



## From the Editors

Her curiosity was too much for her. She felt almost as if she could hear the books whispering on the other side of the half-open door. They were promising her a thousand unknown stories, a thousand doors into worlds she had never seen before.

—*Inkheart* (Cornelia Funke, 2003)

**A**s editors of *The ALAN Review*, we strongly believe in the theme for this issue—Reaching Them All, ALAN Has Books for Everyone. In framing the call, we explained that

. . . there are young adult books for boys, for girls, for challenged readers, brilliant readers, LGBTQ teens, teens in other countries, teens from other countries who now live here, Christian kids, Jewish kids, Muslim kids, non-believing kids, kids with problems at home—alcoholism, illnesses, incest, divorce—as well as kids from happy, fun-loving homes, homes with two moms or two dads or one mom or one dad or one of each or grandparents, teens who live in cyberspace, teens who can’t afford a computer, and so on.

This idea, books for everyone, provides an interesting framework for the articles and columns in this issue. As we have been working to put this issue together, we have been struck by the connections between many of our manuscripts and current issues in the news. The stories in the news about bullying, strong female role models, changes in schools, and complex issues around relationships provide an interesting background for this issue.

Over the past few months, the number of news stories about bullying has risen, and we have watched the parents, schools, football teams, and teens respond to incidences of bullying. Not surprisingly, we

have also seen an increase in young adult literature dealing with issues around bullying. The idea of teens as heroes and role models has also been present in the news stories; features about teen athletes overcoming tremendous odds, teens saving siblings from fires, and teens raising money for terminally ill adolescents have all dominated the national news. In addition to teen heroes, we have also seen teen activists campaigning for gay marriage, for paths to citizenship, and for equal rights. This questioning of society and society’s laws is also playing out in current YAL dystopian texts. These are examples of the “thousand unknown stories” that books can provide for us.

Often those stories are connected with events that occur off the page. YAL, both past and present, provides the stories that whisper to readers, that call to them from that half-open door. “The Look of Classic Young Adult Literature” by Alan Brown and Joan Mitchell, along with several other authors, many of whom are ALAN members, focuses on those young adult authors whose works can now be considered classics. This article is based on a 2012 NCTE panel in which participants joined roundtables that focused on a particular author and his or her relevance to the secondary classroom today.

In “Beyond Sensation: *The Hunger Games* and

Dystopian Critique,” Margaret J. Godbey examines the fascination with this series that has garnered so much attention. She uses reader response to consider why readers are so taken with this series, addressing such themes as the implications of reality television and the representations of gender expectations, and highlights the need for readers to critically examine the novel’s depiction of a future society.

Interestingly, two articles in this issue deal with girls who are especially strong female characters. In Karen Hildebrand’s interview with bestselling author Rae Carlson, we learn of her journey as an author as well as the inspiration for her fantasy novels. Marsha Sprague’s “Girls Who Kill: The Changing Face of YA Warrior Heroines” is a provocative examination of female protagonists from the eighties and today and their changing attitudes toward killing humans in battle.

In “Construction and Depiction of Identity in YA Novels with Digital Communication Technologies,” Koss and Tucker-Raymond discuss how identity and digital communication are evident in much of today’s young adult literature. They closely examine 31 novels for their constructions and depictions of identity.

Young adult novels continue to struggle for widespread acceptance as a body of quality literature. “Text Complexity and “Comparable Literary Merit” in Young Adult Literature” by sj Miller explores the various ways in which these novels meet the demands of text complexity. In addition, Miller argues that these novels should be considered of “comparable literary merit” under the definition and expectation of the College Board.

If you haven’t checked out Shannon Hitchcock’s work, you’ll want to after reading Hinton’s interview with her. In this article, the two explore historical fiction, including Hitchcock’s first novel and her journey into young adult literature.

Educators and parent groups continue to draw attention to the perils of bullying. In their article, “Content Analysis of YAL Related to Bullying,” Jones, Dennis, Torres-OvRick, and Walker draw attention to how this issue is presented in young adult fiction. In “The Portrayal of Bullying in YAL: Characters, Contexts, and Complex Relationships,” Harmon and Henkin continue the discussion by reminding us that this theme has been present since the early years of YA literature—e.g., *The Chocolate War* (1974) and *Blubber* (1974)—and they go on to present a discussion of bullying in current texts.

Bott, Cohen, and Gregory continue the discussion on bullying and frame the idea of institutional responsibilities for bullying in their column, “When Institutions are Liable for Bullying.” Hundley, Bickmore, Bach, and Binford wrap up this issue with a discussion of how English language arts and social studies can use both fiction and nonfiction texts to promote student learning of complex texts.

## References

- Blume, J. (1974). *Blubber*. New York, NY: Random House Children’s Books.
- Cormier, R. (1974). *The chocolate war*. New York, NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers.
- Funke, C. (2003). *Inkheart*. New York, NY: Scholastic.