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English 112B

Prof Warner

### Female Protagonists in YA Historical Novels

Historical novels provide a great base for all readers to learn about past events through the eyes of a fictional or non-fictional character. Through these characters, readers are able to view events and the sentiments that each character felt. This offers new perspectives on each side of an event. For example, a historical novel about the Holocaust can include first person perspective through a Jew, like Anne Frank, in *The Diary of a Young Girl*, or a Lutheran, like Annemarie in *Number the Stars*. The intent of my annotated bibliography is to offer readers Young Adult historical fiction and non-fiction that include female protagonists.

Since I researched such a specific subject, I found many novels that featured women in the Victorian era and young girls in the WWII era. I included the novels that primarily broke the status quo of young adult women in their era or that faced some tribulation that made them realize something about themselves. For example, in *The Breadwinner*, the female protagonist Parvana breaks the status quo of a Middle Eastern, veiled girl and becomes a young boy who supports her family. Overall, I wanted to research all types of female protagonists in YA historical fiction and non-fiction.

My overall purpose of only choosing female protagonists is because women in history have so much to offer readers of today's generation. The characters in the novels annotated below offer values that today's women can strive to learn. For example, in

*Glory Be*, Glory's desire to defeat racial segregation and fight for what is right is a great value for today's generation of young adults who are fighting for what they believe is their right.

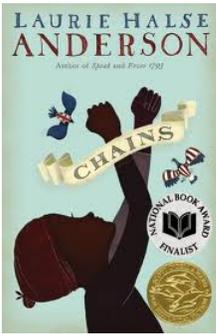
Hopefully through my annotated bibliography, readers can relate to some of the experiences that the female protagonists experienced as well. For example, readers may relate to the experiences of Carlota in *Carlota* of being forced to fill a role and never being able to really express your true self. Or readers may relate to coping with death like Liesel in *The Book Thief*.

My overall approach to finding YA historical novels was first to explore my own library at home. Many of the books that I have read in the past couple of years have included female protagonists that experienced historical events. Then I asked a few friends if they knew some similar novels, of which brought me to *Fever 1793* and *Chains* by Laurie Halse Anderson. These friends recommended these novels and expressed that the themes and ideas of the novels were exemplary. The rest of my books are a result of a Google search that lead me to a great list of YA historical novels with female protagonists.

I greatly enjoyed reading some of the novels presented and hope to one day finish reading the entire list.

## Annotated Bibliography

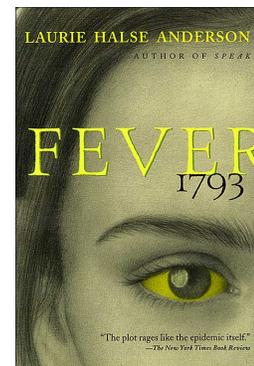
Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Chains*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2008. Print.



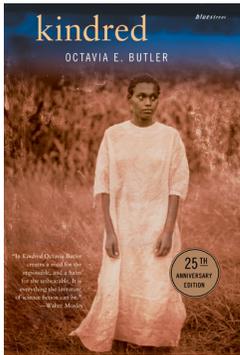
Isabelle, a young black slave in New York 1776, just wants her freedom. However, promises and physical beatings break Isabelle from obtaining her freedom. After being betrayed by Patriots and sold by Loyalists to new slave owners, Isabelle realizes that if she wants freedom for her and her sister, she is going to have to fight for it all by herself. *Chains* presents historical components such as racism, war, domestic violence, and slavery during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This would be an excellent book to start out a unit on slavery in the United States, or to learn about historical facts about the fight for freedom by Americans from England and by black slaves from their owners. (Shannon)

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Fever 1793*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2000.

Anderson brings readers back to Philadelphia 1793 where a large Yellow Fever epidemic occurred that killed a large percent of the population. Mattie Cook lives in Philadelphia where she must deal with the death of her childhood friend, and she risks her own health by working in her family's restaurant that is exposed by travelers who have or were near yellow fever. *Fever 1793* is largely a novel about the perseverance to survive and help others along the way. *Fever 1793* is a



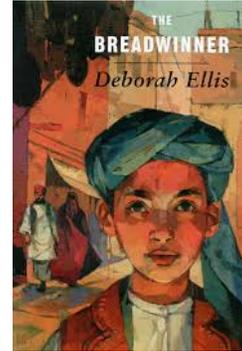
good novel to present to young readers who have struggled with a disease or know someone who struggles with a disease. The courage that Mattie has is very inspirational to young readers and even older audiences. The novel also includes real letters, journals, and documents of that recorded Yellow Fever during 1793 which makes this novel a great source. (Auggie)



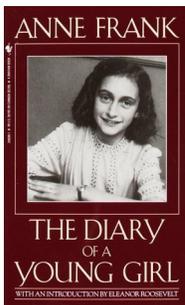
Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979. Print.

Octavia Butler brings readers through time back to the antebellum south with *Kindred*, a novel about a modern black woman named Dana who unexpectedly is transported from 1976 to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Each time Dana is transported back in time, she is meant to rescue Rufus, the man who is supposed to be the father to one of Dana's ancestors. Through *Kindred*, readers learn about the antebellum south through the eyes of a modern woman and receive real glimpses of racism and tolerance towards black slaves. *Kindred*, selling over a quarter of a million copies since its first publication, have given generations a different perspective of the antebellum south. Instead of giving the normal point of view from a back slave, readers are presented the opinions of a black woman who can read, write, and think for herself. *Kindred* deals with historical issues such as racism, family issues, morality, and trust of which can be applied to today's generation as well.

Ellis, Deborah. *The Breadwinner*. Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2000. Print.



*The Breadwinner* takes place in Kabul, Afghanistan where women are forced to stay at home hidden, and the men are the breadwinners for the family. The Taliban takes Parvana's father, and Parvana is forced to disguise herself as a boy in order to obtain money for her families' survival. However, Parvana risks her life by disguising herself as a boy, something women are not allowed to do. *The Breadwinner* is so powerfully written because it invokes a young child to grow up and reach her fullest potential. *The Breadwinner* also introduces some difficult ideas to young adult readers such as facing death and dealing with issues that are uncontrollable. *The Breadwinner* also introduces to young readers the historical issues that involve Middle Eastern women and Islamic extremist ideals.

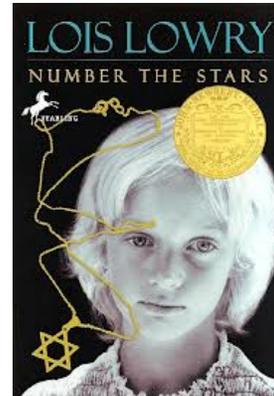


Frank, Anne. *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Garden City (N.Y.): Doubleday, 1952. Print.

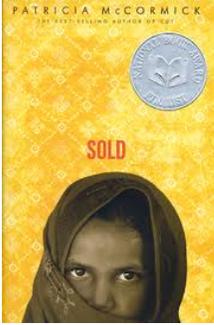
Taking place during WWII, young Anne Frank writes her autobiography of her experiences hiding and running from the Nazi soldiers. While readers learn about the Nazi invasion and concentration camps through Frank's diary, readers also are presented with a young girl growing up and experiencing

love, maturity, and death. Though Frank and her family is able to save other Jews from a deadly fate, Frank and her family are sent to their death. Anne Franks story includes real glimpses of courage, fear, love, and sadness. However, Anne Franks story is also a teaching guide to students who are learning about the hardships and difficulties that Jews had to endure from Nazi soldiers. *The Diary of a Young Girl* is also a great novel to teach about children growing up and finding their true identities. (Levin)

Lowry, Lois. *Number the Stars*. New York: Random House, Inc, 1989. Print.



Lowry brings a new viewpoint of Nazi invasion to the Jews of Denmark in *Number the Stars*. Annemarie Johansen and her family take in their Jewish friend Ellen during the Nazi invasion of Denmark. Annemarie learns what the true meaning of friendship is, and the dangers of being the wrong person at the wrong time in front of Nazi soldiers. Lowry does a great job in presenting the theme of friendship in *Number the Stars*. However, she also presents the harsh historical reality of WWII that can be a great source to what German invasion was really like for Jews and non-Jews. This book would be very helpful to young readers who are researching or beginning to learn about WWII and Nazi Invasion in English classes and History classes.



McCormick, Patricia. *Sold*. New York: Hyperion, 2006. Print.

*Sold* tells the story of young, Nepal-born Lakshmi who was sold into human trafficking by her parents. Written in Vignettes, *Sold* takes you into the brothels of India to learn the dangers of human trafficking: poverty, hunger, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and death. The only way Lakshmi can escape the brothel is if she earns her total worth, or if she escapes with the American who promises her freedom. McCormick writes each of her vignettes beautifully with a touch of poetry and realism. McCormick's YA historical fiction novel is so authentic because she conducted research of human trafficking in India through interviews of women who escaped the brothels. This book is very good for young adult readers who are interested in human trafficking in India, and for those interested in the human struggle to survive harsh and unfair conditions.

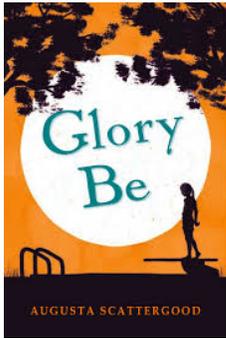
O'Dell, Scott. *Carlota*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1977. Print.

Taking place during the Mexican War, *Carlota* must be everything that her dead brother Carlos was and more in order to defend her father's land from neighboring rancheros. She rides out to



battle against American Yankees in the Battle of San Pasqual. Through her battles and experiences, Carlota finds her true self and embraces her true self, despite different views from her father. *Carlota* is a great novel to introduce to the classroom because it features a female protagonist forced to take up the role of a man while also expected to meet a

female role by her grandmother. *Carlota* is a great source for historical fiction because *Carlota* is based on an actual Mexican woman and recounts many experiences that Mexicans had during the Mexican war. *Carlota* makes a great novel because of its vivid images and emotional connections that O'Dell is able to make between Carlota and the readers. (Kirkus Review: Carlota)



Scattergood, Augusta. *Glory Be*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2012. Print.

Glory is an African American girl from the south in the 1960s who just wants to have her pool party at the local community pool. However, racial segregation prevents Glory from having her pool party and much of the town's resources. In an attempt to become a political activist, Glory writes a letter sophisticatedly complaining about the racial segregation in her town. *Glory Be* presents readers with historical glimpses of racial segregation in the south. Scattergood also adds historical political groups such as the Freedom Workers from the North to insure that Glory is not alone in the fight to end racial segregation. *Glory Be* is a great Young Adult historical novel to add to units of life during racial segregation and can be accompanied with books such as *The Watsons go to Birmingham*. This novel is important to read because it teaches that hard work and dedication can come in small packages, but create a huge effect. (Kirkus Review: Glory Be)

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. Print.



*The Book Thief* follows young Lutheran girl Liesel Meminger, and the twist is that young Liesel is not narrating the novel, but Death is narrating her journey. Taking place in Germany during WWII, Liesel is left in foster care near a concentration camp where she can see Jews entering the camp. In order to steal back what has been stolen from Liesel, her mother and brother, she steals books to take the place of her missing loved ones. Through reading her books and experiencing WWII, Liesel learns the tragedies of Nazi invasion and attempts to deal with the invasion in her own way. *The Book Thief* deals with realistic images of death and historical facts about WWII. Since the novel is narrated by death, there is a dark mood within the entire novel, which may be inappropriate for younger adult readers and more suited for older young adults and above. *The Book Thief* would be an excellent book for teachers to start a unit on WWII historical fiction for ages 16-18. (Maslin)

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All photos taken from Google search.

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