driver for the Auxiliary Territorial Service for the RAF who tries to hide that she is a Traveller). After Louisa's parents both died in the war, she began looking for work, and gets a job assisting an elderly German woman travel from an alien detainment camp back to her niece's pub/boarding house in Scotland. Since Louisa gets along well with the elderly woman, she is hired by the niece to stay long-term as a caregiver. The characters intertwine since Ellen is a boarder at the pub/boarding house and Jamie frequents the pub with his flight crew after their missions. When a German pilot is apprehended and made to stay at the boarding house overnight, he leaves an Enigma machine that can decode messages. Louisa, Ellen, and Jamie must decide what to do with the machine, the messages they receive, and whether or not they can trust the information deciphered.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners I. Inquire D. Grow Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by: Enacting new understanding through real-world connections.

The Enigma Game highlights the roles women played in WWII. Using library databases, research women's roles in World War II, take notes, and discuss your findings with your learning group. Explore the following websites: *History.com*, www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/american-women-in-world-war-ii-1, *BBC.com*, www.bbc.com/future/article/20171009-the-female-code-breakers-who-were-left-out-of-history-books, and *CNN.com*, www.cnn.com/2017/10/11/opinions/code-girls-iiza-mundy-opinion/index.html. What roles in your research were in the book and what roles were different?

Evaluation:

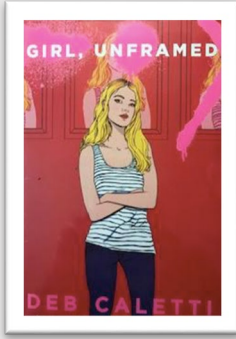
Personal Reaction: I enjoyed reading about the tender relationship between the old woman and Louisa. I found Wein's novel fresh by discussing the role Caribbean men and women played serving Britain in World War II, Scotland's presence in the Royal Air Force, and the role women played as part of the Auxiliary Territorial Service. My favorite detail was how the crew put coins in the pub ceiling before going on a mission, so they had money to pay for their next drink when they returned from war. Hauntingly, the ceiling was covered with coins from men who never returned.

Appeal to Young Adults: Teens will enjoy the questions explored throughout this novel including- How do boys behave? How do girls behave? Am I aware of community groups outside my own? Can I function emotionally (as these characters do) without depending on parents or adults? (Shesman). Teens will also enjoy that all three perspectives are from the points-of-view of teenagers who have a growing sense of independence from adults (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Setting: The story takes place in 1940 during World War II in Scotland.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in a Story* by becoming wrapped up in the story of the Enigma Machine, the secret codes, and the intrigue of whether or not characters will be caught by the Germans (Shesman). Readers will experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* because the characters appear real and the story feels like something that could happen (Shesman). Readers may experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond Self* and into bigger issues in this novel—alien internment camps, the treatment of people who are different, and whether it was honorable for the German pilot to betray his country (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: Positive diverse representation of cultures, races, and religions. Strong female characters. **Negative Aspects:** None



Title: *Girl, Unframed*

Caletti, Deb. *Girl, Unframed*. New York, Simon Pulse, 2020.

Grade Level:

9th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Mystery & Thriller, Teens & Young Adult Family, Teens & Young Adult Social Themes

Related Books:

Burn Our Bodies Down by Rory Power, *Fangirl* by Rainbow Rowell, *Private Lessons* by Cynthia Salaysay, and *The Initial Insult* by Mindy McGinnis

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

Starred Reviews- Booklist (April 15, 2020), Publishers Weekly (May 4, 2020), Kirkus (May 1, 2020), School Library Journal (June 2020), Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation YASLA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2021.

Summary:

“I had a bad feeling, even before I left home. A strong one” (Caletti 1). Sydney is dreading her summer vacation away from her prep school and feels like something bad is going to happen. At the beginning of each chapter detective clues are provided letting the reader know something awful will happen. Sydney feels uncomfortable with her mother—Lila Shore, a celebrity known for her gorgeous looks and sensuality on screen. Sydney, herself, is coming to terms with her own sexuality—her changing body, how men are starting to look at her as a sexual object, and her own sexual desires in her budding teenage romance. For the first time, Sydney feels that her body is not hers. One night at the beach, an event occurs—changing her life forever.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

Using *Gale in Context: Opposing Viewpoints* database use keywords: objectification, sexism, male gaze, feminism, and other related terms. Using your research to inform your thinking, write a letter to Sydney in response to her inner dialogue. Explain how you understand what she is going through and use your research to support your reasons.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners I. Inquire B. Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes: 3. Generating products that illustrate learning.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: Caletti’s writing is real and honest, reminding me exactly how I felt when I was becoming a young woman. I wish I had read a book like this when I was a young girl coming to terms with objectification, body image issues, and the male gaze. I believe this would be a powerful book for a young woman given to her at just the right time. The detective clues, Sydney’s ominous fears, and her teenage romance, were perfectly woven into the story, so the reader does not tire of the serious issues discussed.


Appeal to Young Adults: Readers will relate to this story because it is told from a teen’s perspective and is about a teenager who is trying to distance herself from her mom (Shesman). The novel discusses society’s sexual expectations of women vs. men, accepting one’s body, female objectification and the male gaze, sex and dating (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Structure: Caletti includes “exhibits” at the beginning of each chapter, which are used as police evidence at the end of the book.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers may experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story “Unconscious Delight”* because one gets lost in the mystery element of the book which includes clues, criminal activity, unwanted stalkers, and murder. Also, the romantic relationships may hook the reader. Readers may experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* because one can identify with how Sydney feels about being objectified by men. Readers may experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* by thinking about society’s unfair sexual expectations for men vs. women (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: Caletti accurately describes the inner dialogue of young women when they are beginning to be viewed as sexual beings by men.

Negative Aspects: Some readers may feel uncomfortable due to the descriptions of Sydney’s first sexual experiences and the details of the violent murder. Some readers may not be mature enough to understand Sydney’s thoughts regarding society’s sexual expectations of women. This book discusses the sexual expectations for cisgender heterosexual women.

	<p>Title: <i>How It Went Down</i></p> <p>Magoon, Kekla. <i>How It Went Down</i>. New York, Henry Holt and Company, 2014.</p>		
<p>Grade Level 8th-12th</p>	<p>Genre & Topics General Fiction, Racism, Discrimination, Gang Violence</p>	<p>Award or List Margaret A. Edwards 2021 Winner Coretta Scott King Honor Book: 2015 Best Fiction for Young Adult: 2015</p>	<p>Related Books <i>Inexcusable</i> by Chris Lynch <i>Charm & Strange</i> by Stephanie Kuehn <i>Bright Lights, Dark Nights</i> by Stephen Edmond</p>
<p>Summary Tariq Johnson- a sixteen-year-old who is black- is shot by Jack Franklin- a man who is white. While many community members saw the event, they each have different recollections of what occurred. There is no consensus as to why Tariq was shot, whether he was holding a gun or a Snickers bar, or if he was a member of the Kings gang. When Franklin is not charged with murder and it is determined he was acting in self-defense, friends and family try to make sense of who Tariq was, if he could have been at fault, if this tragedy could have been prevented, and how skin color affects everything.</p>			
<p>Reading Promotion Strategy The librarian will host a discussion group in the library. Together the librarian and students will compare and contrast the book with real life events including: The Black Lives Matter movement, Trayvon Martin’s death, and George Floyd’s death.</p> <p>III. Collaborate A. Think Learners identify collaborative opportunities by 1. Demonstrating their desire to broaden and deepen understandings. 2 Developing new understandings through engagement in a learning group (AASL Standards and Framework for Learners).</p>			
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Personal Reaction: Magoon’s writes a compelling book showing different perspectives of the same event. From the first page, readers are hooked trying to figure out what occurred. Readers witness a community—whose teenagers are trying not only to belong, but, more importantly, to survive—grappling with racism and gang violence.</p> <p>Appeal to Young Adults: Each teenage character is trying to establish his or her identity apart from that of their parents, their gang, and their community.</p> <p>Memorable Literary Element: Magoon writes this book through various perspectives allowing the reader to understand the complexity of racism, gang violence, peer pressure, and white privilege.</p> <p>Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience <i>Level 5–Venturing Beyond the Self</i> because they will be “looking at society through literature (Shesman)”. Readers are taken outside themselves and witness issues which affect society such as: conformity, social pressures, justice, and human weaknesses, and strengths appeal (Shesman).</p> <p>Positive: Beautifully written. The reader becomes invested in the story and in the characters’ lives. Complex issues are discussed thoughtfully and sensitively.</p> <p>Negative Aspects: None</p>			



Title: *How We Roll*

Friend, Natasha. *How We Roll*. New York, Farrar Straus Giroux, 2018.

Grade Level

7th-10th

Genre & Topics

Realistic Fiction, Self-acceptance, Alopecia, Amputees, People with Disabilities, Dating, and Family Life

Award or List

YASLA 2019 Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers Booklist Editors Recommend

Related Books

Extraordinary Means by Robyn Schneider
I Have No Means by Penny Joelson
Our Chemical Hearts by Krystal Sutherland

Summary

Quinn—a middle schooler with alopecia—moves across the country to Massachusetts in order for her autistic brother to attend a specialized school. She is eager to start a new school because at her former school an embarrassing moment occurred that resulted in her having been ostracized due to her baldness. Over time, Quinn learns how to live with her diagnosis with the support of other teenagers on an on-line alopecia support group. To Quinn’s surprise, she finds a group of girls at her new school who appear to be trustworthy of her secret. However, it isn’t until she becomes friends with Jake- an angry double amputee who recently lost his legs- that she finds the confidence to be herself. Quinn and Jake learn through their friendship that since they accept each other they can accept themselves.

Reading Promotion Strategy

This book will be prominently displayed on the Houston’s Hits reading shelf. This book will be included on the monthly Houston’s Hits bookmark.

IV. Curate B. Create Learners gather information appropriate to the task by: 2. Collecting information representing diverse perspectives (AASL Standards and Framework for Learners).

Evaluation

Personal Reaction: Friend writes an engaging modern-day story that discusses sensitive issues in a respectful and light-hearted tone. While most readers will not experience the same problems as the characters in the novel, all readers can empathize with the characters and relate to the desire to be fully accepted by peers. This refreshing story of the power of true friendship will warm the reader’s heart.

Appeal to Young Adults: Friend’s use of the on-line support group and Quinn’s text messages makes this story more relatable for teens.

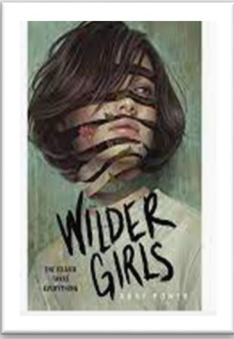
Memorable Literary Element: Themes of disability, difference, and the quest to be accepted, are explored through Quinn’s friendships and her budding romance with an amputee.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story* because they will want to know if Quinn finally is accepted, if Jake re-gains happiness, and if whether or not the two characters develop a romantic relationship. Readers will experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* because all teenagers understand the fear of not being accepted by their peers. The characters and their conversations are also very believable. Readers will also experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* by thinking about peer pressure, human weaknesses, disabilities, and body differences.

Positive Aspects: Friend’s story is relatable, yet she sensitively introduces the reader to struggles with which he or she may not have previous experience with previously. The story is funny, warm, and engaging. The reader roots for all the characters to be accepted.

Negative Aspects: Friend’s story includes sexual content and promiscuous behavior that some students might not be comfortable reading.

	<p>Title: <i>Little White Lies</i></p> <p>Barnes, Jennifer Lynn. <i>Little White Lies</i>. Los Angeles/New York, Freeform, 2018.</p>		
<p>Grade Level 9th-12th</p>	<p>Genre & Topics Mystery Fiction, Debutantes, Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters, Family Life- Southern States</p>	<p>Award or List VOYA Perfect Ten</p>	<p>Related Books <i>The Unfortunates</i> by Kim Liggett <i>The Cousins</i> by Karen M. McManus</p>
<p>Summary</p> <p>Sawyer Taft, an eighteen-year-old auto-mechanic raised by her bar-tending, single mom, receives an unexpected visit from her wealthy grandmother- Vivian Taft- whom she has never-before met. The matriarch provides Sawyer with an offer and a contract, to come live with her for nine months and enter debutante society, in exchange for \$500,000 to be used for college tuition. Sawyer accepts the deal, meets new family members, and makes new friends. Sawyer strives to learn the identify of her father. Along the way, she and the other debutantes uncover family secrets, lies, and—eventually —the truth about the people in their social circles. They also work together to ensure justice is served.</p>			
<p>Reading Promotion Strategy</p> <p>Spring Break QR Code Reading List</p> <p>Spring Break is a wonderful time to read for enjoyment. I will create a list of enjoyable books that can be accessed through a QR code. These books will transport students to another time, place, or culture. All books fit easily in a bag for Spring Break vacation whether students travel to the beach or stay at home on the couch.</p> <p>V. Explore A. Think Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by: 1. Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes (AASL Standards and Framework for Learners).</p>			
<p>Evaluation</p> <p>Personal Reaction: Barnes’ story is easy and enjoyable to read. The reader is eager to know how Sawyer adjusts to her life as a debutante, whether or not she will find out the identify of her father, and if she can help solve the mysteries of her new friends. Barnes creatively uses a social media site to share the scandalous secrets of the community which makes it more relatable to her teenage audience. There are so many twists and turns that the reader wants to continue reading to the end.</p> <p>Appeal to Young Adults: The teenagers in the story act independently from the adults. The teenagers—not the adults—achieve justice for their community. Barnes accurately shows how social media impacts teenage relationships.</p> <p>Memorable Literary Element: The debutante lifestyle—set in contemporary times—allows the reader to experience a different sect in society. The full-page social media posts included in the book allows the reader to understand the secrets being spilled in the community.</p> <p>Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience <i>Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story</i> by experiencing “unconscious delight” & <i>Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story</i> because they will receive pleasure from the book, will respect the story, will want to know why characters act a certain way, will be curious about other ways of life, and will look to see if they can identify with any aspects of high society.</p> <p>Positive aspects: The author was a debutante, herself, which gives the reader an inside look at debutante traditions.</p> <p>Negative aspects: Sawyer and her friends engage in unrealistic risky illegal activity—without legal consequences—to uncover the truths in their community, which at sometimes seems too hard to believe.</p>			

	<p>Title: <i>Wilder Girls</i></p> <p>Power, Rory. <i>Wilder Girls</i>. New York, Delacorte Press, 2019.</p>		
<p>Grade Level 9th -12th</p>	<p>Genre & Topics Mystery Fiction, Quarantine, Diseases, Survival, Boarding schools, Schools, LGBTQIA+</p>	<p>Award or List YASLA’s Teens Top Ten Booklist Editors Recommend</p>	<p>Related Books <i>Agnes At The End Of The World</i> by Kelly McWilliams <i>Our Last Echoes</i> by Kate Alice Marshall <i>The Sacrifice Box</i> by Martin Stewart</p>
<p>Summary: Boarding school girls on Raxter Island are forced to keep quarantine for over eighteen months, after a deadly disease known as The Tox has spread. The disease originated in the nearby wood, has affected the plants and the animals, and has spread to the girls and the faculty. Each person infected with the disease exhibits different body deforming symptoms. When Byatt disappears from the infirmary, Hetty and Reese decide to break the quarantine and go past the fence line in order to find her. Instead, what they find are more questions than answers, leading them to try and uncover the truth once and for all.</p>			
<p>Reading Promotion Strategy Students can compare and contrast their experience with quarantine and the pandemic with that of the Raxter girls’ experiences. Students will discuss their thoughts with peers in literature circles. III. Collaborate B. Create Learners participate in personal, social, and intellectual networks by: Establishing connections with other learners to both build on prior knowledge and create new knowledge.</p>			
<p>Evaluation Personal Reaction: It took a few chapters to settle into Power’s writing style, but then I found myself on the edge of my seat and emersed in the novel. This is the perfect book during the COVID-19 pandemic because it is a hyperbolic version of what our world is currently experiencing. While the reader is most concerned with if the characters will be cured, if they are able to get off the island, and if The Tox is annihilated, Power also causes the reader to care about the characters, their friendships, and their relationships. Appeal to Young Adults: The teenagers are independent from their parents and adults and must take care of themselves and one another. Memorable Literary Element: Power’s choppy tone adds an element of suspense. She uses gaps between words when a character has difficulty forming thoughts. The story alternates between Hetty and Byatt’s point-of-view. Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience <i>Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story</i> due to how The Tox has overtaken the island and deforming all the plants, animals, and people in its path. Readers may experience <i>Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story</i> due to its “bizarre, unbelievable, grotesque...maybe as a means of comparison” to their own lives (Shesman). They also may find themselves in the friendships and LBGQTQIA+ relationships. Readers may also experience <i>Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self</i> and look “at society through literature (Shesman)”. Readers may see a connection between the issues in the book—climate change, COVID-19, self-preservation, betrayal, murder, self-defense—and our society. Positive Aspects: Suspenseful, action-packed, great narration to describe characterization, scenery, and action. Negative Aspects: Maybe too dark and gruesome due to how The Tox deforms the characters.</p>			



Title: *More Than Just a Pretty Face*

Masood, Syed M. *More Than Just a Pretty Face*. New York, Little, Brown and Company, 2020.

Grade Level:
9th-12th

Genre & Topics:
Arranged Marriages, Muslim Teenagers, Multi-cultural Romances, **Romantic Comedies**, Teenage Romances

Related Books:
All-American Muslim Girl by Nadine Jolie Courtney, *What I Like About You* by Marisa Kanter, and *When Dimple met Rishi* by Sanhra Menon

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

Kirkus Reviews Issue: June 1, 2020 & Review Posted Online: May 16, 2020, Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2021.

Summary:

Danyal—a funny, attractive, teenage Muslim boy, who is perceived as not-very-smart—has dreams of becoming a chef. He is in love with his best friend’s gorgeous twin sister Kaval, but wonders if he is good enough to marry her. When he is selected to participate in the Renaissance Man—an academic competition—he thinks it’s his chance to finally show everyone (especially Kaval) that he is more than just a pretty face. When Danyal’s parents attempt to arrange a marriage with Bisma, he finds out her scandalous secret, and they form a friendship. Danyal contemplates true love and what it means to accept yourself.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

Learn about a classmate’s family traditions which could include food, holidays, religion, or clothing. Share your findings with the class in the presentation style of your choice- Microsoft Sway, Animoto, Adobe Spark etc.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners II. Include A. Think Learners contribute a balanced perspective when participating in a learning community by: 3. Describing their understanding of cultural relevancy and placement within the global learning community.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: Masood’s heart-warming novel is funny and adorable even while addressing serious issues encountered by many Muslim teenagers. These issues include protecting family honor, maintaining good reputation, participating in arranged marriages, continuing traditions, practicing religion, following dating customs, and understanding the importance of virginity in religion/culture. I thoroughly enjoyed all the characters and wanted them to all succeed. Masood’s humorous writing had me laughing out loud. In my opinion, this book easy-to-follow book is enjoyable and would be great for a reluctant reader.

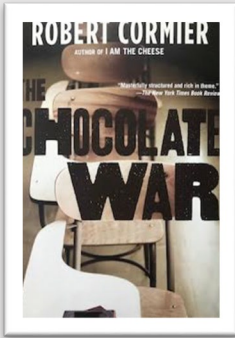
Appeal to Young Adults: Teenagers will enjoy that the main character is a teen boy trying to decide what he thinks about dating and marriage apart from his parents’ traditional Muslim beliefs (Shesman). Readers can vicariously experience the characters’ situations (Shesman). The story—told from the teen’s point of view—includes the following relatable issues: expected behavior for boys vs. girls, sexuality, marriage, school, career choices, personal beliefs vs. religious or family beliefs, and what it means to behave ethically (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Mood: Humorous. Danyal’s character is kind and funny—charming the reader.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story “Unconscious Delight”* due to the intriguing story line, and the mixing of humor, family, tradition, peer pressure, and scandal. The delightful characters hook the reader from the beginning making the reader feel invested in the characters’ lives. Readers may experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* due to the respectable storyline and may empathize with the teenagers trying to “find themselves and where they fit in society” (Shesman). Readers who are struggling with their beliefs vs their family’s beliefs will empathize with this aspect of the story. Readers may experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* by thinking about societal issues of racism, religious extremism, sexism, dating and marriage (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: Funny, honest, adorable, with a happy and satisfying ending.

Negative Aspects: In the ending, the male character rescues the female character from a life of dishonor instead of the female character rescuing herself.



Title: *The Chocolate War*

Cormier, Robert. *The Chocolate War*. New York, Pantheon Books, 1974.

Grade Level:

7th-10th

Genre & Topics: Teenage Rebels, Prep Schools, Bullying and bullies, Realistic Fiction, Classics

Related Books: *Violent Ends: A Novel in Seventeen Points of View* edited by Shaun David Hutchinson, *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, and *I, Claudia* by Mary McCoy

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

Kirkus Starred Review- Kirkus Reviews Issue: April 1, 1974 & Review Posted Online: March 16, 2012, School Library Journal, 17 May 2013, Wilson's Senior High Core Collections Essential Rating.

Summary: Brother Leon has a dilemma. Trinity School needs money, so he decides to order more chocolate than usual for students to sell this year in the fund-raiser. However, if the students fail to sell all the chocolate, the school will have lost money instead of raised money as he intended. In order to ensure that all the chocolate is sold, Brother Leon asks Archie to get the Vigils—the secret society—involved in the fundraising. When Jerry Renault decides he will not sell any chocolate, other students decide to sell less chocolate than usual. The Vigils employ peer pressure, intimidation, and violence to ensure all the chocolate is sold, revealing how wickedness can run rampant when good people do nothing.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

Research group think and its impact on a world event. What information sources would you use? How would you go about finding this information? Share your research findings in a creative way of your choice.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners IV. Curate A. Think Learners act on an information need by: 2. Identifying possible sources of information. 3. Making critical choices about information sources to use.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: I found this hyperbolic situation within the microcosm of a school community very thought provoking. This is a powerful book that causes students to think about what could happen if good people stay silent. This book helps students understand how disturbing events in world history have occurred- gladiator fights, the Holocaust, public hangings, etc. This book would foster excellent discussion about peer pressure and group think.

Appeal to Young Adults: Readers will enjoy that the main characters are teenagers, that the discussions reflect teenage conversations, and that the situations and plot revolves around teenagers (Sheman). The teenagers in the story are the decision makers and hold the power. While reading, teenagers will consider what they believe in and how they should behave ethically (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Theme: Peer pressure and group think can allow immense evil to occur. The reader encounters what can happen when people become power-hungry, scared, or threatened, and others refuse to stand up for what is right.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story* “Unconscious Delight” because they will be entrenched in how the characters will respond to peer pressure and intimidation. Readers will want to know if and how the issues become resolved at the end of the story. Readers will experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* because they will think about how they would respond if they were in that situation. This hyperbolic example of peer pressure makes the reader consider peer pressure in their own lives. Readers will experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* because they will think about how power, peer pressure, and intimidation lead to issues in society. Students will contemplate Nazi Germany and racism in America.

Positive Aspects: This book explores what can happen if peer pressure and group think go unchallenged by society.

Negative Aspects: The LGBTQ community is portrayed negatively when Jerry is called slurs and is beaten up for being perceived to be gay. Descriptions of masturbation and female objectification may make readers feel uncomfortable.



Title: *The Poet X*

Acevedo, Elizabeth. *The Poet X*. New York, HarperTeen, 2018.

Grade Level:

9th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Teenage poets; Realistic Fiction; Teenage Girls; Harlem; New York City; **Novels in verse**; Coming-of-age stories; Books for reluctant readers

Related Books:

Clap When You Land by Elizabeth Acevedo, *Love Is a Revolution* by Renee Watson, *I Know you Remember* by Jennifer Donaldson

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

ALA Notable Children’s Book, 2019, Michael L. Printz Award, 2019, YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2019, YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, 2019, Starred Reviews: Kirkus (January 15, 2018), Publishers Weekly (January 22, 2018), School Library Journal (March 2018), Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation

Summary: Acevedo uses poetry and prose to tell a coming-of-age story about Xiomara who is wrestling with finding her voice apart from her strict Catholic mother’s beliefs. Since Xiomara’s body began to develop, she has been the target of sexual harassment everywhere she goes and has learned to use her fists to stick up for herself. When she develops feelings for a boy in her biology class, she must decide what she believes and confront her mother, her priest, her friend, her brother, and ultimately herself. Xiomara turns to poetry—not her fists—to explore her thoughts and feelings about life and love, and gains the confidence needed to be her own person. She realizes—through her slam poetry club and by performing her poems—that her words deserve to be heard by others and that her words can comfort those who have not yet found their voice. But when Xiomara discovers that her mother found and destroyed her poetry journal, she must determine if she will follow her family’s expectations or if her poetry gave her the courage to finally live her life.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners V. Explore A. Think Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by: 3. Engaging in inquiry-based processes for personal growth.

Xiomara turns to writing poetry to express what she feels and what she wants to say. Look for a poem—either on the internet or from the poetry section in the library—that resonates with you. You may creatively display this poem on Adobe Spark, Google Slides, Instagram, Microsoft Sway, or in a sketch book. It is your choice if you want to share your work with the class.

Evaluation:

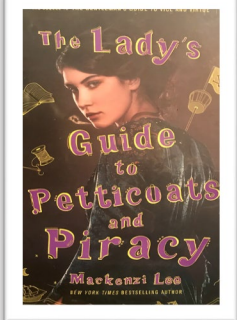
Personal Reaction: Acevedo beautifully uses poetry and prose to describe Xiomara’s anger at her mother, her frustrations with religion, and the all-consuming excitement of young love. The author shows growth and development in all of her characters—which makes for a satisfying ending. I particularly enjoyed reading how Xiomara gained the confidence to stand up for herself and for her poetry. I thought it was valuable to read how the family was able to heal and come together even though they had different beliefs.

Appeal to Young Adults: Teens will enjoy this book since it is told from a teen’s perspective and discusses many concepts that are important to teens including: learning to accept the way one’s body looks, coming to terms with how boys vs. girls should behave, learning to function emotionally without depending on parents, thinking about sexuality and marriage, and exploring one’s personal beliefs (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Conflict: The conflict where the mother burns Xiomara’s poetry journal in front of her—despite her daughter’s pleas—is extremely powerful.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3–Losing Oneself in the Story* because they will “escape” into Xiomara’s story and how she navigates her beliefs, her family, and her love life, while discovering who she is inside (Shesman). Readers will experience *Level 4–Finding Oneself in a Story* because they will relate to Xiomara’s desire to figure out who she is apart from her family. Acevedo is successful at creating relatable characters with realistic speech patterns that allow the reader to understand why characters act the way they do (Shesman). Readers will also experience *Level 5–Venturing Beyond the Self* because they will think about issues such as social pressures, conformity, religion, and belief (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: Acevedo’s powerful poetry and prose may give students a greater appreciation for books written in verse. Students may also become interest in Slam poetry. **Negative Aspects:** Some students may think the author is casting religion in a negative light.



Title: *The Lady's Guide to Petticoats and Piracy*

Lee, Mackenzi. *The Lady's Guide to Petticoats and Piracy*. New York, Katherine Tegen Books, 2018.

Grade Level:

9th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Adventure Fiction, Historical Fiction, Women Physicians, Piracy, Europe, 18th Century, Homosexuality, Gender Roles

Related Books:

A Great and Terrible Beauty by Libby Bray, *Seafire* by Natalie C. Parker, *The Mermaid, the Witch, and the Sea* by Maggie Tokuda-Hall

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

Amelia Bloomer List, 2019, YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2019, Starred Reviews: Booklist (September 1, 2018), School Library Journal (September 2018), Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation.

Summary:

It is the 18th century and Felicity Montague desires nothing more than to study medicine at a university and become a physician. After being rejected by yet another medical board because she is female, Felicity gets a tip that Dr. Alexander Platt—her medical idol—is looking for people to join him in three weeks on an up-coming expedition after his wedding and would probably allow a woman to join him. When Sim—a mysterious young woman and pirate—offers to pay for Felicity's trip from London to Germany, Felicity agrees despite strong misgivings. Felicity discovers that Dr. Alexander Platt is engaged to her estranged childhood friend Johanna and does not have honorable intentions. She uncovers that both the doctor and Sim are after the same artifacts Johanna's mother left in a safe. Felicity and Johanna decide they must get to the safe in Zurich before the others so as to find what her mother left behind. Felicity, Johanna, and Sim go on amazing fast-paced adventure encountering pirates and sea dragons, all while discovering what it means to be strong women.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners V. Explore C. Share 1 Learners engage with the learning community by: Expressing curiosity about a topic of personal interest or curricular relevance.

Felicity wanted to study to become a doctor more than anything else in the world. She was denied because she was a woman. While 18th and 19th century female doctors were rare, Mackenzi Lee in her Author's Note identifies women who made accomplishments in the field of medicine. Using a Gale Power Search to search Gale databases, Encyclopedia Britannica, or internet searches, research Dortha Erxleben and Sophia Jex-Blake. Create a pamphlet using Canva to discuss how these women paved the way for women in medicine.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: I began reading Lee's fast-paced, adventurous novel, expecting that the plot would resemble a historical fiction novel outlining her quest to become a medical doctor. However, by the middle of the novel this adventure fiction novel turned out to be more mystery/fantasy fiction with secrets, treasure maps, sea dragons, magic potions, and the pirates that protected it all. Regardless of the surprise, I was not disappointed and enjoyed this captivating adventure from the first page to the last.

Appeal to Young Adults: Felicity wrestles with a lot of concepts which teenagers can relate—including sexuality, marriage, how do girls behave, how do boys behave, what do traditional gender norms have to do with me, and do I know what career I want to pursue (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Tone: Lee's novel is action-packed, fast-paced, and easy-to-read, which makes it easy to get swept up in the story.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in a Story* and "Unconscious Delight" due to the fast-paced adventure with pirates and sea dragons. Readers may experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* due to identifying with Felicity's desire to find herself and where she fits in society (Shesman). Readers may experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* because they will consider the following issues: homosexuality and its acceptance in society, women's fight for equality with men, social pressures, friendship, and betrayal (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: The quick-witted jokes and conversational banter reflect teenage speech patterns and makes the novel more realistic and enjoyable. Strong character development and the characters growth are evident throughout the story.

Negative Aspects: Some conversations are sexual in nature and may be uncomfortable for some readers.



Title: *The Rise and Fall of Charles Lindbergh*

Fleming, Candace. *The Rise and Fall of Charles Lindbergh*. New York, Schwartz & Wade Books, 2020.

Grade Level:

7th-12th

Genre & Topics:

Nonfiction; Lindbergh, Charles A.; Pilots, Kidnapping; Eugenics.; 20th century; Biographies

Related Books:

Dissenter on the Bench: Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Life and Work by Victoria Ortiz, *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, *The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion, and the Fall of Imperial Russia* by Candace Fleming

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

School Library Journal Best Nonfiction Books, 2020, **YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction, 2021**, Middle and Junior High School Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation, Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation

Summary: Fleming writes about the life of Charles Lindbergh, starting with his childhood and upbringing, and providing information about his parents and grandparents. She describes how he became interested in aviation, how he learned to fly, and his historic flight from New York to Paris, which led him to becoming a larger-than-life media sensation. The reader learns about his interest in the America First movement and in the eugenics movement—the belief that only those who are strong, healthy, smart, and White should be allowed to reproduce. While Lindbergh was in support of Hitler and Nazism, he also believed in Isolationism and that the United States should stay out of World War II. Fleming describes his interest in medical advancement and his work with Dr. Carrell—with the purpose of preserving organs—so people might live forever. Her use of primary and secondary documents allows the reader to have an inside look at the drama and devastation surrounding Lindbergh's son's kidnapping and how it became a media circus. At the end of the biography, Fleming includes how Lindbergh's thinking began to change, his new passion for the environment, how he died, and the secrets he kept from his family.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

AASL Standards Framework for Learners II. Include B. Create Learners adjust their awareness of the global learning community by: 1. Interacting with learners who reflect a range of perspectives.

Consider Lindbergh's stance on America First and Isolationism, the role of the media surrounding his baby's kidnapping, and the influence of celebrities on our society. How has our society changed or stayed the same since Charles Lindbergh's time period? Find a current article—written in the past year—from *Gale in Context Opposing Viewpoints* to defend your position. In learning groups, share your opinion.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: Causing me to think that she is describing a modern-day Trump rally, Fleming provides an interesting prologue, in which she describes an America First rally with protestors and police officers. Her use of the prologue caused me to be more interested in the biography and made me look for further connections between how life in America was then vs. now. I was intrigued with how obsessed the country and paparazzi were with Charles Lindbergh—especially with his child's kidnapping—and how, in their obsession, they disregarded Charles Lindbergh as a person.

Appeal to Young Adults: Teens will be interested in this novel because they can vicariously experience Lindbergh's flight and the drama surrounding the kidnapping and murder of his son. They will also get to explore community groups and beliefs that are different from their own (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Structure: Fleming uses the prologue to build intrigue.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: After reading the prologue, readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story* and will want to persist through the novel to find out how Lindbergh became such an influential man. Readers will also be intrigued with the kidnapping story (Shesman). Readers may identify with Lindbergh's desire to pursue his dreams and experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* (Shesman). Readers will experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self*, by learning about issues in society including eugenics, Nazism, and Isolationism (Shesman).

Positive Aspects: Fleming's use of primary and secondary sources provides the reader with an insider's perspective.

Negative Aspects: The book is long and may lose the reader's interest.



Title: *The Voting Booth*

Colbert, Brandy. *The Voting Booth*. New York, Hyperion, 2020.

Grade Level:
9th-12th

Genre & Topics: African American Teenagers, Elections, Teenage Romance, Teenagers- Political Activity, **Realistic Fiction**.

Related Books: *You Say It First* by Katie Cotugno and *We Didn't Ask for This* by Adi Alsaid

Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:

Starred Reviews: Booklist (June 1 & 15, 2020), Kirkus (May 15, 2020), and Publishers Weekly (June 15, 2020), Senior High Core Collection (H.W. Wilson) Essential Recommendation, YASL Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2021, YASLA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Readers, 2021.

Summary: Marva, who is a politically-minded young woman, and Duke—whose brother was murdered for his political activism—head to the same polling place to cast their very first vote. While Marva is passionate about voting, Duke just wants to cross it off his list to please his family. When Duke discovers that he showed up at the wrong polling place, Marva decides that she will not rest until he casts his vote. After a series of unexpected events, Marva and Duke end up spending the entire day together. In between their playful banter, they discuss their lives, their families, their fears, and what it is like to be an African American teen in America.

Reading Promotion Strategy:

Explore: Usa.gov: <https://www.usa.gov/register-to-vote>, Maryland State Board of Elections website: <https://elections.maryland.gov/voting/index.html>, Vote.org: <https://www.vote.org/state/maryland/> and *Gale in Context: High School* database to answer the following questions: How does one register to vote in Maryland? Can you register to vote on election day in Maryland? What is the purpose of voting? What is the electoral college? Does your individual vote matter?

AASL Standards Framework for Learners B. Create Learners engaged with new knowledge by following a process that includes: 1. Using evidence to investigate questions.

Evaluation:

Personal Reaction: I enjoyed this entertaining story of two teenagers with very different personalities who come to accept each other and fall in love, after an unexpected day together. While I was hooked from the first page due to the intriguing rom-com storyline, it was the serious discussions and character development which kept me reading until the very end. While this book is cute, Colbert uses the characters' backstories to keep it from being overly sappy or trite. This book has warmth and heart with a satisfying ending.

Appeal to Young Adults: Teenage: Readers will enjoy that the main characters are teenagers, that the story is told from the adolescents' points-of-view, and that they can identify with the characters and live vicariously through their situations (Shesman). Students will relate to the characters' desires to think differently from their parents and will live vicariously through the love story. Teenagers will think about voting and protesting and consider what they believe in and how they should behave ethically in our society (Shesman).

Memorable Literary Element: Mood: Colbert writes a playful and fun book, while managing to respectfully discuss serious issues faced by African American teenagers.

Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience *Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story* “Unconscious Delight” because they will experience “losing themselves in a good story” of Marva and Duke going all over town trying to help Duke vote. Readers will experience *Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story* because they will respect the storyline of a young woman frustrated with her boyfriend. Readers will relate to the use of social media and texting. The conversations are realistic and believable. Readers will begin to think about their voting responsibilities. Readers will experience *Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self* as they look at issues in our society including: racism, unfair voting practices, inter-racial dating, gun violence, and protesting. Teens may begin to look outside themselves and see if they can make society a better place engaging with these issues.

Positive Aspects: Thoughtful discussions of interracial dating, voting, and how individuals can make a difference.

Negative Aspects: None

	<p>Title: <i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i></p>
	<p>Asher, Jay. <i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i>. RazorBill, 2007.</p>
	<p>Grade Level: 8th-11th</p>
	<p>Genre & Topics: Suicide, Rape, Guilt, Realistic Fiction, Challenged Books</p>
<p>Professional Reviews, Awards, or Lists:</p>	<p>Related Books: <i>And We Stay</i> by Jenny Hubbard, <i>Charm & Strange</i> by Stephanie Kuehn, and <i>The Tragedy Paper</i> by Alfred A. Knopf</p>
<p>Summary: While this story begins with Clay sending a box of cassette tapes to the next person on the list, it quickly rewinds to the previous day when he received the box. The seven cassette tapes were recorded by Hannah Baker—the girl at her school who had just committed suicide. Each of the thirteen tape recorded sides is about a person who is responsible for why she decided to end her life. Hannah describes how the people in high school and the experiences—whether mild or tragic—had all overwhelmed her desire to stay alive. The book creatively alternates between Hannah’s tape-recorded words in italics and Clay’s words, thoughts, memories, actions in response to what she says in regular print.</p>	
<p>Reading Promotion Strategy:</p>	<p>Hannah explains how the people on the tapes contributed to her suicide. In discussion groups, share how you would help the listeners who are feeling guilty about Hannah’s death, process this information. AASL Standard and Framework III. Collaborate C. Share: Learners work productively with others to solve problems by: 1. Soliciting and responding to feedback from others. 2. Involving diverse perspectives in their own inquiry processes.</p>
<p>Evaluation:</p>	<p>Personal Reaction: I found the storyline very compelling, making this book difficult to put down. Just like Clay wanted to listen to all the tapes, I wanted to finish the story so I could understand why Hannah ends her life. While her trauma was real, I found it upsetting that she blamed others’ actions for why she ended her life. She wanted the listeners to feel guilty for causing her death and failed to take any responsibility for her own suicide. I believe it is a dangerous thought to think you are responsible for another’s suicide. Appeal to Young Adults: Young adults will enjoy this book because the main characters are teenagers, the dialogue reflects teenage conversations, and is told from teenagers’ points of view (Shesman). Teenagers will be able to identify the issues in the book—sex, alcohol, peer pressure, objectification, and depression—and will easily be able to live vicariously through these situations (Shesman). Memorable Literary Element: Structure: Hannah and Clay’s alternating perspectives and dual storyline occur on the same page. Stages of Literary Appreciation: Readers will experience <i>Level 3—Losing Oneself in the Story “Unconscious Delight”</i> because they will be intrigued with finding out all reasons Hannah decided to end her life. Readers will “escape” into the novel and continue reading to find out what else is revealed in the tapes (Shesman). Readers will experience <i>Level 4—Finding Oneself in a Story Literature</i> because the characters will feel real to them and they will respect the story (Shesman). Readers will identify with Hannah’s quest to try and find her place in high school and ultimately in the world. Students may have endured similar embarrassing and/or tragic experiences. Readers will experience <i>Level 5—Venturing Beyond the Self</i> because they will contemplate issues of depression, suicide, and rape (Shesman). Positive Aspects: The back and forth between Hannah and Clay is very creative. The reader gets to know what Hannah says on the tapes, Clay’s reactions to what she says, and what Clay is doing while listening to the tapes. Negative Aspects: Hannah blames others for her suicide without taking any personal ownership of the situation. This novel can foster survivor guilt for those who lost someone to suicide.</p>

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