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ENGL 112B
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Annotated Bibliography Rationale

Young adult literature is often overlooked because it might seem corny or unimportant at first glance. However, YA novels are oftentimes just as thought-provoking as other genres because they tend to feature adversities that aren't addressed much. It's extremely important for young adults to feel represented, especially when they are part of a minority group. The problems experienced by minority groups are narratives that aren't explored often by canonical works.

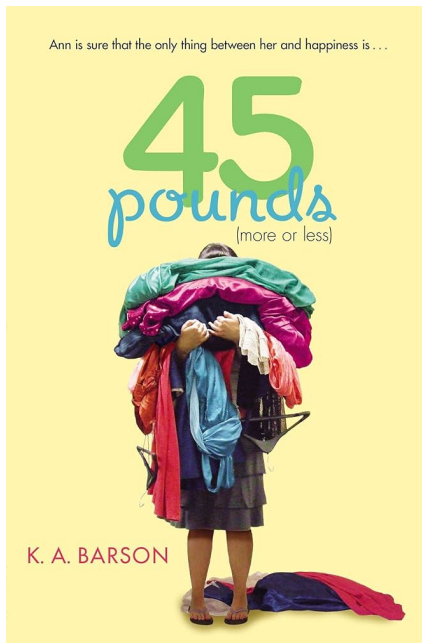
My annotated bibliography focuses on different forms of adversity from different groups who lack proper representation in the media. It's based on "Chapter 4: Books about Real-Life Experiences – Making Life Choices, Facing Violence or Abuse, and Living through Family and Relationship Issues" in *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*, and "Chapter 4 Contemporary Realistic Fiction: From Tragedies to Romances" in *Literature for Today's Young Adults*. Each novel addresses the different problems that exist within themes of body weight, body image, mental health, homelessness, abuse, race, negligent parents, sexuality, identity, and not fitting in. I believe in educating people on the difficulties of the minority experience and advocating for young adult novels that can be applied to the readers' own lives. Oftentimes, a connection can be made to a novel even if the content doesn't directly relate to us. It's valuable to learn about the way others live because it can often be a humbling experience, and allows readers to think about themselves, others, and the world differently. Young adults are still navigating life, but young adult literature about the prominent adversities that exist at their age is effective at getting readers thinking.

Annotated Bibliography: Adversities Experienced by Minority Groups

45 Pounds (More or Less) by Kelly Barson

Barson, Kelly. *45 Pounds (More or Less)*. New York, Viking, 2013.

ISBN-13: 978-0142422656. I have not read this novel. Summary derived from [here](#) and [here](#).



45 Pounds (More or Less) by Kelly Barson is about sixteen-year-old Anne, and her battle with being overweight. Her aunt's wedding is coming up soon, and this is the perfect opportunity for Anne to go on a diet and lose the weight she has always struggled with. She embarks on the challenging journey of weight loss, learning other valuable lessons along the way like loving yourself and your body, confronting societal expectations, and the complexities of adolescence. Anne deals with familial issues, embarrassing moments, and friendship reflections, but

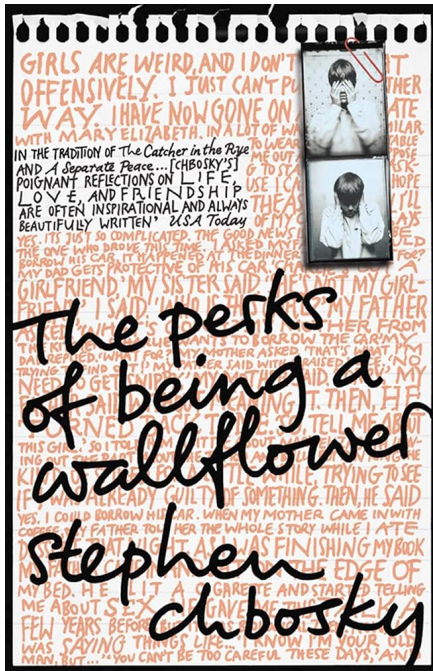
there's also genuine growth and realization from her character.

The novel exposes the possible social, mental, and physical struggles of being overweight, and it's eye-opening. Anne deals with food as a coping mechanism, exercise, and the prejudice of being a 'fat' girl. Additionally, she faces the disparities of low self-esteem, discovering right from wrong, and dealing with step-families. Anne has multiple defining experiences during her weight loss journey and evolves from immaturity to the consciousness of health being more important than physical looks. This is a plausible timeline for young adults because they are still learning about themselves, and may also be struggling with their weight. The novel enforces Exeter quality three (experiences of teen readers, especially strong female

protagonists) and Exeter quality seven (personal issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth). The issues discussed in the novel can connect with young adults who are overweight, but also with the bullies and the people who are on the judging side of things. If a bully learns about the opposing perspective, it's possible for them to realize their wrongs and mature from their hostile actions. The novel has a beautiful message about body positivity and it allows for young adults to grasp what it means to be an overweight and misunderstood teenage girl.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

Chbosky, Stephen. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. New York, Pocket Books, 1999. ISBN-13: 978-0671027346. I have not read this novel. Summary adapted from [here](#).



The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky

follows fifteen-year-old Charlie, a new student at his high school. His shy and withdrawn nature makes him a wallflower, but he's observant and soon finds Sam and Patrick who expose him to new teenage experiences that break him out of his shell a bit more. During the course of the novel, Charlie deals with the deaths of his only friend and favorite aunt, and his new friends grapple with their own life complications. The many laughs, cries, and yells in the novel teach Charlie the complexities of friendship, while his teacher inspires him to become a writer. Simply put, Charlie faces

his deep-rooted traumas as he navigates teenhood, and is forced to question the stability of his new confidence.

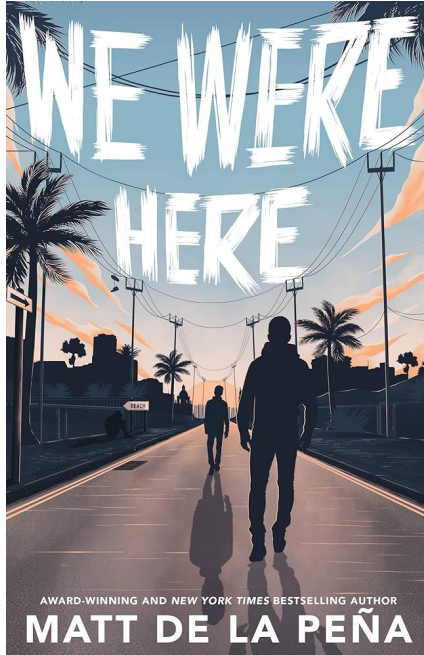
The novel deals with multiple presentations of trauma based on mental health and family life. It tackles critical subjects such as difficulty participating in life and relating to others,

instability in friendships, abuse, sexuality, drug use, and suicide. These are all prevalent concerns for everybody, but even more so for young adults because it is an active point in most of their lives. This novel portrays Exeter quality three (experiences of teen readers, not often found in literary canon), six (themes that allow readers to engage with challenging issues), and seven (issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth). Just like in the novel, teenagers and young adults have friends, struggle with their mental health, encounter abuse, hide their sexuality, use drugs, and contemplate suicide. It's important to learn about these subjects because it can give perspective on adverse experiences, or expose the reality of distressing circumstances to others.

We Were Here by Matt de la Peña

De la Peña, Matt. *We Were Here*. New York, Ember, 2009.

ISBN-13: 978-0385736701. Read in 2023.

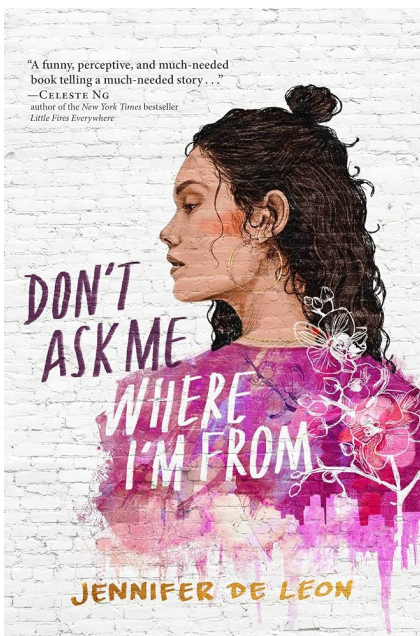


We Were Here by Matt de la Peña follows Miguel, a teenage boy who's sent to a group home after committing a mysterious crime. While there, Miguel and two of his groupmates, Rondell and Mong, decide to run away from the group home to disappear in Mexico. On their venture, Miguel learns about friendship, his love for literature and writing, different family dynamics, and his cultural identity. Their trip to Mexico doesn't go as planned and Miguel ends up back in the group home, only this time it's on his own accord. After various emotions, Miguel learns about the intricacies of being a White and Mexican teenage boy who's rough around the edges, but recognizes his potential despite his trauma.

The novel addresses important themes such as social justice, empathy, brotherhood, ethnicity, homelessness, group homes, adolescence, self-harm, and more. These are all themes that align with the adolescent experience of many teenagers in America, and the novel explores them in a revealing manner. For example, Miguel punches himself whenever he starts crying because he grows up believing that if a male cries, they're weak. He doesn't see what's wrong with this because it's the ideology his brother teaches him and it's what Miguel is accustomed to. Despite this, the premise can be applicable to any young adult who may hurt themselves in the same way, and can help them realize that it's not a good thing. Looking at something from the outside in can be eye-opening for readers and allow them to come to better and more mature conclusions. The novel applies Exeter qualities one (imaginative and well-structured plots, beyond simple chronologies), two (exciting plots: secrecy, surprise, and tension), three (experiences of teen readers, not often found in literary canon), and seven (personal issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth). These are just some of the ways *We Were Here* effectively uses critical information and ideas to get readers thinking about Miguel's experiences.

Don't Ask Me Where I'm From by Jennifer de Leon

De Leon, Jennifer. *Don't Ask Me Where I'm From*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 2020.
ISBN-13: 978-1534438248. Read in 2023.



Don't Ask Me Where I'm From by Jennifer de Leon is about fifteen-year-old Liliana Cruz who confronts the unfamiliar academic and social landscape of her new and wealthy Boston high school. As one of the few Latinas in her school, Liliana faces unique challenges such as racism, culture shock, questions about identity, etc. She explores her heritage, and grapples with questions of cultural identity and her family's immigration status. The novel explores themes of

race, privilege, culture, and cultural identity in a world that labels everything and prioritizes White people.

The novel is effective at portraying both the typical teenage experience, and the hardships of a Latina in America. It discusses many important issues such as American and Latina/o/e identities, culture, the interrelation of cultures in an academic environment, undocumented parents, having a parent be deported, and racial discrimination. This can connect with Latina/o/e students who face similar adversities, but also with other non-minority adolescents who aren't aware of the prejudice around them. Non-minority students can learn about the detrimental culture that exists for people of color in America, but can also apply their own lives to the problems to a certain degree. The novel uses Exeter qualities one (imaginative and well-structured plots, beyond simple chronologies), two (exciting plots: secrecy, surprise, and tension), three (experiences of teen readers, especially strong female protagonists), five (lively, varied, and imaginative language), seven (issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth), and eight (varied levels of sophistication). The novel's candidness simultaneously encourages inclusivity for minority students, exposes these realities to non-minority students, and demonstrates to all readers the polarities that can exist within American and Latino/a cultures.

Lush by Natasha Friend

Friend, Natasha. *Lush*. Scholastic, 2006.

ISBN-13: 978-0439853460. Read in 2015 and 2021.

Lush by Natasha Friend follows thirteen-year-old Sam as she navigates her life with an alcoholic father and a negligent mother. Sam has friends but doesn't trust them enough to share the reality of her home life, so out of vexation, she begins writing notes inside a book at the library. A stranger unexpectedly finds them and starts responding to Sam, where she shares all of



her feelings and frustrations about her father. Sam copes with her problems through secrecy, but she must face her reality eventually.

Lush is a great YA novel because it explores possible coping mechanisms for having an alcoholic parent. Alcoholism isn't widely spoken about despite the many young people who know an alcoholic person, oftentimes somebody they're related to. Samantha also has a negligent mother who ignores the severity of her husband's alcoholism, thus resulting in her recurrent absence. Sam has nobody to turn to, so she turns to a stranger. This isn't exactly the best advice for

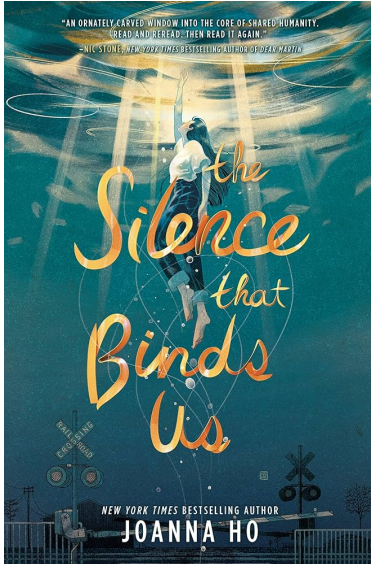
a young person that's struggling, but it normalizes different ways of coping in teenagers and encourages readers to compare good and bad coping skills. The novel also underscores the pressure and anxiety of being an older sibling with an alcoholic parent. Sam gets anxious about her younger brother's health because of her dad's behavior, and her anxiety is effectively discussed. The novel displays Exeter qualities three (experiences of teen readers, especially strong female protagonists) and seven (personal issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth). The themes of negligent parents, familial anxiety, bad coping skills, and self-growth are prominent in *Lush* and it makes useful points for many young adults to think critically outside of their own lives.

***The Silence That Binds Us* by Joanna Ho**

Ho, Joanna. *The Silence That Binds Us*. New York, HarperTeen, 2022.

ISBN-13: 978-0063059344. I have not read this novel, summary derived from [here](#) and [here](#).

The Silence That Binds Us by Joanna Ho follows teenager Maybelline Chen, a Chinese Taiwanese American, who doesn't exactly align with the stereotypical image her mother



expects from her. In turn, her brother Danny has more success with doing things his parents are outwardly proud about. However, Danny struggles with depression, and unfortunately commits suicide. People begin to make racist accusations about Danny's death, saying that May's parents are responsible for coercing Danny to do well in school and putting too much pressure on him. May's parents expect her to stay quiet and let the drama subside, but she can't quietly accept the racist remarks. Through her passion for writing, May defies the stereotypes and publishes a poem in response to the accusations. She continuously sparks conversations about racism, while acknowledging the role that Asians play in the discourse of racism and the effects of staying silent about discrimination. May learns about herself and her culture's place in the world, but fights it during her emotional journey of understanding her complicity about racism.

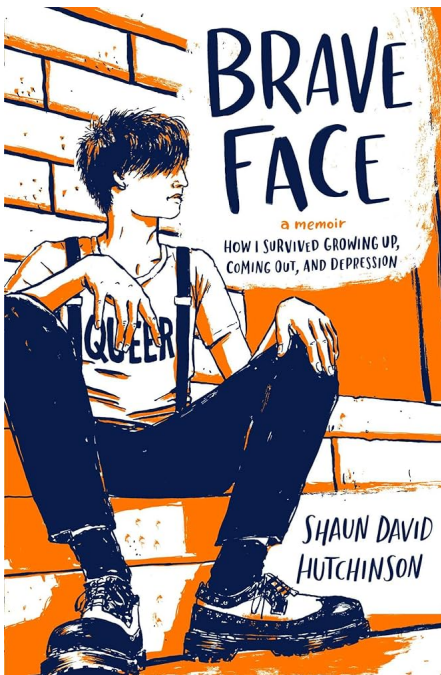
The novel is effective at portraying an Asian stereotype that displays racism first-hand, but also advocates against the stereotype through its main character, May. Her character begins by being immature and unaware of the issues that surround race and ethnicity, but Danny's death increases her understanding of the social stigmas surrounding Asian people and other ethnicities. The novel is open about May's unawareness on the subject of race, but also openly corrects her through her friends' characters to ensure she understands the complexities. There is a sense of awakening not only from May, but from her family as well. Initially, they want to keep their head low and ignore all the racist accusations targeted at them, but May's active learning engenders her parents' realization that silence isn't the most effective approach to discrimination. The novel applies Exeter quality three (experiences of teen readers, especially strong female protagonists)

and Exeter quality seven (issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth). *The Silence That Binds Us* emphasizes important social issues regarding Asian people, advocates for proper racial representation, and universally promotes empathy and understanding. It explores the impact of silence, the power of communication, and the value of diverse perspectives that can be thought-provoking and provide opportunities for reflection for young adults.

Brave Face: A Memoir by Shaun David Hutchinson

Hutchinson, Shaun D. *Brave Face: A Memoir*. Simon & Schuster, 2019.

ISBN-13: 978-1534431515. I have not read this book. Summary derived from [here](#).



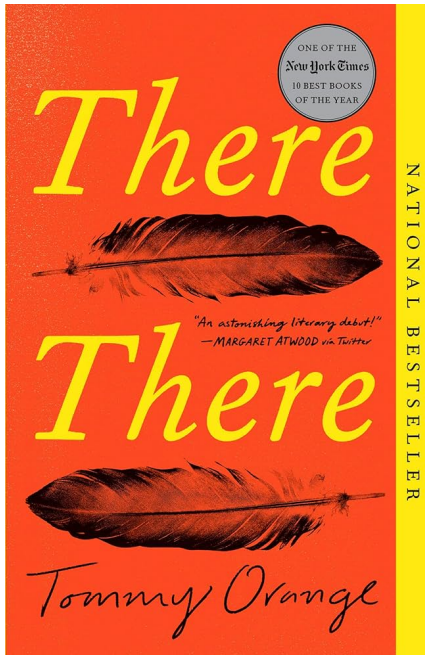
Brave Face: A Memoir by Shaun David Hutchinson is about Hutchinson’s life in the 90s when he’s nineteen. At this point of his life, he struggles with severe depression and his sexuality. Shaun doesn’t fit in, and his depression makes him feel alone and unwanted. At the same time, the world spreads an unkind message about queer love, and it’s only an additional layer of distress for Shaun as a gay man. He reaches his lowest point and almost ends his life, but he survives his attempt and begins to learn both self-acceptance and gratitude. The memoir is brutally honest about Hutchinson’s experience battling with his mental health and sexuality, but also highlights everything that helps him overcome his obstacles.

The memoir is very honest about Shaun’s experience and creates a sense of applicability for young adults. First, Shaun accentuates the negative portrayals of queerness and queer people in media that kindles his internalized homophobia. This candid approach can be beneficial for young adults who struggle to accept their sexualities and grasp the influence of mass media. The

memoir also explains the interconnection between Shaun's sexuality and his depression, and how his depression is intensified by the difficulty accepting his sexuality. Through friendships, relationships, and lots of emotions, Shaun learns to accept himself and his sexuality instead of always presenting a facade. This not only sets an example to pursue enrichment toward self-acceptance and self-love, but can also help readers realize there's hope despite the obstacles faced. The memoir applies Exeter qualities three (experiences of teen readers, not often found in literary canon) and seven (personal issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth). Hutchinson creates a sense of intimacy in his memoir because it's honest and can trigger reflection through connection to his story.

There There by Tommy Orange

Orange, Tommy. *There There*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2018.
ISBN-13: 978-0525633013. Read in 2020.



There There by Tommy Orange weaves together the interconnected stories of twelve Native American characters living in Oakland, California. It is a multigenerational novel that examines the complexities of contemporary Native American identity. The novel addresses cultural heritage, identity, urban displacement, addiction, abuse, and the impact of historical trauma through the characters' Native American experience, culminating in a tragic event at the Big Oakland Powwow. There's a broader commentary on the ongoing challenges faced by Native communities in today's times. Jacquie's newly sober and seeks family redemption. Dene

rebuilds his life after his uncle's death, working at the powwow and creating a documentary in his honor. Opal watches her nephew Orvil dance publicly for the first time, who masters

traditional dances through YouTube videos. The characters all end up at the Oakland powwow, but tragedy arrives and the characters must process everything despite their existing trauma.

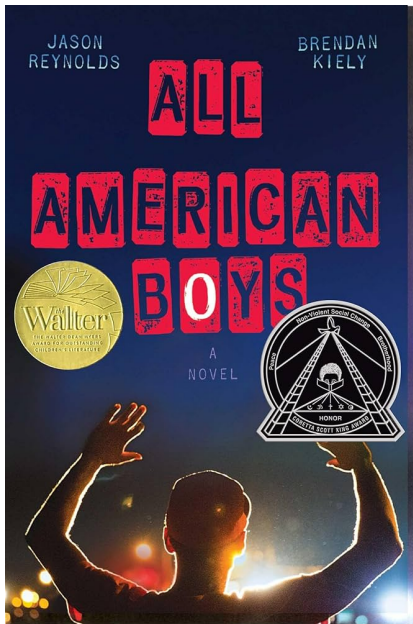
The novel creates an air of companionship that allows for connection with each narrator. Each one of them faces their own conflicts, and questions what it means to be Native American in the United States. The novel also addresses what it means to be a Native American in general, especially when not growing up heavily around the culture. It examines subjects such as identity, familial relationships, substance abuse, poverty, and a lot more. The narratives are empathetic to the Native American experience of each character, and can identify with Native Americans who struggle with the same problems portrayed by the characters. They can also apply universally to others who aren't heavily involved in their ethnic culture. Outside of the first-hand Native experience, the novel ignites questions about the United States, the way people come across, and how people see themselves. Additionally, the book stays current with newer music, media, and slang with the younger characters. The novel displays Exeter qualities one (imaginative and well-structured plots, beyond simple chronologies), three (experiences of teen readers, not often found in literary canon), five (lively, varied, and imaginative language), seven (issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth), and eight (varied levels of sophistication). The novel dissects the urban Native American experience, challenging stereotypes and confronting historical wounds. The characters' interconnected lives work as powerful reminders of the diverse narratives that shape the understanding of America.

All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

Reynolds, Jason and Kiely, Brendan. *All American Boys*. New York, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2015.

ISBN-13: 978-1481463331. I have not read this book, summary derived from [here](#).

All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely follows two teenage boys, one Black and one White, as they face the consequences of an aggravated officer. Rashad and Quinn



stroll through the same store, but Rashad ends up a victim of police brutality, and Quinn ends up the witness. There's a division among the people in their communities, school, and everybody else due to the racial tension. The beating is all over the news, and the police officer is bombarded with accusations of discrimination. Quinn reflects on the question of the officer's guilt until he realizes that Rashad is continuously absent from school. Everybody starts to take sides and tension grows as both Rashad and Quinn try to figure out how to proceed.

The novel's narratives are thought-provoking, offering a glimpse into the lives of both Black and White teenage boys. The narrative shifts when Rashad undergoes a traumatic incident caused by police, prompting reflection on the truth of police brutality. Rashad's coping with trauma and Quinn's dilemma of defending his Black friend as a crucial witness add layers to the narrative, emphasizing the struggles faced by black boys and men. The perspectives are presented with lightheartedness despite their peril nature, creating a sense of normalcy that's a little easier to read and understand. The novel includes Exeter qualities three (experiences of teen readers, not often found in literary canon), five (lively, varied, and imaginative language), and seven (personal issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth). It exposes the importance of parental guidance by portraying the necessity for parents to have important conversations about how their children should navigate interactions with the police. The gravity

of the brutality forced on Rashad, and the perspectives of both he and Quinn can inspire action and a fight for beliefs.

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. London, Penguin Classics, 2014.
ISBN-13: 978-0141439471. Read in 2021.



Frankenstein by Mary Shelley follows Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who becomes obsessed with creating life. He successfully brings a creature to life using a combination of alchemy and science, but upon seeing the creature's appearance, Victor abandons him. The creature is left to fend for himself, facing rejection and isolation. He seeks companionship and understanding, but constantly experiences cruelty from humans due to his appearance. The maltreatment leads him to harbor resentment and a desire for revenge against his creator, Frankenstein. The novel examines the dangers of unregulated scientific ambition and the consequences of rejecting those who are different.

Frankenstein incorporates multiple themes, including scientific ethics, the repercussions of playing God, and the complex nuances of human nature. This can prompt reflection and discussion to help young minds develop critical thinking skills. The novel also explores loneliness, the desire for acceptance, and the pain of being misunderstood. The creature makes his own moral ethics system as he seeks revenge for constant mistreatment, which illustrates the complexity of right and wrong while offering a glimpse into a possible coping mechanism for the unjustly treated. It raises questions about empathy, compassion, and who the real monster is in

the novel. The Exeter qualities in this novel are qualities four (beyond typical experiences), seven (issues that allow for emotional and intellectual growth), and eight (varied levels of sophistication). *Frankenstein* explores the intricacies of humanity, ethics in science, and morals, making it a valuable read for young adults.

Final Thoughts

I believe it's extremely important for groups that face adversity to have the proper representation in social cultures, media, and of course, literature. As a young adult, I'm passionate about the representation of the people who may feel they don't belong because I have been and still am a person that doesn't really belong; and that's okay. Young adult literature simultaneously normalizes the 'unnormal' and addresses topics that aren't as prevalent in canonical works. Everybody needs a little bit of representation, and young adult novels do that in all kinds of empowering ways.

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