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**Annotated Bibliography Rationale**

Young adult literature holds the power to change teens' lives by depicting their stories in imaginative ways. Books that grapple with themes of friendships/ relationships, identity, mental health, coming of age, resilience, etc leave a lasting impact on young adults. For a book to do this, it must touch the reader in such a way that she feels seen or feels a real connection with the protagonist even if the protagonist differs from her. Books about war contain protagonists that not all teens will relate to on the surface level but as they get to know the characters, they make connections to themselves and the world around them. For example, it, unfortunately, seems as if war will live on so long as humans live on, and no matter where one lives, war on one side of the world will have an effect on people living on the other side of the world; reading books about war can assist young adults in understanding that type of situations and finding coping mechanisms. I chose to do my annotated bibliography on young adult books set during wartime. These books fall under “Chapter Seven: Books about Courage and Survival” from Mary Warner’s book, *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story.* These books portray the stories of individuals who are trapped in the middle of a war. They muster the courage to fight for their lives, both figuratively and literally. It’s important that teens are exposed to these books because they offer hope, acceptance, and resilience during situations of uncertainty and confusion.

All the books I chose have to do with real wars that occurred in different countries around the world. Young adult books that have to do with real wars foster empathy and understanding for the experiences of soldiers, civilians, and families affected. By showcasing the human experiences during times of conflict, the books delve into the struggles and sacrifices people had to face. Young adults follow the protagonists in their journeys through unsettling historical events that provide a space for emotional exploration and catharsis, helping teens process emotions related to conflict and loss. On the upside, these books also grant a sense of endurance and acknowledgment of a similar situation.

As previously mentioned, war is an evergrowing dilemma and sometimes we are exposed to so much graphic information about it that it can desensitize us to it all. After viewing and reading news outlets about wars and the atrocities that come with them, young adults can feel overwhelmed and not know how to react. When they receive this information in the form of a book, they’re able to take a deeper view of the different aspects of war. These books can help teens slow down and reflect on how the book might parallel their situation. Being able to relate past events to current global challenges can cultivate discussions about peace and conflict resolution.

Young adult books set during wartime can leave an everlasting impact on teens because it takes them on the journey of the protagonist and places them in the midst of it all. Young adults have a means of escaping the intense conversations about current affairs and decelerating them so that they can have time to truly empathize and respond with a settled mind. Being exposed to real stories about teens who have gone through similar and/or worse situations offers a sense of hope and courage for them to take action for the sake of their future.

**Annotated Bibliography: Young Adult Books about War**

***The Book Thief*** by Markus Zusak

Read in middle school

Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief*. Picador/Pan Macmillan Australia, 2019.

*The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak follows a young girl, Liesel, as she’s sent to live with foster parents, the Hubermanns, and experiences life in Nazi Germany during World War II. In the midst of chaos, Liesel finds comfort in books, stealing them and sharing them with neighbors and the Jewish man, Max, hiding in her basement. By the end of the book, Max and Liesel survive the war although everyone on Liesel’s block doesn’t.

Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief* best displays Exeter Qualities six (themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns) and seven (themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues). The book exposes readers to the dismal reality of war and allows opportunities for them to find solace in other things like Liesel does with books. This book furthers knowledge of World War II by exposing the everyday wrongdoings of Nazi soldiers and acknowledging that innocent people in Germany suffered and died due to living under the Nazi regime.

***Maus*** by Art Spiegelman

Read in high school

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. Pantheon Books, 1992.

*Maus* by Art Spiegelman is a graphic novel memoir detailing Art Spiegelman’s father, Vladek Spiegelman’s experience during the Holocaust. Spiegelman reveals the heinous circumstances his father and mother had to go through while battling to survive the Holocaust. Simultaneously the novel highlights the complexities of intergenerational relationships shaped by trauma.

Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* presents Exeter Qualities one (imaginative and well-structured plots going beyond simple chronologies to include time shifts and differing perspectives), four (characters who go beyond typical experiences so that readers can use the fictional experiences to learn and develop in their own lives), and six (themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns). The book offers insight into the challenges and disparities that a son of Holocaust survivors endure which not many books delve into. It enhances the understanding of the resilience Jews had as they relentlessly adopted survival strategies amid extreme conditions. Additionally, *Maus* provides awareness about the ongoing impact on survivors of war and their affected family dynamics.

***Night*** by by Elie Wiesel

Read in high school

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. Thorndike Press, a Part of Gale, a Cengage Company, 2020.

Elie Wiesel’s *Night* delves into his own journey, as a teenager, through the Holocaust and his disconnection with his religion due to the unbearable circumstances he finds himself in. Wiesel outlines his ordeal and commitment to care for his father while being uncertain of their survival. The memoir reflects on the dehumanization of individuals during the Holocaust and the lasting impact it had on Wiesel’s life.

*Night* by Elie Wiesel exhibits Exeter Qualities six (themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns) and seven (themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues). The memoir offers comprehension of individuals’ relationship with religion during times of harrowing cruelty. It bolsters awareness of the unimaginable sufferings Wiesel experienced as a teenager watching babies and adults be deplorably murdered and the indelible effect the experiences had on him. This book strengthens knowledge about the Holocaust because it gives readers a first-hand account of the degradation endured by Jews and the loss of innocence and faith that many faced during this time.

***The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*** *by John Boyne*

Read in high school

Boyne, John. *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2009.

John Boyne’s *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* unveils the fictional story of nine-year-old Bruno as he innocently befriends a Jewish boy named Shmuel who lives on the other side of a fence that separates their worlds. Bruno is a German boy who is unaware of the abhorrent reality that is faced by the Jews living on the other side of the fence which is why he agrees to cross over to help Shmuel find his father, not knowing he would never return to this family. The story grapples with themes of innocence, family relationships, and nationalism as it gives insight into Bruno’s father’s internal struggle caused by his position as commanding officer.

*The Boy in the Striped Pajamas by John Boyne* features Exeter Qualities five (lively, varied, and imaginative language that is grammatically correct while being neither patronizing and simplistic nor unnecessarily confusing through lexical density or complexity) and six (themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns). Since the story is narrated by Bruno, the reader is exposed to a simple and pure form of writing that illustrates the contrast between Bruno’s sheltered life and Shmuel’s tragic reality in the concentration camp. The book presents ethical and moral questions dealing with the consequences that war could have on innocent children. It also sheds light on how ordinary Germans might have been shielded from the horror of the Holocaust due to propaganda and censorship.

***The Fruit of the Drunken Tree***by Ingrid Rojas Contreras

Read in college

Rojas Contreras, Ingrid. *Fruit of the Drunken Tree: A Novel*. Thorndike Press, 2019.

Ingrid Rojas Contreras’ *The Fruit of the Drunken Tree* is a novel set in 1980s and 90s Colombia during the Colombian drug war and Pablo Escobar’s reign. The story is interchangeably narrated by seven-year-old Chula and her maid, thirteen-year-old Petrona as their lives become intertwined when Petrona is drawn into the world of guerilla forces and puts Chula’s family and herself at risk. The novel explores themes of social class disparity, the impact of political conflict on regular people, and the strength found in unexpected connections.

*The Fruit of the Drunken Tree* by Ingrid Rojas Contreras depicts Exeter Qualities one (imaginative and well-structured plots going beyond simple chronologies to include time shifts and differing perspectives), two (exciting plots that include secrecy, surprise, and tension brought about through narrative hooks and a fast pace), four (characters who go beyond typical experiences so that readers can use the fictional experiences to learn and develop in their own lives), and six (themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns). The novel showcases the horrors of life during Escobar’s reign from the perspective of a child and teen from different socio-economic backgrounds which allows young adults to empathize with characters from different walks of life. It advances the recognition of the disparities faced by both wealthy and poor families in the midst of the Colombian drug war. Additionally, it offers coping mechanisms for individuals dealing with fear, trauma, and constant threat of danger.

***I Am Malala***by Malala Yousafzai

New read

Yousafzai, Malala, and Christina Lamb. *I Am Malala*. Mindbooks, 2015.

*I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai is an autobiography that takes us through recent history of Pakistan where the Taliban took over Swat Valley and forced civilians to follow their interpretation of Islamic religion. It details Yousafzai’s extraordinary account of how she, as a teenager, stood up to the Taliban for girls’ rights to education and was shot in the face because of it. Yousafzai goes from Pakistan to England as she’s rushed to hospitals to save her life while at the same time gaining global fame for her fearlessness.

Malala Yousafzai’s *I Am Malala* demonstrates Exeter Qualities three (characters who reflect experiences of teen readers, something that is not found in much of the literary canon, especially when it comes to strong female protagonists), four (characters who go beyond typical experiences so that readers can use the fictional experiences to learn and develop in their own lives), and six (themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns). This is Yousafzai’s own account of what it was like growing up with the gift of education and the pain it caused her when she was forced to stop going which showcases a true story of a young woman’s determination to gain back her rights. Through her story, young adults gain a greater understanding of what life was like for civilians living under strict rules and the challenges they faced in Taliban-controlled regions.

***Sophia’s War: A Tale of the Revolution*** by Avi

New read

Avi. *Sophia’s War: A Tale of the Revolution*. Scholastic, 2014.

*Sophia’s War: A Tale of the Revolution* by Avi is a fictional story based on true events from the Revolutionary War in New York that follows Sophia’s desperation to stop traitors from jeopardizing the Americans in the war. Sophia is a preteen when she singlehandedly frees her soldier brother from a British prison and then goes on to become a teen spy who infiltrates the British army. This story deals with themes of patriotism, self-discovery, and resilience as Sophia goes against all odds to uncover the truth behind the traitors and does everything in her power to stop them.

Avi’s *Sophia’s War: A Tale of the Revolution* illustrated Exeter Qualities two (exciting plots that include secrecy, surprise, and tension brought about through narrative hooks and a fast pace), three (characters who reflect experiences of teen readers, something that is not found in much of the literary canon, especially when it comes to strong female protagonists), six (themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns), and seven (themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues). This is a valuable read for young adults because they can relate to Sophia’s journey of self-discovery and finding inner strength, while being captivated by the plot and suspense of the story. The story depicts real historical realism as it goes into detail about the atmosphere in New York during this time and portrays the life of everyday citizens.

***A Land of Permanent Goodbyes*** by Atia Abawi

New read

Abawi, Atia. *Land of Permanent Goodbyes*. Penguin Putnam Inc, 2019.

Atia Abwi’s *A Land of Permanent Goodbyes* is a fictional story about Tareq, a teenage boy, and his family’s struggle to find refuge in a new place away from the war in their homeland of Syria. After losing many family members to a bomb strike on their apartment, the remaining family members, Tareq, his father, and his little sister go through Turkey and Greece on their way to Europe in search of safety. The story navigates through the complexities of the Syrian civil war and the refugee crisis faced by individuals fleeing conflict while shedding light on the struggle for survival.

*A Land of Permanent Goodbyes* by Atia Abawi exposes Exeter Qualities four (characters who go beyond typical experiences so that readers can use the fictional experiences to learn and develop in their own lives), and six (themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns). Young adults broaden their scope of understanding refugees and the difficult choices and suffering they undergo in order to survive in places where they’re not wanted. The story furthers knowledge about the influence of extremist groups like Daesh by touching on the violence, destruction, and displacement they brought to Syria.

***Squire*** by Nadia Shammas and Sara Alfageeh

New read

Alfageeh, Sara, and Nadia Shammas. *Squire*. Quill Tree Books, Harper Alley, Imprints of HarperCollins Publishers, 2022.

*Squire* by Nadia Shammas and Sara Alfageeh is a fictional comic novel that depicts the story of Aiza, a teenage girl, as she enters a training camp to become a knight while hiding her second-class citizenship. Aiza realizes that the camp isn’t what she expected and she’s soon caught in the middle of deadly political schemes that endanger her and the other trainees. The story portrays themes of war and oppression as Aiza, being part of the Ornu people, is offered few resources and considered an outsider in Bayt-Sajji.

Nadia Shammas and Sara Alfageeh’s *Squire* projects Exeter Qualities two (exciting plots that include secrecy, surprise, and tension brought about through narrative hooks and a fast pace) and seven (themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues). The story is an alternate history of the Middle East and although it’s not based on any real historical events, it can be understood by anyone who’s part of a marginalized group that knows how it feels to be excluded from the greater good of the people. The illustrations also play a valuable role in augmenting the text as it represents Aiza as smaller or larger within a panel so that readers can get a sense of Aiza’s physical and emotional vulnerability.

***Displacement*** by Kiku Hughes

New read

Hughes, Kiku. *Displacement*. First Second, 2020.

*Displacement* by Kiku Hughes is a fictional comic novel that takes us on, teenage, Kiku’s journey as she travels to San Francisco, where her grandmother used to live, and finds herself being displaced into the 1940s, experiencing life in Japanese internment camps alongside her teenage grandmother. She experiences the challenges and injustices endured by Japanese Americans during World War II. Through vivid artwork, Hughes sheds light on the intergenerational impact that came from racist hysteria during this time.

Kiku Hughes’ *Displacement* unveils Exeter Qualities one (imaginative and well-structured plots going beyond simple chronologies to include time shifts and differing perspectives), three (characters who reflect experiences of teen readers, something that is not found in much of the literary canon, especially when it comes to strong female protagonists), six (themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns), and seven (themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues). Because the narrator is a teenager who is magically transported to the past and makes relevant connections to her present, it grants young adults the knowledge to make these connections in their lives as well. Kiku realizes that there is so much she didn’t learn in school about the Japanese internment camps which can make teens question how much of history is left out in their classes. The story broadens perspective on Japanese internment camps during World War II by taking a deep view into the everyday lives of Japanese people living in them and how these empotionak scars are carrried by their descendants.

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