



Books about Real-Life Experiences

Making Life Choices, Facing Violence or Abuse, and Living through Family and Relationship Issues

Anderson, Laurie Halse: *Speak*

Reprint edition 1 April 2001, ISBN 014131088X

****Teen Recommended****

Melinda has been at an end-of-summer party—the party that precedes her first year in high school. She and her friends are flattered to be invited and Andy, a popular senior guy, is there. When those at the party start drinking, Melinda, who has had a couple beers, wanders out into the woods and meets Andy, who looks at that point like a Greek god. He wants more than kisses though; Melinda can't fight back because she's drunk. She knows enough to call 911 and get help, but everyone at the party thinks she's ratting. Her life becomes solitary and silent. The book is her inner monologue.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Writing can be therapeutic; this book demonstrates the power of inner monologues. Use selections of the book to help your students write memoirs, diaries, or dramatic monologues.
2. Melinda hangs a poster of Maya Angelou in her “sanctuary,” actually an empty closet previously used by custodians. Maya Angelou was also raped and stayed silent—discuss with your students the symbolism of the poster and the struggle that Melinda and Maya Angelou faced in deciding whether to reveal the names of their assailants.

3. Art class becomes a healing place for Melinda; discuss with your students how art can be used to heal. Ask your students what kind of artwork would represent their life at this point. Have your students do an artistic or creative representation—one that voices their sense of themselves.
4. “Between Voice and Voicelessness: Transacting Silence in Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Speak*” by Elaine J. O’Quinn (*ALAN Review* 29, no. 1 [2001]: 54–58) is a resource for background on the novel.
5. “Speaking Out,” by Laurie Halse Anderson (*ALAN Review* 27, no. 3 [Spring 2000]) shares Anderson’s insights on the novel.
6. For background on Laurie Halse Anderson, check the following websites:

www.authors4teens.com
 greenwood.scbbs.com/servlet/A4TStart?authorid=landerson&
 source=
 www.writerlady.com
 www.viterbo.edu/personalpages/faculty/GSmith/
 LessonPlanforSpeak.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because many teens have been “rejected” when others thought they “ratted” on them, and because rejection often leads to violent actions. This novel shows how one young woman survived the rejection of her peers.
- Because they may have “fallen” for someone who looked handsome and was popular, but have had a terrible experience like Melinda and are now dealing with the shame and guilt of rape or sexual assault.
- Because they might be misunderstood by parents and teachers, as Melinda is, and they need to learn from her story how to handle the difficult position of peer pressure. They can decide whether Melinda’s silence and all she faces because of her silence is the best way to respond.

Other books by Laurie Halse Anderson to consider reading: *Yellow Fever 1793* and *Catalyst*.

Angelou, Maya: *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
Published by Bantam, reissue edition 1 April 1983,
ISBN 0553279378
****Teen Recommended****

The book presents a series of memoirs of Maya Angelou’s life from the time she was three and her beloved brother Bailey was four. Much of their childhood was spent under the care of their paternal grandmother, known to them as Momma. They lived in Stamps, Arkansas, in the years before and during the Depression. Stamps was rigidly segregated and Maya, then known as Marguerite, experienced the results of segregation and fear of Blacks.

Bailey and Marguerite are first sent to Stamps because their parents divorced. Eventually they are taken back to live with their mother in St. Louis. During this time, their mother, Vivian Baxter, is living with Mr. Freeman. Freeman begins sexually abusing Marguerite and eventually rapes her. Eight-year-old Marguerite is threatened with Bailey’s death if she reveals anything about the assault. Because she is so ill after the rape, her mother does find out and Freeman is brought to trial. He is later found murdered, and Marguerite believes that her “words” caused his death. She becomes silent for many months following the assault.

The memoirs also chronicle Marguerite (Maya’s) and Bailey’s adolescence, poignantly describing what it meant to be Black in the pre-Civil Rights era.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Mrs. Bertha Flowers is Angelou’s first “lifeline” after the terrifying experience of the rape and her silence after Mr. Freeman’s death. Mrs. Flowers gives Angelou books and tells her to read them aloud. She also offers this wise advice: “Now no one is going to make you talk—possibly no one can. But bear in mind, language is man’s way of communicating with his fellow man and it is language alone which separates him from the lower animals” (*I Know . . .*, 95). Have your students write a response to Mrs. Flowers’s words.
2. Should Angelou have spoken out? What is the witness’s responsibility, particularly if the witness is a child or young adult? Discuss these questions with your students and relate Angelou’s decision to current situations in your students’ lives and school setting.
3. Maya Angelou was chosen by President-elect Bill Clinton to write a poem for his first inauguration. Her poem is “On the Pulse of Morn-

- ing”—locate a copy of the poem and have students analyze Angelou’s use of language in light of what they know of Angelou from reading the book.
4. Oprah Winfrey did a conversation with Maya Angelou—an extended interview. The video is excellent for accompanying a lesson on Angelou and it gives your students the opportunity to “see” Angelou.
 5. *Borrowed Finery* by Paula Fox is a memoir—nonfiction—that traces a life of a white girl from 1923 onward. It would make a good comparison work for study with Angelou’s novel. Paula Fox has also experienced loss of parents, particularly her mother, and the memoir traces that theme of loss throughout Fox’s childhood and adolescence. Use both novels to teach your students about the genre of memoir.
 6. “Seeking *Cuentos*, Developing Narrative Voices” by Louise Garcia Harrison, an essay in *United in Diversity* edited by Jean E. Brown and Elaine C. Stephens (NCTE, 1998), presents ways to teach Angelou’s novel in tandem with *The House on Mango Street* and *Woman Hollering Creek* by Sandra Cisneros; *Blue Skin of the Sea* by Graham Salisbury; and *Living Up the Street* by Gary Soto. Using these novels, you can incorporate a number of multicultural perspectives.
 7. “*The Awakening* and Young Adult Literature: Seeking Self-Identity in Many Ways and Many Cultures” by Pamela Sissi Carroll (chapter 4 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995) uses *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* as one of the autobiographical pieces to complement *The Awakening*, a text frequently taught in American literature courses.
 8. The following are websites with lesson plan ideas:
 - www.westga.edu/~kidreach/lessonplans/cagedbirdlesson.html
 - www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmCagedBird01.asp
 - www.webenglishteacher.com/angelou.html
 - www.planetbookclub.com/teachers/civil.html
 - www.beyondbooks.com/bbteacher/lessons/indexlam12.asp
 - www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1985/3/85.03.03.x.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because many more teens today are raised by grandparents or relatives if the teen’s parents have separated or divorced, so teens can relate to Maya’s and Bailey’s experiences; Black American students frequently live with grandparents.

- Because they might have to live with a stepparent or with a live-in male or female friend of their parents and find this stepparent is abusive, so Angelou’s story can be a guide for them in the lonely position of not being believed by the parent who has remarried.
- Because they might be a victim of prejudice or harassment, and Maya Angelou is both a role model and a spokeswoman for Black Americans and tolerance.

Blume, Judy: *Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret*
Published by Laurel Leaf; Reissue edition 1 October 1991,
ISBN 0440904196
****Teen Recommended****

Margaret is nearly 12 and she and the “Pre-Teen Sensations” are filled with questions about what it will be like to start maturing, have their menstrual periods, and date. At the same time, Margaret has a much larger issue—she is “no religion” since her mother was baptized a Christian and her father is Jewish. When her parents marry, neither set of in-laws is happy about the mix of religions. Thus Margaret’s parents do not participate in any organized religion and decide they will let Margaret choose for herself.

Ironically, Margaret, without any formal religion, has a great sense of God—enough to write to God about everything that’s happening in her life. And Margaret lets God know that she finds God in these times when she talks to God alone—not when she visits the temple with her Jewish grandmother, or goes to the First Presbyterian Church with Janie or to the First Methodist Church with Nancy. Although Margaret is only going on 12, she has some wisdom that many adults never achieve.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book would work well for a unit on Images of God—fitting with a study of *The Odyssey* or *Siddhartha*. Have your students research the religion their family practices, if they do practice any particular one; if the family doesn’t practice any particular religion, your students could explore the approaches of Native Americans, Jews, Muslims, or any group that the students want to explore; and present their findings to the class. A unit exploring world religions would also fit with character education in promoting understanding and appreciation of other cultures’ religions. The following website lists books for teaching children about religion: www.chicagoforum.org/books.htm

2. You might consider inviting ministers or representatives of various religions to come and make presentations about the basic beliefs of the groups they represent.
3. "An Overlooked Characteristic of a Good Literary Choice: Discussability" by Robert C. Small Jr., in "Adolescent Literature: Making Connections with Teens" (special issue, *Virginia English Bulletin* 44, no. 2 [Fall 1994]), focuses on this novel and presents teaching ideas.
4. The following websites have background on Judy Blume and teaching resources:

falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/blume.htm

www.ashland.edu/library/irc/blume03.pdf

5. This site is for girls and women, and parents and daughters:

www.celebrategirls.com/readings.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because teens are often searching for a religion, wanting to know more about religion, or wondering about God, but they rarely want to talk with their parents about religion. By reading this novel, they can see how Margaret handles some of the questions that they may have and learn ways to find out about religion.
- Because they might not be able to participate in the same religious practices their parents or others participate in and want to do some exploring like Margaret does.
- Because they might have the same feeling as Margaret—God might seem more "real" to them when they talk to God alone and not in any particular church service or ritual; Margaret's story and her questions demonstrate a "real" relationship with a higher being.

Other books by Judy Blume to consider reading: *Tiger Eyes*, *Forever*, and *Places I Never Meant to Be*.

Bridgers, Sue Ellen: *All Together Now*
Published by Banks Channel Books, December 2001,
ISBN 1889199060

Casey is 12; she's gone to stay with her grandparents, Ben and Jane, in the small town that was Casey's dad's home. Casey's dad is in the Air Force in

Korea; Casey's mom is working two jobs and isn't available to be with Casey much. Casey learns to love and care for a man, Dwayne Pickens, who is nearly Casey's dad's age—Dwayne is mentally retarded. Dwayne's brother, Alva, finds Dwayne an embarrassment and is constantly trying to get him committed to a mental institution. Casey discovers the gentleness of Dwayne; how Dwayne loves baseball, watching Casey's Uncle Taylor race, and going to movies. Pansy, a lifelong friend of Jane, goes through her own struggles—marrying Hazard Whitaker, a man of 52 who feels like much of his life has been a disaster.

This caring family circle saves Dwayne. The book is set during the polio epidemic, and Casey nearly dies of it. At the same time, Casey is loved back into life by her grandparents as well as Pansy and Hazard, Taylor and Gwen, and Dwayne. Dwayne learns that Casey is really a girl but is okay with that; for a long time, Casey had been hiding that fact from Dwayne, afraid he wouldn't like her if he knew she was a girl.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This is a good book for teaching respect for and acceptance of mental handicaps. There are also a number of central themes: friendship, family relationships, and the importance of extended families. Consider having your students do a "Take a Stand" game following reading of the book. "Take a Stand" is played by first creating a list of value statements (for example: "the best parenting is done by two parents with the mother staying at home"). Once you have a list of such statements, direct students to indicate how they feel about each statement by moving to various locations along an imaginary line on the floor. On one end of the line is the spot for "I strongly agree," the middle signifies "I'm neutral," and the other end is the spot meaning "I strongly disagree." Ask your students to explain their positions and comment further on their perspectives. This activity allows them to clarify values and can work to help foster character education goals.
2. You can also have students create value statements to be used; this allows them to see how important wording of statements can be and also helps them put some of their values into words.
3. A newer novel to teach or read in tandem with *All Together Now* is *The Silent Boy* by Lois Lowry (2003). This novel, set in the early years of the twentieth century, is a first-person narrative of Katy Thatcher and how she learns about what it means for a young person to be described as "touched" and comes to understand what an "asylum" is. This is a

relatively brief novel, which could be read to your students as part of a larger unit on differences. These two novels would connect well with teaching *Of Mice and Men* and with focus on the mentally challenged.

4. "Introducing *To Kill a Mockingbird* with Collaborative Group Reading of Related Young Adult Novels" by Bonnie O. Ericson (in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) uses *All Together Now* as one of the core YA novels in this unit.
5. For further background on Sue Ellen Bridgers, see *ALAN Review* 13, no. 2 (Winter 1986) for several articles.
6. "Creating a Bond between Writer and Reader" by Sue Ellen Bridgers in *Reading Their World: The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Monseau and Salvner 2000) gives author's insights to this novel and others by Bridgers.
7. Lynne Alvine and Devon Duffy, in "Friendship and Tensions in *A Separate Peace* and *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*" (chapter 8 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995) use *All Together Now* as one of five YA novels to complete the unit.
8. Also check the following websites:

www.sueellenbridgers.com/works.htm

www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/bridgers.html

scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/fall96/f96-11-Research.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might have a sibling or a friend who has mental or physical exceptionalities and find themselves having to protect that person from intolerance or hurtful comments. In a larger scenario, they might be called to make some difficult decisions as do the protagonists in *Of Mice and Men* and *The Silent Boy*.
- Because teens, facing peer pressure, are often fearful of differences they have never thought about or encountered before.
- Because, like Casey, they might be teens who are separated from parents and living with grandparents or other extended family and who, by reading Casey's story, can learn about how to live through their situation.

Other books by Sue Ellen Bridgers to consider reading: *Home before Dark*, *Permanent Connections*, *Notes for Another Life*, and *Keeping Christina*.

Bridgers, Sue Ellen: *All We Know of Heaven*

Published by Banks Channel Books, July 1999, ISBN 188919901X

When Bethany first sees Joel, she is helping the women prepare a meal for the men doing the hog slaughtering. He's a loner type who been away at a military academy and has the reputation for needing the discipline of such a school. Bethany lives with her Aunt Charlotte because Bethany's mother has died and Warren, her father, is a hopeless alcoholic. Though she's only 15, Bethany falls in love with Joel and will not wait to go on to school before she gets married. The marriage is doomed from its start, but Bethany is blinded by love.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. "Why Sue Ellen Bridgers' *All We Know of Heaven* Should Be Taught in Our High Schools," by Susanne M. Miller (*ALAN Review* 27, no. 1 [Fall 1999]) is a helpful essay for teaching this novel, particularly in providing rationale for teaching the book.
2. The title of the book relates to a poem by Emily Dickinson; find the poem and discuss it with your students. This will be especially appropriate as part of American Literature studies. Why is "parting all we know of heaven / and all we need of Hell"? What do your students know about "partings"?
3. Bridgers' novel comes from a family story about a relative she knew. Have your students interview an older relative to learn of family stories that may be important to the students' maturing and understanding of their family heritage.
4. The novel is set in the rural South; it is a good novel to use in a rural setting since so many teenagers marry young and do not get to experience much of the broader world. A good journal prompt to use with this novel would be: "How old should you be to get married? Why?"
5. Bridgers uses multiple characters to convey the story. Her book is an excellent example of point-of-view. Consider having your students select their favorite character and write additional entries in that character's voice.
6. "Time and Tradition Transforming the Secondary English Class with Young Adult Novels," by Gary Salvner in *Reading Their World: The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Monseau and Salvner 2000) talks about characters in this novel and a number of Bridgers' other novels.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may be in an abusive relationship and need guidance on how to help themselves, and reading Bethany's story could help them to make wiser choices. In addition, it is frequently easier for a teen to "hear" from another teen what action to take rather than to be told by a parent or another adult.
- Because it is easy for a female to be in a relationship for love, but the male in the relationship may be at another stage that doesn't value emotional attachments.
- Because they may be a friend of someone who is in an abusive relationship, and reading this novel could help them be of help to their friend.
- Because reading Bethany's story and realizing her personal tragedies may help teens who are in abusive situations realize they need to leave the relationship.

Cormier, Robert: *After the First Death*

Published by Laurel Leaf, reissue edition 1 February 1991,
ISBN 0440208351

Three teenagers experience the hijacking of a busload of preschool children by terrorists. Kate is the substitute driver, who the terrorists have tapped as the first to die. Miro is a hijacker appointed to execute her. Ben is the messenger; he has been sent by his father, the general of the secret military organization that is being blackmailed. Ben and Miro are tormented by questions of loyalty and failure, while Kate struggles with what it means to be brave. The book deals with many topics related to terrorism, especially the involvement of young adults on suicide missions.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Before your students read the text, have them brainstorm possible implications of the book's epigram by Dylan Thomas: "After the first death there is no other." Post the possibilities and pause during the reading to see how the book explores many of these meanings.
2. *After the First Death* plays with names, aliases, and ideas of hidden and concealed identity. Have your students chart the passages concerning names; have them journal possible meanings of the final dialogue between Ben and his father. Finally, some say these themes of names suggest Cormier's examination of the hiddenness of God and the mys-

terious name "I am" that God gives to Moses. What evidence in the text can you find to support this?

3. Cormier wrote that this book was the result of his own struggle with the biblical story of Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac. Read the story from Genesis, and have your students discuss under what circumstances fathers might sacrifice or send sons to potential death and for what causes. What questions about God does Cormier's book raise for the reader?
4. Lois Stover and Connie Zitlow, in "Using Young Adult Literature as a Companion to World Literature: A Model Thematic Unit on the 'Clash of Cultures' Centered on *Things Fall Apart*" (chapter 5 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), use *After the First Death* for character connections with *Things Fall Apart*.
5. *The ALAN Review* (vol. 12, no. 2 [Winter 1985]) had several essays on Robert Cormier; all offer good resources for teaching his works.
6. An excellent website with numerous resources is available at:

www.west.asu.edu/library/research/awareness/educational.html

7. A good site for other resources on Robert Cormier and his works:

www.carr.org/mae/cormier/corm-web.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because we live in a world with terrorists, and we don't understand their actions, so reading Cormier's novel could help teens better understand tendencies of terrorists. Also, many suicide bombers in contemporary situations are teens.
- Because the hijackers in this novel are teenagers—teen readers need to know why these teens take these actions and what leads to the violence that some of their peers commit.
- Because the bus driver is a teenager who has to make incredible decisions and show courage beyond her years. Maybe some teens have faced situations where they've needed courage they didn't feel they had and reading Kate's story will affirm their decisions.

Other books by Robert Cormier to consider reading: *Heroes* and *The Rag and Bone Shop*.

Covey, Sean: *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens*

Published by Simon & Schuster, 9 October 1998, ISBN 0684856093

****Teen Recommended****

Sean Covey, son of the well-known author and motivator Stephen Covey, offers principles from his father's book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and encourages teens to apply them to issues they face. *Seven Habits/Teens* asks teens to picture how they want their lives to be and then make the choices needed to get there. Using the tools of self-awareness, conscience, imagination, and willpower, Covey encourages teens to select solid core values and then to be proactive ("those who make things happen") rather than reactive ("those who get happened to"). Covey advises:

1. Be proactive: Take responsibility for your life.
2. Begin with the end in mind: Define your roles and goals in life.
3. Put first things first: Do the most important things first.
4. Think win-win: Have the attitude that everyone can win.
5. Seek first to understand and then to be understood: Listen first. Talk later.
6. Synergize: Working together achieves more.
7. Sharpen the saw: Maintain physical, emotional, and mental balance.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. For each of the seven habits, ask students to choose and mark the anecdote or illustration from the book that made the concept clearest for them. They can share the anecdote and its meaning for them in a talk-ing circle.
2. Go to the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens website at www.educationcentral.org/tlam/7Habits.htm. Check the website for examples, but encourage your students to use their own writing voice. After reading each chapter, ask your students to write their own journals about a specific issue or situation they wish to affirm or to change. Include a personalized "I am" paraphrase of the habit as a journal title.

Master Teacher's Guide

- Stephen Covey [Contemporary Authors Online, Gale, 2003] was quoted in *Fortune*: "Remember, we are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience."
- Using examples from other biographies or fiction, ask your students to

describe characters who illustrate ways in which their spiritual values and priorities shape experiences.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because Sean Covey's book is more teen-friendly, funny, and readable than his father's classic *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.
- Because cartoons, quotes, and stories keep teens interested in reading.
- Because teens will get ideas on improving self-image, building friendships, resisting peer pressure, and achieving goals.

Crutcher, Chris: *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*

Published by HarperCollins Juvenile Books, 18 March 2003,

ISBN 0060094893

****Teen Recommended****

This novel is filled with characters—adolescents in particular—who face lack of acceptance because of difference. Eric Calhoun is fat; his nickname is "Moby." Sarah Byrnes has a physical disfigurement and hides the story of the horrible abuse she's experienced. Mark Brittain is a young man set on upholding the highest moral values, but he has a story hidden behind his self-righteous facade. Jody Mueller looks like the "all together" young woman, but she too holds a painful difference inside. A good read for students who are willing to question some of the status quo.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The characters in this novel are all facing some kind of struggle with identity: Eric Calhoun, the main character, is heavy, called "Moby"—he's the one who stays fat for Sarah after he begins to lose weight by being on the swim team. Sarah Byrnes has been scarred—when she was three, her father pushed her face against the wood stove; her mother has deserted the family. Sarah is feigning silence and is catatonic to protect herself from her dad. Mark Brittain is a very self-righteous person/Christian who, though he preaches a "good line," is rigid in his thinking; he has forced his girlfriend Jody to have an abortion. Steve Ellerby, son of an Episcopalian minister, is a good questioner who is a supporter of Eric. Dale Thornton is a young man who has been held back in school; he acts the part of a bully or tough to antagonize others but he becomes an ally for Sarah.

Ask your students to do writing and thinking about these characters

and about what these characters represent, particularly since the characters face so many issues that teenagers experience.

2. Ms. Lemry is a teacher who is vital in helping these students think and creates the CAT—Contemporary American Thought course. Have students identify which topics should be discussed as contemporary American issues. Students can research and present their stances on the issues.
3. “Introducing My Students to My Friends in Young Adult Literature” by Patricia L. Daniel in the *ALAN Review* (Winter 2002) focuses on *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* and other novels, giving teaching ideas.
4. Lynne Alvine and Devon Duffy in “Friendship and Tensions in *A Separate Peace* and *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*,” (chapter 8 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995) offer a unit plan for using this novel.
5. “Playing the Game: Young Adult Sports Novels” by Chris Crowe, chapter 11 in *Reading Their World: The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Monseau and Salvner 2000) has insights on this and several other of Chris Crutcher’s novels.
6. The following websites are helpful for teaching the novel:

www.webenglishteacher.com/crutcher.html
www.sonoma.edu/users/l/lord/343/Links.htm
scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/spring97/s97-10-Sheffer.html
scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/fall98/wilder.html
www.jsonline.com/enter/books/jun03/148761.asp?format=print
www.Authors4Teens.com
www.aboutcrutcher.com

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might be the only source of support for a peer who has confided in them.
- Because they might have experienced or be experiencing abuse and need to learn through this book how to manage some of the pain they’ve known.
- Because the teens in this book are real and experience many of the things other teens experience, especially isolation and the challenge to “fit in.”
- Because participation in sports and athletic activities can do more than build physical strength.

Other books by Chris Crutcher to consider reading: *Ironman* (one of the many Crutcher books that are ****Teen Recommended****), *The Crazy Horse Electric Game*, *Chinese Handcuffs*, and *Stotan*.

Crutcher, Chris: *Whale Talk*

Published by Laurel Leaf, reprint edition 10 December 2002,

ISBN 0440229383

****Teen Recommended****

T. J. Jones is Black, White, Japanese, and adopted. He’s a good athlete, but he doesn’t necessarily go for the “all jock” sports of football and basketball. T. J. befriends some of the school’s outcasts, organizes them into a swim team, and confronts some of the school’s and the community’s most bigoted people. This novel presents the real world of high school athletics, of small town communities where “winning” is everything, and it tells the story of some terrible human suffering and wonderful human triumphs.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This novel presents a number of teachable moments—experiences of diversity and the intolerance of diversity—to discuss with your students, especially in the context of character education. One of the issues tackled in this book is *race*. T. J.’s biological father was Black and Japanese, so T. J. is a multiracial adolescent in a town where there are very few people of color. Georgia is a child therapist who is also mixed race. Heidi is an abused child; she’s also Black and hated by her stepfather. Another issue is *abuse and special needs*. Chris Coughlin is a teen with severe brain damage, resulting jointly from a mother who was a crack cocaine user and her boyfriend who put saran wrap over Chris’ head when Chris was one year old—the boyfriend said he only wanted to stop Chris from crying. Discussion of the characters in the book and their various aspects of diversity could provide a rich classroom experience, though you and your students need to be mature enough to talk about these sensitive issues. A quote from the book could be an excellent lead-in: “For this moment, high atop my shoulders, Heidi [a child who is biracial] squeals, visible and proud. I know she’ll come crashing down the moment she is degraded again. I know—just because I know—that despair moves in like a flash flood when she is diminished. It isn’t even about a race, really. It’s about nothingness.” (Crutcher 2002, *Whale Talk*, 70–71)

2. "A Teacher of High School Language Arts Speaks with Chris Crutcher," an interview by Debbie Erenberger in the *ALAN Review* (vol. 28, no. 3 [Spring/Summer 2001]) presents good insights on the author and on how to present the novel.
3. For additional resources, consult www.aboutcrutcher.com.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may be tired of those who bully them for being "different."
- Because sometime during the high school years, they may tire of seeing certain athletes "get away with everything," including degrading remarks.
- Because they may have had parents who didn't know a lot about parenting and who made mistakes that these teens can avoid in their own lives.
- Because they may be young males who do not want to follow the crowd and the pressures of being a "jock."

Cushman, Karen: *Matilda Bone*

**Published by Yearling Books, reprint edition 12 March 2002,
ISBN 0440418224**

Fourteen-year-old Matilda has been raised on a manor by Father Leufredus, with the religious emphasis of medieval England. She has been taught reading, writing, Latin, and Greek, and "to seek the higher things." She is not eager to be in the guardianship of Red Peg, the bonesetter in "Blood and Bone Alley," who is eager for someone to tend fires, prepare meals, brew lotions, boil tonics, soothe and restrain patients, and help in the setting of bones. The book conveys much of the medieval world, the role of women in medicine, and the challenges they faced, but most central is Matilda's coming of age in life and in her faith, coming to think for herself, and coming to realize she is not alone.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Guide your students to consider the ways Matilda learns of life or refuses to learn from life. Have them respond to the following quotations:

"You are so priest-ridden that one might think you have nothing of your own to say." (Peg to Matilda, in *Matilda Bone*, 39)

"Why I was tied by my feet to a team of horses and dragged through thistles and thorns. That was torture! This is healing. Watch and learn." (Words Matilda "hears" as she calls on St. Hippolytus, complaining about Peg's method of healing, in *Matilda Bone*, 35)

"I myself think laughing is mighty like praying," said Tildy, "as if saying, 'Listen, God, how much I enjoy this world You have made.'" (The "other Matilda" speaking to Matilda, who has just commented she should be praying, in *Matilda Bone*, 59)

"Bah. Enough of what Father Leufredus thinks. Let us talk more about this when you know what Matilda thinks." (Peg to Matilda who has spoken aloud what she thought was only in her mind about Tom, Peg's husband—Matilda is not impressed with the kind of learning Tom has, in *Matilda Bone*, 70)

Matilda says she's been taught of Hell and to fear demons; her friend Walter asks, "What about God's love?" Matilda thinks, "God's love? Walter must know a different God than she did." (*Matilda Bone*, 137)

2. If you are teaching Chaucer and *The Canterbury Tales* or are studying medieval England, use this book or others by Karen Cushman: *Catherine, Called Birdy* and *The Midwife's Apprentice* to give your students a more personal approach to the period.
3. "The Girls' Story: Adolescent Novels Set in the Middle Ages," by Mary H. McNulty in the *ALAN Review* (vol. 28, no. 2 [Winter 2001]) provides good background on *Matilda Bone*, *Catherine, Called Birdy*, and *The Midwife's Apprentice*.
4. "Historical Fiction or Fictionalized History?" by Joanne Brown in the *ALAN Review* (vol. 26, no. 1 [Fall 1998]) is a good place to begin teaching Karen Cushman's novels.
5. For more information on Karen Cushman and teaching guides check the following websites:

www.neiu.edu/~gspackar/INDEX.html

www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/cushman.html

www.harperchildrens.com/schoolhouse/TeachersGuides/cushmanindex.htm

www.eduplace.com/author/cushman/activities.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might be confused, as Matilda is, by the adults in their life and can see in her story how she learns who to trust and why.

- Because teens often wonder, is knowledge everything? How does life experience come into play?
- Because they might have lost parents or have to live in a situation where they feel isolated, lonely, and misunderstood.
- Because keeping the law and following strict guidelines might not always be possible.

Other books by Karen Cushman to consider reading: *The Ballad of Lucy Whipple*; *The Midwife's Apprentice*; and *Catherine, Called Birdy*.

Dorris, Michael: *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water*

Published by Picador USA, 5 March 2003, ISBN 0312421850

Starting in the present and moving backward, three Native American women narrate this story of love and sacrifice, twined with secrets and kinship. Rayona, 15, “the half-African American, half-Indian girl,” is brought by her mother, Christine, back to the Montana reservation, where Christine appears to abandon her during the 1980s. Christine herself adds 1960s history including the death of her “brother” Lee in Vietnam. Finally, “grandmother” Aunt Ida reveals choices she made in the 1940s—rescuing another woman, Clara, from the shame of bearing the baby Christine.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. One reviewer said, “The shifting POV [points of view] was also a good reminder that each episode of a family’s history has many versions, many perspectives—each flawed, each true.” Guide your students with the following question: What pieces of “truth” are added to the story at each level and what questions emerge? Use the various points of view to review the perspectives of narration.
2. Help your students compare Rayona and Christine as daughters, and compare Christine and Ida as mothers. What qualities of the child and the parent do your students like as good models of children or mothers?
3. “Using Multicultural Literature to Expand the Canon in 11th and 12th Grade English Classes,” by Jim Cope in “Adolescent Literature: Making Connections with Teens” (special issue, *Virginia English Bulletin* 44, no. 2 [Fall 1994]), uses this novel as one of the focus novels in the unit, giving a model for how to teach *Yellow Raft*.
4. Bonnie O. Ericson, in “Heroes and Journeys in *The Odyssey* and Several Works in Young Adult Literature” (chapter 1 in Kaywell, *Adoles-*

cent Literature as a Complement to the Classics, vol. 2, 1995), describes how to teach *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* in conjunction with *The Odyssey*.

5. “Character Education + Young Adult Literature = Critical Thinking Skills” by Mary Ann Tighe in the *ALAN Review* (vol 26, no. 1 [Fall 1998]) focuses on this novel.

Master Teacher’s Guide

- In the final pages of Rayona’s story, Christine tells her about a letter from the Pope which was to reveal the end of the world in 1960. Direct students to reread the passage when they finish the book and have them reflect about how perceptions about one’s future may influence present choices.
- Look for teaching ideas in Elizabeth Belden and Judith M. Beckman’s review of *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (*English Journal* 77, no 4 [April 1988]: 81).
- Look for more discussion of the novel in the article by Anatolia Board, “Eccentricity was all they could afford” (*New York Times*, June 7, 1987, late city final edition, sec. 7, p. 7, col. 1).
- Locate author information in *Contemporary Authors Online* (see www.gale.com).
- Use the following for further resources: “Family Photographs: Relationships among the Generations.” Wyoming Council for the Humanities. Resources for Book Discussion Program Scholars and Project Directors: BDTalk-Ed Archives, www.uwyo.edu/wch/arcfamily.htm.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because the ability to see different points of view is an important skill for young adults.
- Because *Yellow Raft* takes readers to a place that is so different, yet so familiar, and can give readers new perspectives.
- Because the novel shows that love is stronger than pain, deception, and loss.

Enger, Lief: *Peace Like a River*

Published by Grove Press, 20 August 2002, ISBN 0802139256

****Teen Recommended****

A family’s journey begins in a Minnesota town in the early 1960s. Reuben Land, a shy asthmatic boy born with “swampy lungs,” loves to hear his favor-

ite story: how his father's first miracle was getting him to breathe although a doctor had already pronounced the newborn dead. Neighbors view the father Jeremiah, a religious, poetry-loving school janitor, as well meaning but dreamy. Little sister Swede writes about a cowboy hero named Sundown but can't make the ending come out right. Only 16-year-old Davy seems anchored in reality. When teenage thugs invade his home and attack his family, Davy shoots them. Briefly he is a local hero, but when the media frenzy turns ugly, he gets arrested, breaks jail, and runs. His family tracks him to the North Dakota badlands where he has taken refuge with Jape Waltzer, a menacing survivalist rancher and his "captive" daughter Sarah. The Lands wait for contact from Davy. Jeremiah finds love for himself and a mother figure for his children in Roxanne, only months before Waltzer cuts him down.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Using a Bible dictionary, ask your students to offer rationales for choices of biblical names: Jeremiah, Reuben (describing himself as an asthmatic Lazarus), Davy/David, and Sarah.
2. Is the heroic Davy a fugitive from justice, a bringer of justice, or a person whom justice has deserted? Students can use this question for written responses and then for discussion.
3. "We all hold history differently inside us," says narrator Reuben. After your students finish the last chapter, have them reread the opening sequences and discuss how the dreams/fate of Swede, Reuben, and Davy might have been foreshadowed there.

Master Teacher's Guide

- "No miracle happens without a witness. Someone has to declare 'Here's what I saw. Here's how it went. Make of it what you will'" (*Peace Like a River*, 3).
- "Once touched by truth, Swede wrote years later, a little thing like faith is easy" (*Peace Like a River*, 33).
- "One person's chance incident is another person's miracle," Enger suggests. Have your students select one of these three quotations to write about and connect with an experience in their own life.
- Michael Pearson, in an *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* review, said Enger's novel "has the power to convince that, despite sorrow, human experience is a miracle of ordinary truth and extraordinary love." Ask students to journal about something in their own experience that either

they or someone else might consider miraculous. Sometimes the most profound "miracles" rise from the beauty of family and land. Many students may have "miracles" they would like to list.

- Explore more about Leif Enger at *Contemporary Authors Online*: infotrac.galegroup.com.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because the novel is a good fugitive escape story and a good read.
- Because the Land family has been turned upside down by an event and readers can relate to the Land family's story.
- Because teens like to explore ideas about fate vs. miracles.

Greene, Bette: *Summer of My German Soldier*

Published by Penguin USA, reissue edition September 1999,

ISBN 014130636X

****Teen Recommended****

Patty Bergen is a young Jewish girl in Jenkinsville, Arkansas, in the years of World War II. Her unlikely small town becomes the site of a prisoner of war camp for Germans, who the townspeople see only as "Nazis." Patty is also the victim who suffers from an abusive, controlling father and a mother who can't seem to love her. In her precociousness, Patty sees herself as a constant irritation and wonders why she is the way she is. A German prisoner, Frederick Anton Reiker, and the Black nanny, Ruth, teach Patty to see herself as a talented and potentially beautiful young woman. Is it any wonder that Patty is willing to risk all to hide Reiker when he escapes?

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Consider pairing this novel with *Farewell to Manzanar* to explore the Japanese Americans who were interned during World War II as well as for further study of the hysteria that fostered anti-German sentiments in the 1940s.
2. "Beyond the Holocaust: Exploring Jewish Themes through Contemporary Young Adult Literature" by Jeffrey S. Kaplan, an essay in *United in Diversity: Using Multicultural Young Adult Literature in the Classroom* edited by Jean E. Brown and Elaine C. Stephens (NCTE, 1998) includes a brief discussion of the novel and provides teaching ideas.
3. "Using Young Adult Literature to Modernize the Teaching of *Romeo and Juliet*" by Arthea J. S. Reed (chapter 6 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Litera-*

ture as a *Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) uses this novel as one of the books in the unit.

4. Websites directed specifically at the historical context are:

theliterarylink.com/yaauthors.html
 www.cfep.uci.edu/ProDevel/uci-sati/faculty/rodebaugh_unit.html
 www.cis.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1997/2/97.02.03.x.html

5. Lesson plan ideas are available at:

falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/greene.htm
 www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/B00006G3LL/002-9576977-6113636?v=g_lan_ce
 www.geocities.com/Athens/Troy/9122

6. *Bette Greene's "Summer of My German Soldier": A Study Guide*, from *Gale's Novels for Students*, vol. 10 (Gale, 2000) offers additional teaching ideas.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because, like Patty, they might have felt unloved by parents, particularly if the parents are strict disciplinarians or controlling.
- Because their actions on behalf of someone who is shunned might be misunderstood.
- Because they need to learn, as the people of Jenkinsville, Arkansas, did, that not every member of a nationality or group can be judged according to the negative actions of a single person in that group or nationality.

Other books by Bette Greene to consider reading are *Philip Hall Likes Me*, *I Reckon Maybe*; *Morning Is a Long Time Coming*; *Get on Out of Here*, *Philip Hall*; and *Them That Glitter and Them That Don't*.

Haruf, Kent: *Plainsong*

Published by Vintage, 22 August 2000, ISBN 0375705856

****Teen Recommended****

Ike and Bobby Guthrie don't understand why their mentally fragile mother has left their father, a middle-aged history teacher. They discover that many people in their little Colorado town feel lots of pain: lonely old people, abused teens, even their dad. Maggie Jones, another teacher, builds unlikely links between many of the characters, even though her senile elderly father

makes her own life difficult. When she invites two bachelor ranchers to take a pregnant girl into their home, even she calls the situation improbable.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Motherless children fill Haruf's story: Bobby and Ike, Tom Guthrie's kids who have been abandoned by their mother; Victoria Roubideaux, the pregnant Indian girl; and the bachelor McPheron brothers, orphaned 50 years ago. Discuss with your students how these characters are "mothered" by others and how they return that goodness to others. Are these positive or negative actions?
2. The deaths of their horse Elko and the old lady who has befriended them terrify Ike and Bobby; the situations also give them opportunity to seek shelter and receive support. Lead students to consider the following question: What situations do other characters encounter that show a similar rhythm of death and life?

Master Teacher's Guide

- In plainsong, a single voice may initiate a melodic line to set in motion a call-and-response pattern. Have students read in Postlethwaite's review about how Haruf uses literary "plainsong" as characters seem to call and respond to each other. Ask your students to find examples from the story.
- Look at the essay by Diane Postlethwaite, "A Healing Melody," in which she writes: "Kent Haruf's unadorned yet elegant novel makes extraordinary music out of the ordinary rhythms of daily life in a small Colorado town" (*World and I* 15, no. 2 [Feb. 2000]: 258).

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because the small-town, open-plains setting is so accurately described, they'll feel as if they've lived there too.
- Because broken families, problems of aging, and abuse touch people they know, possibly even their own families.
- Because the novel shows that love and caring make a difference.

Hinton, S. E.: *The Outsiders*

Published by Prentice Hall (K-12), reprint edition November 1997,
 ISBN 014038572X

****Teen Recommended****

Ponyboy, an orphaned 14-year-old who loves reading and movies, lives with brothers Darry and Sodapop. Looking back on a tragic round of events, Pony-

boy describes the rivalry between two gangs, the lower-middle-class greasers and the upper class Socs (for Socials). When rumbles lead to violence, one of the Socs is killed. When an abandoned church/hideout catches fire, some children are trapped. Greasers Johnny, Dallas, and Ponyboy run back into the fire to save them. Loss unites the brothers who agree that Ponyboy can escape the life of an “outsider” if he chooses.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Have your students make lists of situations/words of others that contribute to Ponyboy’s sense of being an outsider in a dead-end situation and lists of situations/words of others that offer hints of hope for a better future. Which will be his future? Can we make the best of situations when many aspects seem to be “against” us?
2. When Cherry, a Soc, tells Ponyboy about the upcoming rumble, he seems to catch a glimpse of what the young people from two gangs have in common. He asks, “Can you see the sunset real good from the West side?” and then adds, “You can see it real good from the East side, too.” Discuss with your students what feelings and dreams of these teen characters from a sixties’ gang seem to transfer to our time.
3. “*The Outsiders Is Still ‘In’: Why This Old Novel Is So Popular with Teens, and Some Activities Students Enjoy*” by Lauren Groot with Martha Story in the *ALAN Review* (Winter 2002) gives a current perspective on this older novel.
4. “The ‘I’ of the Beholder: Whose ‘Truth’?” by Joanne Brown in “*Adolescent Literature: Making Connections with Teens*” (special issue, *Virginia English Bulletin* 44, no. 2 [Fall 1994]), uses *The Outsiders* as one of the novels in the unit.

Master Teacher’s Guide

- During their hideout in the abandoned church, Johnny and Ponyboy discuss *Gone with the Wind* and the Robert Frost poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay.” With his dying words, Johnny tells Ponyboy to “stay gold.” Ask your students: what are things in our lives that may be “gone with the wind” and what things do we want to “stay gold”?
- Author background may be found on *Contemporary Authors Online* (see www.gale.com).
- Jay Daly, *Presenting S. E. Hinton* (Twayne, 1987) is another good resource for author background.
- Read Michael Pearlman’s essay “The role of socioeconomic status in

adolescent literature” in *Adolescence* (vol. 30, no. 117 [Spring 1995]: 223) for further teaching ideas.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because this novel is much more than a quick-read about teen violence.
- Because teens may feel like outsiders sometimes, and Ponyboy’s story might be helpful.
- Because they’ll find out about the teen world of their parents or grandparents.

Kingsolver, Barbara: *The Bean Trees*

Published by HarperTorch, reissue edition 1 October 1998,

ISBN 0061097314

****Teen Recommended****

Taylor Greer leaves Kentucky when she graduates from high school, determined not to get tied down by a family or tangled up by love. When an abused and abandoned child is pushed into her arms, Taylor begins a series of adventures in discovery and commitment. Central American refugees Esperanza and Estevan, their protector Mattie, and neighbor LouAnn intertwine their lives with Taylor’s like the fruitful growing of the bean trees.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Ask your students to draw a bean tree to illustrate the themes of this book. Around what central character would their vine grow? What are the problems and situations that prune the vines of family and trust or encourage new growth? What products does the vine/story produce as the characters grow?
2. Have your students write in response to the following quotation by Barbara Kingsolver, discussing how this quotation relates to the novel: “Living in the middle of an alfalfa field was an important influence, I grew up noticing where things come from and where they go—in the sense of seed and compost rather than heaven and hell. I think the whole way I look at the world was formed on a farm” (from www.unm.edu/~wrtgsw/kingsolver.html).
3. Bonnie O. Ericson, “Heroes and Journeys in *The Odyssey* and Several Works in Young Adult Literature” (chapter 1 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995) describes how to teach *The Bean Trees* in conjunction with *The Odyssey*.

4. Rebecca Luce-Kaple and Sylvia Pantaleo have an essay on *The Bean Trees* in *Rationales for Teaching Young Adult Literature* (Reid and Neufeld 1999).
5. *Master Teacher's Guide: A Collection of Forty Guides for Middle and High School Teachers* includes a guide for teaching *The Bean Trees*. The guide is available from Harper Collins Publishers, www.HarperAcademic.com.
6. Another resource on *The Bean Trees* is "Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees: A New Classroom Classic*" by Karen M. and Philip H. Kelly (*English Journal* 86, no. 8 [1997]: 61–64).
7. Some online teaching guides are available at:
 - www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmBeanTrees37.asp
 - www.kingsolver.com/guides/bean_trees.asp

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because like Taylor, they are making choices about their future and can learn from her story.
- Because there are many immigrants in the United States and not many of these people face an easy life in our country; some teen readers will be immigrants themselves and others might be friends of immigrants.
- Because if they've never met someone who had to leave his or her homeland because of violence, oppression, war, or poverty, they might learn to be more accepting of people from different cultures.

Kingsolver, Barbara: *The Poisonwood Bible*

Published by Perennial, 1 October 1999, ISBN 0060930535

****Teen Recommended****

Nathan Price's rigid understanding about being a missionary radically and sometimes violently affects his wife, Orleana; his four daughters, Leah, Adah, Rachel, and Ruth May; and the Congolese. He tries to convert the natives over a year and a half period of hunger, disease, drought, witchcraft, political wars, pestilential rains, and political upheaval. In Kilanga, Leah's sisters help their mother, while Leah chooses to work in her father's garden. The garden, which he stubbornly plants and cultivates by Western methods, is as barren as his cultivation of souls. The education and eventual liberation of the five women from Nathan's arrogant tyranny suggest Africa's resistance to destruc-

tive colonialism. Leah falls in love with and eventually marries Anatole, an African teacher. Adah suffers from a language disorder and chooses silence; she knows that saying words wrong creates disrespect and disaster. When she finally chooses to speak, she becomes a researcher on AIDS and Ebola.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Each Price daughter comes to terms with Africa's complexities in her own way. Have your students make a circle for each daughter and describe what happens to her. What events or actions lead to her liberation from her abusive father? Discuss each daughter's response to the father and why the response is or is not justified.
2. When Reverend Price shouts "TATA JESUS IS BANGALA!" he thinks "bangala" means precious and dear. But with his incorrect inflection (balanga), it means the poisonwood tree which causes itching and misery. Ironically, the culturally insensitive message he gives makes his sentence true. Direct your students to find examples of "miseries" he imposes on the Congolese. Follow up with a discussion about Reverend Price's ministry. What problems arise when we impose a religion on another culture? How might the situations in this novel connect with other attempts at liberating a culture (for example, trying to liberate Iraq)?
3. Clueless and self-centered Rachel best represents America's material culture. Make a list of some of Rachel's goofy expressions and her focus on possessions. Are her possessions appropriate for the culture she's in? Have students consider their own possessions and what they need or don't need.
4. Teaching ideas are also located at the following sites:
 - www.uua.org/re/reach/fall00/adult/poisonwood_bible.html
 - www.readinggroupguides.com/guides/poisonwood_bible.asp
5. *Master Teacher's Guide: A Collection of Forty Guides for Middle and High School Teachers* includes a guide for teaching *The Poisonwood Bible*. The guide is available from Harper Collins Publishers, www.HarperAcademic.com.

Master Teacher's Guide

- In all her fiction, Kingsolver grapples with clashing cultural values, social justice issues, ecological awareness, and the intersection of pri-

vate and public concerns. Direct your students to identify some of the issues that are clashing.

- Review the following essay by Elaine R. Ognibene for insights on the novel: “The Missionary Position: Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible*” (*College Literature* 30, no. 3 [Summer 2003]: 19).
- Secondary students will probably read Kingsolver’s novel mainly to discover what happens to each of the four daughters. Like five-year-old Ruth May, they may also experience the complexity and mystery without fully understanding some of the deeper issues, but that’s okay!

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because maybe their parents have “forced” them to accept religious beliefs that they need to claim as their own.
- Because they might want to learn about living in another culture, particularly one that is much more primitive as far as comforts of life that many American youth are used to having.
- Because loyalty to family may be a challenge for them, as it is for the Price daughters.
- Because Kingsolver transports readers to Africa in ways that are almost physical.
- Because words can hurt and heal as Reverend Price shows, and readers can learn from his experiences.
- Because in reading the story of the Price family, they can discover how to use the experiences of their lives.

Other books by Barbara Kingsolver to consider reading: *Animal Dreams*, *Pigs in Heaven*, and *Prodigal Summer*.

Lamb, Wally: *She’s Come Undone*

Published by Pocket Books, 1 June 1998, ISBN 0671021001

****Teen Recommended****

Does this sound like a comic novel? Dolores’s parents’ troubled marriage lands her mother in a mental hospital and sends Dolores to live with her grandmother. Loneliness and even rape by a neighbor characterize her childhood. Fat and sullen, Dolores dreams about her college roommate’s boyfriend Dante, a hopeless prospect. After a suicide attempt and a spell in a mental ward herself, she reinvents herself, then catches and marries Dante. Her

happy ending turns sour. Hilarious and oh-so-sad, she finally meets Thayer who offers “happily-maybe-sometimes-ever-after.”

(Although funny and filled with contemporary social color, *She’s Come Undone* may be inappropriate for immature readers because of some explicit sexual content and profanity.)

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. One reviewer compares people like Dolores to barnacles on a ship’s bottom—we want to scrape them out of our consciousness, but we also find ourselves “laughing, crying, hoping and praying for them as they stumble through life.” Have your students list several situations where they were disgusted by yet cheering for Dolores. Have them relate Dolores and her experiences to other characters they’ve read about.
2. Discuss with your students when and where Dolores uses food to appease her hunger for love and self-worth and even for God. Are Dolores’s actions common among your students’ experiences? In what ways?

Master Teacher’s Guide

- Susan Bauer writes: “Stories of suffering, to be honest, must end with one of two truths: the presence of God, or a void where he should be . . . not all sufferers will come face to face with the person of God. Those who do, like Job, will bow their heads and admit a riddle that cannot be solved. Those who do not will live in a world without God.” (Bauer, see below.) Talk with students about Dolores—Does Dolores fit either of these categories or is there another source of meaning for her?
- For further insights on the topic of stories of suffering, read “Oprah’s Misery Index” by Susan Wise Bauer (*Christianity Today* 42, no.14 [Dec 7, 1998]: 70). It describes the Jobian suffering in the books Oprah Winfrey recommends on her talk show.
- For additional author information, see *Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale, 2003 (see www.gale.com).
- Additional guides for *She’s Come Undone* can be located at www.readinggroupguides.com/guides/shes_come_undone.asp.
- “Author Profile: Wally Lamb” on Teenreads (www.teenreads.com/authors) offers further information for you and your students.
- Also consider reading Hilma Wolitzer, “It’s a Miserable Life” (*New York Times Book Review*, Aug. 23, 1992, 78).

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because sometimes we all feel “fat and ugly” and like Dolores, we can change that outlook.
- Because of the many cultural references in the novel, teens can make a research game of identifying and relating these references.
- Because the novel will cause readers to both cry and laugh out loud.

Lee, Harper: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Published by Little Brown & Company,

reissue edition 11 October 1988, ISBN 0446310786

****Teen Recommended****

Told from the perspective of Scout Finch, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a classic of the American South during the height of the Depression. Scout, her brother Jem, and their summertime friend Dill Harris are fascinated by their mysterious and hermit-like neighbor, Boo Radley. Atticus Finch, Scout and Jem’s father, defends a Black man, Tom Robinson, who has been falsely accused of raping a white woman, Mayella Ewell. The racism of Maycomb, Alabama, erupts and Scout, Jem, and Dill are thrown into the adult world of racial prejudice, sexual assault, deceit, narrow-mindedness, ignorance, and hatred.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This novel, with its tension-filled court case, is a good one for a debate or mock trial. After your students read the novel, they can hold a debate on the justice or lack of justice in Tom Robinson’s trial.
2. “Introducing *To Kill a Mockingbird* with Collaborative Group Reading of Related Young Adult Novels” (in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) provides excellent ways to teach this novel—locate this essay for the teaching ideas.
3. For a more complete study of racism, consider teaching this novel along with novels by Mildred Taylor; *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is a direct parallel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Students can make Venn diagrams to compare the novels; they could do a compare/contrast essay discussing the novel that is most relevant to them and their experience.
4. This site is helpful if you are using the film version of the novel as part of your teaching: www.teachwithmovies.org/samples/to-kill-a-mocking-bird.html.
5. One of the many teaching guides is available in *Master Teacher’s Guide*:

A Collection of Forty Guides for Middle and High School Teachers (HarperCollins Publishers: www.HarperAcademic.com).

6. In “John Wayne, Where Are You? Everyday Heroes and Courage” by Pamela S. Carroll (chapter 2 in Gregg and Carroll, *Books and Beyond*, 1998), the novel is used as one of the “canonical” novels in the unit.
7. For more about the author and the novel, see the following websites:

wilmette.nttc.org/wjhs/staff/byrne/resources/tkam.html

www.educeth.ch/english/readinglist/leeh/index.html

www.lausd.k12.ca.us/Belmont_HS/tkm/teacher.html

www.lausd.k12.ca.us/Belmont_HS/tkm

www.duluth.lib.mn.us/Programs/Mockingbird/Resources.html

www.freebooknotes.com/guides/tokillamockingbird.htm

www.planetbookclub.com/teachers/civil.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they, like Jem and Scout, may have parents who take unpopular stands and have to suffer harassment or ridicule because of their positions.
- Because they may be falsely accused and need the courage to challenge their accusers.
- Because they may need to read stories like this one about people who are courageous enough to defend those who are oppressed.
- Because they may need to identify prejudice and intolerance in their school situation.

Mazer, Norma Fox: *When She Was Good*

Published by Scholastic, reprint edition February 2003,

ISBN 0590319906

****Teen Recommended****

This is a complex novel told in the voice of Em, who is 13 when her mother dies and who lives in a completely dysfunctional family. Most problematic is Em’s older sister Pamela, who is plagued by emotional illness that is never treated. Em’s dad is alcoholic and abused his wife, who sometimes told Em and Pamela to hide from their dad’s alcoholic rages. When his wife dies, he cannot cope with life, and the family plunges deeper into problems.

When their father suddenly remarries, life only gets worse for Em and Pamela. Particularly for Em, who was closer to her mother, Sally, the new

wife, drives any memories of Em's mom away. Sally eventually demands that Pamela and Em get jobs—even though Em is only 14 then and still in school—and pay for room and board. At this point, Pamela and Em run away and Pamela secures an apartment for them in the city. Pamela's illness precludes her ever holding a job or really being functional in normal society; she is also physically abusive of Em. The novel is dark, but it portrays Em's ability to survive in her search for love and acceptance.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Em learns, when she is out at a lake campground, about the beauty of nature. She describes the experience of seeing a “double moon”—the actual moon and the reflection of the moon in the water. Em expresses this insight saying, “I felt that I had stumbled on a truth . . . if I had it—‘it’ being not the moon and the lake, as such, not its stark and startling beauty, but the ‘itness’ of it—if I had that, I could finally be happy and like other people.” Have your students write about a place or time when and where they have learned a similar insight through nature.
2. “Creating Imaginative Worlds: Unique Detail and Structure in Norma Fox Mazer’s Young Adult Fiction” by Ann Angel in the *ALAN Review* (Fall 2001) (the same issue includes an interview with Norma Fox Mazer) provides insights on *When She Was Good*.
3. “To Tell the Truth: What Names Mean to Female Characters in Young Adult Novels” by Caroline S. McKinney in the *ALAN Review* (vol. 26, no. 1 [Fall 1998]) has insights to this novel and a number of others. Consider reading it for further ideas on teaching the novel.
4. Websites for topics related to this novel, especially about abusive relationships:

www.Authors4Teens.com

www.apa.org/pi/pii/teen

www2.scholastic.com/teachers/authorsandbooks/authorstudies/authorhome.jhtml?authorID=1390&collateralID=5229&displayName=Biography

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might have lost a parent and have to deal with the issue of second marriages and how to relate to these new adults in their lives.
- Because they might have lived with the urging of a parent that they

have to “be good” and then face guilt and remorse for all they think they haven’t done well.

- Because they might have a sibling, a friend, or a classmate who is plagued by emotional illness, and they can learn from Em’s story.
- Because despite anything that happens in their family, they have a right to be happy, to be free, and to feel safe.

Other books by Norma Fox Mazer to consider reading: *Girlhearts*; *Good Night, Maman*; *After the Rain*; *Silver*; and *Out of Control*

Mikaelsen, Ben: *Touching Spirit Bear*

Published by HarperTrophy, 30 April 2002, ISBN 038080560X

Cole Matthews is 15, an angry and increasingly violent young man. When he smashes Peter Driscall’s skull into the sidewalk, Cole has reached a point of no return. The options are jail and serious juvenile detention. Cole’s parole officer is a “never-give-up” kind of man who has been through some difficult experiences in his own life; he also knows about an alternative called “Circle Justice” designed to heal both perpetrator and victim. Cole’s “punishment” takes him to an isolated Alaskan island and to encounters with a mysterious white bear.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book offers a venue for discussing youth violence. In working with the book, you might consider inviting parole officers, juvenile court personnel, or others involved with youth crime and detention to come to your class. Have your students prepare questions in advance and allow them to interview your guests.
2. Is anyone ever completely “totally a lost cause”? Students could have a debate on this topic as well as on the question, are all actions forgivable? Why or why not? Have students prepare their responses to these questions building on evidence from the novel and then give two- to three-minute oral presentations on their position.
3. Some websites related to the book include:

www.somerset.lib.nj.us/teens/gstba20036-8.htm (this site suggests the book for grades 5–8; I’d suggest grades 8–11)

www.teenspoint.org/reading_matters/display_key.asp?sort=101&key=515

www.wildernessdrum.com/html/adventure_fiction.html
www.BenMikaelsen.com

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might be someone everyone else is ready to give up on.
- Because they might be angry at the abuse they've experienced and not have a way to channel that anger.
- Because they might be the victim of some other teen's violent actions.
- Because "Circle Justice" is an alternative to jail or other harsher forms of punishment, and it brings healing to victims and abusers; also readers might not be familiar with "circle justice" and they can learn this alternative way of responding.

Mickle, Shelley Fraser: *The Queen of October*
Published by Algonquin Books, reprint edition May 1992,
ISBN 1565120035

Sally Maulden is 13 in the summer of 1959, and her parents are getting a divorce. Sally is shuttled between her grandparents' home in Coldwater, Arkansas, and Memphis, Tennessee, but she feels most comfortable in Arkansas. She moves through a series of relationships with adults, including an unrealistic love for an older man. Sally matures with the help of her grandparents and a range of adults in Coldwater.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Consider pairing this novel with *A Member of the Wedding* by Carson McCullers, particularly if you are teaching an American literature course. *The Queen of October* may be the more accessible novel for your students, so you could read McCullers' novel in class. The main characters in each novel can be compared and contrasted; each novel holds potential journal topics as well.
2. "Divorce: A Common Thread Which Binds Us Across Geographic and Cultural Boundaries," by Catherine Hritz in "Adolescent Literature: Making Connections with Teens" (special issue, *Virginia English Bulletin*, vol. 44, no. 2 [Fall 1994]), offers insights on the central topic of this novel and can help you discuss this all-too-common topic with your students. Encourage students to write about their experience being children of parents who separate or divorce. Have them discuss

why divorce should or should not be an option for those caught in troubled relationships.

3. For more about the author and teaching ideas, see the following websites:

www.shelleymickle.com
www.shelleymickle.com/biography.htm
coe.uca.edu/ArkansasAuthorsIndex/mickle.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may be experiencing or have experienced their parents' separation or divorce.
- Because they may have a crush on someone older and need to see how Sally handles that kind of situation and how she finds support to move beyond her infatuation.
- Because Sally learns a good deal about adults and some of their struggles, and her story can help teen readers.

Other books by Shelley Fraser Mickle to consider reading: *Replacing Dad* and *Moms on the Loose*.

Myers, Walter Dean: *Monster*
Published by HarperCollins Juvenile Books,
reprint edition 8 May 2001, ISBN 0064407314
****Teen Recommended****

Steve Harmon is 16 and African American—he's one of the many young African American males who is at risk to be destroyed by drugs, guns, imprisonment, or some other kind of disaster. He has been at the "wrong place at the wrong time" and now is in jail facing trial for being an accomplice to a felony murder. Is he guilty? Is his life over? This powerful novel captures Steve's story in a screenplay, named *Monster* because that's what the prosecutor calls Steve.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Think about teaching this novel with *Native Son* or *Black Boy* or other novels about the African American male experience. *Monster* is a captivating read that students could do outside of class, allowing you to work with the more difficult novels like *Native Son*, *Black Boy*, or *Invisi-*

ble Man in class. *Monster* would fit well in a unit on racism, coming in on the contemporary end of the unit.

- The novel is actually in screenplay format; consider having students write a screenplay on a current topic in their school or community setting.
- “Popular Postmodernism for Young Adult Readers: *Walk Two Moons*, *Holes*, and *Monster*” by Stephenie Yearwood in the *ALAN Review* (Summer 2002) presents an additional perspective on the novel.
- Teaching guides and resources on Walter Dean Myers are available at the following sites:

www.Authors4Teens.com

www.harperchildrens.com/hch/parents/teachingguides/myers.pdf

www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/myers.html

faculty.ssu.edu/~elbond/monster.htm

greenwood.scbbs.com/servlet/A4TStart?authorid=wmyers&source=introduction

- This site specifically addresses African American students and their challenges in school:

www.putnamschools.org/Karen/literacypdf/multicultural.pdf

- This site addresses violence and other challenges facing students and schools—it includes a book list and recommended readings:

empowered.org/Resources/books.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might have been at “the wrong place at the wrong time” and have suffered from that or need to learn from Steve’s story about the dangers of being with certain groups or individuals.
- Because peer pressure is a strong force and can make people do things they would never do under other circumstances.
- Because they might be trying to make some tough decisions about belonging to or getting out of a gang.
- Because they might be African American or others who need to understand more about what so often happens to African American males.
- Because they should know about the realities of imprisonment, especially if they are tempted to think they might be doing harmless pranks and get caught up in more serious actions.

Paterson, Katherine: *Jacob Have I Loved*

Published by HarperTrophy, reissue edition 31 March 1990,

ISBN 0064403688

****Teen Recommended****

Twin daughters of a Chesapeake waterman, Caroline and Louise grow up on a remote island during the Depression Era. Caroline is blessed with beauty, talent, and even the love of Louise’s friend Coll. Feeling somehow cursed like the biblical Esau, Louise discovers that love and purpose lie beyond her island shores and her sister’s shadow.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Read with your students the story of the blessing of Isaac and the disinheriting of Esau in Genesis. Together, make a chart of blessings and difficulties that the twins Louise and Caroline seem to have. Using a different color pen, consider what blessings Louise/Esau may ultimately experience. Discuss whether Louise and Esau can ever be considered blessed.
2. Jacob, the favored twin, actually journeyed far and waited a long time for his “blessing.” In what ways may Louise be the Jacob of this story, not the Esau? Does Louise finally come to her promised land? Use these questions for a journal entry and subsequent class discussion.
3. Lois Stover and Connie Zitlow, in “Using Young Adult Literature as a Companion to World Literature: A Model Thematic Unit on the ‘Clash of Cultures’ Centered on *Things Fall Apart*” (chapter 5 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), use *Jacob Have I Loved* to look at the clash of generations in *Things Fall Apart*. Use their ideas to discuss with your students the clashes of culture they experience in their lives.
4. “Exploring the American Dream: *The Great Gatsby* and Six Young Adult Novels,” by Diana Mitchell, (chapter 9 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) uses this novel as one of the six YA novels in the unit. How is the American Dream a factor in this novel?
5. Lynne Alvine and Devon Duffy, in “Friendship and Tensions in *A Separate Peace* and *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*” (chapter 8 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), use *Jacob Have I Loved* as one of the five YA novels to supplement the unit. Reading their essay will give you ideas for teaching a range of novels.

6. "The 'I' of the Beholder: Whose 'Truth'?" by Joanne Brown, in "Adolescent Literature: Making Connections with Teens" (special issue, *Virginia English Bulletin* (vol. 44, no. 2 [Fall 1994])), uses this novel as one of the YA novels in the unit.
7. For more on Katherine Paterson and this book, check the following websites:

www.terabithia.com
 www.neiu.edu/~gspackar/INDEX.html
 www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/paterson.html
 scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/spring94/Liddie.html

8. See the following web page and the section on identity definition in relation to spirituality:

scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/spring96/mendt.html

9. See the following web page for an *ALAN Review* essay on this novel:

scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/spring94/Liddie.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might feel like the blessed or the "disinherited" in the family and can learn from Louise's story how they might respond.
- Because relating to siblings, especially if they are from a stepparent, may be difficult, and siblings from stepparents are common in the family experience of many teens.
- Because it isn't always easy to see the reasons behind what happens in our lives, so reading a novel like this one can help teens sort out the reasons for what happens in their lives.

Other books by Katherine Paterson to consider reading: *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, *Lyddie*, and *The Tale of the Mandarin Ducks*.

Pelzer, David: *A Child Called It*

Published by Health Communications,

reissue edition 1 September 1995, ISBN 1558743669

****Teen Recommended****

This graphic and incredibly tragic book reveals the horrible abuse David Pelzer experienced from the time he was a first grader until he was rescued,

through the efforts of teachers and other school personnel, and placed into foster care. Pelzer tells the events as he remembers them and unfolds issues revealing a family in great pain—with Pelzer taking the brunt of his mother's psychotic behaviors.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. You might best use this book in teaching about respect in a character education unit. With all the pain an abused child or young person has already experienced, teachers and classmates should not add to the suffering. Possibly a segment of the book could be read aloud and used for a discussion of how students could have responded differently to Dave. If a segment is used for discussion, begin with a written response to the reading and then move to discussion.
2. The book is terribly graphic and would need to be used with mature students, but sadly, the abuse of children continues to increase. You and your students need to know about resources and ways to survive the situation—hearing David's story is one way to come to greater understanding of those resources for surviving such terrible situations.
3. Use resources from David Pelzer located at the following websites:

www.davepelzer.com
 shop.store.yahoo.com/monkeynote/chilcalititb.html

4. The following sites are from resource libraries for training and educational support of child welfare reform:

www.midsouth.ualr.edu/resources/DCFS/library/index/A-B.html
 www.preventchildabuse-ri.org

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because someone in their school, in their classes, might be smelly or disgusting and an easy target for ridicule as Dave was, and they might need to know why ridiculing such a person is so harmful.
- Because they or their peers may be too afraid to tell anyone—social workers, teachers, other adults—of being abused and need to know that they can get help.
- Because this book was recommended by many teens as one other teens should read.

Pelzer, David: *The Lost Boy***Published by Health Communications, revised edition 1 August 1997,****ISBN 1558745157******Teen Recommended****

In this sequel to *A Child Called It*, Pelzer narrates his continuing journey to wholeness, describing the series of foster homes he lives in. This book is probably more for teachers and social workers; however, any young person who has faced abuse can learn from David's story. Pelzer does not hide his continuing struggles and seemingly illogical choices that land him in more trouble and difficult situations. His point is that the horrible scar of abuse affects a person's self-esteem, particularly as the person goes through the teenage years and is trying to find identity and acceptance.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. A fiction work that would be good for you to pair with *The Lost Boy* is *Ruby Holler* by Sharon Creech. In this novel, twins Dallas and Florida are in the orphanage run by the Trepids, a ruthless couple out for their own advancement and heedless of the real needs of the children in their care. Dallas and Florida are victims of numerous foster homes until they end up with Tiller and Sairy in *Ruby Holler*. Reading *Ruby Holler* with *The Lost Boy* will give your students Creech's gentle humor that effectively conveys the problems of foster homes in cases where the foster parents are not concerned with the good of the children.
2. Another fiction work that you could use with *The Lost Boy* is *Ellen Foster* by Kaye Gibbons. Ellen, the narrator, weaves several stories together, revealing the death of her mother, her father's alcoholism, and his subsequent remarriage. Ellen is another child experiencing the shift from birth mother and father to stepmother to grandmother to aunts and cousins. She is never well liked or treated—except when taken in for a short period by her art teacher and the teacher's husband. Eventually Ellen identifies the woman she wants as a mother, Mrs. Foster, and Ellen moves there. Ellen's story, again, is "softened" by its presentation as fiction, but her reality is nonetheless harsh and representative of the many children seeking a parental figure who cares. Because Pelzer's books are so graphic, it might be best to read his books in class and have students read *Ellen Foster* or *Ruby Holler* outside of class.
3. "Finding Your Way Home: Orphan Stories in Young Adult Literature,"

by Dirk P. Mattson, in the *ALAN Review* (vol. 24, no. 3 [Spring 1997]) is a helpful essay for the theme of foster children and orphans.

4. These sites list many books and resources helpful for the issue of child abuse:

www.sfasu.edu/AAS/SOCWK/REACH/booksdescription.htm

www.cec-ohio.org/Links.htm

partners.is.asu.edu/~techprep/levels/Level-III/EdProfess/Epir15-03.pdf

Why Give This Book to Teens

- Because they may be in foster care situations or have friends who are.
- Because Dave doesn't find foster family life that easy, even after escaping the horrible abuse he's been facing.
- Because Dave experiences, though to an extreme given the abuse he's experienced, the huge need for acceptance from his peers, and that's a common experience for teens.
- Because they need to understand classmates who might be in foster care.

If you want to read more about David Pelzer, a third book is called *A Man Called Dave*.

Sachar, Louis: *Holes***Published by Yearling Books, reprint edition 9 May 2000,****ISBN 0440414806******Teen Recommended****

Stanley Yelnats (the last of four generations of the same name) has just arrived at Camp Green Lake, Texas, which is not really a camp and which has no lake. It is actually the site of a juvenile detention center run by a corrupt warden who should be imprisoned. Stanley is innocent, but he has to go through all the experiences of the "camp" before his innocence is proved and before the long-standing curse on the Yelnats (from the time of Stanley's great-grandfather) is overcome.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Many of the statements in the book are ironic, so the book works well for teaching the often difficult concept of verbal irony. Have your stu-

dents select statements from the quotations below to explain how irony operates in the novel.

“The campers are forbidden to lie in the hammock. It belongs to the Warden. The Warden owns the shade.” (*Holes*, 3)

“If you take a bad boy and make him dig a hole every day in the hot sun, it will turn him into a good boy.” (*Holes*, 5)

“My name is Mr. Sir.” (*Holes*, 13)

“They all have nicknames,” explained Mr. Pendanski. “However, I prefer to use the names their parents gave them—the names that *society will recognize them* by when they return to become useful and hardworking members of society.” (*Holes*, 18)

That was the worst part for Stanley. His hero [Clyde Livingston] thought he was a no-good-dirty-rotten thief. (*Holes*, 23)

“Now you be careful out in the real world,” said Armpit. “Not everyone is as nice as us.” (*Holes*, 221)

Zero, who couldn’t read until Stanley taught him, is able to figure out that Stanley’s name is on the suitcase. (*Holes*, 216)

Zero is the great-great-great grandson of Madame Zeroni and Stanley is the great-great grandson of Elya Yelnats. (*Holes*, 229)

2. After reading the novel with your students, consider showing the film version of *Holes* and have your students write an essay comparing the text to the visual presentation.
3. “Popular Postmodernism for Young Adult Readers: *Walk Two Moons*, *Holes*, and *Monster*” by Stephenie Yearwood in the *ALAN Review* (Summer 2002) presents an additional perspective on the novel. Use this essay to help students recognize characteristics of postmodern novels.
4. “What’s Good about the Best?” by Ted Hipple and Amy B. Maupin in the *English Journal* (vol. 90, no. 3 [January 2001]) describes *Holes* as one of the three highest-ranking novels of the 1990s and includes a rationale for teaching the novel. You can use this essay to support selection of this novel to read with your students.
5. “*Holes*: Folklore Redux,” by Elizabeth G. Mascia in the *ALAN Review* (Winter 2001) looks at the folktale aspects of this novel. Students can write their own urban legends or folktales connected to people or incidents in their community.

6. Some websites with ideas for teaching the novel include:

www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/sachar.html

itc.gsu.edu/NewberyBooks/holesweb.pdf

falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/sachar.htm

www.lessonplanspage.com/LAHolesByLouisSachar2-TeacherPagesEachChapter36.htm

eduscapes.com/newbery/99a.htm

www.thinkquest.org/library/site_sum.html?tname=J0113061&url=J0113061/

emintsteachers.more.net/FY03/frickev/holes.html

garnet.acns.fsu.edu/~msd3378/virtuallesson.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because maybe they’ve been falsely accused like Stanley and have felt helpless to explain their innocence.
- Because they may have been part of a group that feared the strongest person, like the Lump; reading Stanley’s story might help them know how to handle the “bully” type.
- Because they might need to figure out how to help someone who is an underdog.

Other books by Louis Sachar to consider reading: *Wayside School*, *Dogs Don’t Tell Jokes*, *Sideways Stories*, and the *Marvin Redpost* series.

Sparks, Nicholas: *A Walk to Remember*

Published by Warner Books, 1 September 2000, ISBN 0446608955

****Teen Recommended****

In the prologue to his latest novel, Nicholas Sparks makes the rather presumptuous pledge “first you will smile, and then you will cry,” but sure enough, he delivers the goods. With his calculated ability to throw your heart around like a yo-yo (try out his earlier *Message in the Bottle* or *The Notebook* if you really want to stick it to yourself), Sparks pulls us back to the perfect innocence of a first love.

In 1958, Landon Carter is a shallow but well-meaning teenager who spends most of his time hanging out with his friends and trying hard to ignore the impending responsibilities of adulthood. Then Landon gets roped into acting the lead in the Christmas play opposite the most renowned goody two-shoes in town: Jamie Sullivan. Against his best intentions and the taunts of his buddies, Landon finds himself falling for Jamie and learning some central lessons in life.

Like John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, Sparks maintains a delicate and rarely seen balance of humor and sentiment. While the plot may not be the most original, this boy-makes-good tearjerker will certainly reel in the fans. Look for a movie starring beautiful people or, better yet, snuggle under the covers with your tissues nearby and let your inner sap run wild. (From a review by Nancy R. E. O'Brien for Amazon.com)

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. You may or may not be able to teach this book in connection with a unit or class, but teen readers recommended it and if you are familiar with the book, you can decide which students might enjoy reading it.
2. If you do read the book with students, consider having students discuss the "credibility" of the novel—are there really such experiences? Can life be "happily ever after"? Consider using this book to help students gauge the difference between "just for escape" fiction and literature with greater depth.
3. More information can be found at

www.nicholassparks.com/FAQS/Walk/FAQ_Book_Walk.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might be in a relationship that can grow from reading about others in relationships.
- Because they may not want to risk the peer pressure that comes when they relate to and befriend someone less popular.
- Because they may be in "the dating game."

Steinbeck, John: *Of Mice and Men*

Published by Penguin USA, reissue edition September 1993,

ISBN 0140177396

****Teen Recommended****

Lennie and George are the main characters in this Steinbeck novel set in the time of the Great Depression. They are drifters, migrant workers who are constantly looking for jobs, though they have a dream of finding a place of their own. Lennie is the character that elicits the greatest pathos from readers—he's physically strong and mentally like a child. George acts as a father figure to Lennie, and in this role is called to make a difficult decision to save Lennie from death by a mob.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The book's title is connected to the poem by Robert Burns, *To a Mouse*; explore Burns's poem with the students and have them discuss why (or why not) the title is fitting for the novel. (The *American Heritage Dictionary's* definition of bindle stiff is "Slang = a migrant worker or hobo who carries his own bedroll [bindle is an alteration of bundle].") The poem is as follows:

To a Mouse
Wee, sleecket, cowrin, tim'rous
beastie, . . .

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain
For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

2. An excellent novel to pair with *Of Mice and Men* is Lois Lowry's *The Silent Boy*. This novel could be read aloud in tandem with *Of Mice and Men* and students could write about how they might respond if Jacob, from *The Silent Boy*, is treated any more fairly than Lennie. Both characters can teach students about the condition of those with mental deficiencies. Students could also examine the roles of Katy and George in befriendng Jacob and Lennie.
3. The following websites are helpful for teaching *Of Mice and Men*:

us.penguinclassics.com/static/cs/us/10/teachersguides/ofmiceandmen.html
www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/mice/micetg.html
www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1985/3/85.03.04.x.html
www.greatbooks.org/library/guides/steinbeck.shtml
www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/Steinbeck/mice.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because this is a book about friendship and everyone needs some true friends.
- Because George has to make a very difficult decision to “save” the life of his friend, and real friendships often call for similar decisions.
- Because they might be someone who is an outcast or treated poorly by others.
- Because they might be lonely and looking for friends.
- Because this book also teaches about the Great Depression and it is good for teens to learn about different eras in American history.

Twomey, Cathleen: *Charlotte’s Choice*

Published by Bt Bound, March 2001, ISBN 0613515374

On May 9, 1905, a train pulls into Turner’s Crossing, Missouri, and changes the life of Charlotte Matthews and everyone else in her community. This train is bringing orphans from the Children’s Aid society; among them is Jesse Irwin, also 14, who has been abandoned by parents in New York City and hardened by living a life of survival. Charlotte and Jesse become best friends, and ultimately Charlotte must make a choice of whether to reveal a confidence Jesse has shared. Revealing Jesse’s secret is one way she can save her life, but how does Charlotte break the trust of someone who has had trust broken too often?

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book deals with orphans and abandoned children; it also raises issues about a small town’s prejudice toward those children. Students can research background on the current state of adoption and foster care. A related research topic might be the changing status of care for orphans throughout the history of the United States.
2. “Finding Your Way Home: Orphan Stories in Young Adult Literature,” by Dirk P. Mattson, in the *ALAN Review* (vol. 24, no. 3 [Spring 1997]), is a helpful essay for the theme of foster children and orphans; the essay offers additional novels to use in a themed unit.
3. If possible, invite someone from social services, specifically an adoption agency, to come to speak to the class. Have your students prepare questions for the speaker. A helpful website is www.childstudy.org/fostercare.

4. Students could read books from the following site—all the books deal with orphans and adoption:

www.booksbytesandbeyond.com/books/JUV013050.html

5. A site that shows students “real children” awaiting adoption:

adopt.org/servlet/page?_pageid=289&_dad=portal30&_schema=PORTAL30

6. If your students do service learning or some projects to connect their learning to real life, here is a website that may provide opportunities:

www.orphanhelpers.com

Why Give This Books to Teens?

- Because they might be adopted and can read the story of someone who went through the challenges of foster homes.
- Because someone in the class or among their peers may be orphaned and reading this book will help teens learn something about the life of those who have been adopted.
- Because, like Charlotte, they may face the decision of revealing a secret that could save someone’s life or keeping silent.
- Because this book also deals with sexual abuse and how teens are often trapped in this horrible situation.

Wells, Rebecca: *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*

Published by Perennial, 7 May 1997, ISBN 0060928336

****Teen Recommended****

The book is a blend of voices from Sidda, the now 40-year-old daughter of Vivi, to the women who make up the “Ya Yas”: Necie, Teensy, Vivi, and Caro. It provides a southern Louisiana perspective to relationships and friendship, to mothers and daughters, to Catholicism before Vatican II, and to the stress of parenting and marriages that are not always one’s first choice. The book reveals how much parents’ pain and suffering can affect children and how the effects on the children are often not known for many years.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Teaching this book in tandem with *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* would give a contemporary perspective on a group of young women

bonding as the Ya Yas did. You could direct your students to write a memoir about their own childhood friends. Or in a senior year creative writing project, students could write about the gang or group they “hung around with” in their junior high or middle school years. How do these friendships change, grow, and develop? Why are such friendships important?

2. Your male students might like to read *Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger, *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok, or *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles—then have all your students discuss the differences between female and male bonding situations.
3. *Master Teacher's Guide: A Collection of Forty Guides for Middle and High School Teachers* has a teaching guide for this novel. See HarperCollins Publishers—www.HarperAcademic.com.
4. Reading group guides and other resources for the book are at the following sites:

www.readinggroupguides.com/guides/divine_secrets.asp
www.dragonladies.net/dragonladies_book_list.htm
teachers.net/gazette/AUG02/jones.html
empowered.org/Resources/books.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may have trouble relating to their mothers and need to understand some of what might have happened in their mother's life.
- Because they might want to read the story of friendship that the “Ya Yas” share.
- Because they might be considering marriage and need to know more about why relationships and commitment can be challenging.
- Because if they're males, they might want insights on how to better understand females—mothers, sisters, or girlfriends.

Another book by Rebecca Wells to consider reading: *Little Altars Everywhere*.

White, Ruth: *Weeping Willow*

Published by Aerial, reprint edition 1 April 1994, ISBN 0374482802

As the novel opens, Tiny, who would have been called Ernestina if her mother had dared to defy Tiny's grandfather, is beginning high school. She is living with her stepfather, Vern, and the three children born to him and

Tiny's mother. Tiny's biological father went to fight in World War II in 1941 and was never heard from again; five months after he left, Tiny was born. In the years she and her mother lived with her mother's parents, Tiny had an imaginary friend, Willa. After her mother's marriage to Vern, many terrible things began happening to Tiny, including sexual abuse by Vern. The novel, set in Appalachia, demonstrates Tiny's courage and her struggles to grow to womanhood.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. In some ways this book is for “teachers too” in the sense that you need to understand that many of the students you teach come from families that are troubled. While you cannot take on all the problems your students face, you do need general knowledge of behaviors and warning signs associated with abuse and how those teenagers who have been abused might be affected.
2. Tiny has an imaginary friend, Willa. Willa is part of the years before Tiny's mother remarries and then appears again after Tiny has been abused. For a character lesson, students could write about the importance of having someone—real or imagined—as a confidante.
3. Another literary device is the interior or dramatic monologue. Invite your students to assume the persona of any of the characters in the novel and write that character's response to growing up in the “Holler” or to another event in the novel.
4. Tiny uses letters to Mr. Gillespie—under the guise of anonymity—to express hopes and fears. Have students write to Tiny or Phyllis or to someone in the students' lives.
5. “Reading from a Female Perspective: Pairing *A Doll's House* with *Permanent Connections*,” by Patricia P. Kelly (chapter 8 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) uses this novel as one of the additional works in the unit.
6. “Who Am I? Who Are You? Diversity and Identity in the Young Adult Novel” by Lois Stover in *Reading Their World: The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Monseau and Salvner 2000) discusses this novel in talking about minority cultures within the United States.
7. A book that fits well with *Weeping Willow* is *Forged by Fire* by Sharon Draper. Draper's setting and characters are urban and African American, but the abuse and confusion of a second marriage and a stepfather who molests are common elements in both books. Draper's book is a

Coretta Scott King Genesis Award winner. *Tears of a Tiger*, also by Sharon Draper, is another good read for those who like Draper's books.

8. For more information on Ruth White, check the following websites:

www.carr.lib.md.us/authco/white.htm

www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/whiter.html

www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=0-440-22921-9

scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/winter95/Cole.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may have been abused and not known who they could tell.
- Because they may have friends who need them to listen to their stories of abuse.
- Because they may have struggled to be accepted as they moved into high school.
- Because they may come from a rural area and be considered an outsider.
- Because they might have heritage in Appalachia.

Other books by Ruth White to consider reading: *The Bus to Bluefield*, *Sweet Creek Holler*, and *Memories of Summer*.

Wolff, Virginia Euwer: *Make Lemonade*

Published by Scholastic, reprint edition February 2003,

ISBN 059048141X

****Teen Recommended****

Fourteen-year-old LaVaughn accepts a part-time job caring for the two children of another teen. Jolly, mother of Jilly and Jeremy, is desperate for help feeding, clothing, and raising her two small children, and she's lucky to have found a babysitter like LaVaughn, who is able to help her juggle the demands of single parenting on a small budget. LaVaughn is the narrator of this story, and she describes in realistic details how challenging it can be to help Jolly with her parenting, since Jolly has had no stable home life of her own and has few resources to draw upon as she tries to teach her children life's basics.

Together, the two teens forge an interesting connection, in which they take the worst—life's lemons—and try to make the best—lemonade—out of it. LaVaughn is able to pursue her schoolwork despite the demands of caring

for Jolly's kids, and with the help of a supportive mother and understanding teachers, it looks like she might make some progress toward her goal of attending college. And Jolly might actually learn something from LaVaughn about the value of education and make some positive changes in her own life. A realistic, gritty, and often touching story about parenting, friendship, and overcoming obstacles.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Encourage your students to use many of the wisdom sayings LaVaughn's mom "preaches" at LaVaughn, and the wise actions that LaVaughn takes, to make a collection of ways to "make lemonade" of the "lemons" in their own life situations. Have students share their sayings/actions and compile a list of the best ones to display in the classroom. Here are some examples:

"Mostly you don't quit what you start." (*Make Lemonade*, 11)

"You can't trust the city to keep the bad element out; Public Housing doesn't protect private citizens." (*Make Lemonade*, 14)

LaVaughn is choosing to focus on getting to college so she'll "never live where they have Watchdogs and self-defense." (*Make Lemonade*, 19)

"If you want something to grow and be so beautiful you could have a nice day just from looking at it, you have to wait." (*Make Lemonade*, 25)

"Steam Class"—a take-off on esteem where "they tell you how you can't be blamed for your burdens; your burdens are things not your fault, you didn't do them, but you carry them around." (*Make Lemonade*, 51)

2. "The Problem of Poverty in Three Young Adult Novels: *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*, *Buried Onions* and *Make Lemonade*" by Myrna Dee Marler (*ALAN Review*, Fall 2002) provides insights into and helps for teaching *Make Lemonade* and other novels.
3. "The Urban Experience in Recent Young Adult Novels" by Sandra Hughes-Hassell and Sandy L. Guild in the *ALAN Review* (Summer 2002) presents insights about *Make Lemonade* and how it fits with urban novels.
4. "Growing Strong Family Ties" by Pamela S. Carroll (chapter 4 in Gregg and Carroll, *Books and Beyond*, 1998) uses this novel for activities in the unit.
5. The following websites offer information about Virginia Euwer Wolff and help for teaching *Make Lemonade*:

www.Authors4Teens.com

literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Pubs/0300-17.html

stanleymusic.org/features/wolff_interview/index.php

teachers.altschools.org/tnellen/ftp/pdf/thematicteaching.pdf

www.readingmatters.co.uk/books/make-lemonade.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they can learn from the example of LaVaughn who is going on to college no matter what, even if no one else in their building or their family ever went.
- Because they can learn from LaVaughn who helped Jolly become motivated to return to school and get her GED.
- Because they can bring a presence of acceptance where there is none, as LaVaughn does for Jeremy and Jill, Jolly's two young children.
- Because even though life may have been cruel to them, they can survive and succeed.

Other books by Virginia Euwer Wolff to consider reading: *The Mozart Season*, *Probably Still Nick Swanson*, *Bat 6*, and *True Believer* (a sequel to *Make Lemonade*).