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50+ Recent Young Adult Novels That Can Work in the Classroom

Diana Mitchell

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NOTES: 6-12 Indicates the novel would be appropriate for students in sixth through twelfth grades; w = would work well as a whole class novel, s/i = would work as a novel read by small groups or by individuals in the class.

Barron, T.A. *The Lost Years of Merlin*. Philomel Books, 1996. 326 pages.

A young boy washes up on the shore of Wales with no memory of his past. He saves a beautiful woman also washed ashore from the savage tusks of a boar. Later she claims to be his mother. When he turns 12 his powers start showing themselves and because he repented his misuse of these powers and hurled himself into a fire to try to save his victim, he was blinded. From his mother he learns to develop his "second sight," and now he desperately wants to know his past and who his father is. Thus he embarks on a voyage to find the island kingdom his mother left. This fascinating story tells us of the forces that shaped the young Merlin and makes us want to know more, which is the way the author planned it since this is the first in a trilogy. 7-12 s/i

Bunting, Eve. *SOS Titanic*. Harcourt Brace, 1996. 243 pages.

Barry is leaving his upper class grandparents in Ireland to join his equally prosperous parents in the United States. On his trip over on the Titanic he gets to know and care for Pegeen, the sister of the troublemakers from his village. We see life on the ship and how the first class passengers are treated differently than those in steerage. From his steward, Barry hears about the premonitions of disaster. When it strikes, he moves fast to find Pegeen who is locked behind a door in steerage manned by crew members to prevent these passengers from leaving. What becomes clear in this book is how inadequate the warning system was, how slow the crew's reactions were, and why so many passengers in steerage died. Well done and engaging. 6-10 s/i

Burks, Brian. *Soldier Boy*. Harcourt Brace, 1997. 151 pages.

After running from Chicago in 1876 to save his life because he refused to throw a boxing match, Johnny ends up in St. Louis and is immediately recruited for the army despite his tender years. This story focuses on Johnny's time in the army, his difficulties in accepting authority, and the practices of the veterans who see recruits as fair game. After almost no basic training, Johnny and his friend are sent into the Indian wars at Little Big Horn. 7-10 s/i

Cook, Karin. *What Girls Learn*. Random House, 1997. 304 pages.

Tilden is entering the turbulent teen years when her mother brings a man into their lives. Soon she, her mom, and her sister are moving from the South to live in the cold North with Nick. Not only must Tilden get used to having a man in the house, she also has to get used to a new school and making new friends while dealing with her rebellious younger sister. Then her mom gets sick. Within a year it's obvious that she's not going to survive. But no one in the family knows how to talk about what's happening. This beautifully written story exposes the raw feelings and the doubts and uncertainties that accompany watching a loved one die. This story left a lump in my throat. 7-12 s/i

Creech, Sharon. *Chasing Redbird*. HarperCollins, 1997. 226 pages.

Zinnia Thylor, one of six children, has a strong need to be herself and so when she uncovers a trail that seems to end in her backyard, she decides to uncover it. Through this work she not only uncovers family secrets, but she discovers lots about herself. 6-9 s/i

Deever, Julie Reece. *Chicago Blues.* HarperCollins, 1995. 170 pages.

Lissa is seventeen and away at art school in Chicago when she gets the call from her mother. She is directed to come and get her eleven-year-old sister and care for her since her mother is on yet another drinking binge. Trying to be the parent to her younger sister and once again be responsible for the family is tough on Lissa. Her sister is unbelieving that her mother doesn't want to take care of her, and she takes out her anger on Lissa. Eventually throughout the summer the girls are able to enrich each other's lives but it still doesn't diminish the hurt they constantly deal with. I thought this story rang true. The children of alcoholics are shown in realistic ways, not being able to trust what the mother promises but wanting to believe her desperately. Also, the roles the sisters take is consistent with what I know of alcoholic children. Lissa is the responsible one who ends up mothering her sister and her mother because she feels there is no one else to do it. 8-12 s/i

Dorris, Michael. *Sees Behind Trees.* Hyperion, 1996. 104 pages.

Walnut knows he'll never be considered a man if he has to prove his manhood by shooting a target which he won't be able to see because of his distorted eye sight. However, by using his other senses he shows he can see things others can't see. Thus he is named Sees Behind Trees and goes on a journey with a village elder who hopes Sees Behind Trees will be able to "see" a place Grey Fire fell in love with and wants to find again. Through the journey this young man comes to understand what he can do by turning his handicap into an advantage. 5-9 s/i

Draper, Sharon, M. *Forged by Fire.* Simon & Schuster, 1997. 151 pages.

Gerald by the age of three knew how to stay out of his drug-addicted mamma's way when she has the white stuff. He knew his Aunt Queen loved him, and he loved being there while his mamma was in prison. But then one day she shows up with a new husband and his half-sister. After Aunt Queen's death, Gerald must go to live with his family. He dearly loves his half-sister who always looks frightened, and when he figures out that his step-father is abusing her he decides he must stop him. A well-written story of abuse and poverty. 6-9 s/i

Duncan, Lois. *Gallows Hill.* Delacorte, 1997. 227 pages.

Sarah can't understand why her mother uproots her and leaves her job just to move in with a man she has only known briefly. Then Sarah gets involved with the strangeness of the town and feels she'll never fit in. She's asked to play a fortune teller at a school carnival and is shocked to find out she can clearly see things when she looks into a crystal ball. What she tells people actually comes true so she's branded as a witch by her school mates. Then the dreams start and Sarah is at the Salem Witch Trials. Could it really be true, as her only friend, Charlie, says, that the participants of the Salem Witch Trials have all returned to the same place to work out the struggles they experienced hundreds of years ago? Will Sarah survive? 8- 12 s/i

Ellison, Pierson Suzanne. *The Last Warrior.* Northland Publishing, 1997. 232 pages.

Wow! This novel, based on historical fact, traces several years in the life of Solita, a 14-year-old Apache who, instead of finishing his warrior training, surrenders to the U.S. army along with the rest of Geronimo's small band. The degrading railroad trip to Florida for resettlement is told in graphic detail. Then Solita is torn away from his people along with all the other children in his band and sent to an Indian school to learn to be "white." Full of rage, Solita learns that to survive he must keep his Apache soul to himself. He is placed with a Quaker family in Pennsylvania for the summer and bonds with that family. When tragedy forces him to become a fugitive, he walks back home to Arizona. There he finds that he really has no home since he is now much more educated than the Apaches remaining on the reservation. This author shows her readers what it's like when the majority culture tries to destroy and devalue another cultures. A moving, terrific book. 7-12 s/i

Garland, Sherry. *Letters from the Mountain.* Harcourt Brace, 1996. 211 pages.

Thylor Ryan at 13 realizes he is responsible for the coma and possible death of an unpopular boy who wanted to be part of his gang. Thylor's mother knows nothing of her son's anguish but sends him to the mountains with relatives for the summer to get him away from his ne'er-do-well friends. Taylor's sullenness gradually disappears when his great aunt and uncle put him to work and expect him to be a responsible part of the household. Meeting Jesse Sinkler, the illiterate son of a dirt poor pole cutter, gradually changes Thylor as he teaches Jesse to read in exchange for learning to shoot a rifle. Thylor rethinks his belief that friends are more important than family and begins to reorder his priorities.

7-12 s/i

Green, Timothy. *Twilight Boy.* Northland Publishing, 1998. 227 pages.

When the old Navajo Harrison Chee's hogan is set on fire, his grandson, Jesse, works to find out who or what is trying to harm his grandfather. During his investigation he becomes involved with Carolyn, the daughter of the owners of the trading post, and together they look for hints and information about the skinwalker who might be trying to harm Harrison. Through this compelling mystery we learn much about friendship and about Navajo culture and beliefs. Well-written and hard to put down. 8-12 s/i

Griffin, Adele. *Rainy Season.* Hyperlon, 1996. 198 pages.

Lane and her slightly crazy brother Charlie, live in the Panama Canal Zone with her mom and her dad who is in the military. When the story begins it seems that Lane and Charlie are dealing with the ordinary issues of growing up. Gradually, puzzling details appear such as pictures of the family with one person's head cut out. While Lane is overcoming her fears and Charlie is spinning out of control, the family secret of their inability to deal with the death of the oldest child comes bubbling to the surface, 6-10 s/i

Haddix, Margaret Peterson. *Don't You Dare Read This, Mrs. Dunphrey.* Simon & Schuster, 1996. 108 pages.

In her journal she writes for her English class, Sarah chronicles what is happening to her life since her abusive father returned home after a two-year absence. The responsible one, Sarah scrambles to provide for her younger brother when her mother leaves them alone and without money while she tries to find the husband who once again abandoned the family. Secretive and desperate, Sarah's school work suffers as her life plummets downwards. By finally allowing the teacher to read the journal she is able to ask for help. 7-12 s/i

Hautman, Pete. *Mr. Was.* Simon & Schuster, 1996. 216 pages

Jack accompanies his mother to see the dying grandfather he has never known, and on his deathbed his grandfather tries to strangle Jack. While at his grandfather's house before the funeral, Jack dreams of a door to the past and begins to search for it in the house. Although he finds the door, he doesn't decide to go back to the past until horrifying events in his life involving his alcoholic father propel him to the door so that he can determine his own future. Complex, compelling, I found it impossible to put down. Children of alcoholics, time travel, and glimpses of war activity in the Japanese theater during WW II are all part of this book. 6-12 s/i

Hesse, Karen. *Out of the Dust.* Scholastic, 1997. 227 pages.

This Newbery Winner sears images of the Dust Bowl into the reader's mind as it tells the story of Billy Jo not only surviving daily living but also the death of her mother and infant brother. Written in free verse, this novel takes us into the mind and heart of Billy Jo as she struggles with her guilt over her mother's death and her inability to communicate with her father. She must find a way to heal and she thinks she must leave to do so. An unforgettable story whose images slip into my head unbidden. 9-12 s/i

Hobbs, Will. *Far North.* Avon Books, 1996. 216 pages.

Gabe moves to the Northwest Territory to go to school so he can be close to his dad. One weekend he has the opportunity to fly over the area to take in its beauty. He's surprised to see that the other two passengers are Raymond, his roommate from school, who has decided to give school up and return home and an old man from Raymond's village. The pilot sets the plane down so they can have a closer look at the spectacular, thundering falls, and then the engine won't start. The pilot is swept away down the river, and Raymond, Gabe and the old man begin their desperate struggle to survive the harsh Northwest winter. Action-packed, adventurous, and involving. 8-12 s/i

Howe, James. *The Watcher.* Simon & Schuster, 1997. 172 pages.

A strange girl who sits and stares at the beach, a teen lifeguard who can't escape the rejection he feels from his father, and a twelve-year-old boy whose parents are struggling to hold their relationship together. All three meet in an unexpected way as two of them try to save the third from abuse or death at the hands of a parent. And in the saving, all find something important about themselves. Touching, poetic. 7-11 s/i

Ingold, Jeanette. *The Window.* Harcourt Brace, 1996.

Mandy was blinded in the accident that killed her mother and must now get used to her new home with her great aunt and uncles. She's given the room in the attic that was once her grandmother's. When she leans out the window she often sees and hears scenes from the past, and it takes her awhile to figure out that she's seeing back to the time of her grandmother. As she adapts to her surroundings and even makes a friend, she's drawn into the family struggles of the past and comes to realize she can help in the healing that her grandmother's abrupt leaving had on the family. 8-12 s/i

Jiang, Ji Li. *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution.* HarperCollins, 1997. 272 pages.

This first-person narrative of the tumultuous time of the Cultural Revolution in China details the life and difficulties of this 12-year-old. Always an outstanding student and from a family viewed as well off, she is shocked by the changes that label intellectuals and people with money as criminals who are hounded and often persecuted. Her family's apartment is ransacked several times by the Red Guard and humiliated by them. Then her father is arrested and the Communists want her to testify against him. If she does so she will be guaranteed a place in the rising Communist Party; if she doesn't, she will sacrifice her future in China. This engrossing story vividly shows what it was like to live through these times and how much people suffered. 7-12 s/i

Kerr, M. E. *"Hello," I Lied.* HarperCollins, 1997. 171 pages.

Lang spends the summer with his mom on a glitzy estate where she works for a celebrity. He's come out to his mom and is open about his relationship with his boyfriend so he believes he has everything worked out. Then the celebrity asks Lang to help entertain a teenager from France who will be visiting him. As Lang becomes good friends with the lovely Huguette and their relationship grows, he is thrown for a loop when he realizes he cares deeply about her. A fast-paced story with enough mystery in it makes it tough to put it down. MS. Kerr does it again—writes a compelling, thought-provoking story. 9-12 s/i

Koller, Jackie French. *A Place to Call Home.* Simon & Schuster, 1997. 250 pages.

Anna comes up the driveway after school to discover that her mother's car is gone and that her seven-month-old brother is screaming in his crib. When five-year-old Mandy comes home from school it becomes obvious that their mother will be gone for some time, perhaps on another drinking binge. Anna stays home from school to care for her brother and sister and one day while going to a rather remote park, she is sure she sees her mother's car beneath the surface of the water. Desperate and frightened, Anna has to make a plan to survive since she fears what will happen to the three of them if it is discovered her mother is dead. This book shows the typical older child of an alcoholic parent who assumes responsibility for the family and has learned well that secrets must be kept. 7-12 s/i

Krisher, Trudy. *Kinship*. Delacorte, 1997. 299 pages.

When Pert Wilson's daddy returns to *Kinship* after an absence of more than 14 years, she is sure her life will be perfect because she so desperately wants his acceptance. Throughout this story, narrated in alternate chapters by Pert and residents of her trailer park, we see her dad's actions through many eyes. Pert doesn't want to see what other's see and won't take a hard look at her daddy even when he stands her up for a father-daughter dance. All she knows is that her mother and brother get quieter and quieter the longer he is around. It takes her most of the summer to understand the difference between kin and family and to truly understand what home means, A satisfying sequel to *Spite Fences*. 8-12 s/i

Levine, Gail Carson. *Ella Enchanted*. HarperCollins, 1997. 232 pages.

In this fantasy-like tale, Ella only wants to be free of the "gift" that Lucinda has given her that makes her obey every order she is given. Because this feisty, appealing protagonist speaks her mind and can see things clearly, she is delightful. Although this is a retelling of the Cinderella story, the reader is treated to delicious twists and turns which create a new, exciting story. Very engaging! A Newbery Honor book. 6-9 s/i

Lynch, Chris. *Political Timber*. HarperCollins, 1996. 166 pages.

Gordon Foley has a grandfather, the city's ex-mayor, in jail for fraud who gives him the keys to his trademark '63 Studebaker. Gordie feels his senior year should be perfect since he has the car but then finds out that his grandfather wants Gordie to run for his old job. Caught up in the swirl of events surrounding his city candidacy as well for his school candidacy for office, Gordie finds that having both a straight-talking, slightly outrageous girlfriend and a fantastic car are not enough to keep his senior year as carefree as he thought it would be. 10-12 s/i.

Mazer, Norma Fox. *When She Was Good*. Scholastic, 1997. 234 pages

Em's dad is an alcoholic, her mom can barely hold her life together, and her sister is mentally ill and violent. This very depressing book tells the story of Em's life before and after her sister's death as she tries to figure out how to nurture herself and support herself financially. After Em's mom dies, life gets worse. Pamela, with no one to really care about her, gets verbally and physically violent. When the dad remarries, Pamela, now 18, drags Em away so they can live together on their own. But Pamela has no skills to allow her to hold down a job. Sinking even deeper into depression and/or fantasy, she constantly abuses her sister psychologically and physically. Em thinks she might be free when her sister dies suddenly, but she has to learn how to cope with the voice of her sister that she carries in her head. 9-12 s/i

Mod, Kyoko. *One Bird*. Fawcett Juniper, 1995. 244 pages.

When her mother leaves her father, 15-year-old Meguma is very upset, especially since she's been left to live with her rarely-home father and her cranky grandmother. Meguma is not allowed to call or write her mother but does manage to write her anyway. Feeling very alone because her father spends most of his time at his mistress's house and her grandmother only yells at her, Meguma is overjoyed when she begins to establish a relationship with a vivacious veterinarian whom she met when she took a wounded bird to her. This woman eventually helps Meguma see her own positive attributes and see the possibilities of how she can resume a relationship with her mother. 8-12 s/i

Naidoo, Beverly. *No Turning Back*. HarperCollins, 1995. 185 pages.

After 12-year-old Sipho escapes the brutality of his stepfather by running away to Johannesburg, he finds life on the streets with other children is brutal too. Then he secures a job in a white man's shop and although his physical needs are met, the emotional effects of the racism to which he is subject are also overwhelming. A very descriptive picture of the "new" South Africa. 7-12 s/i

Napoli, Donna Jo. *Zel*. Dutton, 1996. 227 pages.

A lovely young girl is raised on a remote mountainside by her mother who seems to be able to provide for all their physical needs. But a few days before the young girl's thirteenth birthday when she and her mother take the long journey into town, the fabric of their lives changes. A young man is very taken with young Zel because of the confidence she shows in handling horses and also because she seems so direct and honest. When the mother finds out that her daughter liked this attention, she fears that her daughter might some day wish to leave her, and so to "protect" her from this fate, she imprisons her in a tower. This retelling of the Rapunzel story is so engrossing and so well done that the reader is caught in the web of its mystery and simply can't put the book down. 7-12 s/i

Nix, Garth. *Shade's Children*. HarperCollins, 1997. 309 pages.

In this city of the future, children are warehoused in dormitories until their brains are removed when they are fourteen and put in the bodies of creatures of the Overlords. But some children have escaped and work feverishly with the help of an adult, whose only embodiment is in a computer, to fight the powers of evil. An engrossing story that focuses on four children and what they are willing to do and give up to help free humanity. 8-12 s/i

Nolan, Han. *Dancing on the Edge*. Harcourt Brace, 1997. 244 pages.

Miracle McCloy, who lives with her eccentric grandmother and her distant father, knows she's different. She's been told stories of her mother's tragic death and her miraculous birth, but now her father disappears and her grandmother announces he's "melted." Miracle longs for him and invents stories about what she could do to make him reappear. When she and her grandmother move in with her grandfather, he pays attention to Miracle and lets her take dance lessons while insisting she not tell her grandmother. Because mystery shrouds so much of her life, Miracle turns inward and hides her pain until it comes bursting through when she sets herself on fire. Then the secrets are told and she can begin to deal with the hard truth about her past. Touching and beautifully written. 7-11 s/i

Nolan, Han. *Send Me Down a Miracle*. Harcourt Brace, 1996. 250 pages.

Charity's always been the preacher's daughter but now into their small Southern community comes Adrienne, an eccentric artist who claims after a month long sensory deprivation experiment that she has seen Jesus sitting on a chair in her house. Charity is rather taken by Adrienne and her unorthodox ways, much to her father's chagrin. Because this event has torn the town in two, Charity begins to question the rigid thinking of her father, and discord in their home surfaces. When her mother calls saying she won't be back, her father withdraws into himself and becomes even more dogmatic about the religious controversy in town. It takes clear-thinking, caring Charity to help him deal with his own doubts. A moving, well-written book. 8-11 s/i

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *Habibi*. Simon & Schuster, 1997. 259 pages.

When 14-year-old Liyana Abboud's family moves from St Louis to Jerusalem, the city where her father was born, her whole life is changed. She works to learn new languages, to understand tensions and the resulting discrimination between peoples, to fit into the sprawling family of her father, and to figure out how she, as an American Arab, can find a comfortable place for herself in this new world. Liyana is a charming, sometimes mischievous girl, who questions the ways of her father and his people by striking up a friendship with a delightful Jewish boy. I loved the spirit of the protagonist as I learned to negotiate the streets of Jerusalem with her and to unearth the values of a totally new culture. 7-12 s/i

Paulsen, Gary. *Nightjohn*. Bantam, 1993. 92 pages.

Sarny, a young female slave, is being taught to read by Nightjohn, an escaped slave who returned to teach the others how to read. This story of dedication and determination against the cruelty of the slave owners brings home to us the power of being able to read. Some scenes of cruelty. 5-11 w

Paulsen, Gary. *Sarny*. Delacorte, 1997. 180 pages.

As the Civil War is ending, Sarny's two children are ripped away from her, and this sequel to *Nightjohn* begins with Sarny's search for her children. She journeys to New Orleans to find them and on her way meets an extraordinary woman who befriends her. This story lingers on Sarny's early life as she marries and begins schools to teach others to read and then quickly takes us to her 94th year. A very satisfying sequel. 5-11 s/i

Perkins, Mitali. *The Sunita Experiment*. Little, Brown, 1993. 179 pages.

Sunita, an 8th grader whose parents were born in India, finds her life turned upside down when her Indian grandparents come to visit for a year. Suddenly, her mother dresses in sarees and puts a red dot on her forehead and even takes a long leave of absence from her job at a community college. Suni is just getting to be friends with a boy she is interested in when her mother tells her she may no longer have boys come to see her. Instead of telling him the truth, Suni pretends disinterest in him so he won't know how weird her family is. Through her trials with her family, her friend Liz is always there for her. Readers do learn about Indian culture as Suni finds she can talk to her grandfather and that telling the truth helps. 6-10 s/i

Pullman, Philip. *The Subtle Knife*. Knopf, 1997. 326 pages.

Lyca journeys to a new world and meets Will who considers himself a murderer because he acted to save his mother. His father had mysteriously disappeared years ago and Will wants to find him. The two team up and travel between Will's world and a new, strange world where Will finds himself the keeper of the "subtle knife" which can easily give them access to other worlds. The adventure continues as the boundaries between the worlds thin and the danger of destruction at the hands of the specters continues. This one ends as a cliffhanger with some of our questions answered but many more raised. 8-12 s/i

Rinaldi, Ann. *Broken Days: The Quilt Trilogy*. Scholastic, 1995. 263 pages.

When the kidnapped Thankful Chelmsford's daughter, Walking Breeze, is returned to the Chelmsford family in 1811, chaos erupts. She is a Shawnee and proud of it. She doesn't understand why Ebie, her cousin, hates her, nor why Georgie, another half-blooded woman, acts as she does. Through her presence the family deals with racist attitudes and deep emotions. Rinaldi, as always, draws us into the heart of her characters and her story as we learn even more about the history of the time. 7-12 s/i

Rinaldi, Ann. *The Second Bend in the River*. Scholastic, 1997. 276 pages.

As a child in 1798, Rebecca, a settler in Ohio, meets Tecumseh when he visits her family homestead built on the site his village used to occupy. Throughout the years Rebecca and her family become good friends with Tecumseh. She helps him with his English in the speeches he writes, and he teaches her about Indian life and beliefs. Their relationship gradually deepens into something much more than friendship, and both must make a decision about what to do. I loved all that I learned about Tecumseh and about the lives of settlers. 7-12 s/i

Soto, Gary. *Pacific Crossing*. Harcourt Brace, 1992. 126 pages.

Lincoln Mendoza and his friend Tony, barrio brothers from San Francisco, spend a summer as exchange students in Japan. The sharing and learning about the culture of their host families is at times humorous, at times touching. Both boys see their own culture through new eyes as they learn more about themselves. 6-10 s/i

Spinelli, Jerry. *Wringer*. HarperCollins, 1997, 229 pages.

Poor Palmer. He is a gentle soul who abhors violence towards animals, but lives in a town which thinks it is great sport each year to kill 5000 pigeons as its chief fund raiser. Most of the little boys relish the thought of turning ten and helping wring the necks of the pigeons who are not killed outright. Not Palmer, He dreads his tenth birthday and becomes increasingly unhappy with his decision to be part of a gang. After a pigeon pecks on his bedroom window and Palmer takes him into his life, everything changes. This is the story of Palmer's journey towards acquiring the courage to be himself. A Newbery Honor book. 4-9 s/i

Staples, Suzanne Fisher. *Dangerous Skies*. Farrar, 1996. 232 pages.

Buck Smith and Tunes Smith have been friends since birth. Tunes' dad works for Buck's family just like his ancestors did. Race has never been an issue for these two as they fish and boat together in the flats of the Chesapeake Bay area. Then a murder is committed, and because Tunes and Buck find the body, they are in danger of being accused of the crime. Will Buck speak up when Tunes is accused by the white man who tried to assault her? The crime tears open the community and brings out the latent racism and hypocrisy that have been part of our country's history. A gripping story. 7-11 s/i

Stevensoll, James. *The Bones in the Cliff*. Dell, 1995. 119 pages.

Pete, at 11, finds himself on an island with his alcoholic father who insists that he meet every ferry boat every day so he can be warned if a bad man comes. Pete has a very sketchy description to go by and no idea why he is looking for this man. In his travels around the Island between ferry dockings, he meets Rootie and finally finds a friend. When the man finally does come to the island it is clear he plans to kill Pete's father. Pete is shown as a child of an alcoholic who knows he can expect little from his father and so becomes very self-sufficient. 5-9 s/i

Temple. Frances. *Tonight, by Sea*. Harper Trophy, 1995. 147 pages.

Paulie and what's left of her family group lives near the beach in Haiti. They subsist on food from the sea and on what they can grow. Because of the political chaos in the country in 1993, there are no jobs, and anyone supportive of Aristide, "the little priest," is tortured or killed. The soldiers and thugs are in control and kill anyone who does not obey them without question, including a young man who is a close family friend. Paulie's uncle is building a boat so some of them can leave and the story focuses on the time before they are forced to leave. This novel presents a strong picture of the horrors of living in Haiti under the military government. 6-10 s/i

Thomas, Rob. *Slave Day*. Simon & Schuster, 1997. 188 pages.

It's Slave Day at Robert E. Lee High School, a fundraiser in which students and a few willing teachers perform errands for the "masters" who bid on them in the school auction. One African-American student challenges the whole idea, and when he can't seem to get any support for outlawing the day, he decides to "purchase" the Student Council president who is also African-American. Written from multiple perspectives in alternating chapters, this story shows how the day's events cause many to rethink their approaches to their own lives. Involving and engrossing as these characters jump off of the page into our own lives. 9-12 s/i

Thomasma, Kenneth. *Moho Wat*. Baker, 1994. 184 pages.

Moho Wat, a nine-year-old Shoshoni boy, proves himself after a mountain lion rips off his hand. First, he teaches himself to hunt with a bow and arrow again. Then he pulls off a startling rescue of a girl of his tribe taken captive. Although the plot keeps us involved, the characters never seem developed enough. 5-8 s/i

Vick, Helen Hughes. *Tag Against Time.* Harbinger House, 1996. 189 pages.

This sequel to *Walker of Time* follows Tag, who was zapped back to ancient Hopi times, as he journeys forward to his own time in this century. He doesn't get home all in one "walk" through time but stops in different historical periods in the Hopi canyon to help change attitudes and behavior in order to preserve the remnants of Hopi culture. This engrossing story is also a history of how native ruins were destroyed and how the conservation movement began. Original and engaging. A satisfying sequel. 7-11 s/i

Villasenor, Victor. *Walking Stars: Stories of Magic and Power.* Pinata Books, 1995. 202 pages.

This collection of the stories of Victor's family is absolutely magical. He started out his journey towards story collecting by doubting the stupendous incidents his parents talked about until he went to Mexico to see for himself and learned that we are all walking stars. If we would only recognize the special brilliance and power we have as human beings. Not only are these stories interesting and engaging, they validate the importance of stories from our own cultures. Funny, touching, imaginative. A great collection. 6-10 s/i

Walter, Mildred Pitts. *Second Daughter: The Story of a Slave Girl.* Scholastic, 1996. 214 pages,

Aissa, a slave girl who never knew her parents, lives in a household with her older sister who seems better able than Aissa to outwardly accept that she is a slave. Set in the years just prior to the Revolutionary War, the reader sees the struggles of the slaves in the Ashley household to submit to their owner's demands. Aissa and her sister, Bett, meet free blacks and because their owner is part of the group of white men of property writing the Massachusetts Constitution. They are privy to the political thought of the time. Eventually Bett can take no more of her mistress's treatment, and she approaches lawyers she knows through her master to take her case and declare slavery illegal in Massachusetts. A fascinating novel that includes stories about Africa as well as strong portrayals of Africans who did not accept the way the masters defined them. 6-10 s/i

White, Ruth. *Belle Prater's Boy.* Bantam, 1996. 196 pages.

Woodrow comes down from the Appalachian hills to live with his grandparents after his mother disappears. Told from the point of view of his cousin, Gypsy, who lives right next door, this gentle, poignant tale takes us into the children's deep inner places when sadness and loneliness stay. These cousins share their sixth grade year and gradually help each other deal with their losses. The characters and setting jump to life for the reader and we feel we are witnesses to the turmoil in this quiet Virginia town. I loved this book. 5-9 s/i

Woodson, Jacqueline. *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun.* Scholastic, 1995. 141 pages.

Melanin Sun and his hip mom have a good life together. Then she breaks it to him that she is in love with a white woman. His reaction to this news, which he feels shatters his world, is very realistic. He withdraws, won't speak to her, and doesn't know how to think about what is happening. He fears he will be labeled as gay, and his anger causes him to refuse to meet the woman so important to his mom. Terrifically done. 6-12 s/i