

2001

Best Books for Young Adults: Are Young Adults Reading Them?

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Abstract

The major aim of this research was to determine whether or not young adults are reading books from recommended reading lists. The study was conducted on a sample of 801 students in grades six through twelve who were administered a questionnaire survey designed to determine what young adults are reading and why they read. Overall, the data was quite consistent with similar studies that have been done. This study found that females read more than males and usually read because they want to while males read because they have to. Both genders prefer to read fiction over nonfiction. A small percentage of students read 10% (five books) or more than 10% of the books on the recommended reading lists. More females than males read one or more books on the recommended reading lists. Middle school students read more titles from the lists than senior high school students. Findings suggest that the majority of young adults are not reading books on recommended reading lists.

**Best Books for Young Adults:
Are Young Adults Reading Them?**

A Graduate Research Paper

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts**

to the

Division of School Library Media Studies

Department of Curriculum & Instruction

College of Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Kathryn J. Bratland Kellner

August 10, 2001

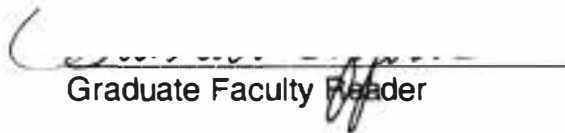
This Research Paper by: Kathryn J. Bratland Kellner

Titled: Best Books for Young Adults: Are Young Adults Reading them?

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

The major aim of this research was to determine whether or not young adults are reading books from recommended reading lists. The study was conducted on a sample of 801 students in grades six through twelve who were administered a questionnaire survey designed to determine what young adults are reading and why they read. Overall, the data was quite consistent with similar studies that have been done. This study found that females read more than males and usually read because they want to while males read because they have to. Both genders prefer to read fiction over nonfiction. A small percentage of students read 10% (five books) or more than 10% of the books on the recommended reading lists. More females than males read one or more books on the recommended reading lists. Middle school students read more titles from the lists than senior high school students. Findings suggest that the majority of young adults are not reading books on recommended reading lists.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Teachers, librarians, parents, and other adults have a definite opinion about what young adults should read. Young adults may or may not agree with these opinions. Lists of recommended books are published annually. These lists are not prepared by young adults. This research will investigate whether young adults are reading the books recommended for them by library organizations.

Young adult fiction and young adult literature are fairly new terms that began to be used about the time of the publication of The Outsiders (Hinton, 1967). *Young adults* used to mean the age group from 21 to 25; when the voting age changed from 21 to 18 the term shifted from its literal meaning to mean *pre* adult. Librarians recognized teenagers as a distinct audience before publishers did as the label YA (young adults) originated as a librarian's term. While teenagers could not satisfy their curiosity about sex and other topics in the public library years ago, they could read about themselves in the books for older children or in adult books (Gottlieb, 1984).

Teenagers want to be called young adults, to be part of the adult world, and have privileges that adults have. The teen years are formative years and what adolescents read in these years is vital. Teens are going through adolescence, that phase of life when they are trying to find themselves. They search among their peers and in books. Young adult fiction books take adolescents' concerns seriously (Fuchs, 1987).

Some students as well as their parents think that some books are good literature and others are just plain reading. Literature, according to this view, is composed of books that nobody would pick up and read voluntarily. They are assigned in English class, are too long or boring, have too much flowery

language, and too many difficult words. Authors such as Shakespeare, Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Dickens, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and many others are included in this category (Fuchs, 1987).

Characteristics of Young Adult Literature

Young adult literature can include a variety of reading materials and be defined in different ways. G. Robert Carlson (as cited in Reed, 1988) defines young adult literature (also called adolescent or juvenile literature) as literature read by young adults. This could include books written specifically for adolescents as well as for children, adults, and general audiences (Reed, 1988). Holland (1991) feels that adolescent literature is whatever any adolescent happens to be reading at any time. What they are reading depends on the age, sex, and taste of the adolescent. There is a difference between the young adult literature found in the bookstore and that found in public libraries. Books found in the bookstore are of a much lower quality and aimed at younger readers (Jones, 1998).

Young adult literature has changed through the years. Topics once considered taboo such as sex, abortion, abuse, homosexuality, rape, drugs, and alcohol are important to the plots in some contemporary books. Dialogue sometimes contains profanity. The characters include teenagers who are real people with real problems. Young adult books come in a variety of genres. These include realistic fiction or problem books, science fiction which is fiction with a scientific bent, teenage romance, the world of the occult, sports stories, biographies, nonfiction or information books, mystery and crime, and others. (Fuchs, 1987; Teens' Favorite..., 1992).

Several criteria should be considered when choosing books for young

adults according to Reed (1988). There should be a limited number of well developed characters and a simple, fast moving plot with realistic problems and conflicts. The format should have easy to read text, short chapters, and an adult appearance with more white space than adult books. The themes should challenge young readers to question and think but avoid talking down to readers or preaching. The writing style should use light, simple, lively language, have limited description, and be good honest writing by an author who cares about adolescents (Reed, 1988). Some common themes found in adolescent novels include alienation, friendship, family, death, mental illness, sex, drugs, and alcohol (Hipple, 1992).

Kelly (1992) says gender plays a role in what young adults choose to read. Boys want the main character to be male while girls will read books with either gender playing the major role. Boys prefer a large cast of characters in an action packed plot, taking place over a long period of time, and lots of dialogue and description of action. Girls like few characters in a more direct plot, taking place in a specific locale (a school or town, covering a certain period of time (a summer or a year), and descriptions of inner thoughts and emotional reactions. Girls and women will read and enjoy "masculine" books, but boys and men rarely enjoy a "feminine" one (Kelly, 1992). Many teens, particularly boys, prefer nonfiction to fiction (Reed, 1988).

Reed (1988) believes the peak of reading interest occurs around age 12 for many young adults. By then they can read comfortably a wide range of materials on a variety of reading levels. By late junior high or early senior high school teenagers can read independently and are willing to exert some effort on reading. Adolescents can use books to establish their own identity. It is

important for early adolescents to see themselves in the characters, plots, and themes of the books they read. If they find stories unbelievable, characters unrealistic, or themes obscure they will call them “boring” or “dumb” and stop reading. If they continue reading it will probably be only because the book is required. The danger here is that teenagers may decide that reading is a waste of time. Late adolescents (between ages 15 and 18) who read for pleasure are on the road to mature adult reading. (Reed, 1988, 4,5,11).

The review section in VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates), a periodical devoted to articles about work with young adults, divides young adults into three sections: Middle School (grades 6-8), Junior High (grades 7-9), and Senior High (grades 10-12). Reed (1988) also divides them into three groups but gives them different names: Preadolescent (ages 10-13), Early Adolescent (ages 13-15), and Late Adolescent (ages 15-18) (p. 21). The main readers of books marketed to young adults are between the ages of 10 and 14. By the time readers reach high school they have turned to adult fiction or stopped reading altogether (Klein, 1991).

YA literature can also be defined as well-written novels, intended specifically for readers 13 to 18, in hardback format which show up in reviewing sources. That is the literature studied in college English classes and in library schools and put on recommended reading lists, but it may not be primarily what young adults read (Jones, 1998).

Books are selected for a recommended book list because they are in some way outstanding. The reasons may differ. Some books make lists because of originality, others popularity, and others because of literary quality. Just because a book does not make a list does not mean that it is a mediocre

book. Writers of young adult books treat a wide variety of subject matter and themes, including some controversial ideas. They choose protagonists from minority groups as well as the white middle-class majority. The protagonists are fairly young. The quality of the writing varies from poor to excellent, just as it does in writing aimed at all audiences. Young adult literature is worth studying and has something to offer students. It provides enjoyment, satisfaction, and literary quality as well as life, hope, and reality to young people. Teachers and librarians should recommend particular books to students, not because they are classics, but because the student's own personality and interests are considered. Adults in their leadership role must know what, who, and where young adults are and also know the books. Young adult literature is not the whole of literature but an increasingly important part (Donelson and Nilson, 1989).

Best Books for Young Adults Lists

Young adults need to be exposed to quality literature on topics they are interested in or they will choose not to read. Adults who work with young adults and books often prepare lists of books they consider outstanding so that other adults can recommend these books to young people and so that young people can quickly identify books of quality they might like to read. BBYA is one such list compiled by fifteen librarians on the Best Books for Young Adults committee (commonly referred to simply as BBYA) of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) of the American Library Association (ALA). The committee's job is to select "from the year's publications, significant adult and young adult books to annotate the selected titles" (Kollasch, 1991, 68). The list is intended for young adults. A committee member must have read a book to

vote for or against it. A simple majority of eight votes was needed for a book to make the final list. The committee began in 1952. The list's length has increased over the past decade; 1981's list included 50 titles and the 1991 list consisted of 84 titles. Some YA librarians want the list cut to 25 or 40 titles. Although the number of votes for inclusion has been raised from eight to nine, the number of books on the list continues to be above the limit of 25 or 40 suggested to the committee (68-69).

The BBYA list targets two audiences, young adults and the professionals who purchase their reading materials. The list could improve its credibility by addressing teenagers more directly. A policy not to balance the list by genres or age level provides access to readers of all interests and abilities. It also allows the list to be skewed by committee member's strengths and weaknesses. Most years the list contains more fiction than nonfiction titles although the 1988 list was more than half nonfiction. Some titles are classified in libraries as adult books, some juvenile, and others targeted for teenage audiences. Science fiction/fantasy and mystery/horror/suspense genres are often slighted on the list (MacRae, 1989).

Some of the books on the BBYA list are unanimous choices, others miss making the list by one vote. A unanimous selection is not necessarily better than the others. It is difficult for 15 people to come to total agreement on all books but the list they come up with is a good annual collection of books (Broderick, 1989).

Teachers, parents, and literary professionals know that reading should be of vital importance to teens, but find it difficult to convince teens of the benefits. "Young Adult Choices" is a unique book list selected by teens

themselves (Teens' Favorite..., 1992). This list might be helpful to adults encouraging teens to read. Youth participation at YALSA Committee meetings has been an issue. A motion was made to seek an exemption from ALA policy so that young adults could attend Best Books for Young Adults Committee meetings to comment on nominated titles. YALSA has also formed a joint committee with another organization to explore the possibility of a national teenage library association that would be an ALA affiliate (Druse, 1994).

The newest awards that YALSA endorses are the Margaret A. Edwards Award and the Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature. The Margaret A. Edwards Award, established in 1988, honors an author's lifetime achievement for writing books that have been popular over a period of time. Robert Lipsyte is the 2001 Award Winner for The Contender (1967), The Brave (1991), The Chief (1993), and One Fat Summer (1977). The Michael L. Printz Award is named for a Topeka, Kansas school librarian and honors a book that exemplifies excellence in young adult literature. The 2001 Award went to Kit's Wilderness by David Almond. (American Library Association, 2000)

For years studies of the reading interests of teenagers have formed a body of research in the field of young adult literature. Interest studies need to expand beyond what young adults prefer, to what they are actually reading. Young adult literature is not books published by the juvenile division of publishing companies. Many students are reading adult books by the age of 14. The accepted definition of young adult literature is any material, fiction or informational, that young adults read. The analysis of bibliographic references in the field of young adult literature is just beginning (Poe, Samuels, Carter, 1993).

Statement of Problem

Books written specifically for the young adult and selected for recommended lists by librarians may not be the books young adults actually read.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine if young adults are reading books from one of the recommended reading lists.

Research Questions

The following questions will be answered when this study is completed:

1. Are the books chosen by the BBYA (Best Books for Young Adults) committee the books that young adults are choosing to read independently?
2. Does the BBYA list include books written by the favorite authors of young adults?
3. Do young adults read because they want to or because they have to (required for English class)?
4. Do young adults prefer to read fiction or nonfiction?

Hypothesis

1. More than half of the young adults polled will have read five or more books on the Best Books for Young Adults lists.
2. A greater percentage of females will have read one or more books on the Best Books for Young Adults lists than males.
3. Students in grades 6-9 will have read more titles on the lists than students in grades 10-12.

Assumptions

1. An assumption of this study is that students do read books.
2. Another assumption is that the books on the Best Books for Young Adults lists are good reading and have appeal for young readers.
3. Another assumption is that students will respond accurately to a questionnaire.

Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited to the 1997 - 2001 Best Books for Young Adults lists. It will also be limited to young adults between the ages of 12 and 18 (grades 6-12) attending public schools served by the Area Education Agency (AEA) 4 in Northwest Iowa. This study will not consider where young adult readers find books to read.

Definition of Terms

BBYA list - an annual list of books compiled by a committee of the Young Adult Library Services Association consisting of fiction and nonfiction appropriate for young adults ages twelve to eighteen (American Library Association, 2000).

Genre - the term used to refer to different types and categories of literature, e.g. fantasy, historical fiction, informational (Wiseman, 1992).

Theme - The reason the author wrote the story, includes the idea or moral the author wishes to convey (Wiseman, 1992).

Young Adult Literature - literature that is appropriate for ages 12-18, approximately sixth through twelfth grades (Jones, 1998).

Young Adult - for the purposes of this study persons between the ages of 12 and 18.

Significance of the Study

This study will determine if young adults are reading the books on recommended reading lists. Book lists are selected by adults from adult perspectives and usually reflect quality of literature and “appropriateness” of topic. Students, on the other hand, will choose what is exciting and of interest to them. If there is not a match -- if students do not read the books on the recommended lists -- then either the compiling of the lists needs to be revisited or teachers and librarians need to do more to encourage students to read these “better” books. Displays, booktalks, or motivating activities, for example.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this study is to determine if young adults are reading books from one of the recommended reading lists. Research related to this topic generally falls under the categories of literary merit, reading interests, and favorite books.

Literary Merit

Should young adults be assigned to read only books that meet certain criteria of literary merit or only books that interest them? Although literary merit is important, teachers' perceptions of which literary works are appropriate for in-class study and out-of-class assignments may differ from the choices adolescents make when selecting their own reading materials. Although some objectives for teaching adolescent literature relate to students' need to read for enjoyment and pleasure, it is important to include young adult novels that have literary merit. One study measured the literary quality of selected young adult novels. Reed and Gerlach's study (1993) determined the literary merit of most often read novels. Eighty students enrolled in three "Fiction for Adolescent" classes at two mid-Atlantic universities participated in this study. The instrument was a 24-item, 1-4 Likert scale asking how well the novel met each of the criteria. Thirty-two books were chosen for this study because they were appropriate for the adolescent age range, were on a wide range of topics, and represented both well known and unfamiliar adolescent novels. The Newman-Keuls Test of Sources of Effect was used to compile the data (53-54). The Bridge to Terabithia and Are You There, God? It's Me Margaret were rated as high literary merit and The Cat Ate My Gymsuit as medium literary merit for the

junior high school level. No books were rated as low literary merit at this level. At the high school level Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry and The Outsiders were rated high, Smart Girl was medium, and Forever was low (Reed and Gerlach, 1993).

Traw (1993) studied what kinds of books middle schoolers will read when given the freedom to choose. Fifty-five children of middle-class parents enrolled in two sections of eighth grade English at a university laboratory school participated in the study. The students kept lists and reading journals of the books they read. His results found: 1) Thirteen books to be the median number of books read during the school year; 2) students read books in the genres of teen issues, romance, mystery/suspense, supernatural horror, fantasy and science fiction; 3) mostly girls read books in the romance and teen issues genre; 4) fantasy and science fiction were mostly read by boys; 5) girls read two books for every one book read by boys; 6) students read many books of low literary quality. These findings indicate that adolescents read a large amount of low quality literature which might be used as a bridge to higher quality literature (Traw, 1993).

Gallo (1992) studied students' reaction to their assigned readings in order to determine whether students liked such books. He surveyed 3,400 students in grades four through twelve in 50 schools in 37 towns and cities throughout Connecticut. His findings show that 40 percent of the boys and 35 percent of the girls in junior high schools said they seldom or never liked required selections. In senior high schools 41 percent of the boys and 23 percent of the girls said seldom or never. Only one student in five usually or always liked the required reading (Gallo, 1992).

Reading Interests - Gender

Fair (1990) studied what young adults like to read. One thousand one hundred ten females and 741 males between the ages of 14 and 19 responded to her study. The readers surveyed were in individualized reading and English classes in rural, suburban, and urban Iowa, Illinois, and Texas high schools. Her findings show the favorite categories of females to be contemporary realism, mystery, and nonfiction. They are interested in stories of home and school life, romantic love, careers for women, mystery stories, and sentimental fiction. Males preferred nonfiction, mystery, contemporary realism, science fiction, and adventure. Both males and females usually prefer fiction to other types of reading materials. Females were found to read more than males. Another finding of this study was that females often read books with male protagonists but males do not read books with female protagonists. The top three categories that both males and females reported as influencing them when choosing a book were: a friend's recommendation, a favorite author, or a teacher's recommendation (Fair, 1990).

Jones (1992) reviewed several other researchers' reading interest surveys of young adults to determine who, what, how, and why young adults read. His findings showed that girls are the primary YA readers. Periodicals proved to be the primary reading materials for YA's. This preference increases as students become older. Although surveys vary, romance seems to be the popular genre followed by mysteries. Gender and grade level impact how a student reacts to a book (Jones, 1992).

Moffitt and Wartella's (1992) study compared female and male adolescent leisure reading. A survey was sent to 500 students from five high

schools in central Illinois to determine differences between readers and nonreaders. Their findings show that 85% of girls are readers while only 65% of boys are readers (Moffitt and Wartella, 1992).

Favorite Books

Carter, Lowery-Moore, and Samuels' (1993) study discovered three important features about young adults and their reading. Written student responses from the winning ballots in the 1987 and 1988 Young Adults' Choices program were used to evaluate young adult preferences. One thousand one hundred sixty-three responses were coded from the 1987 pool and 1,204 from the 1988 pool. By selecting their own materials these adolescents discovered, read, and enjoyed many fine books. When discussing favored books they were able to focus on distinct elements and make connections to their own lives. Their interactions with the literature were primarily positive experiences that they wanted to share. Although they lacked sophistication and an extensive reading background, they recognized the qualities of a book that make it outstanding (Carter, Lowery-Moore, and Samuels, 1993).

Summary

The findings were similar in all of these studies. Jones (1992) and Fair (1990) found that more girls read than boys. It also appears that girls prefer fiction while boys prefer nonfiction (Jones, 1992). Gallo (1982) found that less than half of the students, both boys and girls, seldom or never liked literature that was required reading. Age or grade level, gender, and interests determine what young adults read. Many young adults choose low quality literature which might lead them to higher quality reading in the future (Traw, 1993).

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine if young adults are reading books from a recommended reading list, specifically the “Best Books for Young Adults List,” which is selected annually by a committee of the Young Adult Library Services of the American Library Association. A survey questionnaire methodology was used for the study. The researcher gathered data by asking questions on a questionnaire and then analyzed the answers to the questions. A random sample of schools served by AEA (Area Education Agency) 4 in Northwest Iowa was used to determine whether the books on this list are being read.

The population for a survey research methodology must be qualified to answer the research questions. The survey was sent to classroom, reading, and English teachers to administer to their students to determine if the students are reading books on the BBYA lists.

Population

The population surveyed in this study included students in grades six through twelve attending public schools served by AEA 4 in Northwest Iowa. Five school districts were randomly selected to receive surveys.

Instrumentation

A survey questionnaire was developed based on previous research and on the research questions and hypotheses. The purpose of the instrument was to gather information on whether young adults are reading specific books from the BBYA lists. The survey included questions regarding what young adults are reading and why they read. It listed the top ten books from “Best Books for

Young Adults” lists for the years 1997 through 2001 and asked students to put an “X” in front of the books they had read. Appendix A is the survey instrument that was used.

Procedures

The first step in the process was to determine the school districts to be included in the survey population. The name of each public school district in the *AEA 4 Educational Directory* was placed in a container and the names of five districts were drawn. All schools in the five districts which house grades six through twelve were selected to receive the questionnaire.

The principals of each of the schools included in the survey were then contacted. The principal contact information was found in the *AEA 4 Educational Directory*. A letter (see Appendix B) was sent to each principal requesting permission for his/her school to participate in the research project and requesting names of teacher contacts who would administer the surveys. A copy of the questionnaire, a permission form (see Appendix C), and a self-addressed envelope to be returned via AEA 4 van mail was included in the mailing. Five schools responded but not all grade levels at all schools chose to participate.

After the principals responded granting permission and determining contact names, the questionnaires and a cover letter (see Appendix D) explaining the research project were sent to the teachers who administered the questionnaires to the students. The questionnaires were returned via the AEA 4 van mail. The date for returning the survey was the date three weeks following the date the letter was mailed.

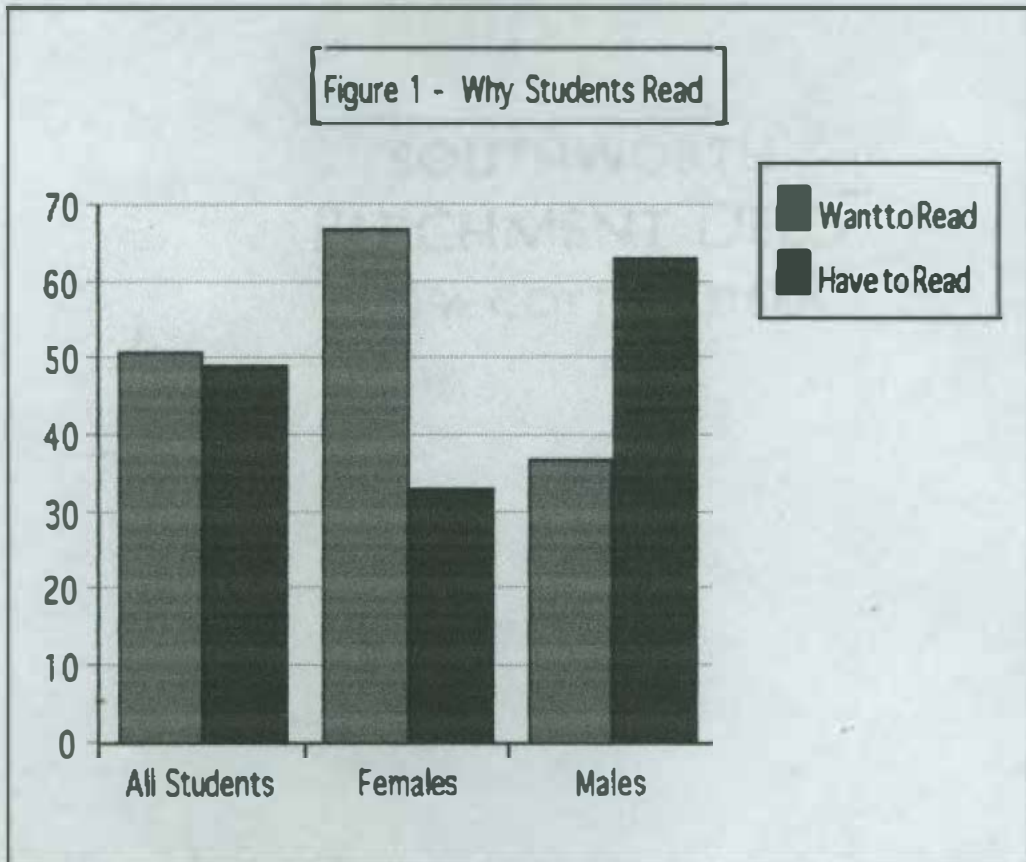
Chapter 4
Data Analysis

Data were collected in order to determine if young adults are reading books from one of the recommended reading lists, specifically the Best Books for Young Adults lists from 1997-2001. Of the 801 questionnaires that were returned 713 were included in the study. Eighty-eight students did not answer all of the questions or circled more than one answer to one or more questions on the questionnaire so they were not able to be included in the results. Table 1 shows the breakdown of the responses in this study.

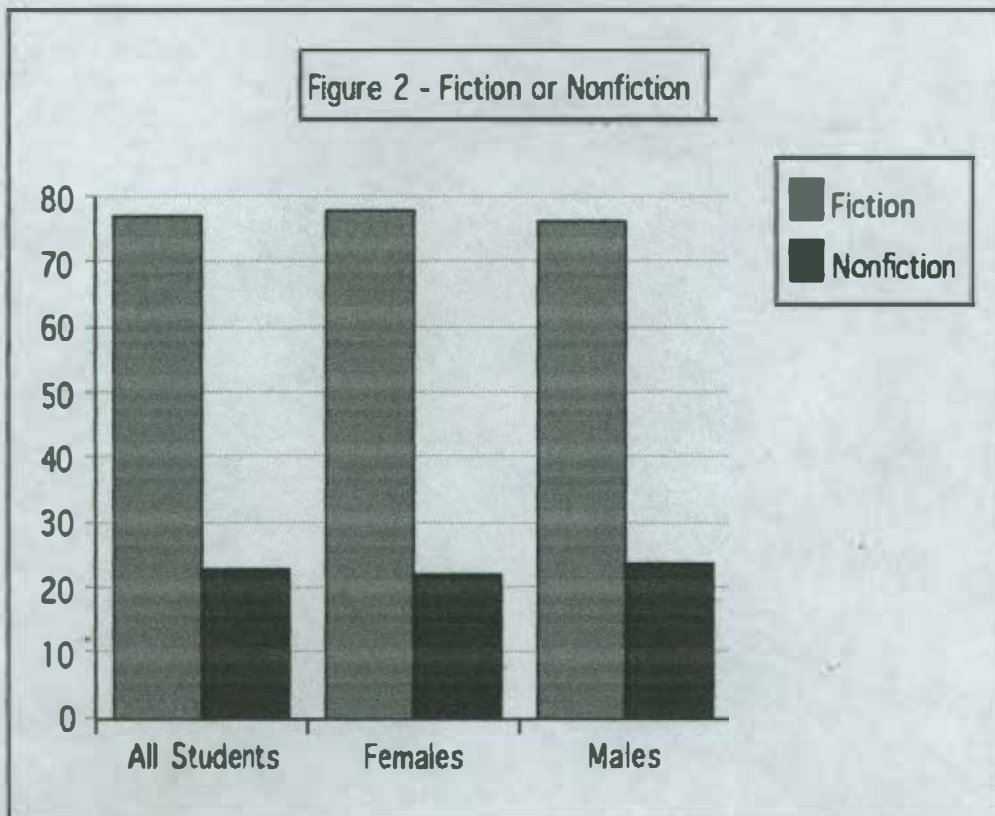
Table 1. Responses by Grade and Gender

Grade	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Totals
Females	58	74	85	38	40	15	22	332
Males	77	76	84	52	43	20	29	381
All Students	135	150	169	90	83	35	51	713

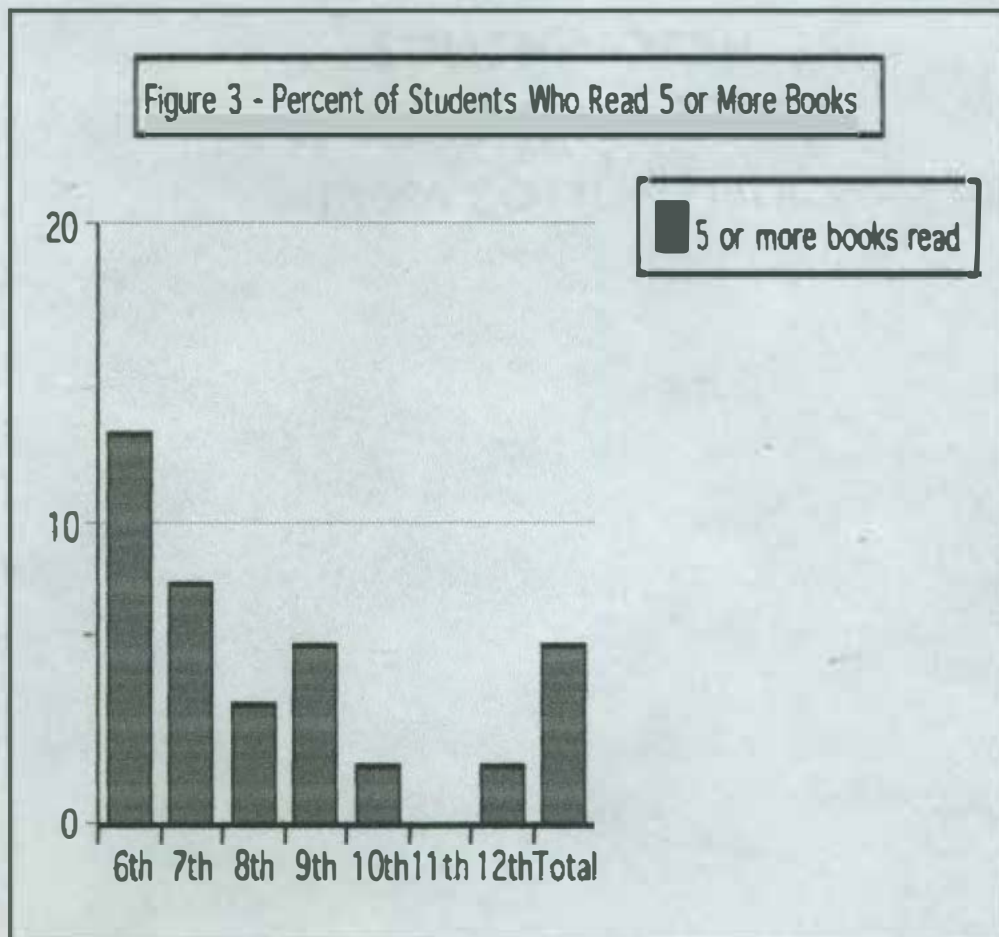
One of the questions answered by this survey is "Do young adults read because they want to or because they have to?" Fifty-one percent reported reading because they want to while 49% read because they have to. Gender differentiation shows the data differently. Most females (67%) read because they want to while 33% of females read because they have to. Most males (63%) read because they have to while 37% of males reported that they want to read.



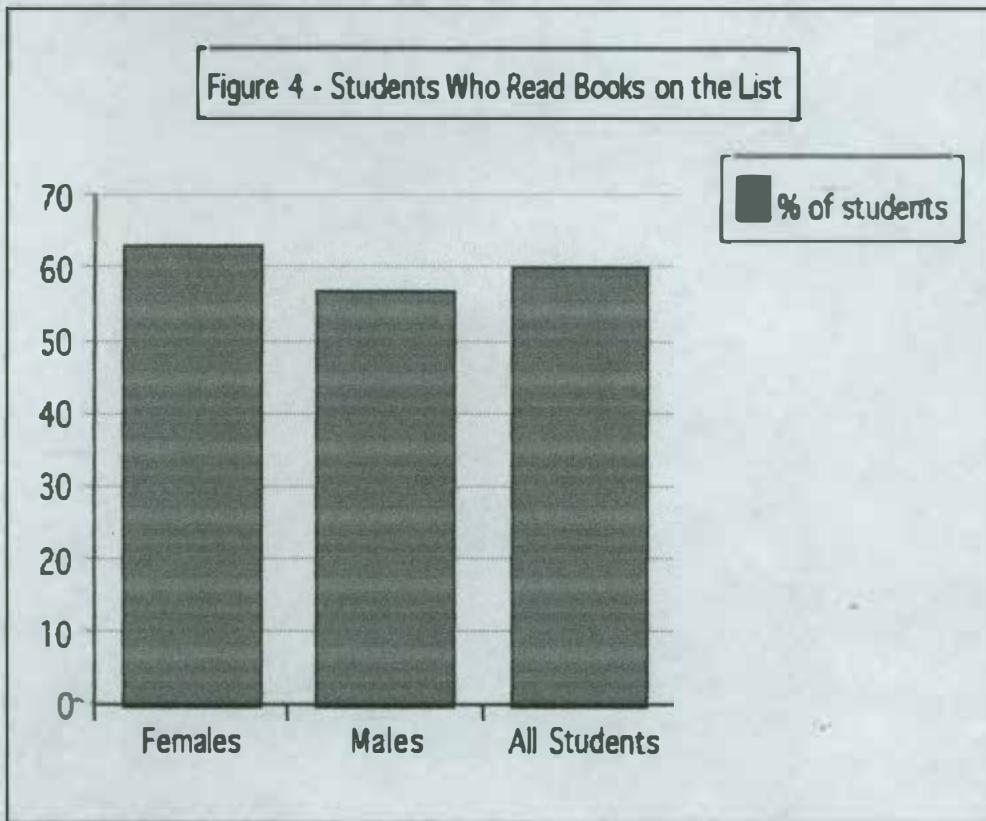
Another question answered by this survey is "Do young adults prefer to read fiction or nonfiction?" Fiction is the preferred reading by both males and females. Seventy-seven percent of all students prefer to read fiction while 23% prefer to read nonfiction materials. Seventy-eight percent of females choose fiction while 22% of females choose nonfiction for recreational reading. Seventy-six percent of males prefer to read fiction and 24% of the males polled choose nonfiction as preferred reading.



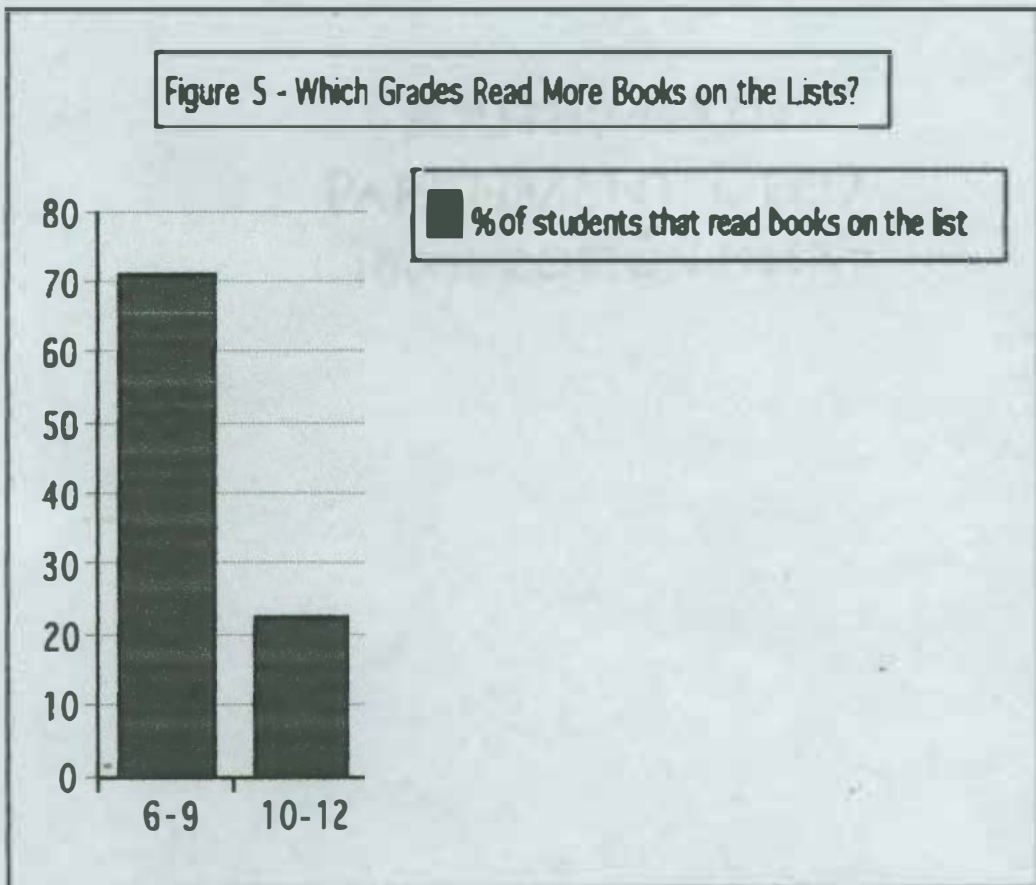
The first hypothesis was "More than half of the young adults polled will have read five or more books on the Best Books for Young Adults lists." Only 6% of the students had read five or more books on the lists included in the survey. The most books read by an individual student was 18, and a large number of students had not read any of the books on the list. Figure 3 shows the percentage of students at each grade level that read five or more books. Hypothesis one is rejected.



The second hypothesis was "A greater percentage of females will have read one or more books on the Best Books for Young Adults lists than males." Sixty-three percent of the females polled read books on the list compared to 57% of males. Sixty percent of the total group polled read one or more books found on the list. Hypothesis two is accepted.



The third hypothesis was "Students in grades 6-9 will have read more titles on the lists than students in grades 10 -12." This proved very true in this study. Seventy-one percent of the students polled in grades 6-9 read one or more books on the list while only 23% of the students polled in grades 10-12 read one or more books on the list. Figure 5 compares these two groups of students. Hypothesis three is accepted.



Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

Books written specifically for the young adult and selected for recommended lists by librarians may not be the books young adults actually read. The purpose of this study was to determine if young adults are reading books from one of the recommended reading lists. The Best Books for Young Adults lists were chosen for this study.

Eight hundred one survey questionnaires were returned but only 713 were able to be counted. Eighty-eight students failed to complete the questionnaire correctly so could not be included in tabulating the results. Three hundred thirty-two of the 713 students were female and 381 were male. The surveys were sent to students in grades 6-12 in public schools served by AEA 4 in northwest Iowa.

A survey questionnaire methodology was used. Students were asked to circle answers to questions asking what they preferred to read - fiction or non fiction, why they read - have to or want to, and indicate which books they had read from a list of 50 books.

Females usually read because they want to while most males read because they have to (required for English class, etc.). Both males and females prefer to read fiction over nonfiction. This corresponds with Fair's (1990) findings but does not agree with Reed's (1988) findings. Reed's study reflected that many males prefer nonfiction.

This study found that females read more than males although not by a

large margin. This is consistent with other studies (Jones, (1992), Fair, (1990). Only six percent of the students read five or more books on the list. Sixty percent of the students had read at least one book on the list. The middle school grades read more books on the list than the senior high grades and girls read more than boys at most grade levels. Thirteen percent of sixth graders had read five or more books on the list while only two percent of twelfth graders and zero percent of eleventh graders had read five or more books on the targeted list. A sixth grade girl read 18 books on the list which was the most books read by any of the students.

Conclusions

This study suggests that books on the BBYA lists are not being read by a large number of young adults. Only six percent of students polled had read five or more books from a list of 50 BBYA books. Teachers and librarians need to encourage students to read to broaden their interests and knowledge. Book lists need to be made available to students and reading should be modeled by adults. Young adults need to see that reading is important and that they will use it throughout life. Teachers should get to know their students individually as much as possible so they can target their interests and reading levels.

Older students are busier than younger students. Some of them have after school jobs or are involved in music and sports activities. Teachers can encourage these students to read by allowing time for recreational reading in school. Programs such as D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything And Read) might be implemented. Books and novels should be incorporated into the curriculum as much as possible.

Students prefer to read fiction over nonfiction. History and government

classes provide opportunities to introduce both fiction and nonfiction reading materials. Librarians and teachers should introduce students to nonfiction materials and show them how they might be useful to them. Lessons supplemented with novels will broaden students' interests and knowledge.

Girls read more than boys. Teachers need to find what interests their students. They can do this by talking with students or administering interest surveys. Include topics of interest to both boys and girls in lessons. It might be best to target the interests of boys, as girls have been found to read things males are interested in while males usually steer away from "female" materials.

Although this survey did not include any specific questions on favorite authors it can be assumed that the favorite authors of young adults are not on the list since a small percentage of students have read books from the list. It was noted that Henry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone by J.K. Rowling was read by students of all grade levels. The total record of students' reporting of their titles is Appendix E.

Recommendations

This study shows that books on recommended reading lists are not being read to a great extent by young adults. Teachers and librarians need to pay attention to the reading interests of young adults. They can do their own reading surveys, interest level surveys, and book surveys. This would help them to know what books to recommend for the committees to evaluate when determining what books should be on the final list. It would also help them know what they should have in their collection or teach in their curriculum. Books on the lists need to be made available to students in the library and in classrooms.

When developing a questionnaire the directions need to be explicit. If this researcher were to conduct this study on another group of students the directions would state: "Answer all questions and please circle only one answer to each question." This might decrease the number of incomplete surveys. A short definition of nonfiction might also be included.

A further study might be done on what books are available in this region. Do the school libraries, public libraries, and bookstores have these titles in their collections? Another study might be where do students find books or how do students find books.

Teachers, librarians, and other adults have a definite opinion about what young adults should read. Young adults do not always agree with these opinions. Adults need to listen to young adults and find out what their interests are. This information will enable them to steer young adults toward good reading materials that young adults will find interesting.

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Appendix A

Please circle the correct answer to questions 1-4.

1. What grade are you currently in? 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
2. I am: A) Male B) Female
3. I prefer to read: A) Fiction B) Nonfiction
4. I usually read: A) Because I have to B) Because I want to

=====

Listed below are the Top 10 Best Books for Young Adults for each year from the 1997-2001 Best Books for Young Adults lists. The author is listed first and then the title of the book. Please go through the list and put an "X" in front of each of the books you have read.

=====

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| _____ 1. Hobbs, Will <u>Far North</u> | _____ 13. Bloor, Edward <u>Tangerine</u> | _____ 26. Lobel, Anita <u>No Pretty Pictures: a Child of War</u> | _____ 38. Myers, Walter Dean <u>Monster</u> |
| _____ 2. Farmer, Nancy <u>A Girl Named Disaster</u> | _____ 14. Cormier, Robert <u>Tenderness</u> | _____ 27. Mikaelson, Ben <u>Petey</u> | _____ 39. Namioka, Lensey <u>Ties that Bind, Ties that Break</u> |
| _____ 3. Pullman, Philip <u>Golden Compass</u> | _____ 15. Hesse, Karen <u>Out of the Dust</u> | _____ 28. Rowling, J.K. <u>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</u> | _____ 40. Porter, Connie <u>Imani, All Mine</u> |
| _____ 4. Gilstrap, John <u>Nathan's Run</u> | _____ 16. Klause, Annette Curtis <u>Blood And Chocolate</u> | _____ 29. Sachar, Louis <u>Holes</u> | _____ 41. Bagdasarian, Adam <u>Forgotten Fire</u> |
| _____ 5. Myers, Walter Dean <u>One More River to Cross: An African American Photograph Album</u> | _____ 17. Krakauer, Jon <u>Into Thin Air</u> | _____ 30. Woodson, Jacqueline <u>If You Come Softly</u> | _____ 42. Bauer, Joan <u>Hope was Here</u> |
| _____ 6. Thomas, Rob <u>Rats Saw God</u> | _____ 18. McDonald, Joyce <u>Swallowing Stones</u> | _____ 31. Opdyke, Irene <u>Gut In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer</u> | _____ 43. Chevalier, Tracy <u>Girl with a Pearl Earring</u> |
| _____ 7. Blum, Josual <u>The United States of Poetry</u> | _____ 19. Myers, Walter Dean <u>Harlem</u> | _____ 32. Anderson, Laurie Halse <u>Speak</u> | _____ 44. Katz, Jon <u>Geeks: How two boys rode the Internet out of Idaho</u> |
| _____ 8. Glenn, Mel <u>Who Killed Mr. Chippendale? A Mystery in Poems</u> | _____ 20. Reynolds, Marjorie <u>Starlite Drive-In</u> | _____ 33. Card, Orson Scott <u>Ender's Shadow</u> | _____ 45. Konigsburg, E.L. <u>Silent to the Bone</u> |
| _____ 9. Wallace, Rich <u>Wrestling Sturbridge</u> | _____ 21. Bauer, Joan <u>Rules of the Road</u> | _____ 34. Holt, Kimberly Willis <u>When Zachary Beaver Came to Town</u> | _____ 46. Paulsen, Gary <u>The Beet Fields</u> |
| _____ 10. Wilkomirski, Benjamin <u>Fragments</u> | _____ 22. Colman, Penny <u>Copses, Coffins, and Crypts</u> | _____ 35. Jordan, Sherryl <u>The Raging Quiet</u> | _____ 47. Ryan, Pam Munoz <u>Esperanza Rising</u> |
| _____ 11. Bartoletti, Susan Campbell <u>Growing Up In Coal Country</u> | _____ 23. Ferris, Jean <u>Love Among the Walnuts</u> | _____ 36. McNeal, Laura and Tom <u>Crooked</u> | _____ 48. Spinelli, Jerry <u>Stargirl</u> |
| _____ 12. Bernstein, Sara Tuvel <u>Seamstress</u> | _____ 24. Haddix, Margaret <u>Among the Hidden</u> | _____ 37. Meyer, Carolyn <u>Mary, Bloody Mary</u> | _____ 49. Whelan, Gloria <u>Homeless Bird</u> |
| | _____ 25. Holt, Kimberly Willis <u>My Louisiana Sky</u> | _____ 50. White, Ruth <u>Memories of Summer</u> | |

Appendix B

March 19, 2001

Dear Principal:

I am writing to request permission for your school to participate in a research project. This research project is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Masters Degree at the University of Northern Iowa. My research project is to determine if students/young adults in grades six through twelve are reading the books recommended for them by library organizations such as YALSA (Young Adults Library Services Association) of ALA (American Library Association). I am particularly interested in the "Best Books for Young Adults List." I have developed a questionnaire that I would like to have the students in these grades complete. I will be asking classroom teachers or English teachers, depending on the grade level, to take 5 or 10 minutes of their time to have students complete the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed.

If you are willing to grant permission for your school to take part in this research project please sign the enclosed form and return it to me via the AEA 4 van mail. It would be helpful if you could tell me how many students are in each grade or class and the names of the teachers (classroom, English, homeroom, etc.) that you would recommend administer the questionnaire. I will then send the questionnaires and an explanation of the research project directly to these teachers. I would like to send the questionnaires to the teachers around April 5th. If you have any questions please contact me at 712-757-3755 after school hours or at 712-448-2712 in the evening. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathy Kellner
Title 1 Reading & Math Teacher
South O'Brien Schools - Primghar Center

Enclosures

Appendix C

I am willing to have _____
Name of School
participate in Kathy Kellner's Research Project.

Principal's Signature

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>	<u>Teacher/s</u>
6	_____	_____
7	_____	_____
8	_____	_____
9	_____	_____
10	_____	_____
11	_____	_____
12	_____	_____

Appendix D

April 17, 2001

Dear Teacher:

Your principal has granted permission for your school to participate in a research project. This research project is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Masters Degree at the University of Northern Iowa. My project is to determine if students/young adults in grades six through twelve are reading the books recommended for them by library organizations such as YALSA (Young Adults Library Services Association) of ALA (American Library Association). I am particularly interested in the "Best Books for Young Adults List."

I am asking for your participation in this project. Please have each of your students complete the enclosed questionnaire and return them to me via the AEA 4 van mail by May 8, 2001. Please affix the enclosed mailing label to the front of the envelope you received the questionnaires in. If you have any questions please contact me at 712-757-3755 after school hours or at 712-448-2712 in the evening. You can also email me at kkellner@pionet.net or kkellner@s-obrien.k12.ia.us. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathy Kellner
Title 1 Reading & Math Teacher
South O'Brien Schools - Primghar Center

Enclosures

Appendix E

The number on the line in front of each book title is the number of students who reported they read that book.

- 34 1. Hobbs, Will Far North
- 15 2. Farmer, Nancy A Girl Named Disaster
- 12 3. Pullman, Philip Golden Compass
- 8 4. Gilstrap, John Nathan's Run
- 4 5. Myers, Walter Dean One More River to Cross: An African American Photograph Album
- 7 6. Thomas, Rob Rats Saw God
- 4 7. Blum, Josual The United States of Poetry
- 13 8. Glenn, Mel Who Killed Mr. Chipendale? A Mystery in Poems
- 14 9. Wallace, Rich Wrestling Sturbridge
- 1 10. Wilkomirski, Benjamin Fragments
- 3 11. Bartoletti, Susan Campbell Growing Up In Coal Country
- 11 12. Bernstein, Sara Tuvel Seamstress
- 23 13. Bloor, Edward Tangerine
- 4 14. Cormier, Robert Tenderness
- 73 15. Hesse, Karen Out of the Dust
- 13 16. Klause, Annette Curtis Blood And Chocolate
- 17 17. Krakauer, Jon Into Thin Air
- 15 18. McDonald, Joyce Swallowing Stones
- 4 19. Myers, Walter Dean Harlem
- 3 20. Reynolds, Marjorie Starlite Drive-In
- 4 21. Bauer, Joan Rules of the Road
- 15 22. Colman, Penny Corses, Coffins, and Crypts
- 1 23. Ferris, Jean Love Among the Walnuts
- 34 24. Haddix, Margaret Among the Hidden
- 20 25. Holt, Kimberly Willis My Louisiana Sky
- 11 26. Lobel, Anita No Pretty Pictures: a Child of War
- 3 27. Mikaelson, Ben Petey
- 278 28. Rowling, J.K. Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
- 208 29. Sachar, Louis Holes
- 4 30. Woodson, Jacqueline If You Come Softly
- 22 31. Opdyke, Irene Gut In My Hands: Memories of a Holocaust Rescuer
- 8 32. Anderson, Laurie Halse Speak
- 3 33. Card, Orson Scott Ender's Shadow
- 8 34. Holt, Kimberly Willis When Zachary Beaver Came to Town
- 1 35. Jordan, Sherryl The Raging Quiet
- 6 36. McNeal, Laura and Tom Crooked
- 20 37. Meyer, Carolyn Marv. Bloody Mary
- 16 38. Myers, Walter Dean Monster
- 5 39. Namioka, Lensey Ties that Bind... Ties that Break
- 2 40. Porter, Connie Imani. All Mine
- 9 41. Bagdasarian, Adam Forgotten Fire
- 5 42. Bauer, Joan Hope was Here
- 5 43. Chevalier, Tracy Girl with a Pearl Earring
- 9 44. Katz, Jon Geeks: How two boys rode the Internet out of Idaho
- 5 45. Konigsburg, E.L. Silent to the Bone
- 14 46. Paulsen, Gary The Beet Fields
- 2 47. Ryan, Pam Munoz Esperanza Rising
- 18 48. Spinelli, Jerry Stargirl
- 2 49. Whelan, Gloria Homeless Bird
- 12 50. White, Ruth Memories of Summer