



Books on Allegory, Fantasy, Myth, and Parable

**Babbitt, Natalie: *The Eyes of the Amaryllis*
Published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977**

This book is only a fantasy for those who do not know of the power of the sea, of the ocean. The true story behind this book deals with loss of the brig *Amaryllis* in 1850, when a hurricane “swallowed” the ship, the captain, and the crew. Babbitt begins this novel some 30 years after this event, recounting how Geneva Reade, the ship captain’s widow, who had witnessed the ship’s disappearance, is still waiting and hoping for some message from the bottom of the sea. Her granddaughter Geneva, known as Jenny, comes to stay with her grandmother, and together they faithfully search the sea. Jenny’s father (George), then a young boy, had also witnessed the ship’s disappearance. He feared the sea ever after; his daughter, by contrast, is drawn to it.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The book’s epigraph, “Many waters cannot quench love, / neither can the floods drown it” (Song of Solomon 8:7), presents a biblical connection that you can explore with your students. How is this biblical passage related to the book?
2. John Masefield’s poem, “I Must Go Down to the Sea Again” or other poetry like “The Seafarer” or other literary works with themes connected to the allure of the waters would make good companion pieces. *The Eyes of the Amaryllis* is short enough to be read aloud during a study of *The Odyssey* to offer a prose companion. The book could also be

used in a unit on ballads and balladry, accompanied by Gordon Lightfoot's musical rendition of "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald." A current film that would work well in such a unit is *The Perfect Storm*.

3. The prologue of the book, "Seward's Warning," provides an example of dramatic monologue. Consider reading this prologue as an introduction to a writing prompt on the conflict of man versus nature.
4. The following website provides author background on Natalie Babbitt:

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

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because maybe they've been fascinated by the ocean, the sea, or some other element of nature and want to explore it, despite nature's unpredictability.
- Because they might have witnessed death or destruction caused by nature and can relate to the fears George has for his daughter.
- Because this book might help them bond with an older relative who has lost someone he or she loves.

Babbitt, Natalie: *Tuck Everlasting*

Published by Faber and Faber Ltd, 24 October 1988,

ASIN 0571120954

****Teen Recommended****

Now a recently released movie, this sparse tale offers a combination of fantasy and realism, complete with a kidnapping, a murderer escaping from jail, and some difficult decision making. However, Babbitt's book also asks profound questions about the meaning of life and death. When 10-year-old Winnie Foster meets the Tuck family, she is invited to cross boundaries she never imagined. She is eventually offered the ultimate gift—eternal life from the Fountain of Youth—and begins to wonder what living forever might really cost. Winnie acts as a sort of reverse "savior" for the Tucks and their burden of protecting humankind from the knowledge that such an eternal existence is possible.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Ask students to make two sketches of a spring. *On the first sketch*, label the spring, "My Thoughts about Living Forever." Ask students to write sentences, phrases, or questions that reading *Tuck Everlasting* provokes in their minds. Make these ideas "flow" out of the spring. The ques-

tions or comments can branch into puddles or rivulets, and can be "dammed up" by other comments or questions. *On the second sketch*, label the spring, "Babbitt's Hints about Everlasting Life." Ask students to copy sentences from *Tuck Everlasting* that suggest Babbitt's own views. Make these sentences "flow" out of the spring.

2. Chapter 1 presents several musings about the woods, the neighbors, and the approach to life of those living in Treegap. Have your students write about and discuss what they experience in neighborhoods or in the communities where they live.
3. Babbitt's story is like a myth or fable. Consider having students write a myth or fable about living forever.
4. Go to scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/winter95/Milner.html and read Joseph O. Milner's comments on *Tuck Everlasting* in "Hard Religious Questions in *Knee-Knock Rise* and *Tuck Everlasting*" (*ALAN Review* 22, no. 2 [Winter 1995]). Milner writes, "*Tuck Everlasting* seems to be probing difficult questions with a skeptical attitude not unlike that found in the works of two literary scourges of religion, Kurt Vonnegut and Wallace Stevens. . . . Natalie Babbitt is working in much the same territory in that she takes the basic, haunting question—if a man die, shall he live again?—and reverses it to ask, if a man were not to die, could he truly live?"
5. If you are teaching Vonnegut, consider pairing *Tuck Everlasting* with one of his works. Or look at the poetry of Wallace Stevens, which Milner cites, and consider doing a study of the poetry paralleled to *Tuck Everlasting*.
6. "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]) examines this novel.
7. For more information on Natalie Babbitt and her books, check the following websites:

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

www.webenglishteacher.com/babbit.html

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

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might have questions about life and what comes after life.
- Because they might have to make some difficult decisions and can learn from Winnie Foster's choices.

- Because someday they might find they'd like to escape the pressures of life as it is and might need to see some of the disadvantages of living forever.

Other books by Natalie Babbitt to consider reading: *Knee-knock Rise* and *The Devil's Storybook*.

Block, Francesca Lia: *I Was a Teenage Fairy*
Published by HarperCollins Juvenile Books,
reprint edition 2 May 2000, ISBN 0064408620
****Teen Recommended****

This book beautifully combines fantasy and realism. For that reason, it might not be for all readers. Block's books are known for becoming cult classics. The setting is Los Angeles, in modern times. However typical the storyline may seem—Barbie Marks is a beautiful, successful model, her career created by her mother—this novel is anything but typical.

Barbie has a tiny, talking fairy named Mab who is her companion throughout her dysfunctional life. Is Mab real? The reader is forced to ask and answer that question repeatedly during the novel. Mab is a "straight talker"; she speaks in a way Barbie is not capable of. There are only a few other characters even mentioned in the novel. Griffin Tyler is the other character Mab helps learn to deal with himself.

Barbie and Griffin were both molested by the same photographer at an early age. Though his photographs launched their careers, Barbie and Griffin are forced to deal with the secret and the pain. Set against the glamour of the young, successful, Los Angeles lifestyle, the tragedy of their abuse is made to seem real, though it is never dealt with in graphic detail. Both characters must come to terms with themselves. Barbie must also come to terms with her family: a mother who looked the other way while her daughter was sexually abused, and a father who abandons his family to begin another.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The book is a modern fairy tale and follows the fairy tales tradition—the stories were often more dark and violent than we might remember. Students can write their own modern fairy tale addressing issues that may be "too dark" to be presented in realistic fiction.
2. A teaching guide for *Dangerous Angels*, also by Francesca Lia Block, is available in *Master Teacher's Guide* by HarperCollins Publishers—

www.HarperAcademic.com. *Dangerous Angels* is **Teen Recommended** and has similar themes to *I Was a Teenage Fairy*.

3. Teaching resources for this book are located at the following website:
ccwf.cc.utexas.edu/~funlearn/booksr4kids/teenage.html
4. "Francesca Lia Block's Use of Enchantment: Teenagers' Need for Magic in the Real World" by Lois L. Warner (*ALAN Review*, Winter 2002) is an excellent essay for examining a number of Block's books.
5. The novel may be too controversial even when taught as fairy tale, but the oppressive mother figure trying to live her life through Barbie is often a reality for teens.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may have experienced some form of abuse.
- Because they might have friends who have had such experiences.
- Because they might have parents who have determined their future and are not really in tune with their abilities and aptitudes.
- Because sometimes an imaginary friend can help them find themselves.

Others books by Francesca Lia Block to consider reading: *The Hanged Man*, *Violet and Claire*, and *Dangerous Angels*.

Card, Orson Scott: *Ender's Game*
Published by Tor Books, reprint edition 15 August 1992,
ISBN 0312853238
****Teen Recommended****

Andrew is six; his older siblings are Peter and Valentine. In this highly scientific and futuristic fictional world, Andrew is a "third"; his parents risked having more children than they should. Andrew, aka Ender, has been singled out, though. He is taken by the International Fleet at age six and made a commander by age nine. Has he had a childhood? Is the "programming" that happens at the school dehumanizing? Can he or should he fight the system? Supposedly Ender is "right" for the "program," but as Dink Meeker asks, "Is the program right for Ender?"

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The book could be paired with *Brave New World* or some of the other science fiction/Utopia works. You might also pair it with *The Giver* by

Lois Lowry. Both books recognize children and how their lives can be controlled; Ender and Jonas are both among the gifted children taken and “used” by governments or adults who are in power.

2. This book has the potential for many good discussions and writing prompts. One topic for discussion is childhood. What should the “normal” childhood be like or include? Is the training program that Ender experiences a good thing for a child as young as six? Why or why not?
3. Ender and Jonas both represent children who maintain goodness and high ideals despite the adult world; a character comparison of these two protagonists would be a good activity.
4. *Artemis Fowl* by Eoin Colfer, also ****Teen Recommended****, is another novel to work into this study. *Artemis Fowl*, a 12-year-old, is the protagonist, but in many ways is not the hero that Ender or Jonas is. Artemis wants the fairy gold, and he has the genius to crack the ancient fairy code of writing. He is ruthless with only occasional qualms of conscience. Encourage students to analyze his character in light of Jonas, Ender, and Gollum from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.
5. *The Transall Saga* by Gary Paulsen, also ****Teen Recommended****, is another good book to read along with *Ender’s Game*. In *The Transall Saga*, Mark Harrison is transported to another world/planet. Unlike Ender and Artemis, Mark is working to save many of the people in the land as well as to save the planet Earth, which he learns had been decimated. If the class is divided into several groups, each reading one of these novels, each group could present a panel discussion on why the protagonist of the novel they read is or isn’t a hero and why they believe this.
6. “Taming the Alien Genre: Bringing Science Fiction into the Classroom” by Katherine T. Bucher and M. Lee Manning (*ALAN Review*, Winter 2001) offers insights to teaching this novel.
7. Resources for teaching *Ender’s Game* and background on Orson Scott Card are available at the following sites:

www.hatrack.com
 hometown.aol.com/hostaacprofryk/endergame.html
 www.addison.lib.il.us/6card.asp
 web.mit.edu/m-i-t/science_fiction/profiles/card.html
 www.jointhesaga.com/otherviews/card.htm
 www.woodrow.org/teachers/bi/1994/science_fiction.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might wonder if everything technological is necessarily the best for our world.
- Because they might some time be forced to choose between what they know is right and what the adults around them are telling them.
- Because Ender’s world is a political world that needs analyzing, and often our world needs analysis that we don’t give it.
- Because what begins as science fiction all too quickly becomes reality.

Coelho, Paulo: *The Alchemist*

Published by Harper San Francisco, reprint edition 10 May 1995,
 ISBN 0062502182

****Teen Recommended****

Santiago is a shepherd; he is also on a journey because he wants to know the world. He has puzzling dreams about finding a treasure at the pyramids and meets a series of people as he searches for the interpretation of the dreams. An old man, Melchizedek, the king of Salem, is one of the most helpful; Melchizedek informs Santiago that Santiago has discovered his “Personal Legend.” En route to Egypt, Santiago finds himself duped a number of times, but he stays rooted in the wisdom of Melchizedek and uses the Urim and Thummin, sacred lots for determining God’s will, that Melchizedek gave him.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book is filled with biblical references—have students trace the references and find their larger context in the Bible and then relate them to the novel.
2. The Alchemist, Melchizedek, and others in the book are wisdom figures. Have students locate their favorite quotation or passage and write an explanation of the wisdom contained in the passage/quote.
3. Have students write their Philosophy of Life or “Personal Legend.”
4. *Master Teacher’s Guide: A Collection of Forty Guides for Middle and High School Teachers* includes a guide for teaching *The Alchemist*. The guide is available from Harper Collins Publishers, www.HarperAcademic.com.
5. Paulo Coelho’s official website is www.paulocoelho.com.br/engl/index.html.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they are at the beginning of their “Personal Legend.”
- Because the book is a parable filled with many wise lessons about life.
- Because too often we don’t know our dreams and even more often, we don’t follow them.

Other books by Paulo Coelho to consider reading: *The Fifth Mountain*, *The Pilgrimage*, and *Veronica Decides to Die*.

Cooper, Susan: *The Dark Is Rising*

Published by Random House Children’s Books, 31 December 1973,

ASIN 0701150203

****Teen Recommended****

Merriman Lyon appears in a new role, this time in Buckinghamshire as teacher and Old One. He mentors Will Stanton, the seventh son of a seventh son, who wakes on his eleventh birthday to discover he, too, is one of the immortals whose mission is always to keep the dark forces in check. Will learns he must bring together the six signs that will defeat the Dark when it rises at the darkest time of the year between Christmas and Twelfth Night. Sliding through portals of time and space, Will battles the forces of darkness in his own time or in earlier centuries. He learns how the Old Ones can stand together to face the power of the rising Dark. However, Will must discover within himself the courage and wisdom required for the task.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. The Walker, “Hawkin,” liegeman to Merriman, betrays the Light to the Dark with terrible consequences. Will is both saddened and angered by The Walker. More than anything else, the dilemma of The Walker’s divided loyalties, paralleled by those of Will’s selfish and giddy sister Mary, contributes to the loss of Will’s innocence. Have students write a letter to Mary from Will with the emotions and allegiances of a kid brother and also those of being an Old One.
2. Merriman helps Will distinguish between the magical power of the Light, not “of magic . . . born out of foolishness and ignorance and sickness of the mind.” What are some contrasts among the ways magic is used by the servants of the Dark and by the Old Ones who are sworn to unite the signs of Light?
3. Teri Lesesne, in “Beyond Camelot: Poetry, Song and Young Adult Fan-

tasy” (chapter 12 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995), uses the novel as one of the additional reading elements in the unit.

Master Teacher’s Guide

- Each book in Cooper’s *Dark Is Rising* series is set in a specific season—Lammas, Christmas, Halloween, Midsummer—times when magic is strong, according to legend. Although *The Dark Is Rising* is more indebted to Celtic myth than to Christian story, have students list incidents and symbols of the Christmas season. How does Cooper use them to examine ideas of community, sacrifice, and redemption?
- At Oxford, Cooper heard lectures by J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, the great writers of Christian allegory and fantasy. Students familiar with the Lord of the Rings trilogy or the Chronicles of Narnia might look for their influences in Cooper’s work.
- Check the resource: “Susan Cooper” by Margaret K. McElderry in *Horn Book* (1976), pp. 367–72, or at www.thelostland.com/mcelderry.htm.
- Cooper wrote: “A friend of mine says it’s all the fault of Oxford University, where students of English had to read so much mediaeval literature that we ended up believing in dragons.” Relate this comment to her works.
- www.thelostland.com/qanda.htm is a website connected to the novel.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because Cooper’s time and space portals are better than a movie’s special effects.
- Because Will’s fears can help us understand our own.
- Because we, too, may be asked to join causes that demand much of us.

Cooper, Susan: *Over Sea, Under Stone*

Published by Scholastic, 1989, ISBN 0590433202

****Teen Recommended****

The first book in Cooper’s *Dark Is Rising* series introduces Simon, Jane, and Barney Drew, on holiday in Cornwall with their adoptive uncle Merriman Lyon (Merlin). When the three discover that an ancient map may lead to the Holy Grail, Barney, a fan of the King Arthur legends, persuades the others to join the search. They suspect that their great-uncle is not in Cornwall by accident and that he is even more mysterious than they imagined. As the

children discover a timeless battle between the Light and the Dark, they meet sinister dangers when other village residents seek the Grail for their own dark purposes.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. For centuries the legends of the Grail have tempted scholars and inspired death-defying searches. How and when do the Drew children begin to suspect that the race to find the Grail and the manuscript decoding its runes has implications worth risking their lives to win?
2. Knowing whom to trust is a critical life skill for young people. As they read, have students list characters the children meet during their summer in Cornwall, making notes on their trustworthiness. Where are the surprises? When and why do their initial judgments change?

Master Teacher's Guide

- Cooper wrote: "Haunted places all, true springs of the matter of Britain. Bronze Age barrows littered our landscape; Celt and Anglo-Saxon merged in our faces; Arthur invaded our daydreams; the Welsh legends our darker dreams at night." How does her comment relate to the book?
- For author information, check "Meet Susan Cooper" at usitweb.shef.ac.uk/~emp94ms/ownwords.html.
- For more insights on the book, see "Susan Cooper" by Margaret K. McElderry in *Horn Book* (1976), pp 367–72, or at www.thelostland.com/mcelderry.htm.
- The standing stones and legendary sites of Cornwall take on more mystery for the Drew children as the story spins out. Read about Cooper's childhood influences and show where you see them in this book.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because families working together can protect important things.
- Because not all authority figures can be trusted.
- Because some things are worth great risk.

Cormier, Robert: *Fade*

Published by Laurel Leaf, reissue edition 1 September 1991,
ISBN 0440210917

What would I do if I were invisible? What power would invisibility give me and how might such power be corrupting? When Paul learns that he has

inherited a family curse/gift of being able to "fade," he discovers dark secrets of family and friends. As an adult, he fears that his nephew will use the family curse/gift for ultimate evil. "Terrible power brings terrible temptations. So far the wielders of the power, the faders, have all been normal, sane and stable. But what if a fader were to grow up abused, damaged and vicious?"

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Go to Amazon.com and read Patty Campbell's 1998 interview with Robert Cormier at www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/feature/-/5191/102-8751315-8641718. In a discussion about evil, Cormier says, "It's people who deny evil that there's no hope for. Once you know about the existence of evil, then you can start to fight it. Evil doesn't come out of a cave at night—it wears the bland face of the man who belongs to the Rotary Club, or the grocer . . ." Do parallel journal pages with these headings: Where are the revelations of evil in *Fade*? Where are the revelations of evil in my world? Across the bottom discuss: Is Cormier's conclusion supportable?
2. In the *ALAN Review* (Winter 2001), John Ritter, John H. Simmons, and ReLeah Lent and Gloria Pipkin all have articles that are tributes to Robert Cormier and provide insights into this author.
3. The *ALAN Review* vol. 12, no. 2 (Winter 1985) had several essays on Robert Cormier; all offer good resources for teaching his works.
4. See these websites for insights on the novel:

theliterarylink.com/questions_otherbooks.html#Fade
www.cix.co.uk/~asc/trapped/book55.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because Paul is 13 (the age of, or close to the age of, many teens) and he possesses a power that could bring death.
- Because maybe they have some quality that allows them to do something unusual; how do they handle this quality?
- Because maybe they have a friend who has a secret he or she shares with them. What do they do about that secret, especially if it might be harmful to others?

Other books by Robert Cormier to consider reading: *I Am the Cheese*, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway*, *Tunes for Bears to Dance To*, *The Rag and Bone Shop*, and *We All Fall Down*.

Gibran, Kahlil: *The Prophet*

Published by Walker and Co., large print edition September 1991,

ASIN 0802725325

****Teen Recommended****

In a distant, timeless place, a mysterious prophet walks the sands. At the moment of his departure, he wishes to offer the people gifts, but he possesses nothing. The people gather round, each asks a question of the heart, and the man's wisdom is his gift. It is Gibran's gift to us, as well, for Gibran's prophet is rivaled in his wisdom only by the founders of the world's great religions. On the most basic topics—marriage, children, friendship, work, pleasure—his words have a power and lucidity that in another era would surely have provoked the description “divinely inspired.” Free of dogma, free of power structures and metaphysics, consider these poetic, moving aphorisms a 20th-century supplement to all sacred traditions—as millions of other readers already have. (Review by Brian Bruya, Amazon.com)

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This is a book of “wisdom sayings”—it would work well while studying *Siddhartha* or Emerson's “Self Reliance” or Thoreau's *Walden*. Students could do a comparison of the “wisdom” provided by each writer and describe which they find more appealing.
2. Have students select the saying or short essay that is most fitting for their lives and then identify or explain why this saying is most appropriate for them. Have students select the wisdom most needed by people in their high school—again, ask them to provide an explanation for their choice. Have students select the advice they'd most like to give others and explain why. Have students select the advice most needed by those in political leadership in the United States and explain why.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because we all need wisdom to guide our lives.
- Because the topics addressed in the book fit all ages, all times.
- Because sometimes wise words can change attitudes toward life.

Highwater, Jamake: *Anpao: An American Indian Odyssey*

Published by Scholastic, November 1991, ISBN 0590451405

Anpao means “the dawn.” This book is a series of myths woven together in journey. Anpao and his twin Oapna are poor and have no parents (actually

Anpao was conceived by the Sun and a human mother), but they do love the beautiful maiden, Ko-ko-mik-e-is. She says she cannot marry because she belongs to the Sun. “Be careful, Ko-ko-mik-e-sis, and listen to me because I have great power. You must not marry. You are mine.” Ko-ko-mik-e-sis tells Anpao she will marry him if he goes to the Sun and tells the Sun that Ko-ko-mik-e-sis wants to marry him, and if Anpao can get the Sun to remove the scar on his face.

The book chronicles Anpao's odyssey to the Sun; he must fight the jealousy of the Moon who constantly causes deaths, disasters, and destruction.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Myths are good texts to help students learn about other cultures and periods of history. This book would be a good companion with a study of Greek and Roman mythology. If you have students write a myth, adding a culture from the United States may help students find more relevance.
2. If you are in a region of the country where you have contact with Native Americans, it would be good to have a member of a local tribe come and talk about storytelling. You might also consider taking students to some “sacred place” of Native Americans since Native American sacred stories usually cannot be told outside of these sacred sites.
3. Pair this book with the video series of Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth* and have your students compare the myths of Anpao to those Campbell explores.
4. Visit the following website and note the section on the “Quest for Spiritual Knowledge”:

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

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because Anpao is on a journey into adulthood, just like they are.
- Because they can learn something about coming of age as youth in another culture experience it.
- Because Anpao overcomes many obstacles and demonstrates courage.

L'Engle, Madeleine: *A Wrinkle in Time*

Published by Yearling Books, reissue edition 11 May 1998,

ISBN 0440498058

L'Engle, Madeleine: *A Wind in the Door*

Published by Yearling Books, reissue edition 15 March 1974,
ISBN 0440487617

L'Engle, Madeleine: *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*

Published by Yearling Books, reissue edition 15 December 1980,
ISBN 0440401585

L'Engle, Madeleine: *Many Waters*

Published by Yearling Books, reissue edition 1 August 1987,
ISBN 0440405483

****Teen Recommended****

Each book in this series focuses on some member of the Murry family, whose parents are talented scientists, and deals with the mysterious reality of time. *A Wrinkle in Time* draws readers through the allegory about time to the real world and challenges them to discover what each has to counteract the forces of hate and evil. The book introduces the theory of the “tesseract,” a fifth dimension of time. *A Wind in the Door* examines the inner sickness that can stifle human growth, particularly the growth of the spirit. Through the fantastic environment of the mitrochondria and farandola, which are literally and scientifically too minute to be explored, L'Engle presents the all-important philosophy:

“Remember, Mr. Jenkins, you're great on Benjamin Franklin's saying, ‘We must all hang together, or assuredly we will all hang separately.’ That's how it is with human beings and mitrochondria and farandolae—and our planet, too, I guess, and the solar system. We have to live together in—in harmony, or we won't live at all.”
(*A Wind in the Door*, 147)

The next two novels, *A Swiftly Tilting Planet* and *Many Waters*, both explore the deplorable reality of enmity between brothers or in families and communities of the world, again using the adolescent protagonists who see the reality through those who are lovers of peace and those who are not. In *A Swiftly Tilting Planet*, L'Engle introduces another concept about relationships called “kything,” which allows those close to one another to bolster each other's spirits.

Many readers know Sandy and Dennys, the “normal” boys in the Murry family, from *A Wind in the Door* and *A Wrinkle in Time*. A simple hunt for a recipe on their parents' computer and a wish to go somewhere warm plunges them into a blazing-hot desert somewhere else in time. When they get

acquainted with a family of tribesmen, they're feeling pretty comfortable until they realize the family belongs to THAT Noah. How will Sandy and Dennys get back to their own time before the Great Flood—the many waters—comes? They realize that Noah's beautiful daughter Yalith is not mentioned in the Genesis flood story they've read. Fearing that she may be trapped, they are determined to change history and save her. Meanwhile the fallen angels, the Nephilim, exercise powers of evil the twins had never encountered.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Some animals embody goodness and majesty in L'Engle's pre-Flood fantasy. Others reflect the Nephilim. Invite students to expand L'Engle's good and evil menagerie and tell reasons for their choices.
2. Yalith's grandfather Enoch teaches her some important ways that creatures listen to and praise their Creator. How does what she learns give her strength and resources she will need?
3. Sandy and Dennys discover that, even though they've tessed into prehistory, problems of deception, violence, and jealousy feel familiar. What aspects of L'Engle's pre-Flood world seem similar to our own times?
4. The following resource has extensive ideas for working with these four novels: “Teaching the Madeleine L'Engle Tetralogy: Using Allegory and Fantasy as Antidote to Violence” (ERIC: Accession No. ED 436 785, 23 pages on microfiche).
5. “The Storyteller: Fact, Fiction, and the books of Madeleine L'Engle” by Cynthia Zarin (*New Yorker*, April 12, 2004) is a good resource for understanding L'Engle.
6. The following websites have helpful teaching ideas as well:

www.madeleinelengle.com

www.webenglishteacher.com/lengle.html

www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/lengle/lengletg.html

www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/offices/di/Burleson/Lessons/planet/index.htm

www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/offices/di/Burleson/Lessons/Wrinkle/index.htm

www.proteacher.com/070104.shtml

Master Teacher's Guide

- L'Engle said: “Have courage and joy. Sometimes our moments of greatest joy come at [the] times of greatest courage. . . . Our children need

to hear over and over again that there is no such thing as redemptive violence. . . . Violence never redeems. And what we do does make a difference!" How do the actions of Sandy and Dennys illustrate L'Engle's advice to her readers?

- Check the resource "Listening to the Story: A conversation with Madeleine L'Engle," by DeeDee Risher: www.theotherside.org/archive/mar-apr98/lengle.html.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because our world, for all its technological advances, is sometimes a "sick" planet.
- Because families are often torn by sibling rivalries.
- Because love of parents and siblings, and love from parents and siblings, is often the force that can save the world.
- Because, like Meg and Charles Wallace, we often are misunderstood and ridiculed by our peers.
- Because unicorns and other mythological creatures often pique curiosity.
- Because blending Bible stories and imagination allows readers to ask fresh questions.
- Because the idea of knowing what's coming and trying to escape it makes a great adventure.

Other books by Madeleine L'Engle to consider reading: *The Arm of the Starfish*, *Dragons in the Water*, *Troubling a Star*, and *The Rock That Is Higher*.

L'Engle, Madeleine: *An Acceptable Time*

Published by Laurel Leaf, reissue edition 1 November 1990,
ISBN 0440208149

This novel's central character is Polly, the oldest daughter of Meg Murry and Calvin O'Keefe. Polly is with her grandparents, the famed scientists of L'Engle's tetralogy. With the Murry's friend Dr. Louise, and her brother, Bishop Columbra, she experiences a time travel all her own. In this novel, as with the earlier four, L'Engle identifies peoples of earlier times whose culture led them to greater oneness with the universe as well as peoples, not unlike some in our contemporary world, who believe force is the only way to achieve goals.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Because Polly goes to a world of three thousand years earlier, this book is a good lead to exploring civilizations of the ancient world. Students could research this earlier age in history and explore what has changed in the centuries since. In groups, they could present findings about what has improved and what has changed in negative ways.
2. Groups could also examine the similarities between ancient and modern times; for example, Polly notes that the concept of human sacrifice is no more barbaric than the genocide that happened during the Nazi regime in World War II. Students could present their findings in oral presentations or in essays.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because, like Zachary, they might be so focused on saving their own life that they are unaware of the danger they are causing to others, particularly someone they love.
- And like Zachary, they might feel they have done something so unforgivable that there is no hope for them.
- Because, like Polly, they might become the instrument of peace in a troubled time.
- Because sometimes we cling to outdated and problematic traditions when we are fearful of change or of challenging others' to new ways of doing things.

Lewis, C. S.: *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Published by HarperCollins, 30 October 1998, ISBN 0060281375

****Teen Recommended****

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is probably the one book of the series that teachers would get time to teach, but all of the books in *The Chronicles of Narnia* are worth reading. In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy come into a fantasy world controlled by the White Witch. Narnia, under this wicked witch, is a land where it is always winter, but Christmas never comes. All who have been under the power of the White Witch and those who are hiding from her are awaiting Aslan, an allegorical Christ figure.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Especially if students have never been introduced to the concept of allegory, use *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* to teach what alle-

gory is. Have students identify the names, the places, the seasons, and the characters that are symbolic and explain what each of them symbolizes. You might include background on names and what these mean. For example, Lucy is connected with light. How do light and Lucy's character connect?

2. Have students write their own allegory. Begin with brainstorming, clustering, or mapping a problem/conflict/issue that needs addressing. Once students have identified a problem, then, in groups or individually, have students create an allegory to solve the problem or conflict.
3. Though *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is on one level a children's story, it can be read on many other levels as well, one of which is biblically. If you have your students write allegories, you might consider having them design the allegory to present to younger children.
4. Check the following websites for further resources for C. S. Lewis:

falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/lewis.htm
 members.lycos.co.uk/Jonathan_Gregory76/lion.htm
 personal.bgsu.edu/~edwards/lewis.html
 cslewis.drzeus.net
 www.scriptorum.org/l.html
 www.aslan.demon.co.uk/allegory.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because the Professor is a very positive adult figure, a wisdom figure, and sometimes it's hard for adolescents to find adults who are positive role models.
- Because as allegories, these books have many layers of meaning, so the *Chronicles* are not for children only.
- Because a fantasy world can often help us better understand the real world.

Other books by C. S. Lewis to consider reading: *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, *This Hideous Strength*, and *Till We Have Faces*.

Lewis, C. S.: *The Screwtape Letters*

Published by Harper San Francisco, 5 February 2001,

ISBN 0060652934

****Teen Recommended****

C. S. Lewis has developed here a powerful work of irony. He has created a series of devils, but the principal characters are Screwtape and his nephew

Wormwood. Screwtape, through a series of letters, is mentoring Wormwood on how to successfully tempt a new Christian. Do not be fooled—the book teaches more about what and who God is and what true Christianity requires than it does about devils.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book is excellent for teaching irony and satire—two difficult concepts for students. Students will need to know that the “Enemy” Screwtape speaks of is actually God. They also need to know, just as they need to know when reading Swift's “A Modest Proposal,” that irony and satire call for readers to make serious “leaps.” They cannot take the text at face value.
2. If you are studying any other works with representations of the Devil, for example, Dante's *Inferno*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or Goethe's *Faust*, this work by Lewis provides an excellent parallel text.
3. Here are some sites for teaching guides to work with *The Screwtape Letters*:

www.readinggroupguides.com/guides/screwtape_letters-author.asp
 www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/lewis/cs-lewis.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because maybe they wonder if the Devil really exists.
- Because maybe they have some trouble believing in God or in some divine being.
- Because this book demonstrates that not all books on religion are unapproachable.

Lowry, Lois: *Gathering Blue*

Published by Laurel Leaf, 10 September 2002, ISBN 0440229499

Kira is young, especially young to be left alone in the world. She has fought, and her mother has fought for her, since she was born fatherless and with a twisted leg. It was the custom of the community to take such infants to the Field of Leaving, unnamed, before the spirit filled the infant, making her human. Kira, though, like two others in this novel, has gifts the community wants and needs. Kira can thread: her fingers simply “know” the stories and convey the memories in the threads. Matt, from the people of the Fen, is her only companion and support against the women of the village led by the

vindictive Vandara. Kira eventually is taken by the Council of Guardians to become the one who repairs the robe for the Singer. Her privileged position does not come without cost, nor does it for the others selected to be the artists for the community.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. *Gathering Blue* is set in an undefined time and setting, presenting a world that is both a utopia and a dystopia. Using a Venn diagram or similar graphic organizer, have students define what is good about Kira's world and what is troubling. Compare Kira's world to our contemporary world; again, note what is positive and what is negative about each world.
2. Several members of Kira's village hold special roles: the Council of Guardians, the Singer, the Carver, and eventually Kira, as robe-threader. Discuss with students the privileged life they lead. Does having all the comforts one wants necessarily make the person happy? Explain.
3. Kira, Thomas, and Jo, the little singer, all possess "knowledge" that no one else has; they are each artists in a village without art. What would our world be like without music? Art? Literature/story?
4. "Take pride in your pain. You are stronger than those who have none" (*Gathering Blue*, 22–23). These words are advice given by Kira's mother. Ask students to explain this statement and locate other quotes from the novel that are paradoxes or seeming contradictions.
5. Kira holds and keeps with her a small cloth weaving, a kind of talisman for her; it conveys comfort and peace but also warnings and cautions. Ask students: If you were to have such a talisman, what would it be and why?
6. "The Artistic Identity: Art as a Catalyst for 'Self-Actualization' in Lois Lowry's *Gathering Blue* and Linda Sue Park's *A Single Shard*" by Janet Alsop (*ALAN Review*, Fall 2003) is a very helpful essay for examining artistic identity, as well as providing insights into both novels.
7. Check the following websites for a sample lesson plan and teaching ideas:

www.westga.edu/~kidreach/gatheringbluelesson.html

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

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because the life of comforts can seem enviable, especially when we face difficulties.

- Because sometimes they can feel all alone and overwhelmed by those older and in authority positions, even though their accusations may be false.
- Because they may need to rethink what freedom means, especially when others seem to have "the good life."

Lowry, Lois: *The Giver*

Published by Laurel Leaf, 10 September 2002, ISBN 0440237688

****Teen Recommended****

The key in this story is lack of difference. In the communal lifestyle Jonas and others experience, everything is the same. While all the regulation can present an aura of security for them, the young people in Jonas's world face the deprivation created by sameness. The ultimate horror of the sameness is "release" of anyone different. And for Jonas, destined to become the next Keeper of Memories, the reality of release is a horror he cannot allow to continue. Lowry's novel can teach readers about the richness in diversity and the problems with a world where there is supposedly no pain.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This novel again presents a world that is utopic; *The Giver* makes a good companion novel to *Brave New World* or *1984*. Students could first identify the elements in Jonas's society that are the most enticing; then identify those elements that are most problematic.
2. Have your students prepare a debate: Pro—Jonas's world is the kind of world we should have; Con—Jonas's world is too problematic and it is good that Jonas would leave it.
3. "What's Good about the Best?" by Ted Hipple and Amy B. Maupin (*English Journal*, January 2001) explains why *The Giver* is such a strong novel.
4. "Character Education + Young Adult Literature = Critical Thinking Skills" by Mary Ann Tighe (*ALAN Review* 26, no. 1 [Fall 1998]) focuses on *The Giver* as one novel to use with character education.
5. "Grief, Thought, and Appreciation: Re-examining Our Values Amid Terrorism through *The Giver*" by Angela Beumer Johnson, Jeffrey W. Kleismit, Antje J. Williams (*ALAN Review*, Summer 2002) offers ideas for teaching *The Giver* in light of terrorism.
6. For more author information and teaching ideas, check the following websites:

www.carolhurst.com/authors/l/lowry.html
www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/lowry.html
www.yabookscentral.com/cfusion/index.cfm?fuseAction=guides.guide&guide_id=14&book_id=183
www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/lowry.html
www.sonoma.edu/users/l/lord/343/Links.htm
www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/giver/givertg.htm
www.learner.org/channel/libraries/makingmeaning/makingmeaning/wholegroup/lessoplan.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because Jonas's story is for anyone, not only for those who are 12.
- Because the idea of a world without pain and any unpredictability can be enticing.
- Because they might think about creating an ideal world and can see what works and what doesn't.

Other books by Lois Lowry to consider reading: *Anastasia Krupnik* and others in the *Anastasia* series, *The Silent Boy*, and *Messenger*.

Paterson, Katherine: *Bridge to Terabithia*

Published by Harper Trophy, 1987

****Teen Recommended****

Jess Oliver Aarons Jr. is the only son in a family; he's sandwiched between two older sisters, Ellie and Brenda, and two younger, May Belle (who really adores him) and Joyce Ann (who is too young and demanding). His dad isn't around much; he drives back and forth daily to Washington; his mother is too busy to seem to care. Though left with many of the household chores, Jess is creative; he loves to draw. The only one who supports his artistic talents is Miss Edmunds, a teacher at school who is unconventional compared to the rest of the teachers and to the folks in the community of Lark Creek, a kind of "backwater" area.

The Burke family, two seemingly "hippie type" adults and their daughter Leslie, move in next door. Jess likes to run; he has dreams of being the "fastest kid in the fifth grade"—he runs in the cow pasture. When Leslie moves in, she wants to run, too; she is the fastest. She also doesn't fit in since her parents are so different. The family has moved because Leslie's parents are

"reassessing their value structure"; because of the uniqueness of her family and the ways students at school treat Leslie, she and Jess bond.

Leslie eventually finds a place in the woods between the two families' homes and names the place "Terabithia"; she tells Jess it will be like Narnia, and she loans Jess her books about Narnia. Their secret place becomes the site of grief and healing.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Through a written description, an artistic representation, or other media, create your own "Terabithia"—your personal favorite place or private world.
2. "A Bridge Too Far—But Why?" by John Simmons (*ALAN Review* 25, no. 2 [Winter 1998]) examines this novel.
3. For more about Katherine Paterson and her books, check the following websites:

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

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

4. "Characters in Realistic Fiction: Do They Change with Changing Times?" by Mary Jane Gray (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 it examines.
5. Here are other websites related to the novel:

www.beyondbooks.com/lit71/1.asp

www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel/Pages/Patersonpage.html

www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel/Pages/MollerPage.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may want to have their own private place and this story can show the importance of such a place.
- Because they might have lost a good friend and find it hard to share their grief or even to be able to grieve.
- Because they may have friends who are considered "odd" or whose lifestyle is unlike others' around them.

Other books by Katherine Paterson to consider reading: *Sign of the Chrysanthemum*, *Lyddie*, *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, and *Parzival: The Quest of the Grail Knight*.

**Rowling, J. K.: *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*
Published by Scholastic, 22 October 2002, ISBN 0439420105
Teen Recommended**

Can we go beyond criticizing the Harry Potter books from a Christian perspective, instead seeing them as a tool that can open new ways of thinking? Whether Rowling intended us to or not, we can use the insights we find for good purpose. In this second book of the series, Harry is confronted early on with Dobby, a house elf, bent on preventing Harry from returning to Hogwarts. This year Harry is led to explore the Chamber of Secrets and mysteries connected to it.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Divide the class into four houses; each house gets a House Elf. House Elves must bring cookies and juice, run errands, straighten up the room when members of the house leave, and sit on the floor. One speaker from each “house” presents conclusions of group discussion.
2. “I’ve always been able to charm the people I needed. So Ginny poured out her soul to me, and her soul happened to be exactly what I wanted. . . . I grew stronger and stronger on a diet of her deepest darkest secrets. . . . Powerful enough to start feeding Miss Weasley a few of my secrets, to start pouring my soul back into her . . .” (Tom Riddle, in *Chamber of Secrets*, 310).
Ginny Weasley gets mixed up in something really dangerous. How was Tom Riddle able to take part of her soul? Are there things that can take our “souls”? Is it just young people who experience these dangers?
3. “It is our choices, Harry, that show who we truly are, far more than our abilities.” (Dumbledore, in *Chamber of Secrets*, 333.) Have your students comment on this statement of Dumbledore’s. What does it mean to them? Why?
4. Ask your students: Why is Harry worried that he himself might be the Heir of Slytherin? Are Harry’s fears like anything you might have felt? How does Headmaster Dumbledore explain how Harry got to be in Gryffindor? What made Tom Riddle choose the Dark Arts? What connections can you make between Tom Riddle’s choices and some you yourselves might have made?
5. “Critically Thinking about Harry Potter: A Framework for Discussing Controversial Works in the English Classroom” by Joanne M. Marshall (*ALAN Review*, Winter 2003) provides a good basis for using the novels.

6. “Spiritual Quest in the Realm of Harry Potter” by Gail Radley (*ALAN Review*, Winter 2003) could be used with the any of the novels to date in the Harry Potter series.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because Harry Potter faces choices between good and evil.
- Because sometimes they are afraid of who they are or of some of the qualities they possess.
- Because they, like Ginny, can get “taken in” by groups or ideas they don’t really want to follow.

**Rowling, J. K.: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*
Published by Scholastic, September 1998, ISBN 0590353403
Teen Recommended**

This first book in the series introduces Harry Potter and his true background—his parents, James and Lily Potter, were wizards and were killed by Lord Voldemort. Harry lives his first year at Hogwarts, builds friendships with Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, gets his first opportunities to play Quiddith, and has his first encounters with the Dark Lord.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. Rowling shows some of the influences of two other English writers of Christian allegory, J. R. R. Tolkein and C. S. Lewis. Even if she does intend to be allegorical, playing with the texts allows the author’s ideas to help us explore our own beliefs. Ask your students: What ideas, connections, and affirmations do the following quotes provoke in you?

“These people will never understand him! He’ll be famous—a legend—I wouldn’t be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter day in the future—there will be books written about Harry—every child in our world will know his name.”

“Exactly,” said Dumbledore . . . “It would be enough to turn any body’s head. Famous before he can walk and talk. Famous for something he won’t even remember. Can you see how much better off he’ll be, growing up away from all that until he’s ready to take it?” (*Sorcerer’s Stone*, 13)

“You’ll find some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don’t want to go making friends with the wrong sort.” (Draco Malfoy, in *Sorcerer’s Stone*, 109)

"[The Mirror of Erised] shows us nothing more or less than the deepest most desperate desire of our hearts. You, who have never known your family, see them standing around you. . . . However, this mirror will give us neither knowledge or truth. . . . It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live." (Dumbledore, in *Sorcerer's Stone*, 214)

"To one as young as you, I'm sure it seems incredible, but to Nicholas and Perenelle [inventor of the Sorcerer's Stone], [dying] is like going to bed after a very, very long day. After all, to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure." (Dumbledore, in *Sorcerer's Stone*, 297)

"Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign . . . to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever." (Dumbledore, in *Sorcerer's Stone*, 299)

"Call him Voldemort, Harry. Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself." (Dumbledore, in *Sorcerer's Stone*, 298)

"There are all kinds of Courage," said Dumbledore [to Neville Longbottom] smiling. "It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends." (*Sorcerer's Stone*, 306)

2. "*The Sorcerer's Stone: A Touchstone for Readers of All Ages*" by Susan Nelson Wood and Kim Quackenbush (*English Journal* 90, no. 3 [January 2001]) is a good resource for teaching any of the works.
3. Here are some websites that can be useful for the Harry Potter series:

www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel/Pages/HarryPotterpage.html

www.scholastic.com/harrypotter/reference

www.jkrowling.com

www.scholastic.com/harrypotter/books/guides/index.htm

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they might have lost or experienced the death of someone in their family.
- Because they might know some peers who are proud and selfish like Draco Malfoy.
- Because they can learn a great deal from "wisdom figures" like Dumbledore. Who in their family or relationships is such a person?

Rowling, J. K.: *The Prisoner of Azkaban*

Published by Scholastic, 8 September 1999, ISBN 0439136350

****Teen Recommended****

Harry is now 13 and attending his third year of school at Hogwarts. The escape of Sirius Black from the formidable prison of Azkaban is the central focus of the book. Harry learns more about dealing with the "dark arts" that will continue to torment him, particularly about the dementors: the hooded, gray, deathly creatures who guard Azkaban and who ultimately drive a person to despair. Harry also learns the truth of who Sirius Black is and how important it is to look beyond the appearance for the truth.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book has numerous symbols that can provide creative writing ideas as well as excellent journal prompts:

Consider the "boggarts"—the shape-shifters who can take the shape of whatever they think will frighten people most—and the response to such fears, to see the ridiculous and laugh. Students can write about what would be most fearful for them and how they could foil the fears by imagining the "boggart" in a humorous context.

Consider the Grim—a symbol of what can cause or signal our death. Harry believes the shaggy black dog is a threat. Again students can write about what might seem negative, but in fact, can be positive.

2. Students could write/create their own "Defense against the Dark Arts"—what aspects of life seem negative or destructive to them? What can be the protection or the charm to be used in these situations or against these obstacles?
3. Harry is taught that the most potent response to the presence of dementors—those who want to lead us to despair and to see only the worst in life—is to call on a Patronus. "The Patronus is a kind of positive force, a projection of the very things that the dementor feeds upon—hope, happiness, the desire to survive—but it cannot feel despair, as real humans can, so the dementors can't hurt it" (*Prisoner of Azkaban*, 237). The other piece of the "defense" is to concentrate with all one's energy on a single, very happy memory. Using the concept of the defense against dementors, have students write about a single, very happy memory. Also, have them create a list of "patronae"—who would be their rescuers.

4. Albus Dumbledore is a wisdom figure throughout the series. Here are a few of the quotable quotes he offers in this third book in the Harry Potter series:

To Harry, when Harry tells Dumbledore that Harry thought he saw his father: “You think the dead we loved ever truly leave us? You think we don’t recall them more clearly than ever in times of great trouble? . . . [Your father] shows himself most plainly when you have need of him” (*Prisoner of Azkaban*, 427–28).

“Harry, in a way, you did see your father last night. . . . You found him inside yourself.” (*Prisoner of Azkaban*, 428)

“Didn’t make any difference?” said Dumbledore quietly. “It made all the difference in the world, Harry. You helped uncover the truth. You saved an innocent man from a terrible fate.” (*Prisoner of Azkaban*, 425)

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because there are many real “dementors” in life—and teens need to be able to ward off the obstacles that can drain them of hope and life.
- Because they need to remember that there are people, often family and friends, who are true “patronae” in life.
- Because they need to celebrate the very happy memories in life.
- Because they want to remember that those we love who die don’t ever really leave us.

**Rowling, J. K.: *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*
Published by Scholastic, 8 July 2000, ISBN 0439139597**

****Teen Recommended****

The central event of Harry’s fourth year at Hogwarts is the Tri-Wizard competition. Harry finds himself more and more under suspicion; few people really believe that Harry did not put his name in the competition, knowing he is not old enough to compete. Harry (along with Hermione and Hagrid) also has to deal with Rita Skeeters and her gossipy commentaries in the *Daily Prophet*. The greatest challenge to Harry, though, is the Dark Lord’s return and his relentless pursuit of Harry.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This book, like the others in the series, has many elements of fiction worth exploring. The “Veela” who are present at the Quidditch World

Cup have similarities with “the Sirens” from mythology. There are also continual references to the Phoenix, the mythological bird that can rise from its ashes to new life. Harry’s and Lord Voldemort’s wands each have a phoenix feather in the core; Dumbledore has Fawkes, the phoenix in his office. Consider working with your students on these elements of mythology in a unit on myths.

2. Again there are numerous quotations from the book worth thinking and writing about—consider using some of the following for “Ready Writes” or class starting prompts:

Regarding the first task of the Tri-Wizard contest: “Courage in the face of the unknown is an important quality in a wizard [could fill in other nouns than wizard]” (*Goblet of Fire*, 281).

Sirius to Ron about Mr. Crouch: “If you want to know what a man’s like, take a good look at how he treats his inferiors, not his equals” (*Goblet of Fire*, 525).

Describing Azkaban: “Many go mad in there . . . they lose the will to live” (*Goblet of Fire*, 529).

Dumbledore to Harry, who is so exhausted and does not want to tell his story of the duel with Lord Voldemort and the terrors he experienced in the cemetery: “Numbing the pain for a while will make it worse when you finally feel it” (*Goblet of Fire*, 695).

Dumbledore in his end of the term speech: “We can fight it [Lord Voldemort’s power] only by showing an equally strong bond of friendship and trust. Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open” (*Goblet of Fire*, 723).

3. Harry discovers a strange device in Dumbledore’s office—the pensieve. Dumbledore uses it when he has too many thoughts and memories in his mind. He removes some and places them in the pensieve; this allows him to see more clearly the patterns or links in all the ideas. How would you use a pensieve if you were able to have one?
4. Lord Voldemort wants Harry’s blood more than anything since Harry’s under the special protection of the supreme sacrifice his mother made for him—she died that he might live. Ironically, Barty Crouch, the younger, has a mother who sacrifices all for him, willingly assuming her son’s appearance in Azkaban. Consider using these sections of the book with your students to discuss the theme of parents’ sacrifices for their children.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because, like Harry when he feels the pain of his scar and says what he “really wanted was someone like a parent: an adult wizard whose advice he could ask without feeling stupid, someone who cared about him” (*Goblet of Fire*, 22), they may want an adult or guidance person in their life.
- Because Harry has to deal with being teased and harassed by those who are jealous of him; they may also have this experience.
- Because Harry is called to be extremely courageous even to the point of fighting for his life—he can be an inspiration.
- Because Harry is tempted to take the glory of winning, but he doesn’t let himself get trapped in gaining power; he realizes that Cedric’s death is a far greater concern.

**Rowling, J. K.: *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*
Published by Scholastic, 10 August 2004, ISBN 0439358078
Teen Recommended**

Some have commented that *The Order of the Phoenix* is too “dark,” but the book represents what a real 15-year-old who has experienced the true horrors that Harry has feels like. He is frustrated at not being kept posted on all that is happening as Dumbledore assembles the Order of the Phoenix, a band of those who are willing to fight the Dark Lord. Harry also experiences the pain of his unwilling “union” with Lord Voldemort—at times Harry actually hates Dumbledore. Also Harry “sees himself” doing the actions of the Dark Lord, as when Harry thinks he has caused Arthur Weasley’s near death. Above all this book presents Harry’s own sacrifice for one he loves, Sirius Black, and the Dark Lord again operating under the notion that he can best get to Harry by attacking those Harry loves.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. This novel is the one most connected with Harry’s “coming of age.” Should Harry be more in Dumbledore’s confidence? Should he know more about the secret workings of the Order of the Phoenix? These questions would be good writing prompts and discussion starters for the broader issue: At what age are teens really able to make their own decisions? Why do you choose this particular age?
2. The Fidelius charm is connected with protecting one’s most significant friends or family. Have students write their own fidelius charm and explain why they’d use it and for whom.

3. The phoenix is a powerful mythical symbol. How does this symbol become particularly important in the Order of the Phoenix? Why?
4. Review Dumbledore’s conversation with Harry after Sirius’s death. What does Dumbledore mean as he says that youth cannot know old age, but he as an older person needed to remember more about what youth experiences? How is this significant?
5. The following websites have helps for teaching *The Order of the Phoenix*:

www.charactercounts.org/pdf/HarryPotter-guide_by-Michael-Josephson-0703.pdf
www.waterborolibrary.org/potter.htm
www.theorderofthephoenix.net/book-5/chapters.htm
www.hp-lexicon.org/order-phoenix.html
www.webenglishteacher.com/rowling.html

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because they may have struggled with being discounted or felt not trusted by adults when they had done actions requiring the courage and wisdom of adults.
- Because they may have had an experience like Harry’s when they actually feel hate toward the very people they should love.
- Because they may have someone in their life like Dolores Umbridge.

**Tolkien, J. R. R.: *The Hobbit*
Published by HarperCollins, 4 September 1995, ISBN 0261103288
Teen Recommended**

Bilbo Baggins is a Hobbit, and this book narrates his adventures. One of the highlights of the book is that Bilbo meets Gollum, a nasty slimy creature who has possession of a marvelous ring. Bilbo gets the ring and soon realizes its amazing powers—like invisibility. This prequel to *The Lord of the Rings* presents a kind of epic journey. After his adventures, Bilbo returns to Bags End just in time to prevent his home from being sold; he was no longer considered respectable because of his adventurous nature.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. As in many fantasies, there are creatures, animal-types, who are given human characteristics. Ask students to describe the character in *The Hobbit* that they would most like to be and explain why.

- The fantasy genre builds on allegory. *The Hobbit* can be used to teach allegory and makes a good parallel text with *The Odyssey*.
- The following websites are helpful for working with Tolkien:

www.tolkienonline.com/
www.successlink.org/great2/g1156.html
www.uni-giessen.de/tefl/seminarP/newMedia/muds/Prepare.html
www.michigan.gov/scope/0,1607,7-155-13515_13516_13517-76619--00.html
www.tolkiensociety.org/press/literacy.html
www.berghuis.co.nz/abiator/unit/hobbit/hindex2.html
gollum.usask.ca/tolkien/

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- Because the book has a way of presenting some of the universal qualities of human nature, but we can learn from these more enjoyably through fantasy.
- Because they might enjoy the adventures Bilbo takes.
- Because this is a wonderful work for the imagination.

Tolkien, J. R. R.: *The Lord of the Rings* (trilogy)

Published by HarperCollins, 1994, ISBN 06181129022

****Teen Recommended****

The Fellowship of the Ring; The Two Towers; The Return of the King—These works are filled with allegory; dominant themes include the addiction of power; the struggle of good and evil; the spirit of self-sacrifice; the self-destruction coming from revenge, jealousy, and ambition; and the redeeming qualities of true friendship and loyalty. The Hobbits are all protagonists, but Frodo and Sam are the ultimate heroes as they overcome every obstacle to rid the world of the Ring.

Teaching Ideas and Resources

- Explore with your students the rich themes in the poem:

Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky
 Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
 Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
 One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
 In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
 One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
 In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.

- Have students analyze the characters who are protagonists/positive figures and those who are antagonists/negative characters—including the range of creatures like Orcs, the Nazgul, and so on. What do these characters teach about humankind?
- Explore with your students the symbolism of names of characters, mythic creatures, and places.
- Teri Lesesne in “Beyond Camelot: Poetry, Song and Young Adult Fantasy” (chapter 12 in Kaywell, *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*, vol. 2, 1995) uses the Trilogy as one of the YA novels to supplement this unit.
- Teaching guides are available at:

www.randomhouse.com/highschool/catalog/display.pperl?0-345-33971-1&view=tg
www.randomhouse.com/highschool/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=0345339703&view=tg
- This site is on C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien:

www.aslan.demon.co.uk/allegory.htm
- A video series entitled *Rings, Kings and Things* providing an explanation of modern fantasy literature’s debt to medieval literature is available from Cerebellum.com.

Why Give This Book to Teens?

- For the adventure, the imaginative tale.
- Because they can meet characters who portray true friendship and loyalty.
- Because they may need help to sort through the realities of life that include people who are power-hungry, jealous, and selfish.
- Because they need to find some heroic models.

Other books by J. R. R. Tolkien to consider reading: *The Hobbit*.