The Sounds of Stories

I remember vividly Charles Laughton, the great actor of screen and stage, traveling all over and doing readings from great books. The audiences were mesmerized. Bill Martin, Jr., used to be a spectacular performer as a storyteller at IRA and NCTE. How we listened and how we cheered. People rushed to get copies of the books being used in these presentations.

Today we are blessed with audiobooks. Students should be able to listen and find the magic of interpretation as actors read aloud or participate in dramatizations based on the finest young adult literature.

Here are a few worthy of note:


Great listening. Letting students read aloud from their favorite books, emphasizing dramatic techniques and interpretation, is a practical way to develop fluency, listening skills, and oral interpretation. Highly motivating.

**For too many students the Holocaust is at a time and place that might be equal to the American Revolution or the Civil War.**

DK, in association with USC Shoah Foundation Institute, has published *Holocaust: The Events and Their Impact on Real People* in which survivors tell their stories on DVD. It is stunning with pictures and text, as well as the DVD, to remind the world that this should
never happen again to any people anywhere in the world. The text is written by Angela Gluck Wood. Steven Spielberg has done the foreword. An important book.

Alleen Pace Nilsen and Don L. F. Nilsen have provided a most interesting, fun, thought-provoking book, *Names and Naming in Young Adult Literature*, Scarecrow Press.

They make a great case for showing that teens are very much interested in names, particularly in this age of computers and technology. Names are definitely important in self-identity. (I once had a student who had the name of Marilyn Monroe and had no resemblance to that celebrity in any way, shape or manner. It was embarrassing for her in many ways.)

The book discusses nicknames, friendly and mischievous, labeling people with “names,” according to their positions, actions, and personal characteristics. The authors provide interesting insights in how names are chosen to reveal class consciousness, ethnicity (maybe rank), historical and cultural contexts. There are interesting reminders that in a number of novels, the authors take the time to explain how various characters got their names, such as Ratchet in *The Canning Season*.

J.K. Rowling, Louis Sachar, M. E. Kerr, T. Anderson, Walter Dean Myers, M. E. Kerr, and Cynthia Kadokata are just a few of the many authors’ works analyzed in this stimulating book. I must admit, that before I read this, I only on occasion thought of the naming game in certain books. But my eyes have been opened, and I thank these authors for their excellent analyses. Most worthwhile.

Making Time for Reading

After the ALAN workshop in New York City, I came home with loads of books and the desire to read and read and read. While every book I list here might not be a prizewinner, I think this list is worthy of exploring. As usual, I try to list titles according to a basic theme. Select and have fun.

Cultural Diversity


Walter Dean Myers. *Harlem Summer*. Scholastic.


On the Lighter Side

Mary Hershey. *The One Where the Kid Nearly Jumps to His Death and Lands in California Razorbill*.


Short Stuff: Short Stories and Tales

David Almond and Others. *Click: One Novel, Ten Authors*. Arthur Levine/Scholastic.


M. Jerry Weiss and Helen S. Weiss, eds. *Dreams and Visions*. Tor.

Biographies


Tales through Poetry


**Graphic Novels**
Nick Abadzis. Laika. :01 First Second.

**The Impact of Wars**
Walter Dean Myers. *Sunrise over Fallujah*. Scholastic.

**Friendships**

**Bedside: Very Special People**

**School Days**