

Best Young Adult Novels

VOCABULARY,
ACTIVITIES,
AND TESTS

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This thematic listing of the books covered in this volume indicates difficulty levels: **E = Easy**, **M = Medium**, and **D = Difficult**. (For further explanation of levels, read the section titled "Using the Book.") General topics are also given for each book.

Dreams and Goals

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Introduction to Young Adult Literature

Why Teach Young Adult Literature?

The challenge to the language arts teacher in today's society is complex. Students exhibit a wide range of basic skills. Some are reading far below grade level, others have the necessary skills but are considered "aliterate" because they choose not to read, and still others are voracious readers. You will find a combination of these levels of readers in almost every classroom.

When you use books that are relevant to teenagers, more students are willing to take risks. They are interested and eager to involve themselves in reading. Higher thinking skills such as critical thinking, interpreting, analyzing, and predicting can be integral in the study of young adult literature. Margaret Early in 1960 summarized the three stages of reading growth as 1) primary (unconscious enjoyment) — infancy through beginning or middle years of elementary school, 2) secondary (egocentric years of adolescence) — late elementary through secondary years, and 3) aesthetic (creative reading). Many students at the secondary level will not read at the aesthetic level until their last years of high school. And a small minority will never reach the aesthetic level, even as adults. Unfortunately, many of our English class curricula are aimed at this level.

What implications does this have for the language arts teacher who has a prescribed curriculum to follow? The task for any teacher, whether in English, language arts, reading, special education, or many of the content areas becomes a question of how to motivate students, how to make them risk-takers, and how to involve them in the reading process. Arthea J. S. Reed in her book *Reaching Adolescents — The Young Adult Book and the School* summarizes this well: "This does not mean 'watering down' the content of the subject area; nor does it mean excluding the 'classics'; nor does it mean eliminating the basics; nor does it mean teaching only what interests the students today. It means bridging the gap between childhood and adulthood so that the content can be taught in a more sophisticated way."

Young adult literature lends itself easily to vocabulary study, characterization, and all levels of critical thinking. Sometimes young adult literature is the *only* bridge students have between problems of adolescence and potential growth, as a student and a human being. P. J. Petersen, author of *Would You Settle for Improbable?* and other young adult novels, said in a talk to teachers in Albuquerque, New Mexico, that the philosophy of reading young adult literature is that, for the young adult, this particular genre of literature provides perspective, comfort, and guidance. These books attract young adults because they tell them: "You are not alone."

Young adult literature deserves much more credibility in our homes and classrooms. As in any other genre there are poor choices. But, for the most part, young adult books provide excellent models of literature. Authors such as Katherine Paterson,

Irene Hunt, Robert Cormier, and Cynthia Voigt write beautiful literature that is relevant to *all* ages.

From our own personal perspective and classroom experiences (25 years total), our students became interested and more active readers when we introduced young adult books into our curricula. Parents also became more active as students brought home books and talked about them with their families. Conversely, we also heard teachers, administrators, and parents voice their concerns about the absence of the “classics.” To these critics, we can point out that the same issues are discussed, whether it be Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* or John Neufeld’s *Sharelle*. Again, we see the young adult book as a possible bridge to the classics. (A list of classics and their young adult counterparts is given in the Appendix.)

Secondary students who say they’ve never read a book discover that being guided through the study of young adult literature in a classroom, with a book that is relevant to them, brings confidence and can even spark a love of reading.

Evolution of the Young Adult Novel

It would be difficult to pinpoint the actual beginning of the genre of young adult literature. Whether you would consider *Huckleberry Finn* or *Little Women* a young adult book would depend on your own criteria.

However, in the 1940s, Maureen Daly introduced a touch of realism in the book *Seventeenth Summer* (still read today). For the most part, though, young adult literature was typified by the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys books. In the 1950s, books about cars, sports, and romance were popular, with such notables as *Hot Rod* by Henry Gregor Felsen and the Rosamond du Jardin books.

A new element of realism in young adult literature became noticeable in the 1960s with such books as *Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones* by Ann Head, *Island of the Blue Dolphins* by Scott O’Dell, and *The Contender* by Robert Lipsyte. By the 1970s, realistic young adult novels were the standard and continue to be so.

As our values and perspectives have changed, young adult literature has reflected those changes. Twenty years ago a teen would have been hard pressed to find a book on divorce or drug abuse. Today, a teen has not one choice, but many. Issues such as pregnancy, cocaine addiction, and even child abuse are topics now available in young adult literature.

Another example of the evolution of young adult literature is seen in the science fiction/fantasy categories. Thirty years ago science fiction fans had a steady diet of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Robert Heinlein. Today, teens can enjoy Madeleine L’Engle, William Sleator, and Ursula Le Guin as well as the popular adult writers. In fact, a fantasy such as *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis can be a wonderful introduction into the world of fantasy/science fiction and can entice even the most reluctant reader.

Young adult novels can be the catalyst for many topical units in the classroom. On an individual basis, these books can sometimes be cathartic. Issues in today's YA books can be highly relevant and correspond to the realistic needs and concerns of this age group.

Criteria for Choosing Young Adult Literature

Basically, all of the books included in this teaching guide follow three guidelines:

1. Written for the young adult audience.
2. A young adult is the protagonist.
3. Topics are aimed at the needs of young adults.

For reluctant or poor readers, we include some other cautionary criteria:

1. No time shifts.
2. Modern time setting.
3. No more than four to five main characters.
4. Lots of dialogue and action.
5. Able to be read within four weeks.

One important guideline for you to remember if you will teach a book to an entire class is to *like the book yourself*. If you specifically want to do a novel concerning changes in the family unit, for example, be sure to find one that you feel comfortable with and are excited about.

Teachers should also be risk-takers, however. A book that just seems "right" will minimize most of our cautions. For example, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis does not meet the listed criteria; however, this novel has been successfully used in secondary classrooms. Another example is *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls. The beauty of such books is enough to sustain interest, no matter what guidelines the novel follows.

You might want to start your young adult book approach with students with a mystery. Especially with reluctant readers, the ones who complain they've never read a book (and seem to challenge anyone to make them), teenage mysteries such as *Killing Mr. Griffin* and *The Third Eye* by Lois Duncan can capture the attention of even the most recalcitrant.

Lindsay, Lindsay, Fly Away Home

by Stella Pevsner

Synopsis:

Lindsay has always had an exotic life, living with her father and stepmother all over the world. Most recently, she has lived in India and fallen in love with Rajee, a young Indian boy. Suddenly, her whole life is in an upheaval as she is shipped back to the United States to live with her Aunt Meg. The reasons for her move are not totally clear to her, and she's not overly enthusiastic about living in the States. Most of the kids at her new school find her snobbish, and Rajee writes her that he's marrying someone else. When she breaks her leg in an accident, she learns more truths about her real father and mother. It is finally time for Lindsay to decide where home really is. (Archway)

Vocabulary:

CHAPTER 1 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. excursion2. unnerving3. improvised4. apprehensive5. rowdy6. caste7. expatriate8. sari	CHAPTER 3 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. verandah2. array3. paranoid4. fathom5. drudge6. wan7. confide	CHAPTER 6 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. manipulate2. cordial3. espionage4. compromised	CHAPTER 9 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. brunch2. disconcerted3. export4. continental5. savage	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. timid3. unvarnished	CHAPTER 17 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. wrenching2. gloating3. devastating4. annulled5. revelations6. obsession
CHAPTER 2 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. sibling2. indifference3. skinflint4. kimono5. reprieved6. conspiracy7. garb8. mesmerized9. sensitivity10. weary11. zombie12. contrariness13. desolation14. acclimated15. discomfited16. contrition	CHAPTER 4 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. coax2. persistent3. soothe4. bullocks5. awe6. grim7. tactful8. extravagant9. martyr10. lament	CHAPTER 7 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. candid2. squalor3. realism4. perpetual5. inject6. hovered7. commercialism8. reprehensible9. blundered10. cherub	CHAPTER 10 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. inquisitive2. intercepted3. implement4. rupee5. convert6. arrogance7. prattled	CHAPTER 13 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. felicitous2. torrents3. detachment4. conspire	CHAPTER 18 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. brutal2. toiling3. devotion4. withering5. dredge6. tabloid
	CHAPTER 5 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. spigots2. simpering3. exotic4. truce	CHAPTER 8 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. mantra2. blissful3. chic4. bungalow5. detrimental6. corrupt7. severing	CHAPTER 11 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. harboring2. unrequited3. machinations4. nostalgic5. grievances6. diplomat	CHAPTER 14 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. elusive2. hybrid3. tranquil4. wholesome	CHAPTER 19 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. vivid2. dispelled3. hordes4. yearn5. reveries
			CHAPTER 12 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. retort	CHAPTER 15 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. saga2. scowling3. ruddy	
				CHAPTER 16 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. bizarre2. quirks3. authorization4. haggard	



Name: _____

Date: _____

Lindsay, Lindsay, Fly Away Home — Chapters 1-10

Matching: Match the underlined vocabulary word with the word from the box that is closest in meaning. Write the synonymous word in the blank.

1. _____ "Or was this group just abnormally rowdy?"
2. _____ "As Dad's only sibling . . ."
3. _____ "It was hard to keep an air of indifference."
4. _____ "I must admit I felt the tiniest bit of contrition as Meg left."
5. _____ "I wandered out to a verandah."
6. _____ "I'd expected him to coax a bit."
7. _____ "So she was tactful as well as proficient."
8. _____ "It's a symbol of our undying devotion."
9. _____ "That's like really exotic."
10. _____ "Is this a case where I should be polite or candid?"

honest
uncaring
noisy
kind
faithfulness
regret
sister or brother
persuade
strange
porch

True/False: Write out *true* or *false* to each of the following statements.

1. _____ Lindsay was very excited to be moving back to the States.
2. _____ Lindsay knew her Aunt Meg very well and felt very comfortable with her.
3. _____ Ruthanne considered Aunt Meg somewhat of a "celebrity."
4. _____ Lindsay was a little surprised to find out Jess had a girlfriend, named Hope.
5. _____ In India, Lindsay was used to having maids do everything for her.
6. _____ Claudine was several years younger than Lindsay's father.
7. _____ Lindsay was very touched when Aunt Meg installed a phone in Lindsay's own bedroom.
8. _____ When Lindsay called home to India, she talked to her father for a long time.
9. _____ Eliot was Aunt Meg's second husband.
10. _____ Lindsay was shocked when the bank couldn't convert her rupees into dollars.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Lindsay, Lindsay, Fly Away Home — Chapters 11-19

Fill in the Blanks: Using just the vocabulary words given here, fill in the blanks with an appropriate word that would make sense within the context of the story.

devotion
tranquil
authorization

harboring
haggard
devastating

scowling
bizarre

Lindsay's accident in the truck was somewhat of a _____ one. She slipped on mud and hit the pavement, breaking her leg. The hospital staff said they needed some _____ from a parent to proceed with medical attention. Lindsay was _____ no ill feelings toward the kids who were messing around with the mud in the back of the pickup, but Kim, the crew chief, was _____ at the kids who did it.

After Lindsay was given some medication, she felt a little more _____, but not much. The pain was _____, and Aunt Meg was almost in hysterics. The next morning, Aunt Meg's face looked _____ and worn out, and Lindsay was beginning to understand the _____ that Meg was giving to her.

True/False: By the end of the book, Lindsay had been told the truth about her background. Write out either *true* or *false* to the following statements to show what was *really* true about Lindsay, not what Lindsay thought for many years.

1. _____ Lindsay's father was Eliot.
2. _____ Aunt Meg was Lindsay's mother.
3. _____ Jess and Ruthanne were Lindsay's cousins.
4. _____ Aunt Meg's parents had her first marriage annulled.
5. _____ Brian, Jess' uncle, was killed in the war.
6. _____ Daniel and Katherine couldn't have children of their own.
7. _____ After Katherine died, Lindsay came back to live with Meg.
8. _____ Daniel was glad to be rid of Lindsay as she became a teenager; he said she was too hard for him to handle.



Name: _____

Date: _____

Final Test
Lindsay, Lindsay, Fly Away Home

Multiple Response: Choose *as many answers as are needed* in order to complete each statement correctly. This means you may choose one, two, three, or even all four answers. Write the letter(s) of your choice(s) in the blanks.

1. _____ When Lindsay started at her new school, she appeared snobbish because she (a) refused to speak to anyone (b) spoke with a very proper British accent (c) bragged about all the places she had visited or lived in (d) told the teachers they were dumb.
2. _____ Lindsay thought she was sent back to the U.S. because (a) she was becoming too "close" with Rajee (b) her father wanted her to have some American education (c) her father and Claudine were having marital problems (d) she got in trouble with the law in India.
3. _____ Jess told Lindsay to do this in order to fit in. (a) Play down all the places she had been to. (b) Laugh more. (c) Try dating American boys. (d) Dress in jeans.
4. _____ Hope was (a) Lindsay's cousin (b) a girlfriend of Jess' (c) very helpful to Lindsay (d) Chinese-American.
5. _____ Eliot was (a) boisterous and outgoing (b) dating Aunt Meg (c) a news celebrity (d) a vegetarian.
6. _____ During the school year (a) Lindsay became good friends with Turk (b) Lindsay became Homecoming Princess (c) Hope continued to be good friends with Lindsay (d) Ruthanne got mad at Lindsay and refused to talk to her anymore.
7. _____ Jess and Lindsay decided to stay downstate (a) because their relatives asked them to (b) so they could go to summer school (c) in order to earn some money (d) to work in the cornfields.
8. _____ Lindsay broke her leg when she was (a) trying to detassel corn (b) trying to hurry out of the truck (c) hit by a slow-moving truck (d) dancing.
9. _____ After Lindsay's accident, Aunt Meg explained that (a) she was really Lindsay's mother (b) Daniel was really Lindsay's uncle (c) Lindsay's real father died before Lindsay was born (d) she didn't know how to tell Lindsay the truth.
10. _____ At the end of the book, Lindsay (a) had learned to make more friends (b) had decided to go live with Daniel (c) had decided to stay with Meg (d) felt as though she were really home.

Essay: On the back of this paper or on a separate sheet, write a complete paragraph to answer the following.

How was Lindsay's summer job especially good for her, being somewhat of a foreigner to the United States?



Answer Key

Lindsay, Lindsay, Fly Away Home

Worksheet, Chapters 1-10

Matching

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. noisy | 6. persuade |
| 2. sister or brother | 7. kind |
| 3. uncaring | 8. faithfulness |
| 4. regret | 9. strange |
| 5. porch | 10. honest |

True/False

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. false | 6. true |
| 2. false | 7. true |
| 3. true | 8. false |
| 4. true | 9. false |
| 5. true | 10. true |

Lindsay, Lindsay, Fly Away Home

Worksheet, Chapters 11-19

Fill in the Blanks

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| First paragraph: | Second paragraph: |
| bizarre | tranquil |
| authorization | devastating |
| harboring | haggard |
| scowling | devotion |

True/False

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. false | 5. false |
| 2. true | 6. true |
| 3. true | 7. false |
| 4. true | 8. false |

Final Test

Multiple Response

1. b, c
2. a, b, c
3. a, c
4. b, c, d
5. a, b
6. a, c
7. c, d
8. b
9. a, b, c, d
10. a, c, d

Essay (Answers may vary somewhat.)

Lindsay's summer job was good for her because she had a chance to see what rural America was like. She had always been in an urban setting, so her job was especially an eye-opener because she worked in the fields and lived with a farm family. The job was good for Lindsay because, coming from India, she was used to everyone waiting on her. With her field job, Lindsay saw how tough it was to do hard labor. This job was also good for Lindsay because she started to realize that she really missed "home" —not India, but Aunt Meg and the home she had made there. This was one of the first breaks Lindsay made with her Indian ties.

Extension Activities

Lindsay, Lindsay, Fly Away Home

Resources

1. Corn detasseling is indeed a summer job for many teenagers in the midwestern United States. The explanations in the book are fairly good, but if you live in Illinois (where the book is probably set) or any of the other corn states, try to find a resource person to come to your class and talk about this. It's a fascinating process to see, although the job is very hard and tiring.
2. Another book that is now a classic is *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. In this book, we see the same kind of situation: a girl having to leave India and go to live in another place, against her will. Although the time period is different from *Lindsay, Lindsay, Fly Away Home* and there are other differences as well, the remarks about and memories of India are similar. Although *The Secret Garden* is usually for ages 9–12, it is a beautiful book, and almost anyone could enjoy reading it.

Optional Student Assignments

1. Throughout the book, we read the letters of Rajee. Although we heard about what Lindsay was going to write to him, we never saw her letters. Become Lindsay for a moment and write the letter to Rajee *after* he told her he was going to marry someone else. Reread the letter in Chapter 13 to help you reply.
2. Write in play form the conversation Daniel and Meg must have had in order for Daniel to agree to send Lindsay to America. This conversation would have taken place before the book began. With a classmate, present the play to your class (as though it is a phone conversation) either as a Reader's Theater presentation or a drama.
3. Lindsay mentioned the Taj Mahal several times. Look up some additional information on the Taj Mahal and present your findings to the class. Try to find some pictures of the tomb (a travel agency might even have a large poster they could lend or give to you).
4. Lindsay had trouble understanding American slang. Make a list of at least 20 sayings that today's teenagers use that might give Lindsay trouble if she came to your school.
5. If you have a schoolmate who has recently moved here from another country, interview that student. Find out what is hardest about moving to an American town or city, and find out what the student likes best about America. Really try to find out the probthe student had when she or he came to your school.

Lindsay, Lindsay, Fly Away Home (continued)

Additional Books by Stella Pevsner

And You Give Me a Pain, Elaine (Archway)
Cute Is a Four Letter Word (Archway)
I'll Always Remember You . . . Maybe (Archway)
Me, My Goat, & My Sister's Wedding (Houghton Mifflin)
A Smart Kid Like You (Scholastic)