

Best Young Adult Novels

VOCABULARY,
ACTIVITIES,
AND TESTS

Mary Rupe
Patricia Tarry-Stevens



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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.

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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.

Using the Book Units

Each book unit has the following:

- A Synopsis/Vocabulary page.
- A Student Worksheet for the first half of the book.
- A Student Worksheet for the second half of the book.
- A Final Test for students.
- Answer Keys for worksheets.
- Extension Activities for teachers and students.

Each book can be used in one of three ways: 1) teacher-guided study for an entire class; 2) independent study — i.e., book report; 3) in-depth committee, group, or individual study.

For your ease of usage, we point out the following features of the units.

1. If you will teach to an entire class, you can examine vocabulary in depth, discussing meanings in context. Additional worksheets may be desirable, depending on your own students' mastery. We have found that mere dictionary definitions seem ambiguous to students when five different definitions are listed. Our particular method allows students to keep a vocabulary notebook. We present vocabulary words on the board, and a class definition is discussed and recorded. Each student uses her or his vocabulary notes for worksheets, thereby ensuring better note-taking and organizational skills among students.
2. If a student reads the book independently — as a book report, for example — the final test would be sufficient to test comprehension. The final tests contain no vocabulary work.
3. You can assign a book to students independently or for group work. However, if you are not leading them through the vocabulary or chapters, students *must have* a copy of the vocabulary page for their own personal use.

On the worksheets, we have used a variety of question types. Multiple response questions are sometimes new to students and teachers. In these kinds of questions, students choose *as many answers as are needed* in order to complete the statement correctly. Usually there is more than one correct answer; sometimes as many as all four are correct. Very seldom do the multiple response questions have only one right answer. Caution students not to confuse these kinds of questions with the standard multiple choice questions, which are also used in the units.

With true/false and many of our character identification sections, students are asked to *write out* “true” or “false” or a character’s name. Too many times teachers cannot read a *t* or *f*. Writing out the answer also demands that students be more precise with their decisions.

In fill in the blanks/vocabulary sections, sometimes a book has a great deal of vocabulary to be covered. In these cases, a chapter number is given in parentheses before the blank to assist students in a proper choice. Some books, however, have a limited amount of vocabulary, and the word choice is fairly obvious without a chapter number. So a chapter number is not given in these cases. Also, word choices must make sense within the context of the story. Therefore, any adjective will not be correct just because an adjective is needed. The word students choose must be narrowed down from the list, so that students show their understanding of both the book and the vocabulary word.

Reading and Interest Levels

Reading and interest levels are a subjective matter. What may interest one student will be a complete turn-off to another. Some students reading at a fourth grade reading level will pick up a book at a much higher reading level and thoroughly enjoy it, if the motivation is there.

For your better understanding of our book units, we have assigned a general reading/interest level to each of the books. Basically, this is what the categories mean:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>EASY LEVEL</i> - | Easy vocabulary
and/or
Easy concept for most young people |
| <i>MEDIUM LEVEL</i> - | Easy/Medium vocabulary
and/or
Concept/story premise may be
difficult for some |
| <i>DIFFICULT LEVEL</i> - | Difficult/a lot of vocabulary
and/or
A difficult concept for most students |

Again, don’t dismiss a book because we have labeled it “Difficult.” We are only saying that the book may have a great deal of vocabulary for students to work with, or it may present a difficult concept. Sometimes the book may be set in a locale that is difficult for your students to identify with; if your students will relate easily to the locale and concept, then the book will not be on the difficult level for them. It is very hard to assign levels for young adult novels. The majority of young adult books, just by nature of being for young adults, never reach the difficulty level of *Moby Dick* or *Beowulf*.

The most obvious uses for this teaching anthology are in language arts, English, and reading classrooms. However, teachers have included these young adult books in social

studies, history, special education, and even parenting classes. Although we taught many of these books at the high school level, almost all of them are also appropriate for the middle school levels.

Ultimately, you will determine the use of these book units. Whether you use them just for comprehension checks for individual students or as the stepping stone for a major study unit lasting three or four weeks, we hope that the units will benefit both you and your students.

Deathwatch

by Robb White

Synopsis:

Madec and Ben are teamed together for a simple hunting trip. They would not have been together under any other circumstances: Madec is a rich, conniving businessman from California; Ben is a college-bound youth brought up to respect the desert he lives in. What starts out as a simple hunting trip turns into a life-or-death struggle as Madec becomes a psychotic killer intent on destroying Ben and the truth. (Dell)

Vocabulary:

CHAPTER 1

1. stalking
2. wary
3. geologist
4. prone
5. forlorn
6. ewe
7. congealing
8. fissure

CHAPTER 2

1. kin
2. sorrow
3. velocity
4. derelict

CHAPTER 3

1. chiding
2. isolated
3. biased
4. intent
5. contingency
6. testimony
7. apprehension
8. perjure
9. concealment
10. arroyo

CHAPTER 4

1. provoke
2. contemplate
3. scurrying

4. lee

5. collateral
6. crevice
7. sidewinder
8. formidable

CHAPTER 5

1. foreboding
2. implements
3. vertical
4. lacerated
5. ricocheting
6. ozone
7. summit
8. butte
9. tenacious
10. futile
11. vain
12. reconciliation

CHAPTER 6

1. immense
2. pinnacle
3. circumference
4. saguaro
5. sullen
6. ominous

CHAPTER 7

1. implacable
2. flaw
3. lassitude

4. pendulum

5. hazardous
6. breccia

CHAPTER 8

1. abraded
2. depressions
3. piton
4. barren
5. trending

CHAPTER 9

1. excruciating
2. dehydration
3. gnawing
4. intensity
5. debris
6. lethal
7. trajectory
8. covey

CHAPTER 10

1. escarpment

CHAPTER 11

1. civilian
2. vivid
3. vigor
4. dormant

CHAPTER 12

1. scabbard

2. analyze

3. originate

CHAPTER 13

1. compress
2. preliminary
3. rations
4. fire retardant
5. methodical
6. pillar
7. clambering

CHAPTER 14

1. instantaneous
2. tendons
3. rotor
4. nauseating
5. shrewd
6. gangrene
7. petty

CHAPTER 15

1. speculation
2. hideous
3. negligible
4. remote
5. impounded
6. waiver

CHAPTER 16

1. aggravation
2. bloated

3. ballistics

4. telescopic

CHAPTER 17

1. haughtiness
2. intimidated
3. contempt
4. incriminate
5. alibi
6. calibers
7. autopsy
8. arrogant
9. collusion



Name: _____

Date: _____

Deathwatch — Chapters 1-18

Character Identification: Write in *Ben*, *Madec*, or *Old Man* in the blanks next to each description of that character.

1. _____ He was young, but he knew the desert well.
2. _____ He said that he saw “horns” before he shot.
3. _____ He had received a permit to hunt a bighorn.
4. _____ He was accidentally killed.
5. _____ He made shoes out of woodpecker nests.
6. _____ He was being paid well to be a desert guide.
7. _____ He made certain that Ben could get no water.
8. _____ He had the more expensive gun.
9. _____ He looked at the shot in his arm and felt no pain.
10. _____ He lived in the desert, all alone.
11. _____ He wanted to be a geologist some day.
12. _____ At the beginning, he tried to make a deal with Ben.
13. _____ He shot the old man twice.
14. _____ He owned the Hornet.
15. _____ He was used to getting his own way.

Fill in the Blanks: Fill in the blanks with appropriate words taken from the vocabulary list for the chapters indicated in parentheses.

1. Ben and Madec had been out in the desert for three days (1) _____ bighorn sheep.
2. Even though it would be (7) _____, Ben knew he had to climb the (5) _____.
3. Madec thought that in a court of law, Ben would be (3) _____ in his testimony.
4. The old man looked like some (2) _____, someone who would have no (2) _____.



Name: _____

Date: _____

Deathwatch — Chapters 9-17

Word Substitution: Rewrite this paragraph using vocabulary words from Chapters 9-17 with the same meanings as the underlined words and phrases.

One of the first signs of severe thirst is a feeling of being tired. Then comes the very painful itching. Finally, the hallucinations start, which can be very intense. The person will not be able to figure out any situation and will suffer from horrible illusions.

Rewrite here: _____

Short Answer: Use complete sentences to answer these questions.

1. What is a saguaro, and how did it help Ben?
2. What were some of Ben's injuries? Name at least three.
3. What were some of Madec's injuries?
4. How did Ben become the attacker instead of the attacked?
5. What does the word *covey* refer to in this book, and how did a covey save Ben's life?



Final Test *Deathwatch*

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

1. _____ Ben's feet were swollen and abraded from the rocks and hot sand.
2. _____ As soon as Madec saw the fire around his camp, he started shooting at Ben.
3. _____ Not one of the people at the sheriff's office was really an expert in ballistics.
4. _____ Everyone in the town called the new doctor at the health center the "boy genius."
5. _____ Ben and Strick had known each other since high school.
6. _____ Dr. Saunders was well liked by the townspeople.
7. _____ The doctor said that Ben would probably lose a leg because of the gangrene.
8. _____ Ben was very proud of his powerful .358 Mauser.
9. _____ The old prospector who was killed was probably also hunting bighorn sheep.
10. _____ Ben ended up eating raw birds in order to survive.

Multiple Choice: Choose the one best answer to each of the following. Write the letter of that choice in the blank.

1. _____ Ben went with Madec on the hunting trip because (a) he liked Madec (b) his uncle asked him to do it as a favor (c) he was getting paid very well (d) he wanted to see bighorn sheep for the first time.
2. _____ Madec could best be described by which group of words? (a) shrewd, selfish, mean (b) loving, friendly, outgoing (c) old, forgetful, harmless (d) creative, shy, scared
3. _____ What did Ben want to be some day?
(a) veterinarian (b) doctor (c) geologist (d) computer expert
4. _____ About how many days, in total, were Ben and Madec out in the desert? (a) 1 (b) 2 (c) 6 (d) 20
5. _____ Without water, how long can a person live? (a) about 1 hour (b) about 4 hours (c) about 48 hours (d) about a week
6. _____ What is the main symptom of dying of thirst? (a) a heart attack (b) coughing (c) blistered feet (d) dehydration
7. _____ For what did Ben use the birds' nests and sotol leaves? (a) shoes (b) a hat (c) a coat (d) food
8. _____ Where did Ben find the slingshot? (a) on the butte (b) at the prospector's camp (c) in the jeep (d) buried under the sand
9. _____ Who said, "I just want to report an accident"? (a) Ben (b) Madec (c) Emma, the nurse (d) Strick
10. _____ Whose "story" backed up exactly what Ben was trying to tell everyone? (a) Emma, the nurse (b) Strick (c) Ben's uncle (d) Dr. Saunders



Answer Key

Deathwatch

Worksheet, Chapters 1-8

Character Identification

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. Ben | 9. Ben |
| 2. Madec | 10. Old Man |
| 3. Madec | 11. Ben |
| 4. Old Man | 12. Madec |
| 5. Ben | 13. Madec |
| 6. Ben | 14. Ben |
| 7. Madec | 15. Madec |
| 8. Madec | |

Fill in the Blanks

1. stalking
2. hazardous
butte
3. biased
4. derelict
kin

Deathwatch

Worksheet, Chapters 9-17

Word Substitution

One of the first signs of dehydration is a feeling of being tired. Then comes the excruciating itching. Finally, the hallucinations start, which can be very vivid. The person will not be able to analyze any situation and will suffer from hideous illusions.

Short Answer

1. A saguaro is a huge cactus found in parts of the southwestern United States. Woodpeckers make their nests in these plants, and that was what saved Ben's feet. He used the deserted nests and sotol leaves to make a kind of shoe so he could continue to walk.
2. Ben had cut and bruised almost all parts of his body. Because he was naked, he had blistering from the sun. He was shot in the arm by Madec.
3. All of Madec's wounds were caused by Ben's buckshot. Specifically, Madec's hand and wrist were hit hard, and his kneecap was broken. Ben thought Madec's right hand was probably broken, too.

Deathwatch (continued)

4. Ben dug a hole in the sand, hid there, and waited until Madec went by on his way to the butte. He then set Madec's camp on fire, which caused Madec to run right into Ben's attack plan.
5. A covey is a group of birds. When Ben climbed the butte he found a small pond on the top. Then a covey of quail came in to drink and he shot some of them. In this way, he finally got some food and, with it, some strength.

Final Test

True/False

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

Multiple Choice

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

Extension Activities

Deathwatch

Resources

1. Most school libraries have excellent filmstrips or films about the desert. If your school is located in a nondesert locale, this type of resource should almost be required as students read this book. In order to understand the book fully, a student should be able to picture mentally a saguaro, a butte, an arroyo, and an escarpment.
2. A bulletin board made up of desert sites could also be beneficial to students. Good desert pictures can be found in some issues of *National Geographic* and *Arizona Highways*.
3. The movie *Savages* follows the book somewhat. Made for television, the movie stars Andy Griffith and Sam Bottoms. This film is 78 minutes long and was made in 1974.

Optional Student Assignments

1. Have a group of students rewrite Chapter 16 as a play and then present it to the class as a Reader's Theater.
2. At the end of the book, lead a discussion on how events would have changed if the old prospector had been wounded but was still alive. Would Madec have taken the old man into town immediately for medical attention, or would he have devised some way to let the man die anyway? Will Madec ever try to get revenge on Ben?
3. Other books that deal with the same theme of person versus person in a struggle for life are:

The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier

The Dangling Witness by Jay Bennett

**The Elephant Tree* by Harriet Luger

**Snow Bound* by Harry Mazer

Lord of the Flies by William Golding

***Z for Zachariah* by Robert C. O'Brien

*Covered in Volume II of this series.

**Covered in this volume.