This Is My War!

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ave teachers and librarians from the onslaught of brutal cuts and criticisms. Schools and libraries, according to many, are places where budgets can be cut. Taxes can be reduced. Some politicians, even governors, have used virtual scalpels to cut to the bone the very essence of a good education for all. In many instances, new purchases of publications have been delayed or curtailed. These are considered “nonessentials.”

Is literacy a nonessential?

Is viewing what is happening in the modern world nonessential?

Is developing critical and creative thinking nonessential?

Reading for me is an integral part of my daily life. Is it because of my education? My age? My concern for the future?

There have been so many books that made me focus on ideas. While others might not feel these are the “prize-winners,” I enjoyed them! We must remember, though, that few things are as personal as reading. When the mind clicks on something that has been written, and the reader is jerked into the ideas, what kind of true evaluation can be developed to assess the qualities of learning? Of teaching? Just look at this variety of books, with different takes and different literary styles to meet the needs, abilities, and interests of readers.

Around the World

Abdel-Fattah, Randa. Where the Streets Had a Name. Scholastic, 2010.


Thompson, Holly. Orchards. Delacorte, 2011


Biography


Death


Family


**Fantasy**
Choldenko, Gennifer. *No Passengers beyond This Point*. Dial, 2011.

**Friendships**

**Graphic Novels**

**Historical Fiction**

**Identity**

**Mystery & Suspense**

**Nonfiction**
Gann, Marjorie, and Janet Willen. *Five Thousand Years of Slavery*. Tundra, 2011.

**Illness**

**The ALAN Review Fall 2011**
Problems in School
Science Fiction
Lancaster, Mike A. *Human.* Egmont, 2011.
Sports
Supernatural
Discoveries
Ann McKinstry Micou recently moved to Montclair, New Jersey, and she introduced me to her books—*A Guide to Fiction,* set in Vermont, for children and young adults (Vermont Historical Council, 2008), and *Fiction Set in Vermont 3* (Full Circle Press, 2009). These reference books emphasize the importance of “place in literature.” The works cited are excellently annotated and include useful bibliographies for each author listed. Among them are Peter Abrahams, Julia Alvarez, Robert Newton Peck, Gregory Maguire, Katherine Paterson, Paul Zindel, Ann Brashares, M. E. Kerr, and Karen Hesse. Absolutely fascinating! Ann is currently researching a book about authors’ works set in New Jersey.

Sir Ken Robinson is a strong advocate of creativity and changing the paradigm of schools. I was introduced to this native of Liverpool, and now California, through a presentation on television. He wants students, parents, and teachers to recognize the aptitude and passion within a person and to capitalize on these traits in developing meaningful instruction. His book, *The Element* (Penguin, 2009), is filled with ideas and case studies. Meet Gillian Lynne who loved to dance, but who was tagged as a child with a learning disorder. She then went to a school with a dance program and blossomed. She later auditioned for the Royal Ballet School in London and became a soloist. Later, she met Andrew Lloyd Webber and created with him some of the most successful musical theater events, including *Cats* and *The Phantom of the Opera.*

In *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (Nation Books, 2010), by Chris Hedges, one learns that “nearly a third of the nation’s population is illiterate or barely literate . . . a third of high-school graduates never read another book for the rest of their lives and neither do 42 percent of college graduates. In 2007, 80 percent of the families in the United States did not buy or read a book.”

We must do better. ALAN is leading the way.