



Dissertations on Adolescent Literature: 2000–2005

No research column would be complete or responsive to the needs of young adult teachers, researchers and enthusiasts without a review of the wealth of recent dissertations involving the study of young adult literature. Thus, the theme of this column is to bring to readers of *The ALAN Review* an informative summary of significant masters and doctoral dissertations completed in the last five years (2000-05) “of” and “about” young adult literature.

The dissertations of *young adult literature* concern papers that study the use of young adult novels in a classroom setting. These researchers examine the practice of using young adult literature as a pedagogical tool and its effect on the perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of adolescent readers.

The dissertations *about young adult literature* comprise research that analyzes young adult fiction as a literary genre. These literary scholars devote considerable time and effort to revealing the characteristics of plot, structure and style in the works of young adult fiction

and its implications for both adolescent and adult readers.

As no summary of all the works cited can be totally complete, apologies to those who dissertations are not represented or to those whose study is misrepresented. The intent of this columnist is to cull the archives for the thesis listed in dissertation abstracts within the last five years and to produce a representative summary of the good work accomplished. My hope is that young adult teachers and readers everywhere will benefit from the plethora of interesting and provocative research being accomplished in the name of young adult literature and in turn, these rich studies might spur investigations of your own. Enjoy.

Dissertations Of Young Adult Literature

Ching-hsien Chiu’s dissertation “New Immigrant Readers: The Role of Young Adult Literature in Literacy Development and Academic Confidence (North Carolina State University, 2005)” investigates how reading young adult literature

might affect new immigrant adolescents who are in the process of developing their English literacy and making the transition to academic confidence. Chiu’s primary question is “if reading young adult literature has a positive effect on literacy development and academic confidence for English as a second language (ESL) middle school students?” Using a qualitative framework for study, the researcher triangulates the data derived from observation, interviewing, and document analysis of five recent immigrants to America, ranging in time frame for coming to the United States from one year and eight months to five years. All five students attended the same middle school with a large number of other ESL students who came from the same region in Mexico. These Mexican students were bilingual, speaking more often Spanglish, an English/Spanish mix. Initial findings show that young adult literature plays a significant and vital role in student literacy success. All indicators for positive intellectual growth—academic performance, reading fluency and

flexibility, and social growth and development—are rated high in this qualitative study, indicating that even more time is needed for emerging immigrant learners to spend more time with young adult literature that speaks to their immediate experiences.

Jennifer Claiborne's dissertation "A Survey of High School English Teachers to Determine Their Knowledge, Use, and Attitude Related to Young Adult Literature in the Classroom (University of Tennessee, 2004)" examines the young adult literature books that teachers use in the classroom. Using information gathered from a mailed survey, the researcher explores three questions—what young adult novels are used in secondary classrooms; what are teachers' opinions about using young adult novels in secondary classrooms; and whether or not teachers belong to professional affiliations dealing with the study of young adult literature. The researcher mailed 138 surveys to secondary English teachers in 12 different schools in the state of Tennessee. Of the 138 surveys mailed, 93 responses were received, netting a response rate of 67%. The results showed that of the 93 respondents, a majority, 73%, did not use young adult literature in their classes, and of those who did use young adult novels, only the classics of young adult literature are represented. Teachers, although reluctant to use young adult novels in their instruction, did indicate an awareness of contemporary YA literature, but were reluctant to use it for a variety of reasons—most notably, they did not feel it was relevant or worthy enough to use in

their curriculum. Finally, out of the 93 responses, 38 belonged to the National Council Teachers of English and only one, to the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents.

Teresa Wilson's dissertation "Bringing Memory Forward: Teacher's Engagement with Constructions of 'Difference' in Teacher Literature Circles (University of Victoria, Canada, 2004)," explores the impact of teacher literature circles on the development and construction of meaning in study of young adult literature. Between January and June 2003, the researcher studied eighteen practicing teachers, comprising both elementary and secondary levels, who were invited to discuss multicultural children's and young adult literature in monthly book clubs, write their own literary biographies, and engage in monthly interviews with the researcher. The result is that teachers reveled in non-authoritative, self-revealing discussions about children's and young adult literature, learning that instructional methodologies with young people that emphasize indirect, constructivist teaching approaches are far preferable than direct, authoritative instructional designs. Simply, when young readers read what they want, they learn best.

Janet Hill's dissertation "An Interactive Study of Teachers' Online Discussions of Young Adult Literature (Kent State University, 2003)" is a qualitative study, examining the conversations of teachers as they engaged in on-line discussions of young adult literature. The qualitative study is framed within the theories of reader

response and dialogic professional development (the analysis of a conversation to understand a professional issue). This case study uses a small nationwide online mailing list, or listserv, of 22 middle school teachers who volunteered to engage in online discussions about the young adult literature that they teach. Using a grounded theory analysis, the researcher Hill cites that as a result of the online discussion, the participating middle school teachers increased their knowledge of the subject matter, gained insights in their understandings of pedagogical practices, and experienced personal and professional growth. Also noted is that the on-line discussions tended to be monologic, rather than dialogic in nature, and that discussions adhered to conversations about the young adult books themselves, and not toward social-cultural issues and ideologies about the books read in their respective classes.

Sue L. Jacobs' dissertation "Artistic Response of Incarcerated Male Youth to Young Adult Literature (Kansas State University, 2003)" examines ways in which incarcerated youth respond artistically to young adult literature. Four males, ages ranging from 13 to 17 years old, were chosen from a secured facility. For the four young boys, the inquiry sessions included listening to three young adult literature books being read orally, writing an artistic response to the books read aloud, and participating in a follow-up interview session upon completion of their respective artistic responses. Employing a qualitative research approach, the researcher Jacobs' data includes an interest inventory, a pre- and post-

attitude survey, field notes, artistic response, and interviews. Results indicate an initial reluctance on behalf of the four males to discuss the young adult literature in question, but after time, these four young boys do open up about the books they heard read to them. This study is more fascinating for its descriptive analysis of the four young men in question, than, given the small sample size, for any generalization towards any other study or large group constituency

Evelyn Marie Eskridge's dissertation "Teachers Taking the Aesthetic Stance While Practicing Discussion of Young Adult Literature (Oklahoma State University, 2002)" is a study that is theoretically framed in Rosenblatt's theory of reading (1978) in which the reader acts as the central focus between the author and the text. Participants in this study are six female white teachers—one elementary, three middle, one high school, one college—with teaching experience ranging from five to twenty-five years. Meeting nine times over ten weeks, each session lasting from one to two hours, this qualitative study with the researcher acting as a participant observer reveals that teachers revel in weekly participatory discussion about the value of young adult literature in their own classroom practice. By building on multiple perspectives, the participating teachers gained greater insight and respect for the use of young adult literature in their respective teaching and serve as a model for teacher development.

Rebecca Denice Garrett Hunt's dissertation "An Examination of Attitudes, Interests, and Levels of

Response to Young Adult Novels versus Classic Novels (University of Toledo, 2001)" investigates the attitudes, interests, and levels of response to a young adult novel and a classic novel in a high school English class of an urban school district in the Midwest. Using an intense qualitative research design, Hunt recorded the reactions of both teacher and students during an eleven-week observation where both a young adult novel and a companion classic novel were taught. The results indicate that students demonstrate a better interest and higher attitude in the young adult novel in contrast to the classic novel. Students found the young adult novel a more appealing and intriguing genre, revealing the challenges of using classic novels in a high school curriculum.

Julia L. Johnson-Connor's dissertation "Seeking 'Free-Spaces Unbound': Six 'Mixed' Female Adolescents Transact with Literature Depicting Biracial Characters (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2004)" explores the female biracial adolescents' transactions as they read and transacted with selected biracial literature, including young adult literature, in and out of a school book club, both individually and in small groups. Her findings indicate a need to broaden the definition of multicultural education and the role of multiethnic and multicultural literature in the lives of adolescents, particularly a previously neglected group of young people, biracial children.

Celiamarie Narro's dissertation "Students' Perception of a Relationship Between Young Adult Fiction and Science Literacy (The Univer-

sity of Texas, El Paso, 2004)" examines the relationship between young adult fiction and middle school scientific literacy. Using a statistical analysis of pre- and post scientific knowledge and attitude surveys, Narro concludes that introducing science fiction literature into an eighth-grade student's science curriculum has a significant impact on that student's scientific literacy level.

Dissertations About Young Adult Literature

Lori Ann Atkins Goodson's dissertation "Protagonists of Young Adult Literature and their Reflection on Society (Kansas State University, 2004)" is an in-depth study which employs context-sensitive text analysis techniques developed by Huckin (1992) to examine characteristics of protagonists in randomly selected young adult novels appearing on the International Reading Association's (IRA) Young Adults Choices lists from its inception in 1987 through 2003. Goodson's central thesis question is "to what extent do the protagonists of recent popular young adult literature reflect diverse characteristics?" As defined in the thesis, the meaning of diverse characteristics includes ethnic background, gender, and socio-economic status. Also, Goodson indicates the dominant multiple intelligence trait (based on Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences) of the protagonist represented in the young adult novels selected to study. Three books, or 10 percent, from each year's IRA Young Adult Choices list (1987-2003) were selected for review, yielding a total of 51 novels. An

independent scholar specializing in young adult literature and multiple intelligences verified Goodson's analysis. Results, not surprisingly, show that typical protagonists in contemporary young adult fiction are predominantly upper/middle class white girls who are linguistically intelligent. Thus, the implication of this study is whether these books appeal to non-reading adolescents? As Goodson concludes, classroom teachers trained to use young adult novels to engage reluctant or disinterested readers need to be cautioned that most young adult novels are geared to students whose interests are most dissimilar from the characters they might encounter in their readings.

Holly Wagg's master's thesis "Producing (In(Visible)) Girls: The Politics of Production in Young Adult Fiction with Adolescent Lesbian Characters (Concordia University, Canada, 2004)" examines the increase in the publication of homosexuality-themed young adult literature and concludes that novels that feature adolescent lesbian characters account for fewer than one-quarter of all published titles. Based upon interviews with seven authors regarding their novels published between 1978-2003, the author uses a socioeconomic research model to understand how the politics of book publishing, particularly novels geared for young adults, yields works whereby the adolescent lesbian is an invisible/visible girl in adolescent literature. This literary duality is best exemplified by the presence of adolescent lesbian on the pages of young adult novels, but her near absence on book covers and marketing strategies. At

times, her role is minimized and at others, her presence is erased.

Carrie Nishihira's dissertation "Fantasies and Subversions: Reworking of Fantasy in Young Adult Literature" explores contemporary young adult re-workings in novels, short stories and films of fairy tales and fantasy sources from a feminist and psychoanalytic perspective. The researcher examines the image of women as portrayed in archetypal stories throughout the ages and how these images are manifested in contemporary young adult novels. By examining the role of sex, power and violence as portrayed through patriarchal romance narratives and then how they are reinterpreted in YA literature, the researcher demonstrates how reinterpretations in young adult fiction are linked to changing cultural conceptions of adolescence, gender, romance and sex. A range of literary works from nearly every genre and era is introduced to substantiate the findings of this intricate and involving study of gender theory as applied to young adult literature.

Eric Tribunella's dissertation "Disposable Objects: Contrived Trauma and Melancholic Sacrifice in American Literature for Children and Young Adults (City University of New York, 2005)" illustrates the ways in which American children's and young adult literature turn repeatedly to a narrative in which a child is compelled to sacrifice or renounce a loved object. The author concludes that such a literary device is used repeatedly and compellingly to show a demonstrable catalyst for character maturation. The symbolic representation of living without the object

surrendered is regarded as a sign of accomplished adolescent maturity. Thus, the loss of a parent, a friend, an animal, an object, or even virginity, is regarded as a first step towards becoming an adult. Novels studied include *Johnny Tremain*, *Old Yeller*, *A Separate Peace*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, *My Brother Sam in Dead*, *Number the Stars*, *The Upstairs Room*, *The Outsiders*, and *That Was Then, This Is Now*.

Janet Merle Wossum Hilburn's dissertation "Walking in the Light: The Role of Protestant Christianity in Young Adult Modern Realistic Fiction (Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, 2005)" is a study that looks at the intersection between increased religious fervor in society (the emergence of the Religious Right in American public life) and its reflection in young adult literature. Results of the study show that there has been an increase in the number of books published with some sort of content pertaining to Protestant Christianity since 1990. In these novels, religion frequently becomes an area of conflict—both internal and external—for the protagonist with the resolution at best, ambiguous. Characters question their beliefs, but ultimately embrace a faith, if not in the specific religious tenets, at least, in a beneficent God.

Marnie Kristen Jorenby's dissertation "About Face: The Transformation of the Hero in Post-War Japanese Literature for Youth (The University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2003)," examines the themes prevalent in children and adolescent literature written for young Japanese prior and after the second World War. Traditional Japanese literature—prior to the

Asian Pacific War (1940-45) paints a clear portrait of the Japanese hero, loyal, patriotic, and determined war hero. With the Japanese defeat in the war, many literary leaders began to question the validity of showing the traditional Japanese war hero as a role model for young children. In the post war era, a new generation of authors began to write stories depicting alternate visions of heroism, courage and responsibility.

Jorenby's thesis analyzes a selection of Japanese children's and young adult literature for its vision of heroes in post-war Japan. Hill concludes that indeed the images of Japanese hero in the novels she examines has changed; the Japanese soldier is depicted as a reluctant war hero, more vulnerable and cautious than previously imagined in pre-war Japan.

Elizabeth Ann Younger's dissertation "How to Make a Girl: Female Sexuality in Young Adult Literature (Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2003)" analyzes representations of female sexuality in more than fifty young adult literature texts. The researcher examines these young adult novels in relation to each other and in terms of historical development, demonstrating in clear and vivid terms how young adult literature has and continues to play a significant role in the social construction and perception of femininity and female sexuality. Sample topics studied include teenage romance, gender roles, body image, sexual responsibility, heterosexuality, lesbianism, teenage pregnancy, and peer pressure. Younger concludes that of the more

than fifty young adult novels analyzed, the results are decidedly mixed. True, although many young adult novels reinforce traditional gender roles for young women, there are many more texts that challenge perceived ideas about female identity and provide alternative visions of what it means to be young and female in a patriarchal culture.

Rebecca Platzner's dissertation "The Functional Value of Story In Young Adult Literature about Incest (Walter Fisher) (Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, 2002)" employs [Walter Fisher's \(1978, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1995\)](#) narrative paradigm as a method of examining 18 realistic fictional narratives about incest, published for an audience of young adults, in which a young adult female is the victim of incest by her father, stepfather, or uncle. Results of the study demonstrate that stories about female victims of incest can serve as methods of coping, telling, sense making, and relationship building—especially stories that are essentially autobiographical narratives.

Julie Ann Robinson's doctoral thesis "Charting the Hero's Journey in Coretta Scott King Award Contemporary Young Adult Novels (Arizona State University, 2002)" examines twenty young adult novels selected for the "Coretta Scott King Award." The young adult novels are examined using the three components of Joseph Campbell's literary analysis entitled "hero's journey"—separation, initiation and return. Using an adapted theoretical model for content analysis developed by Clifford Geertz, combined with Molefi Kete Asante's revised

approach to Campbell's hero journey, the results of the study indicate that these award-winning books depict with relative degree of authenticity and accuracy the life of young African-American adults are of immense aid in helping young African-American readers cope with issues of developing self and group identity.

Amy Jo Lantinga's dissertation "A Study of the Novels of Harry Mazer and Norma Fox Mazer and their Place in Young Adult Literature (University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2001)" analyzes the Mazers' individual and collective works according to psychologist's Robert Havighurst's adolescent tasks found in "Developmental Task and Education" (1972). The Mazers novels are found to readily comply with Havighurst's adolescent list of physical, social and emotional developmental tasks. The resulting benefit is that the Mazers' work makes perfect vehicles for classroom use and discussion.

Myrna Dee Marler's dissertation "Representations of the Black Male, His Family, Culture and Community in Three Writers for African-American Young Adults: Mildred D. Taylor, Alice Childress, and Rita Williams-Garcia (University of Hawaii, 2001)" asserts that since the end of the civil rights movement, African-Americans as a group have moved away from the goal of integration to promoting a distinct African-American culture worthy of equal status in a pluralistic environment. Marler traces the development of the African-American culture within the context of the American mainstream, using young adult literature as a representative example of this profound and

significant change in the depiction of a cultural and racial identity. Focusing, in particular, on three African-American writers for young adults (Mildred D. Taylor, Alice Childress, and Rita Williams-Garcia), this researcher examines each author's contribution towards the representation of a black identity. Mildred D. Taylor depicts a strong and positive African-American culture which resists white oppression with dignity; Alice Childress underscores the problems created by poverty and racism; and Rita Williams-Garcia examines the destructive forces of modern life that work against cultural family and unity.

Dirk Patrick Mattson's dissertation "The Portrayal of Religious Development in Young Adult Literature: An Analysis of Contemporary Works (Fritz Oser, Paul Gmunder) (Arizona State University, 2001)" is a qualitative study of fifteen contemporary young adult novels which portray the religious developmental experience of its protagonist. Using the stage development theory of religious judgment as proposed by Fritz Oser and Paul Gmunder, Mattson found that the portrayal of the protagonists in these fifteen young adult novels—average age 16.7 years—was consistent with Oser and Gmunder's developmental theory of religious judgment in its essential characteristics and realistic in its portrayal of young people wrestling with their religious identity.

Rosalind Faye Carmichael's dissertation "Educating African-American Youth: Reflections of Historical Knowledge and Cultural Values in African-American Young Adult Literature (Temple University,

2000)" explores the extent to which African-American authors of young adult fiction incorporate historical knowledge and traditional African-American cultural values in their works. Using twenty randomly selected young adult novels written by African-American authors and published between the years 1966 and 1996, Carmichael examines these works for authenticity, consistency and poignancy in depicting the African-American experience. The researcher uses three specific analytical instruments—the African-American Cultural Values Survey, the Afrocentric Behavioral Assessment Instrument, and the Family Environment Survey—to analyze the textual contents for its representation of African-American life. The result is that these young adult novels demonstrate with clarity, resonance, and authenticity the African-American experience and thus, serve as exemplar literature for young adults to learn more about the life of African-Americans in the United States.

Amy Beth Maupin's dissertation "The Five Best Novels for Adolescents in the 1990s: An Evaluative Study (University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2000)" attempts to answer the question "what traits or characteristics are typical of the best adolescent novels of the 1990s?" A survey conducted by Ted Hipple (University of Tennessee, 2000) reveals that the five novels were *Ironman* by Chris Crutcher, *Make Lemonade* by Virginia Euwer Wolff, *Holes* by Louis Sachar, *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse, and *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. In the study, these novels are evaluated according to seven

yardsticks of value designed by Walter Blair and John Gerber. Those criteria are clarity, escape, reflection of real life, artistry in details, emotional impact, personal beliefs and significant insights. All five best novels scored highly on each of Blair and Gerber's evaluative characteristics for judging the value of a work of fiction. In particular, this researcher notes that a novel's ability to appeal to a reader's emotions and offer conceptual insights will determine its popular appeal and critical acclaim.

Walter Dean Roof's dissertation "Poststructural Feminist Power: A Thematic Analysis of Female Protagonists in Adolescent Literature, 1942-1946, and 1992-1996 (University of South Carolina, 2004)" is a descriptive investigative study which thematically analyzes adolescent literature, twenty novels with female protagonists, from two time periods, 1942-1946, and 1992-1996. Employing the concept of power in poststructural feminism, researcher Roof examines the changes, if any, in the portrayal of female protagonists that occurred during the fifty-year interim (1946-1996). He compares eight adolescent novels from 1942-1946 with twelve written during 1992-1996. The findings of this study suggest that the young heroines in the works of these two eras maintain certain spirited demeanor, regardless of when the novel was written. Still, findings also suggest that in the earlier works, females exhibit a greater signs of independence and less dependence on males, than their female protagonist counterparts in the earlier era (1942-1946). In the young adult novels written between 1992-1996, women appear

more assertive and adventurous.

Jean Ann John's dissertation "Teaching Citizenship: Civic Values in the Young Adult Novels of Chris Crutcher (Oklahoma State University, 2002)" explores the notion of civic values as portrayed or not portrayed in the novels of Chris Crutcher and whether the consequences of the demonstration of civic values resulted in positive or negative consequences for the characters portrayed in Crutcher's novels. Using a rating scale and four different raters, researcher John found a strong presence of civic values (tolerance, compassion, honesty, respect, and reflective decision-making) in all seven young adult novels by Chris Crutcher and his main character most frequently displayed all categories of the aforementioned civic values. The study's results indicate that Crutcher's novels may serve as a useful tool for teaching civic values to adolescents.

Wendy Jean Glenn's dissertation "Alternatives for Adolescents: A Critical Feminist Analysis of the Novels of Karen Hesse (Arizona State University, 2002)" analyzes eight of Hesse's novels for adolescents using the critical feminist lens of authentic realism. Authentic realism is a reading approach, as described by Sarah Mills, that values and encourages a reader's personal connection with the text. In each of her young adult novels, Hesse, as researcher Glenn reveals, explores the notion of gender identity, questioning the traditional definition of what it means to be female or male in a society dominated by patriarchal values. The resulting vision is adolescent stories where teenage girls display an

independent spirit formally reserved for males, and adolescent boys exhibit a nurturing and caring demeanor usually associated only with females. This reversal of stereotypes encourages readers of Hesse's young adult novels to become the people they wish to be—regardless of the stereotypical roles for male and female gender as expected by society.

Gael Elyse Grossman's dissertation "The Evolution of the Vampire in Adolescent Fiction (Michigan State University, 2001)" examines the appearance of vampires in young adult novels to assess the recent popularity of vampires in fiction and to highlight its distinction as a genre of fiction, separate from horror or shock. To research this intriguing topic, both novels using vampires as lead figures and readers of vampire fiction were studied. Using a cultural coding research design developed by Linda Christian-Smith, researcher Grossman's findings demonstrate that vampire fiction is filled with male and female characters who are independent, empowered individuals who defy traditional male and female roles. Readers react strongly to the characters, identifying with many of the strong traits exhibited by male and female characters. Thus, as a result of her study, Grossman urges researchers to study this complex genre closely, imploring that its recent popularity among young adults demands our attention.

Mary Ann Cappiello's dissertation "Tricksters and Rescuers, No Damsels in Distress: Female Protagonists of Historical Novels for Young People Set during the American Revolution (Columbia

University Teachers College, 2004) examines the construction of teenage female protagonists of historical novels, specifically those written for young people, set during the American Revolution and written between the years 1860-1998. This literary study spans several years and many genres of fiction for young people, including the dime novel, the junior novel, and the young adult novel. The resultant findings indicate that female protagonists—as displayed in historical novels during this wide and expansive time period—are always strong and independent figures who defy convention and stereotype to achieve goals for the greater good.

Cynthia A. Nicholl's dissertation "Rites of Passage in Young Adult Literature: Separation, Initiation and Return (Beverly Cleary, Katherine Patterson, Jerry Spinelli, Avi, Lois Lowery) (California State University, 2002)" outlines the thesis that in the late twentieth-Century, young adult literature has evolved to represent the rite of passage experience for teenage readers. Nicholls examines five representative young adult novels (one from each author cited in the title) to demonstrate that in each book, a young protagonist experiences the separation, initiation, and return of the rite of passage—or coming of age journey—so typical of young adolescents in the throes of growing and maturing.

Mei-Ying Wu's dissertation "What Fantastic Creatures Boys Are: Ideology, Discourse, and the Construction of Boyhood in Selected Juvenile Fiction (University of Idaho, 2005)" explores the notion of boyhood as portrayed in

adolescent novels, particularly J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Gary Paulsen's *Brian* books, Lois Lowery's *The Giver* and the Jerry Spinelli's *Wringer*. The result is a multi-faceted demonstration of "boyhood" highly dependent on the author's construct and definition of maleness. Boyhood, as Wu demonstrates, is not static, immobile, unitary and/or universal; but, highly dynamic, divergent, socially and historically contingent, and ideologically contestable.

Shwu-yi Leu's dissertation "Struggles to Become 'American': Historical and contemporary experiences of Asian-American Immigrants in Children's and Young Adult Fiction, 1945-1999 (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2002) discusses how contemporary Asian-Pacific Americans and their experiences are depicted in books for young readers and adolescents. Using both quantitative and qualitative data, researcher Leu concludes that there is a paucity of literature that portrays contemporary Asian-Pacific Americans and of nearly 300 hundred analyzed, only a third detail the richness of growing up both Asian-Pacific American and American.

Kristina Peterson's dissertation "The Gifted Child in Children's Literature, 1955-1995 (University of Minnesota, 2001)" explores the portrayal of gifted children in both children and young adult literature from 1955-1995. Titles were limited to works of fiction, originally written in English, intended for children and young adults, which feature at least one character identified as intellectually gifted or talented. Resultant data reveals no homogenous portrait of the gifted

child, but a composite picture of young people who are aggressive, bright, and often, conflicted.

JaNae Jenkins Mundy's dissertation "Best Books for Young Adults: An Analysis of the Structural, Stylistic, and Thematic Characteristics of the 1998 Best Books for Young Adults and 1998 Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers" analyzes the characteristics of books of each respective list to determine the criteria for selection. Mundy concludes that books selected reluctant readers were more plot driven, whereas books selected as best books for young adults were generally more complex in structure, style, and theme. Nonfiction books, though, revealed no distinct characteristics for either list.

Conclusion

A cursory read of this column reveals two things—1) young adult novels are studied and studied extensively in dissertations across the country and 2) dissertations "of" and "about" young adult literature have only begun to scratch the surface of what is required for a thorough and extensive study of a literary genre that is relatively new in style and content. Moreover, the relatively small number of dissertations that examine the use of adolescent literature in the classroom warrants the attention of young adult scholars everywhere for only then will adolescent teachers and readers begin to develop a full appreciation for the use of young adult novels as a viable instructional tool to motivate both reluctant and highly-skilled readers.

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