



Books about Identity, Discrimination, and Struggles with Decisions

Bauer, Marion Dane (editor): *Am I Blue?*

Published by HarperTrophy, reprint edition 30 May 1995,

ISBN 0064405877

****Teen Recommended****

This collection of short stories focuses on adolescents and sexual identity. One of the most powerful stories is that of Bruce Coville, for whom the collection is named. Coville's narrator is a young man who has just been attacked and harassed. Melvin, a fairy godfather, appears to the young man and grants him three wishes. One of the wishes involves an experiment—anyone who is gay or lesbian turns blue, to varying degrees. The narrator is surprised to realize who and how many people have kept their sexual orientation hidden.

Other stories in the book are written by many well-known YA literature writers including Francesca Lia Block, Lois Lowry, Jacqueline Woodson, M. E. Kerr, William Sleator, and Jane Yolen.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. In her introduction to the collection, Marion Dane Bauer shares a powerful statement of a friend of hers: "I have never met a bigot who was a reader as a child." This statement offers a key purpose for you to teach or direct your students to these short stories. Most often, teens know little about sexual identity and those who are gay or lesbian live in fear of others finding out. If for no other reason, teaching this collec-

tion of short stories may help those adolescents who attempt suicide because of their sexual identity. Consider selecting stories to read for character education units.

2. Your students may have read books by authors included in this short story collection. If so, allow students to read the story by the author they are most interested in and compare the short story to the novel.
3. "Honoring Their Stories, Too: Literature for Gay and Lesbian Teens" by Michael Cart (*ALAN Review* 25, no. 1 [Fall 1997]) is a good essay relating to this book. Use this essay for ideas about how to relate the short stories in this book to your classroom situation.
4. Nancy Prosenjak has an essay on *Am I Blue?* in *Rationales for Teaching Young Adult Literature* (Reid and Neufeld 1999). In addition to analysis of the collection, Prosenjak includes related works—collections of short stories, novels, and nonfiction.
5. Some teaching ideas are available at the following site, which presents a summary of each story in the collection:

www.hu.mtu.edu/~evjohnso/amIblue.pdf

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might be wondering about sexual identity and need to learn more about it. Teens seldom feel comfortable talking to adults about sexual identity or other issues related to sexuality.
- Because they might be gay or lesbian and wondering how to share that reality with parents, family, or friends.
- Because too many teenagers face harassment and ridicule and they may be one of those hurting others or being hurt themselves.
- Because reading and knowledge can reduce fear and bigotry, and sexual identity is the target for many hate crimes.

Bennett, Cherie: *Life in the Fat Lane*

Published by Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 9 February 1998,

ASIN 0385322747

****Teen Recommended****

Lara is 16 and everything in her life seems to be perfect; she's the perfect weight and size, she's dating a perfect guy, and she has the opportunity, though only a junior, to become homecoming queen. Lara is also in a very dysfunctional family, though she isn't truly aware of the dysfunction until

she develops a rare syndrome, Axell-Crowne, which causes her to gain an inordinate amount of weight. Now her mother, obsessed with physical beauty, and her father, who thinks all Lara needs is willpower, practically disown her. Lara also experiences the taunts and ridicule that others who are overweight face and she no longer wants to be Lara.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book provides a great segue into the whole topic of body image that our culture thrusts at us in so many ways. Your students can analyze ads and media that promote the "thin is beautiful" image. They can make a bulletin board showing the negative ads and design counter ads that are positive. They can also research the problems of bulimia and anorexia that cause serious damage to themselves or to many of their peers—males as well as females. Consider having students do an I-Search paper on these topics.
2. Body image and weight issues related to popularity can be a good topic for a "Take a Stand" activity and follow-up discussion. Create a series of statements with which students can take a stand somewhere along the continuum of strongly disagree to strongly agree. Then have students listen to each statement and move to a location in the room indicating their position on the continuum. It might also work well to have students submit statements related to the topic and use those anonymously to create the list for the activity.
3. "Gender Issues and the Young Adult Novel in the New Millennium" by Pam B. Cole and Patricia P. Kelly (in Monseau and Salvner 2000) looks specifically at Bennett's book and the issue of body image.
4. "Eating Disorders: A Recollection and a Review of Some Relevant Young Adult Fiction," by Elizabeth M. Myers, and "The Portrayal of Obese Adolescents," by Rachel Beineke (both in *ALAN Review* 25, no. 3 [Spring 1998]) are two essays worth reading in connection with this novel.
5. In the "Research Connection" of the *ALAN Review*, Fall 2003, Jeffrey Kaplan presents researcher Beth Younger's findings on "Female Body Issues in Young Adult Literature"; see this journal for other books related to female body issues.
6. The following websites have helpful teaching information and resources:

www.teencybercenter.org/lists/food.htm

www.caringonline.com/eatdis/books/stories.htm

www.womens-studies.ohio-state.edu/peerpower/EatingDisorders.htm
 www.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/clifford/20021207-9999_1c7clifford.html
 www.ala.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Our_Association/Divisions/YALSA/For_Members_Only/YAttitudes/Archives1/Summer_2002/Resource_Roundup3/The_Shame_List/The_Shame_List.htm
 www.kelleyrose.org/disorderly/books.html
 www.drrecommend.com/lst/Health/Mental_Health/Disorders/Eating/20.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might be overweight and facing ridicule about it.
- Because they might be one who thinks that body image is everything and are struggling with bulimia or anorexia.
- Because they might be someone who harasses others about weight and body image, and they should know the harm it can cause.
- Because they might face parental pressures and expectations that are unreasonable, and reading Lara's story might help them.

Brashares, Ann: *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*
 Published by Delacorte Books for Young Readers,
 reprint edition 11 March 2003, ISBN 0385730586
 Teen Recommended

Could a pair of jeans have magical powers? Carmen, Lena, Tibby, and Bridget think so. The four friends are wildly different in size, shape, and personality, but a pair of thrift store jeans fits, flatters, and empowers each of the teens. In fact, as they try the pants on—one after another—they feel that anything might be possible. The pants couldn't have come at a better time. This is the first summer they'll be apart. Lena will visit her grandparents in Greece. Bridget is on her way to soccer camp in Baja. Carmen has been invited to stay with her father in another city, and Tibby is dreading the thought of spending the summer at a dumb summer job without her good friends. They make a pact: the magical pants will travel among them throughout the summer. They all will be able to feel like the goddesses they are during part of the long summer ahead.

Such an imaginative set-up for a novel! Readers follow the pants into the lives of these engaging girls. We watch them face difficult situations—Carmen faces her father's remarriage, Bridget struggles with a sexual attraction to a coach in her camp, Lena gets caught in a language and cultural barrier while trying to explain that she was physically assaulted, and Tibby confronts leukemia and its cruelty in twelve-year-old Bailey's life. Each of the girls learns to deal with the consequences of their actions, discover new stores of inner strength, and learn about the power of true friendship. Without moralizing, author Ann Brashares weaves in delicious ideas about celebrating our differences and loving ourselves as we are.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Each chapter of the book opens with a quote, frequently the words of a famous person. Ask your students to select their favorite ones and explain how the quotes fit the characters and their actions. Some of the quotes to choose from:

“Not all who wander are lost.”—J. R. R. Tolkien

“Luck never gives: it only lends.”—ancient Chinese proverb

“Can you make yourself love? Can you make yourself be loved?”—Lena Kaligaris (one of the four friends)

“There is no such thing as fun in the whole family.”—Jerry Seinfeld

“Love is like war: easy to begin. Hard to end.”—proverb

“I have seen the future and it's like the present, only longer.”—Dan Quisenberry

“The problem is not the problem. The problem is your attitude about the problem. Got that?”—Coach Brevin

“You will make all kinds of mistakes: but as long as you are generous and true and also fierce you cannot hurt the world or even seriously distress her.”—Winston Churchill

2. The pants are the object that unites these four friends; have your students write about an object or symbol that could keep them connected to friends. For an oral presentation opportunity, allow the students to share their choice and explain how the object could work.
3. Using Montaigne's essay “On Friendship” or something from Emerson,

have your students make a comparison of the advice presented in these “canonical” writings with that presented by Brashares.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might need the support of friends and can learn from the way these four young women were friends despite all kinds of differences.
- Because they might be faced with the remarriage of a parent and with the anger or feelings of abandonment that come with it and, by reading this novel, can learn to cope with their situations.
- Because they might need to know how to relate to someone younger than they are who is terminally ill.
- Because this book teaches about some of life’s biggest issues: friendship, death, desires, and loss.

Cormier, Robert: *The Chocolate War*

Published by Laurel Leaf, reissue edition 1 August 1986,
ISBN 0440944597

This book is set at Trinity High School, a school run by an order of Roman Catholic brothers. Brother Leon is acting headmaster and a despicable man; the “Vigils,” a student group not totally unlike a college fraternity, really “runs” the place. Archie Costello is the “assigner”; he devises schemes for underclassmen to fulfill. There is a black box; if Archie draws a black marble from the box he has to do the assignment—neither ever happens.

Archie is asked by Brother Leon to help enlist the support of the Vigils behind the annual chocolate sale. Jerry Renault, a freshman who has just lost his mother to cancer in the spring and who lives with a father who can’t bear the loss of his wife, first is ordered not to sell; then Jerry refuses on his own. The motto he has on a poster in his locker is “Do I dare disturb the universe?” (a T. S. Eliot line from “The Wasteland”). Jerry is eventually beaten terribly in a fight (arranged by the Vigils) against Emile Janza, a cruel, amoral young man. Roland Gouber—called the Goober, is Jerry’s only friend, yet he’s unable to save Jerry and feels as though he betrayed Jerry.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This is another book that lends itself to the “Take a Stand” Activity. Once more, you might involve students in creating the questions/state-

ments about peer pressure and other topics they see as related to the novel. Their statements could be submitted anonymously in a box and then used for class discussion.

2. “Do I dare disturb the universe?”—Use this central quote from the book for a writing prompt and then have a discussion of the responses. Some related questions you can ask your students: Can you really get away from a gang or group to which you belong? Is it worth the suffering or ridicule you might face? Is it really possible to go against the majority?
3. Chapter 11, “Alienation from Society in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Chocolate War*” by Elizabeth Ann Poe; chapter 12, “The Beast Within: Using and Abusing Power in *Lord of the Flies*, *The Chocolate War*, and Other Reading” by Barbara G. Samuels; and chapter 13, “Dealing with Abuse of Power in 1984 and *The Chocolate War*” by Kay Parks Bushman and John H. Bushman (all in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) present units for teaching this novel.
4. *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli (**Teen Recommended**) is a good book to compare or read simultaneously with *The Chocolate War*. The narrator is again a young male, but this time it is the unconventional goodness of Susan/Stargirl that becomes the “affront” to her peers. They can’t stand to see someone so different. In many ways, Stargirl acts heroically, particularly because she doesn’t need recognition. Students could work the “Take a Stand” activity with this novel as well.
5. See the *ALAN Review* Fall 2003 issue for an article by Jen Menzel, “Intimidation in Cormier’s *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, *We All Fall Down*, and *The Chocolate War*.” This article gives insights on themes in *The Chocolate War*.
6. Patricia L. Daniel, in “Relationships and Identity: Young Adult Literature and *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*” (chapter 7 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), uses *The Chocolate War* as one of the YA novels to compare with the play.
7. Several teaching lessons are available at the following sites:
 - www.webenglishteacher.com/cormier.html
 - www.csis.pace.edu/schools/wp/dcronk/ChocWar.html
 - www.mcdougallittell.com/disciplines/_lang_arts/litcons/chocolat/guide.cfm
 - www.carr.lib.md.us/mae/cormier/cormier.htm
 - www.fsu.edu/~CandI/ENGLISH/webq/chocolate/Chocolate.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may have felt pressured to do something they really don't agree with.
- Because they may be struggling with how to fit in—especially if they have had some loss in their family like Jerry had in his.
- Because sometimes they deal with adults who knowingly or unknowingly add to the problems and pressures they experience.
- Because they may feel guilty about not being able to help or save another person they like.

Danticat, Edwidge: *Behind the Mountains*

Published by Orchard Books, October 2002, ISBN 0439372992

Celiane Esperance is a young Haitian woman; she lives with her mother and older brother, Moy, in the mountain area of Beau Jour, Haiti. Her father left for the United States in 1995, five years before Celiane's diary entries begin. Her father has been working to get the money for Celiane, Moy, and their mother to come to New York. Celiane's story includes the fear she faces in preelection Haiti; one day in Port-au-Prince a seven-year-old girl is killed when a bomb is thrown at the school bus on which she's riding. Celiane's question at this news is "Why must children be killed? They are not involved in politics" (*Behind the Mountains*, 53). This novel also reveals the tension 19-year-old Moy faces—he is not allowed to be an adult, but in his father's absence he takes on many adult responsibilities.

Once the family is reunited in New York, Celiane's diary describes the world of Haitian immigrants trying to assimilate. Moy wants to follow his dream of painting; his father wants him to pursue education. Papa's and Moy's values clash and Celiane sees it all; her story is one common to many immigrants in early twenty-first-century America.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book, as well as *Flight to Freedom* by Ana Veciana-Suarez, is part of a new series, First Person Fiction, a line of novels about today's immigrant experience published by Scholastic. These novels are both first-person narratives; you can use them to teach point-of-view in novels while helping your students learn about other cultures and about the realities that exist for many students who are from immigrant families. Scholastic also provides a discussion guide including a summary

of each novel; discussion points on character, setting, and theme; a comparison of the novels; related readings; and the following websites:

www.historyofcuba.com (The Timetable History of Cuba)
www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html (CIA—The World Fact Book)
www.encycarta.msn.com/find/concise.asp?ti=06082000
 (Encarta Encyclopedia Article on Haiti)
www.infoplease.com/ipa/a0107612.html (information on Haiti)

2. Suggest that your students look for newspaper articles and other news reports on immigrants or refugees trying to come to the United States. Have them compare these news stories with the experiences Celiane has in her life.
3. Other websites include:
 - www.wehaitians.com/diaries%20of%20desperation.html
 - www.litwomen.org/Complist/complearn_a.html
 - teacher.scholastic.com/products/tradebooks/bookupdate/janfeb04.htm
 - www.libraries.phila.k12.pa.us/misc/SummerReading/SummerRead-Grade6.html
4. A printable file on the novels is available at:
 - www.nysreading.org/BookBanter/banspring03.pdf
5. A site on Historical Fiction for Teens:
 - www.webrary.org/rs/bibhistfict.html
6. Multicultural Books for Young Readers:
 - education.umn.edu/CI/NBFYR/MultiCultural.html
7. Reading Around the World:
 - www.seattleschools.org/schools/hamilton/Library/world_read.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because many students are international, and all students need to learn more about different cultures and their peers who come from different countries.
- Because people in the United States sometimes have difficulty accept-

ing people from other nations, particularly after September 11, 2001, and a book like this can let young adults know what their peers who are immigrants are experiencing.

- Because Celiane's family struggles with many of the same tensions that their own families may face, regardless of cultural experience.
- Because many young people today are growing up in places where there is violence.

Greene, Bette: *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*

**Published by Laurel Leaf, reissue edition 1 January 1997,
ASIN 0440226953**

Carla Wayland is 16 and living with her mother in Rachtville, Arkansas; Carla's father left the family when she was a baby. Her mother, a librarian at the public library, faces a barrage of issues around censorship, but nevertheless keeps working for the rights of all. Sometimes Carla is embarrassed by her mother's tough stances. When a gay couple moves into neighboring Parson's Springs, Carla faces her greatest test. Andy Harris, a popular and handsome high school senior, appears to be a devout Christian; however, he is also homophobic and his actions toward Frank and Stephan (the gay couple) erupt with increasing hatred. Carla struggles as she believes she's in love with Andy, but in the face of Andy's violent actions, she wants to say, "I really, really hate it when you're hating. I hate it even more when you try to force me into hating, too" (*Drowning of Stephan Jones*, 81). This is a tragic and powerful novel.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Once again, consider doing the "Take a Stand" activity to determine students' responses to the topic. If you do the activity as part of pre-reading, you could use statements or actions of the characters of the novel and see what students think before and after the novel.
2. This novel could be used in a character education unit—particularly in connection with response to bullying, harassment, or hate crimes. Students could write about hate crimes or situations they have witnessed, read about or heard about; have the students submit their writings anonymously, and you could use these for discussion.
3. After reading the novel, have students debate the fate of Andy and his peers. They might also research the Matthew Shepard case or do follow-up reading of *The Laramie Project*.

4. There are two articles from the Winter 1994 *ALAN Review* that could enhance the teaching of this novel: "America's Designated Victims: Our Creative Young" by Bette Greene (*ALAN Review* 21, no. 2 [Winter 1994]: 2–4) and "Understanding Adolescent Homophobia: An Interview with Bette Greene" by Lynne Alvine (*ALAN Review* 21, no. 2 [Winter 1994]: 5–9). These two articles can be found at the following websites:

scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/winter94/Greene.html

scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/winter94/Alvine.html

5. "Drowning in Dichotomy: Interpreting *The Drowning of Stephan Jones*" by Patrick K. Finnessy (*ALAN Review* 25, no. 3 [Spring 1998]) is a resource for teaching this novel.
6. "Honoring Their Stories, Too: Literature for Gay and Lesbian Teens," by Michael Cart (*ALAN Review* 25, no. 1 [Fall 1997]) is a good essay relating to this book.
7. Some other websites with resources for teaching the novel:

www.ncac.org/issues/bettegreene.html

www.ncac.org/projects/l_gbooks.html

scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/spring98/finnessy.html

www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ARTICLES/pdf_file/751.pdf

scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/winter96/webunder.html

www.tamucc.edu/~swolff/ENGL3360/youngadultEJ.pdf

www.ccsu.edu/library/nadeau/Bibliographies/BannedBooks.htm

www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ARTICLES/pdf_file/67.pdf

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because no one deserves to be hated and harassed; we all need to learn this.
- Because they might be in a position like Carla—where they love someone without being able to see his or her worst qualities.
- Because like Carla, they want to see the "deeper, more real qualities, those qualities which the eyes alone could never penetrate" (*Drowning of Stephan Jones*, 203).
- Because we all need to understand more about sexual identity and acceptance of diversity.
- Because they might have been harassed for being different.
- Because using religion for hate is not acceptable.

Hesse, Karen: *Witness*

Published by Scholastic, reprint edition February 2003,
ISBN 0439272009

This powerful book is based on actual events related to the Ku Klux Klan in Vermont in the 1920s. We hear the events conveyed through the voices of ten characters, each presenting varying perspectives. Most poignant are the voices of six-year-old Esther Hirsch, whose mother has died, and of Leanora Sutter, age 12, whose mother is also dead. Esther and her father are Jewish and become objects of Klan attacks for “corrupting a Christian woman,” Sara Chickering, into taking Jews into her home. Leanora and her father are Black and experience harassment as well from Klan members. Eighteen-year-old Merlin Van Tornhout is caught between the acceptance he feels from the Klan and the desire to be something more. The “religious figure” clergyman, Johnny Reeves, is one of the book’s most appalling figures, locked in bigotry and believing in his own righteousness.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book would be a very effective opening for any unit on discrimination or on the Holocaust. You could use the book in a read-aloud, readers’ theater format. Then you could follow with a write-around activity where students respond to the book and its “voices.” After writing their own thoughts, they pass their paper to a student on their right; this student comments on the first response, signs his or her name, and passes the paper on. (The same exercise can be done in a computer classroom by having students move from one computer to the next.) You end up with a written dialogue on which to build discussion.
2. The dramatic monologue style of the book is reminiscent of Edgar Lee Master’s “Spoon River Anthology.” If you are teaching American Literature, use *Witness* in tandem with “Spoon River Anthology.”
3. “Consider the Source: Feminism and Point of View in Karen Hesse’s *Stowaway* and *Witness*” by Wendy J. Glenn (*ALAN Review*, Winter 2003) offers a perspective for teaching the novel.
4. Web resources for teaching the novel include:
 - www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/hesse.html
 - www.csulb.edu/org/childrens-lit/proj/nbgs/nbgs-lists/nbgs2002.html
 - 205.213.162.11/stairs_site/workshop_pages/TeacherLine/childrens_authors/activity1_shared_resources.html#kh
 - www.emporia.edu/libsv/nom0304bcurr.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might have people who judge them by skin color, religion, or other external factors.
- Because teenagers were those most hurt in this real-life incident.
- Because hate crimes continue today and teens can help their peers stop such violent behavior.
- Because it is easy to get caught up in an activity or group when it is supported by a religious group we belong to.

Other books by Karen Hesse to consider reading: *Phoenix Rising*, *Just Juice*, and *The Music of Dolphins*.

Kerr, M. E.: *Night Kites*

Published by Demco Media, September 1987, ISBN 0606035230

The narrator is Erick Rudd, now 17. His family story includes a brother, Pete, ten years older than Erick, who develops AIDS. Erick himself is an average 17-year-old with friends like Jack Case (also 17) who are exploring the world of sexuality and, for a good part of the novel, bemoaning their lack of sexual activity. At the heart of this book are a young man’s struggle and his parents’ struggle to accept an older brother and son who is “different” and whose difference has brought him into contact with a deadly disease.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Your students may find this book best to respond to anonymously, particularly because the central characters are males and teen males are often more reluctant to share feelings on sexuality, let alone sexual identity. Consider having them write using pseudonyms or assumed names and have them write to Jack, Erick, Pete, or his parents.
2. Teaching resources for the novel include the following:

Mellon, Constance. “Critical Essay on *Night Kites* by M. E. Kerr.” In *Masterplots II: Juvenile and Young Adult Literature Series Supplement*. Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 1997.
journals.ccc.sped.org/EC/Archive_Articles/VOL.33NO.6JULYAUGUST2001_TEC_P_rater.pdf (About Using Juvenile Literature to Teach about HIV/AIDS)
www.ric.edu/astal/authors/mekerr.html

3. Many of the resources—especially websites—included in the teaching

ideas for *The Drowning of Stephan Jones* are also applicable for teaching this novel, so consider using those.

4. "Honoring Their Stories, Too: Literature for Gay and Lesbian Teens," by Michael Cart (*ALAN Review* 25, no. 1 [Fall 1997]) is a good essay relating to this book.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might know of someone who has AIDS.
- Because they might also be in the "dating game" and be wondering how to relate.
- Because this story is told by a 17-year-old male and not many books are presented in the voice of young men.
- Because no one deserves to die alone.
- Because parents are struggling too, and teens don't often realize that their parents have difficulties with sexual identity also.

Latifa: *My Forbidden Face: Growing Up Under the Taliban— A Young Woman's Story*

Published by Miramax, 9 July 2003, ISBN 1401359256

Latifa is a teenager in Kabul, Afghanistan, on September 27, 1996, when the Taliban take control of Kabul. From this day, her family, her city, and her country are never the same. Yes, she lived a childhood that was seldom free of bombing and attacks, but she had never faced the oppression that came with the Taliban controlling Kabul. Her mother, who is a doctor, can no longer practice medicine—especially not medicine for women; after the Taliban, women cannot get any medical treatment. Latifa had just passed the first part of the university exams and was hoping for a career in journalism. After the takeover, she cannot attend school and all hopes of a "normal" career are gone. She and many others, especially women, become prisoners in their own homes.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. In the introduction to the book, Latifa writes that she hopes this book will be important to other women, "those whose words are locked away, those who have hidden what they have witnessed in their hearts and in their memories." She dedicates the book to all the Afghan girls and women who have kept their dignity to their last breath, to all who

have been deprived of rights in their own countries, and to those who "live in darkness even after the dawn of the twenty-first century." You should use this book to teach—especially to teach the many young people of the United States who have never known such violations of freedom and basic human rights.

2. Latifa's story is a memoir. The book can demonstrate an example of this genre. You could also use it in a nonfiction unit on biography. The following site provides a further list of biographies to pair with *My Forbidden Face*:

www.fahan.tas.edu.au/libraries/senior/biography.htm

3. Students could do a web quest on Afghanistan, on the Taliban, on the various religious groups in Afghanistan, and on other topics related to the book and do oral presentations on their findings. Afghanistan is frequently in world news or written about in newspapers. Your students could compare Latifa's view of Afghanistan to the 2006 realities.
4. For some web resources on the book, check the following sites:

www.csmonitor.com/2002/0530/p17s01-bogn.htm

www.usatoday.com/life/books/2002/2002-03-21-burqa.htm

www.developmentgateway.org/node/134111/

rawa.fancymarketing.net/zoya-nd.htm

hotburrito.100megsfree5.com/books/taliban.html

www.angelfire.com/ca/miroo/womenbiblio.html

www.womenforafghanwomen.org/press/womensreview.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because many in America are afraid of the Taliban and most often we fear what we don't know.
- Because the post-9/11 United States has made us more aware of countries like Afghanistan, but we seldom know stories of the "everyday" citizens there.
- Because we need to understand the oppression and violence that marks our world so we can learn how to end it.
- Because if they feel restricted, they can learn about how much freedom countries like the United States provide for them.
- Because all over the world there are teens like Latifa who live amid war and oppression, and we need to understand more about their world.

Martel, Yann: *Life of Pi***Published by Harvest Books, 1 May 2003, ISBN 0156027321**

Piscine Molitor Patel, nicknamed Pi, is the son of a zookeeper in India. Pi spends his precocious teen years studying zoology, and, over his family's protests, three unique religions. He practices all three! When the economy fails, his family emigrates to Canada on a freighter, taking with them many of the animals, which they've sold to North American collectors. When the ship sinks and all others are lost, a zebra, an orangutan, a hyena, a Bengal Tiger, and Pi share a lifeboat. To survive, Pi must tame the tiger, named Robert Parker. In a series of environmental and psychological adventures, the author creates a coming-of-age survival story.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Some questions to begin your discussion of the novel include the following: How does Pi use the lessons of childhood? What childhood characteristics and beliefs must Pi discard? In what ways do Pi's 227 days in a lifeboat at sea, his escape from the carnivorous seaweed island, and the lessons he learns from his relationship with Robert Parker the tiger—whether real or a creation of his imagination—create the beliefs by which he will live as an adult? Your students could also write about how they might survive if they were in Pi's situation and about the choices they would make.
2. Martel uses intensely descriptive passages to show Pi discovering his "place" in the "universes" of the lifeboat, the sea, and his own sense of self. Direct your students to make lists of what some of these discoveries are.

Master Teacher's Guide

- "They didn't know that I was a practicing Hindu, Christian, and Muslim. Teenagers always hide a few things from their parents, isn't that so? All sixteen-year-olds have secrets, don't they?" How do your students react to this quotation and Pi's practicing of three religions?
- See Jonathan Keifer's "Fascinating 'Life of Pi' gives readers a reason to believe." (*San Francisco Chronicle*, June 23, 2002.) Use this essay for background on the novel.
- Add Pi's scientific thinking to his mix of three religions, and Pi's experiences become an interesting laboratory. How might Pi be an allegory,

an illustration, or even a model for today's teens who must grow up on a very small and complicated planet?

- "Pi comes to realize that survival involves knowing when to assert himself and when to hold back, when to take the upper hand and when to yield to a power greater than himself." What has he learned about the use and the futility of power?
- A review by Gary Krist, "Taming the Tiger: for the hero of this novel, survival depends on knowing when to yield" (*New York Times Book Review*, July 7, 2002, p. 5), is another resource to help you teach the novel.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because the instincts to survive are stronger than they know.
- Because even tough times hold magical and beautiful experiences.
- Because "the tigers" in their lives may help them discover their strengths.
- Because they may be in a search for what to believe and can learn from Pi's searching.

Mickle, Shelley Fraser: *The Turning Hour***Published by Thomas Rivera Center, 15 January 2004,
ISBN 1579660088**

It's early December, she's 16 years old, and Bergin has decided to commit suicide. She swallows a bottle of aspirin, but she is found by her 14-year-old stepbrother before she dies and now her question is "how do I get back?" Bergin's story is revealed as she goes through counseling, and as her mother, Leslie, recalls her own mother's alcoholism and her father's strength. Leslie and Doug's divorce and subsequent remarriages all play a role. The novel traces carefully the significance of each person in Bergin's life, but especially the significance of her father and mother, who separated when Bergin was six years old. Like a detective novel, it aims at discovering why Bergin attempted to take her life.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Set up a question and answer box. Have your students write out the questions they want answered by characters in the book, especially by Bergin. Select students who are willing to assume the roles of characters and hold a question/answer session.

- It is likely that one of your students, or someone your students know, has committed or attempted suicide. As a pre-reading activity, ask your students to write why they think suicide is or is not justified. After reading the novel, have them again write their response and compare the two responses.
- For background on this book and the author, check the following websites:

www.shelleymickle.com/biography.htm
aol.teenreads.com/reviews/0913515221.asp
www.bookreporter.com/reviews/0913515221.asp
www.readinggroupsguides.com
www.sitescraper.co.uk/books/Suicidal%20behavior.html
www.childadvocacycentergainesville.org/board.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might be tempted to commit suicide.
- Because they might be suicide survivors, trying to rebuild their lives.
- Because they might be overwhelmed with problems and need to know there are other ways to handle seemingly insurmountable difficulties.
- Because they might have friends, peers, or family members who have committed suicide.
- Because they might be children of parents who have separated or divorced and never have been able to piece all the feelings together.

Napoli, Donna Jo: *Song of the Magdalene*

Published by Point Signature, August 1998, ISBN 0606137890

The narrator of the book is Miriam, who from the age of ten experiences “fits.” Miriam’s mother has died and her family has a servant, Hannah, who has a crippled son, Abraham. Set in the time of Jesus (known as Joshua in the Jewish tradition and in this book), the town of Magdala is filled with devout Jews who see anyone crippled as a sinner. In addition, anyone who experiences the “fits” Miriam has is considered possessed by a demon. She hides her “fits”—though she never knows exactly when she will experience one—by going alone into the valley. She doesn’t go unnoticed; Abraham knows she goes and begs to be taken along. He reveals to her that he is intelligent, even going so far as to teach Miriam to read.

Now Miriam is doing several things that are unacceptable in the patriar-

chal Jewish world—she is going around the town and into the valley as good women should not, and she is traveling with an outcast—Abraham. In the presence of most of the Jewish community, he does not speak and appears to be mute or an idiot.

The book presents a real picture of the struggles of someone who is different; it gives the story of Mary of Magdala, who the Gospels say “was possessed by seven demons.” Miriam/Mary is freed by the “great healer”—Joshua/Jesus—and follows in his company.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

- Abraham is a mature young man who, because of his physical illness and the suffering he’s experienced from being treated as an outcast and an idiot, has wise advice to give Miriam. Discuss with your students his words about his illness and Miriam’s fits: “You didn’t sin, Miriam. You broke no law of Moses and Israel. You’re not sick because you sinned, Miriam. I’m not sick because I sinned. If there’s anything I’ve figured out in my life, it’s that invalids aren’t any more sinners than anyone else” (*Song of the Magdalene*, 55).
- Miriam is in the temple one day and hears the Levites chanting. One of the reasons they praise God is that they have not been made women. Discuss the role of women and the reality that in many cultures today women still do not have the rights that are afforded males.
- “Fairy Tales, Myths, and Religious Stories,” by Donna Jo Napoli (*ALAN Review* 25, no. 1 [Fall 1997]), provides insights to this novel.
- Some teaching ideas can be found in the following website:

powayusd.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/pusdphs/library/issues_of_faith.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might want to know more about the lives of women who lived at the time of Jesus.
- Because they might have some kind of physical or emotional handicap that isolates them from others.
- Because they too might want to have a “reason” for some of life’s difficulties—like why some people develop cancer or terminal illness.
- Because they might want to learn about a courageous woman.

Other books by Donna Jo Napoli to consider reading: *Spinners*, *Zel*, *Sirena*, *Stones in Water*, and *Daughter of Venice*.

Philbrick, Rodman: *Freak the Mighty*

Published by Scholastic, reprint edition June 2001,

ISBN 0439286069

****Teen Recommended****

Max, a boy who is large for his age and frequently ridiculed for his physical size and lack of intellectual ability, narrates this book. In addition, Max bears a striking resemblance to his father, a man imprisoned for killing Max's mother. Kevin Avery, alias "Freak," who has a giant mind and a deformed, dwarfish body, befriends Max. The combination is "Freak the Mighty." The sequel, *Max the Mighty*, and an 1998 video, *The Mighty*, further supplement this text displaying a range of differences.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. After you have read the novel, it might be a good idea to have a medical person who has knowledge about the kind of disorder that Kevin had come present to the class. As an alternative, finding information about this illness could be a good web quest activity for your students to learn about illnesses that can cause disfigurement.
2. All too often, your students have been ridiculed, or even worse, have ridiculed others who look different or have some disability. This novel is a quick read and can be used with your students to address respect or other aspects of character education.
3. In "John Wayne, Where Are You? Everyday Heroes and Courage" by Pamela S. Carroll (chapter 2 in Gregg and Carroll, *Books and Beyond*, 1998), this novel is one of the YA novels used to supplement the unit.
4. "Listening to Kids in America" by Rodman Philbrick (*ALAN Review* 28, no. 2 [Winter 2001]) gives insights by the author on this novel.
5. "Are These Parents for Real? Students' Views of Parents in Realistic and Historical Fiction" by Janis M. Harmon and Monica C. Gonzalez (*ALAN Review*, Winter 2003) looks at the parent image in *Freak the Mighty*.
6. For author information, background, and teaching ideas, check the following websites:

www.Authors4Teens.com
greenwood.scbbs.com/servlet/A4TStart?authorid=rphilbrick&source=
www.rodmanphilbrick.com/teaching.html

www.moraga.k12.ca.us/JM/Teacher/Forster/Projects/Mighty/indexFreak.html

www.resourceroom.net/Comprehension/literature/ftm_toc.asp
teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/bookrev/tguide.htm
www.cinematheque.bc.ca/pdfs/mighty.pdf

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might be struggling with body image, feeling embarrassed by who they are.
- Because they might be harassed because of something their parents or family members have done.
- Because everyone should have a friendship like Max and Kevin have.
- Because they might be someone who ridicules others because of appearance and need to realize that appearances aren't everything.

Other books by Rodman Philbrick to consider reading: *Max the Mighty* and *The Last Book in the Universe*.

Reynolds, Marilyn: *Love Rules*

Published by Morning Glory Press, 1 July 2001, ISBN 1885356765

Lynn Wright is 17, beginning her senior year at Hamilton High. Her best friend, in fact, "soul mate friend," Kit Dandridge has something so important to share with Lynn that Kit won't talk about it over the phone—they have to meet at "their tree." Lynn learns that Kit is lesbian and struggles to keep their friendship. Lynn also begins dating an African American and finds herself "on the outside looking in" because she is interracial dating. Conan, her new boyfriend, struggles also to tell his family he is dating a "white girl." Kit, Lynn, and Conan learn a good deal about the hate that their peers can show and about how they can best support diversity in each other.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book, with the realistic situations at Hamilton High, provides a cast of characters with whom students can relate. Have your students select a character to whom they feel they can best relate. Write a series of diary entries in the voice of that character.
2. Marilyn Reynolds' website has helpful teaching guides for *Love Rules* and other books in her Hamilton High series. Check the following site for these guides:

www.morningglorypress.com/pages/fictrite.html

3. "Honoring Their Stories, Too: Literature for Gay and Lesbian Teens," by Michael Cart (*ALAN Review* 25, no. 1 [Fall 1997]) is a good essay relating to this book and why you should teach it.
4. In Jeffrey Kaplan's "Research Connection" in the Fall 2003 *ALAN Review*, Barbara Smith shares her research on "Sexual Orientation and Young Adult Literature"—this essay includes other books that address the same topic as *Love Rules*.
5. Resources addressing the topic of gay and lesbian young adults are found at:

www.glsen.org/templates/resources/record.html?section=16&record=1523
 teens.denverlibrary.org/find_pages/genre_pages/glbqt.html
 www.framinghamlibrary.org/teen/bglbt.htm
 www.usd320.k12.ks.us/whs/lmc/alternative.html
 www.alexsanchez.com/gay_teen_books.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might have friends whose sexual identity is different from theirs, but who need them to continue being a friend.
- Because they might need to learn more about sexual identity, particularly that it is not just a choice; homosexuality is a biological and psychological reality.
- Because bullying and harassment are unacceptable for any person.
- Because they might be teens who need courage to accept their sexual identity.

Rinaldi, Ann: *Wolf by the Ears*

Published by Scholastic, reissue edition January 1993,

ISBN 0590434128

The novel is narrated from the perspective of Harriet Hemings, probable daughter of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, an African American woman. Harriet, Beverly (a male), Madison, and Eston are the Hemings children still living at Monticello; their brother Thomas has already left—"passing as white" into a different world. Thomas left when Harriet was 10; he apparently bore such resemblance to Jefferson that when anyone came to the plantation, he was sent elsewhere. Harriet's mother has been the keeper of Jefferson's wardrobe and the only one allowed, most times, into the inner

sanctum of the Master's rooms. Harriet always feels she must call Jefferson "the Master"—yet that sets a slave relationship, despite that fact that all of the Blacks at Monticello (definitely the Hemings) are given papers saying they are free; these papers are accessible when the Hemings reach age 21.

Harriet speaks of the pain she sees in Jefferson; "I'm watching him. Me. Harriet. I watch the great Thomas Jefferson at the time when he doesn't know it. And I see things others don't see. I can do that with people. Especially with white folk. They don't know how to keep what's in their hearts from showing in their eyes like we do" (*Wolf by the Ears*, 12). Harriet records how others want her to leave when she is 21; she doesn't want to leave; she believes Jefferson doesn't want her to leave either. Thomas Mann Randolph, son-in-law of Jefferson, wants Harriet to "go for freedom."

Eventually Harriet does decide to leave the plantation. As Harriet is preparing to leave, and she has now shared this with Jefferson, who seems saddened, yet tolerant, Harriet finds out that Beverly is leaving—he won't tell Jefferson before he goes. Also only after their farewell meeting does Harriet learn from her mother that Beverly was also "passing." The end chapter—a final scene with Jefferson—is very powerful.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. American history gives us one perspective on Thomas Jefferson; how do this book and other recent knowledge about Jefferson most likely fathering children with slaves affect your perspective on this man? Have your students answer this question and relate it to the larger issue of what is expected of someone in a position like the president of the United States.
2. The book's title is based on the following quote by Jefferson:

"Gradually, with due sacrifices, a general emancipation and expatriation could be effected. But, as it is, we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation the other."

Discuss the quote with your students and how it fits with the issue of slavery or other political issues.

3. The key to this work is the alienation of non-recognition. This novel is a great one to "pair with a classic," specifically *Absalom, Absalom*. You could have your students read Rinaldi's book on their own while you are reading *Absalom, Absalom* in class, since it is a much more difficult novel.

4. Teri Lesesne, in "Exploring the Horror Within: Themes of the Duality of Humanity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Ten Related Young Adult Novels" (chapter 10 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995) uses *Wolf by the Ears* as one of the YA novels in this unit.
5. "Making Valid Connections: Historical Fiction Set in Virginia" by Cheryl Christian (in "Adolescent Literature: Making Connections with Teens," special issue, *Virginia English Bulletin* 44, no. 2 [Fall 1994]) focuses primarily on *Wolf by the Ears*.
6. Some web resources for teaching this book can be found at:

www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/rinaldi65.html
education.boisestate.edu/bdavies/wolf_by_the_ears.htm
www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/rinaldi.html
www.springfieldlibrary.org/reading/womenYA.html
www.hpl.lib.tx.us/gala/bhm03/readings_ya.html
falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/rinaldi.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because identity and recognition of who you are is one of the most important things in life.
- Because often we have glorified images of historical figures, such as presidents, and we need to know these people are also human and imperfect.
- Because they may be people of color who have experienced racism.
- Because they may need to know more about the lives of African Americans and about the ways African Americans and others have been persecuted.

Other books by Ann Rinaldi to consider reading: *A Break with Charity*, *The Last Silk Dress*, and *Broken Days*.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz: *Esperanza Rising*

Published by Scholastic, reprint edition 1 June 2002,

ISBN 043912042X

Esperanza is anticipating her thirteenth birthday; she's used to living a life as the landowner's daughter, not as a day laborer or migrant worker. Her

father has always been sympathetic to the workers, but not everyone knows that nor respects that. Just before her birthday, her father is killed by bandits and Esperanza's life is changed forever. Eventually she and her family escape to California, and Esperanza truly needs to live on hope, as her name implies.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The book contains a number of proverbs or wise sayings. Ask your students to select one of these to explain and apply to a situation in their life:

"You can only feel the earth's heartbeat when you are still and quiet."
(*Esperanza Rising*, 2)

"Wait a little while and the fruit will fall into your hand." (*Esperanza Rising*, 2)

"There is no rose without a thorn." (*Esperanza Rising*, 14)

"He who falls today may rise tomorrow." (*Esperanza Rising*, introduction)

"The rich person is richer when he becomes poor, than the poor person when he becomes rich." (*Esperanza Rising*, introduction)

"In Mexico we stand on different sides of the river." (Miguel, a worker's son, to Esperanza, *Esperanza Rising*, 37)

"The rich take care of the rich and the poor take care of those who have less than they have." (*Esperanza Rising*, 79)

2. "The Migrant Experience in the Works of Mexican American Writers" (*ALAN Review*, Fall 2002) has insights on this and other novels related to migrant workers.
3. Resources on the author and the novel can be found at the following:

www.pammunozryan.com/books.html
www.bluffton.edu/lionlamb/biblio/conflict
www.simsbury.lib.ct.us/ya2001.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might know what it means to have money and enough to live on, but not how to survive if they lost all they had.
- Because like Esperanza, they might be used to having people wait on them, but they might need to learn to take care of themselves.

- Because Esperanza's story is reflective of many of the immigrant people coming to the United States—they need to understand the situation of those people, especially of those young people who may be their classmates.

Salinger, J. D.: *The Catcher in the Rye*

Published by Little Brown & Company, reissue edition 1 May 1991,

ISBN 0316769487

****Teen Recommended****

Holden Caulfield is about to be expelled from Pencey Prep. He cannot relate to or confide in anyone except his little sister Phoebe, so he skips out four days early for Christmas break and heads for New York City. Labeling nearly everything he encounters as phony—his favorite word, Holden rarely lets others see his real self. Disgusted with the uselessness of the adult world, he goes back to his parents' apartment to talk to his sister Phoebe about his dream to become a "catcher in the rye." He visits his history teacher, Mr. Antolini, who makes sexual overtures; Holden panics and runs back to Phoebe.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Holden Caulfield is the master of cynical "cool" that disguises deep caring about lots of things. Ask your students to make a list of things they view cynically and note those about which they also care or worry.
2. View the film *Finding Forrester*. Have your class list the parallels and differences between William Forrester and Salinger. Then have them make comparisons between Holden Caulfield, the New York teen of the 1940s, and Jamal Warner as the model of today's New Yorker.
3. "Catcher as Core and Catalyst" by Ted Hipple (chapter 4 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) presents numerous teaching ideas.
4. The following site lists novels that can be compared with *The Catcher in the Rye*:

www.yabookscentral.com/cfusion/index.cfm?fuseAction=guides.guide&guide_id;eq31&book_id=127

5. The following websites are helpful for teaching Salinger and *The Catcher in the Rye*:

www.webenglishteacher.com/salinger.html

www.cwrl.utexas.edu/%7Eailise/teaching/lesson/catcher/index.html

www.teachnet-lab.org/MBHS/scragg/catcher/Catchernovel.html

www.umsl.edu/~gryan/amer.studies/amst.catcherwegquest.html

www.educeth.ch/english/readinglist/salingerjd/seclit.html

Master Teacher's Guide

- For the alienated and cynical Holden, there is no spiritual salvation. Instead, Holden dreams of *himself* as the savior figure, "the catcher in the rye." Ask students: Do any of your vocational dreams contain similar "save the world" elements? How do they differ from or compare to Holden's?
- "Holden Caulfield's Legacy" by David Castronovo (*New England Review*, Spring 2001) provides background on the novel.
- Coles, Robert. *Secular Days, Sacred Moments* (*America* 181, no. 3 [July 31, 1999]: 8) gives insights on the novel.
- *Contemporary Authors Online* provides author background. See www.gale.com.
- "Holden Caulfield, Alex Portnoy, and *Good Will Hunting*: Coming of age in American films and novels" by Lawrence E. Ziewacz (*Journal of Popular Culture* 35, no.1 [June 2001]: 211–218) gives insights for pairing *Catcher* with more contemporary works.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might feel that no one understands them or their world.
- Because they might be struggling with what the future holds for them—and whether it has any meaning at all.
- Because Holden has been the classic teenager for half a century.
- Because they're smarter, kinder, and more honest than Holden.
- Because Holden is still funny, modern, and cool.

Staples, Suzanne Fisher: *Shabanu*

Published by Laurel Leaf, 12 August 2003, ISBN 0440238560

****Teen Recommended****

Shabanu, a young Pakistani girl, and her family are desert people who follow a water supply throughout the year. Her family has no sons and Shabanu is allowed some freedoms many Muslim girls are not. According to Muslim tradition, Shabanu and her older sister Phulan are betrothed to their male

first cousins. Shabanu accepts the betrothal even though it will end her freedom. When a tragic encounter with a wealthy landowner ruins the marriage plans of Phulan, Shabanu is called upon to sacrifice the life she has dreamed of with her future husband. She must choose between upholding family honor or following her own inner voice.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. "I AM: Coming to Know Thyself through Literature" (chapter 1 in Gregg and Carroll, *Books and Beyond*, 1998) presents an extensive unit for teaching *Shabanu*. It gives pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading activities as well as pairing the novel with *Antigone*.
2. Bonnie O. Ericson, in "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 *Shabanu* and several other YA novels along with *The Odyssey*.
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 *Shabanu* to discuss clashes of generations in *Things Fall Apart*.
4. Teaching activities for the novel can also be found at:
 - atozteacherstuff.com/stuff/literature4.shtml
 - www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/staples.html
 - www.glencoe.com/sec/literature/litlibrary/pdf/shabanu.pdf
5. "What about Our Girls? Considering Gender Roles with *Shabanu*" by Colleen A. Ruggieri (*English Journal*, January 2001) provides some excellent approaches to the novel.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because it is particularly important in "post 9/11" United States culture to understand more about Muslims.
- Because Shabanu has to make difficult decisions regarding her family and her future happiness.
- Because this novel shows the challenges in growing from adolescence to adulthood.

Taylor, Mildred: *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* Published by Scholastic, 1991, ISBN 0590982079

****Teen Recommended****

The book, as do all of Taylor's writings, presents the experience of Black Americans in Mississippi in the 1930s and the period preceding the Civil Rights Movement. Cassie, Taylor's protagonist, is female, Black, and part of a land-owning family in an area of White sharecroppers, who are themselves besieged by the Depression but further blinded by racist reactions. Taylor's novel is easily paired with *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Many English programs require *To Kill a Mockingbird* as one of the novels in American Literature or in ninth-grade novel units. Harper Lee's book presents situations of racism from the perspective of narrators who are White; Mildred Taylor's protagonists are Black. Read the two novels simultaneously—perhaps have half of your students read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the other half read *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*—and do a comparison of the texts. For a graphic organizer, a Venn diagram would work well in seeing the parallels between the novels.
2. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is the first book in a trilogy. The other two novels are *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* and *The Road to Memphis*. Suggest that your students read the trilogy, which is an easy and gripping read, particularly as part of a unit of study on slave narratives or the Black experience in America.
3. Here are more suggestions for pairing these novels with "classical" American literature units: Consider pairing *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* or *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, or *Native Son* or *Black Boy* by Richard Wright with nonfiction about racism and civil rights or with *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*. Also consider pairing Mildred Taylor's novels with *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck or other literature of the Great Depression. Two other books that could be paired with those listed above are *Nightjohn* and *Sarny* by Gary Paulsen.
4. "'Do they TRUST Me?': White Teachers, African American Students, and an African American Young Adult Novel," by Pamela S. Carroll (in "Adolescent Literature: Making Connections with Teens," special issue, *Virginia English Bulletin* 44, no. 2 [Fall 1994]) focuses specifically on this novel.

5. In “John Wayne, Where Are You? Everyday Heroes and Courage” by Pamela S. Carroll (chapter 2 in Gregg and Carroll, *Books and Beyond*, 1998), this novel is used as one of the YA novels to supplement the unit.
6. “Anne Frank’s *The Diary of a Young Girl*: World War II and Young Adult Literature” by Joan Kaywell (chapter 2 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) uses this novel to show the impact of World War II on families.
7. “*Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*: Voices of African American Southern Women,” by Pamela S. Carroll (chapter 10 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 1, 1993) presents a unit for using this novel.
8. An essay on Mildred Taylor in *Contemporary Southern Writers*, 1999, provides background on Taylor’s many excellent books.
9. The following websites provide more information on Mildred Taylor and her books:

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

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

www.penguininputnam.com/static/packages/us/yreaders/educate/guides/taylor/content.htm

websites.ntl.com/~nchs/NCHS_PROSE.html

www.planetbookclub.com/teachers/civil.html

www.penguininputnam.com/static/packages/us/yreaders-new/tl-guide-landmildredtaylor.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may be people of color who have experienced racism.
- Because they may need to know more about the lives of African Americans and the ways these people have been persecuted.
- Because Cassie can be a good role model for other African Americans.

Other books by Mildred Taylor to consider reading: *Let the Circle Be Unbroken*, *The Road to Memphis*, and *The Gold Cadillac*.