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Diana Mitchell

100+ Recent Novels That Can Work in the Classroom

Codes used: **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.

Adler, C. S. **Youn Hee And Me**. Harcourt Brace, 1995. 183 pages.

Caitlin loves her adopted brother Simon. When Caitlin's mother is notified that Simon has a sister who is alive and living in an orphanage in Korea, they know what they must do. Caitlin is excited about having another sibling, but when Youn Hee arrives and doesn't seem to like Caitlin but wants all of Simon's attention, she's no longer sure this will work out.

This novel realistically describes the joys and the difficulties of fitting another member into a family, especially one from another culture who seems to disapprove of so much about America.

A terrific little book that does a great job dealing with the clash of cultures as well as the issue of adoption. 5-9 s/i

Avi. **Nothing But the Truth**. Orchard Books, 1991.

A ninth-grader's suspension for singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" during homeroom becomes a national news story. Also, there is a good portrayal of an English teacher who can't see herself as the students see her, and who doesn't realize the sometimes damaging effect she has on her students.

The unusual thing about this story is the way it's told through a series of conversations, memos, letters, P.A. announcements, and diaries. This fast-paced, interesting novel shows how ridiculous school rules and procedures can look to the outsider. Kids will like this one. 7-11 s/i

Bauer, Joan. **Squashed**. Delacorte, 1992. 194 pages.

Growing a pumpkin for a contest doesn't seem like much of a plot line for a story. But don't be deceived. This funny, touching story is wonderful! Ellie wants to spend time nurturing her pumpkin, but her oh-so-logical father who's still recovering from his wife's death has other plans for Ellie. Ellie prevails and in her quest for the best pumpkin, she encounters pumpkin saboteurs, dishonest farmers, and a boy who understands her and her own feelings about her mother's death.

Pumpkins will take on a new meaning to readers of this book. Issues include: being overweight, death of a parent, being oneself. 7-11 s/i

Bauer, Joan. **Thwunk**. Dell, 1995. 215 pages.

A.J. McCreary gets her wish. Through the strange appearance of a real, live Cupid, her wish of undying love and devotion from gorgeous Peter Terris comes true. In this hilarious account of teen love, A.J. learns that looks truly are not enough. Another interesting aspect of this novel is A.J.'s passion for photography. Through that passion the reader learns about photography as art. A fun, satisfying book that I wish all my students suffering from love sickness would read! 7-11 s/i

Bauer, Marion Dane. **Am I Blue?** HarperCollins, 1994. 272 pages.

This wonderful collection of 16 stories all deal with gay and lesbian themes. Some deal with figuring out who one is, others deal with acceptance, one deals with death. But all are alive with human emotions and show the place love and caring have in our lives. Some of these stories are so powerful you'll never forget them, others make a gentle impact, but the need to write openly about what love means to the characters in these stories cannot be denied. This collection should be in every library and on every classroom shelf. 9-12 s/i

Bauer, Marion Dane. **Face to Face**. Clarion Books, 1991. 176 pages.

Picked on at school by bullies, thirteen-year-old Michael confronts his fears during a trip to Colorado to see his father who works as a white-water rafting guide and whom Michael has not seen in eight years. This story shows a boy coming to grips with his father's inability to be a parent for him. Sensitively told. Addresses the issue of children feeling they are to blame for the breakup of a marriage and shows how deeply buried painful memories can be. Issues include fear,

divorce, fathers and sons, abandonment, hostility toward step-parent. 6-10 s/i

Bauer, Marion Dane. **A Question Of Trust**. Scholastic, 1994. 130 pages.

A week after their mother leaves and moves across town, Brad (12) and Charlie (8) take in a stray cat in secret because of their fear that their father will disapprove. The cat soon gives birth to kittens and both boys pour their time and affection into these felines. Their longings and fears are reflected in how they deal with the cats. They are angry when they believe the mother cat has hurt one of her kittens, and in their anger they try to ban the mother cat from being near her young.

Numerous parallels exist between the boys' feelings for their mother and their treatment of the cats. Even if young readers do not understand all these parallels, they will recognize the uncertainty, fear, and unresolved feelings shown in this vivid portrayal of children learning to cope with their parents' separation. Movingly and gently told. 5-8 s/i

Bennett, James. **Dakota Dream**. Scholastic, 1994. 182 pages.

Floyd has been in foster homes most of his life. He finally breaks loose by running away to an Indian reservation since he feels his destiny is to be an Indian. When he gets there, he is taken seriously and encouraged to go on a vision seek. During this four days of fasting, Floyd reviews his whole life and comes to a clearer understanding of what he really wants in life. The reader gets real insight into the foster care system as well as insights into the wisdom of the elders in the Sioux nation. A thought-provoking, heartwarming novel. 6-11 s/i

Bennett, Jay. **Skinhead**. Fawcett Juniper, 1991. 146 pages.

A mysterious call summons Jonathan to Seattle. Once there, his life is threatened after the man he went to see dies before Jonathan can talk to him. When he decides to stay in Seattle to solve this mystery, he is kidnapped by a murderous group of Nazi skinheads. Another fast-paced, compelling novel by Bennett. This book looks deeply at why some people become intolerant. 6-12 w

Bennett, Jay. **Sing Me a Death Song**. Fawcett Juniper, 1990.

Jason has to live with the fact that his mother, a convicted murderer, and in jail for eight years is soon to be executed. He dreams that it is up to him to save her, and one week before her execution, a dying sheriff gives Jason new information that could save her life. High-powered, terrifying—a real page turner. Might be a good novel to use to show students how to write such compelling mysteries. 7-11 w

Block, Francesca Lia. **Cherokee Bat and the Goat Guys**. HarperCollins, 1992. 116 pages.

With their parents away, four young people form a rock band that becomes wildly popular, carrying them into a freer life than they can cope with. Because they get involved in sex and drugs way before they can handle them, two of the band members totally lose

touch with who they are and what is important to them. This is the third book in the series. It is still zany, but the message is much more ominous even though it's almost written like a myth or fairy tale. Rock music, identity, growing up too fast. 8-11 s/i

Block, Francesca Lia. **The Hanged Man**. HarperCollins, 1994. 137 pages.

Parts of this book, which takes place in Los Angeles, almost seem surreal as do many of Laurel's experiences. At 17 she stops eating after her father dies, and she seems to drift through life not caring about anything. She becomes involved in a somewhat casual but sexual relationship with Jack. Eventually, through his caring she is able to deal with the horrors in her life she had been hiding even from herself. A haunting, disturbing book. 9-12 s/i

Block, Francesca Lia. **Witch Baby**. HarperCollins, 1991.

Witch Baby, a girl with purple eyes, comes to live with Weetzie Bat and My-Secret-Agent-Lover-Man as a baby. Now she initiates many wild adventures in Los Angeles and appears selfish and nasty as she tries to understand who her parents are and where she belongs. Zany and parody-like but does show the deep longing of children to know of their background. Issues include search for parents, reason for acting out. 7-10 s/i

Bode, Janet. **Kids Still Having Kids**. Franklin Watts, 1992. 179 pages.

This non-fiction book poignantly tells the stories (in their own words) of kids having kids and how they cope. This hard-hitting book is not for the faint-hearted. It tells of eleven-year-olds having babies, of girls deciding to have abortions, of girls deciding to give babies up for adoption, of girls who get no support from the fathers of their children. This book tells it like it is. 7-12 s/i

Brennan, J.H. **Shiva Accused**. HarperCollins, 1991.

This is an engrossing story set in prehistoric times which shows women as the rulers. As a major ceremony approaches, political rivals from another tribe falsely accuse a Shingu girl, Shiva, of murdering the Hag. 6-10 s/i

Brooks, Bruce. **What Hearts**. HarperCollins, 1992. 94 pages.

After his mother divorces his father and remarries, Asa's sharp intellect helps him realize how he must act to cope with this new parent. Four completely separate stories each show us an aspect of Asa's growth and give a very clear picture of the joys and traumas of growing up. We know this boy when we've finished the book. Issues include divorce, step-parents, self-knowledge, love, coming to terms with your world. 9-12 s/i

Brooks, Martha. **Paradise Cafe and Other Stories**. Joy Street/Little, Brown, 1990.

First loves, dealing with older people, attachment to a dying dog, runaways, and a closeness to a retarded person are just some of the topics dealt with in this very lively collection of short stories. These brief encounters

with life are honest and real. The variety of the people in the stories and the situations they are part of also keep the reader turning the pages. A very satisfying collection that should appeal to junior high and above. 7-12 w

Brooks, Martha. **Two Moons In August**. Groundwood Books, 1991. 157 pages

Sidonie is 16 and trying to recover from the death of her mother a year and a half earlier. Her father cannot share his grief and becomes remote. Her older sister is home for the summer but is busy with her own life. Sidonie becomes friends with Kieran who is himself enmeshed in the battle his parents are waging. This well-written novel thrusts the reader into the heart of a family and its friends while they try to work through their grief and find new meaning in life.

I liked this book and can feel the mood of it each time I pick it up. Issues include: death of a parent, separation of parents, love outside of one's race, growing up, falling in love. 8-12 s/i

Buffie, Margaret. **My Mother's Ghost**. Kids Can Press, Ltd, 1992. 214 pages.

Sixteen-year-old Jess moves to a ranch with her parents after her brother's death. Her mentally unstable mother seems to be bothered by a ghost. Jess worries about her until she too begins to be drawn into the life of a young boy who lived at the ranch early in the century. Part of the novel is told from this boy's point of view. This engrossing story places the past and the present side by side and makes the reader wonder what the young boy and Jess's deceased brother have to do with each other. Major issues include dealing with death, step-parents, being a handicapped child. 7-11 s/i

Burgess, Barbara Hood. **Oren Bell**. Delacorte, 1991.

With a ghost in their purple bedroom, a drug house next door, a granddaddy who drinks too much, new stricter teachers at school, and a mother being courted by their new veterinarian, the three Bell kids have plenty to cope with. Tragedy strikes when Oren's best friend, another seventh grader, is found murdered. His death sets off a whole chain of events that lead to changes for all of the Bell children. This fast-paced, mysterious story not only shows how these kids deal with the violence that surrounds them in the streets, but also reveals the love and the warmth present in their family that gives them the support they need to succeed. Middle-schoolers will be charmed by this wonderfully written book and will long remember each member of the Bell family including their ghost. Siblings, drugs, dating parent. 6-9 w

Cadnum, Michael. **Breaking the Fall**. Viking, 1992. 131 pages.

Desperately trying to hold together his disintegrating life, Stanley allows his friend Jared to draw him into a dangerous game of fear. Stanley knows it's wrong to break into people's houses but continues to allow Jared to tell him it's harmless because they only steal something to prove they've been there. Through his interactions with Sky and her family, Stanley begins to develop

a measure of self worth but still fears that Jared will label him a coward. A fast-paced, hard-hitting book about what this desire to feel intensely alive says about both these boys' lives. This one grips you. Issues include alienation, lack of relationship with parents, lack of communication. 9-12 s/i

Cadnum, Michael. **Calling Home**. Puffin. 1991, 138 pages.

Peter parties and drinks all the time especially with his best friend Mead. One night in the basement of an abandoned house, Mead purposefully drops a full bottle of whiskey and Peter punches and accidentally kills him. For eight long weeks Peter carries this secret with him and the reader feels his guilt, anxiety, and hopelessness. So that Mead's parents won't be upset, Peter imitates Mead's voice and calls them sporadically. This novel is terrifying and screams to be read in one sitting so the reader can sleep. Powerful!! The teen alcoholic is uncovered in this book. 7-12 w

Carter, Alden R. **Dogwolf**. Scholastic, 1994. 231 pages.

Pete doesn't feel wholly a part of either the Native America nor the white world. As he struggles to figure out who he is, he is tormented by the howling of a half dog/half wolf who is caged nearby. His decision to free the animal has far-reaching consequences. As the animal strikes and kills animals, he becomes a bigger threat to the whole community. The summer wears on, and Pete continues his work in a fire tower where it becomes impossible for him to ignore the consequences of his actions. Set in a forested area that is dry and ready to go up in flames at any time, this story is compelling, haunting, and thought-provoking. 8-11 s/i

Cooney, Caroline B. **Flight #116 Is Down**. Scholastic, 1992.

Teenager Heidi Lanseth helps rescue people from a plane crash on her family's property, and the experience changes her life forever. Fast-paced, suspenseful, engrossing. Except for a bit of heavy-handed, sexist male behavior at the end, this book was interesting and hard to put down. Issues include self-confidence, disasters, human reaction to disaster. 6-10 s/i

Cormier, Robert. **Tunes For Bears To Dance To**. Dell, 1992. 101 pages.

To escape the memories of the brother who died, Henry's family moves across town into an unfamiliar neighborhood. Since his father is too disturbed to work, Henry finds a job at a grocery store to supplement what his mother makes. Mr. Hairston, Henry's boss, is nice enough to his customers but speaks of them in disparaging terms behind their backs.

Then Henry befriends a survivor of the Holocaust who is slowly carving a replica of his childhood village. Mr. Hairston, aware of the relationship, asks Henry to do something based on Mr. Hairston's hate of Henry's friend. Henry needs the job, but can he find the strength to say NO to Mr. Hairston? Issues include racial hatred, Holocaust, death in family, following one's conscience. 6-10 s/i

Coville, Bruce. **Jennifer Murdley's Toad**. Harcourt Brace, 1992. 156 pages.

When a plain-looking fifth grader purchases a talking toad, she embarks on a series of extraordinary adventures that lead her into dealing with a magician, a witch, and the issue of what appearances really mean. Fun, zany, and interesting. Issues include self-concept, inner vs. outer beauty, dealing with peers. 5-8 s/i

Crutcher, Chris. **Athletic Shorts**. Dell, 1992. 161 pages.

Five of the six short stories in this collection have characters from Crutcher's other novels. We find out how Lionel from *Stotan* resolves his feelings for the boy whose boat killed Lionel's family. We find out where Telephone Man learned to be prejudiced. We find out why Johnny from *Crazy Horse Electric Game* spends so much time making puns. Students who have read any of Crutcher's novels will especially love these stories. 7-12 w

Crutcher, Chris. **Ironman**. Greenwillow, 1995. 192 pages

From Bo Brewster's interactions with his demanding and uncompromising father, he has become a very stubborn person who won't back down. When he gets in trouble with a teacher at school, the only way the teacher will let him back in class is if he goes to Anger Management class before school. From that motley group, Bo eventually learns what caring and support mean.

Bo is determined to win the Ironman contest (swimming, running, biking) but his father actively works to sabotage his efforts. The other students in Anger Management become Bo's support group. Much of this book is written as a series of letters to Larry King (Live) because Bo doesn't seem to have anyone else to talk to. This book is fast-paced and engrossing as the lives of the participants in Anger Management unfold and they try to learn to deal with the conflicts in their lives. 9-12 w

Crutcher, Chris. **Staying Fat For Sarah Byrnes**. Greenwillow, 1993. 216 pages.

The daily class discussions about the nature of man, the existence of God, abortion, organized religion, suicide, and other contemporary issues serve as a backdrop for a high school senior's attempt to answer a friend's dramatic cry for help.

Crutcher's done it again. The reader knows there's more than meets the eye about Sarah's disfigured face. This novel takes us into the complex issues that touch the lives of teens today including coping with abuse and coping with rigid-thinking parents. This novel is loaded with discussion possibilities. 10-12 w

Davis, Jenny. **Checking on the Moon**. Dell, 1993. 208 pages.

Cab Jones and her older brother Bill go to live with their grandmother in Philadelphia while their mother and her new husband travel through Europe one summer. Cab ends up waitressing at her grandmother's neighborhood restaurant where she gets very involved in this working class community. Then break-ins and

a rape mobilize the community and they decide to take their own streets back. A satisfying, emotional book. 7-12 s/i

Davis, Ossie. **Just Like Martin**. Simon & Schuster, 1992. 215 pages.

Following the deaths of two classmates in a bomb explosion at his Alabama church, fourteen-year-old Stone organizes a children's march for civil rights in the autumn of 1963. Stone's intense desire to be involved in Martin Luther King's non-violence is balanced by his father's cynicism and belief that nonviolence won't work. A moving, well-told story. Stone is the kind of kid you'd love to have for a son. Issues include civil rights, prejudice, making a difference. 7-11 s/i

Davis, Terry. **If Rock and Roll Were a Machine**. Delacorte, 1992. 209 pages.

Bert Bowden lost his sense of self when a manipulative fifth grade teacher decided to crush any feelings of pride and intelligence he had. Now in high school, Bert's interest in motorcycles and writing is nurtured by two caring adults who help Bert see that he is someone worthwhile. A wonderfully written book that forces us to remember the doubts about ourselves that so dominated our teenage years. Issues include identity, damage a teacher can do, motorcycles, and writing. 9-12 s/i

DeFelice, Cynthia. **Weasel**. MacMillan, 1990.

Alone in the frontier wilderness in the winter of 1839 while his father is recovering from an injury, eleven-year-old Nathan runs afoul of the renegade killer known as Weasel and makes a surprising discovery about the concept of revenge. In this survival story which explores prejudice towards Native Americans, the characters become very real to the reader. 6-10 s/i

Doherty, Berlie. **White Peak Farm**. Orchard Books, 1990.

Teenage Jeannie unfolds the triumphs and the tragedies of her close-knit family as they face violent changes on their isolated Derbyshire farm. The reader knows this family when she's done with the book—Jeannie's difficult father, placating mother, moody brother, and lighthearted older sister who must leave her family's acceptance behind when she marries the son of her father's enemy. Jeannie almost goes the route of many intelligent young women who fall in love—but with her young man being self-centered and with her Gran's advice, she is prodded to look beyond the farm and the life she has always known. The tensions of living in her family are well drawn as are the characters. 9-12, s/i

Dickinson, Peter. **AK**. Delacorte, 1990.

When a military coup occurs in the constantly war-torn African country of Nagala, teenage Paul is forced to flee into the open countryside to avoid enemy soldiers who seek his life. The reader really feels the uncertainty and fear caused by living in a war-torn country. The problems of underdeveloped nations are vividly shown as is the power of a single woman who knows how to bring people together. This would be a

wonderful book to use in social studies classes, especially to discuss the effects of war on young people. Issues include war, fear, powerlessness, corruption. 8-12 s/i

Draper, Sharon Mills. ***Tears of a Tiger***. MacMillan, 1994.

Rob Washington, 17-year-old basketball star is killed in a one-car accident. He and his three friends had been drinking, and his best friend Andy had been the driver. This novel focuses on Andy who is trying to cope with the crushing burden of guilt. Most people in his life tell him to put the past behind him, and almost no one understands how hard it is for him to get through a day. A counselor helps for a while, but Andy quits going. His grades slip, he argues with his parents, and his girl friend leaves him. This story, which does not end happily, really shows what it's like to be this depressed. The end is powerful and the letters written to Andy about his suicide show how intensely a loss like this is felt by those near to him. The style this was written in took some getting used to—dialogue with nothing to identify the speakers—and at first I thought it was a bit preachy, but it got stronger as I got further into it. Issues include drinking and driving, being responsible for someone's death, suicide. 9-12 s/i

Feder, Harriet. ***Mystery in Miami Beach***. Lerner, 1992. 173 pages.

When spending winter break with her grandmother in Miami beach, freshman Vivi Hartman stumbles upon danger, Nazi hunters, and an old mystery involving the escape of the Jews from Germany before WWII. Hurtled unknowingly into a web of intrigue, Vivi must quickly decide who she can trust to protect her grandmother and herself. This fast-paced story makes the reader want to know more about why the ship, the *St. Louis*, was not allowed to disembark any of its Jewish passengers. This novel would be a great way to arouse students' interest in discrimination against the Jews before and during WWII in the United States. 6-11 s/i

Foley, June. ***Susanna Siegelbaum Gives Up Guys***. Scholastic, 1991.

Friendly, popular Susanna bets her best friend that she can give up guys for three months. So that her parents won't wonder about this unusual behavior, she asks the class clown, Ben, to pretend to be her boyfriend. The two spend time together after school, and Ben is more honest and critical of Susanna than anyone has ever been. Surprisingly, she listens to what he says and slowly allows her real self to emerge around him. Susanna has an impact on Ben, too. He begins to put his "class clown" act aside and let her see the more serious side that he has tried so hard to suppress. Susanna's non-traditional parents are a delight. Her father stays at home and is a terrific cook while her mom is a doctor. Contact with them makes Ben rethink his views on what a man should be. This book is much more than the title implies and will appeal to teens who want a look at an open relationship. 6-10 s/i

Gallo, Don, ed. ***Join In: Multiethnic Short Stories***. Delacorte, 1993. 256 pages.

This is another collection of excellent short stories. Each is long enough to have real meat in it for classroom discussion, and through each story the reader will gain new insights into and understanding of the cultures represented in the collection. More importantly, however, are the wonderful characters we meet who are dealing with the very human issues involved in growing up. 7-12 w

Gallo, Don, ed. ***Short Circuits***. Delacorte, 1992. 206 pages.

This collection of scary short stories has something for almost everyone: an evil ghost, unexpected residents on a houseboat in Egypt, a rich man who can't believe he's dead, a librarian who knows how to imprison her patrons in books, a dead aunt who still makes her negative presence felt on Christmas, a dog who's really a person, and a deceased dog who's still around. This is a fun, interesting kid pleaser. 6-10 w

Garland, Sherry. ***Shadow of the Dragon***. Harcourt Brace, 1993. 314 pages.

Danny, a rather Americanized Vietnamese teen, struggles to keep his family as the main focus of his life (as his grandmother wishes) when he feels pulled especially by his first love—an Anglo girl. Then Danny's cousin Sang Le comes to live with them straight from a refugee camp in Hong Kong, and Danny has to spend even more time with the family. In the background is a Vietnamese gang led by Cobra who brings an air of menace wherever they all go. Sang Le begins to get involved with them, then Danny is threatened by a group of Skinheads who want him to stay away from his Anglo girlfriend. The ending is not a happy one, but Danny finally understands who he is and what he does owe his family. This book provides wonderful information on Vietnamese customs and values and could be used on a unit on diverse cultures which could include how it feels to be pulled by being part of two cultures. 8-12 s/i

Garland, Sherry. ***Song of the Buffalo Boy***. Harcourt Brace, 1992. 243 pages.

Shunned and mistreated because of her mixed heritage, and determined to avoid an arranged marriage, seventeen-year-old Loi runs away to Ho Chi Minh City with the hope that she and the boy she loves will be able to go to the United States and find her American father. This touching story shows the beauty of Vietnam as well as the reality of living in a rural community. It also vividly portrays kids living off of the streets in the city. We get a real understanding of the kind of life mixed-race children in Vietnam live. Issues include prejudice, desire to find biological parent, as well as information on life in Vietnam. 7-12 s/i

George, Jean Craighead. ***Julie***. Harper Collins, 1994. 226 pages.

Readers of *Julie of the Wolves* will love reading this book and finding out what happened to Julie. Others

will find it equally satisfying as they learn about Julie's culture and the lives of the wolves.

When Julie returns to her very concerned father, she is faced with many challenges. One is to accept her father's Caucasian wife and another is how to help save her wolves in an environment that sees them as threats. Julie's strong commitment to the ways and beliefs of her culture often puts her in conflict with even her own father who sees the need to modernize. Julie finds an ally in a young Siberian man, and their relationship gradually deepens.

This sequel also involves survival scenes such as when Julie and her stepmother are caught in a raging snow storm and when Julie returns to her beloved wolves to try to figure out a plan to save them. Although not fighting for her daily survival as she did in the previous book, Julie is shown in this book quietly fighting for the world she knows, loves, and wants to keep intact. 6-10 s/l.

Goodman, Joan Elizabeth. ***Songs from Home***. Harcourt Brace, 1994. 213 pages.

Anna, living in a pensionne in Rome with her dad, longs for a real home and real roots. She does not understand how her father can be content drifting and earning money as a street performer. She is humiliated by this kind of begging. She does find one true friend at school who accepts her even though Anna shares little about her circumstances. Then one evening while singing on a street outside a restaurant, an old friend of Anna's deceased mother recognizes Anna. She lets Anna's dad know that his family is desperate to have them back in the United States since they haven't seen Anna since she was a baby. Anna must make the decision about what's best for her—to continue this itinerant life or put down roots. This book provides a good look at a "hippie" parent and his child who wants something different. 7-10 s/i

Grant, Cynthia D. ***Shadow Man***. Atheneum, 1992. 149 pages.

Charming but reckless eighteen-year-old Gabe, drunk as usual, smashes his truck into a tree and dies, sending waves of shock and grief through his small town. Told in chapters that alternate narrators, we hear the voices of his girlfriend, brother, uncle, father, and others. We also hear the voice of the dead boy through the journals he's written for his English teacher. This powerful book examines the impact of Gabe's death as it also looks at the forces that created an alcoholic eighteen-year-old. Brief mention of sex. Issues include death, family problems, alcoholism, teen pregnancy. 9-12 w

Greene, Bette. ***The Drowning of Stephan Jones***. Bantam, 1991.

Carla's mother, as town librarian, fights against townspeople who want any "anti-Christian" book taken from the library while Carla has to decide how to interact with her homophobic boyfriend who torments a gay couple. Even though the male couple seem stereotypical, this is a look at hatred in its most brutal form. Worse still, the town seems to support the harassment. A powerful book which clearly shows us

the face of hatred. Issues include intolerance, censorship of library books, peer pressure, as well as homophobia. 8-12 s/i

Gregory, Kristiana. ***Earthquake at Dawn***. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

A novelization of twenty-four-year-old photographer Edith Irvine's experiences in the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake, as seen through the eyes of fifteen-year-old Daisy, a fictitious traveling companion. Good look at the earthquake in human terms as well as a look at what life was like for women at his time. 7-11 s/l

Guy, Rosa. ***The Music of Summer***. Delacorte, 1992.

The attractive, sophisticated young African-Americans gathered at Cape Cod have their own set of economic and color prejudices; but Sarah, the darkest-skinned, begins to see more clearly the duties and hopes of her ancestry.

An intriguing, stimulating book, it asks the reader to look at the whys of the dark skin/light skin issue. Brief mention of sex. An excellent book to involve students in so they can see how deeply racism permeates our society. I loved the book partly because the fluffy social climbers were exposed as shallow and potentially dangerous. Lots of food for thought and discussion. 9-12 s/i

Hamilton, Virginia. ***Plain City***. Scholastic, 1993. 194 pages.

Twelve-year-old Buhlaire, a "mixed" child who feels out of place partially because she doesn't seem to have a father, wants to know her family's history. She is enraged when she finds out her father is not dead as her family has led her to believe. She becomes critical of her mother's career, lashes out at other members of her family, and generally feels that no one understands her. After she does meet her father, the conflicts with the rest of her family intensify, and she has to figure out for herself how to interact with her homeless, sometimes deranged father. I liked the way her whole extended family raised Buhlaire, and I liked her mother's irreverent attitudes. This was a very realistic portrayal of adolescent turbulence. Themes include finding and accepting oneself, dealing with prejudice, and accepting one's family background. 6-10 s/i

Hobbs, Will. ***Down River***. Atheneum, 1991.

Fifteen-year-old Jessie and the other rebellious teenage members of a wilderness survival school team abandon their adult leader, hijack his boats, and try to run the dangerous white water at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. What a book! Adventurous and compelling as we watch and often wince at the decisions this group of outcasts makes. Troy dominates the group and makes decisions that keep him center stage and in control. Jessie is attracted to him but eventually learns to look past his blue eyes to his actions. All of these participants are troubled, and the experience helps put in perspective for most of them what is important in life. A terrific book that is difficult to put down. Themes include alienation from family, wilderness survival, identity. 8-11 w

Hotze, Sollace. **Acquainted with the Night**. Houghton Mifflin, 1992. 230 pages.

During a summer on a Maine island, seventeen-year-old Molly and her older cousin become very close as she helps him deal with his father's suicide and his experiences in the Vietnam War, and as they share encounters with a troubled ghost. Very realistic story that also shows the pull of physical closeness. The ghost, however, helps Molly and Caleb keep their relationship in perspective. Themes include closeness, dealing with the death of a parent, overcoming experiences in Vietnam. 8-12 s/i

Homes, A.M. **Jack**. Vintage, 1990. 220 pages.

Teens strive to be "normal" and Jack is no different. He's finally adjusted to his parents' divorce when his father tells him that he is gay and living with his lover. Jack's response is typical, and he condemns his father and his actions. Then Jack immediately tries to find a girlfriend. However, Jack eventually does get a different perspective on his family when he spends the weekend with his best friends's family whom he views as being perfect. This very realistic book introduces the reader to an issue more and more teens have to face today. 9-12 s/i

Houston, Gloria. **Mountain Valor**. Philomel Books, 1994. 236 pages.

Eleven-year-old Valor is left on the farm with her pregnant mother, a younger cousin, and two ex-slaves when her dad and brother go off to the Civil War. This spunky heroine believes females are capable people who count. After soldiers ravage the farm, steal their animals, and hurt some of her people, Valor decides that she should be the one to take action. With the advice of a herbalist she respects, she hatches a plot to get revenge on the cruel soldiers and to get her animals back. Students will be surprised to see how little women were thought to be able to do. They will also be surprised at the restrictions on women's lives. Valor's actions, of course, challenge these stereotypes. 6- s/i

Jordan, Sherryl. **A Time of Darkness**. Scholastic, 1990.

A fascinating story about teenage Rocco who at first in his dreams and then in reality is taken to another time and place. The people live in caves in the mountains and make and do everything for their own survival. At first Rocco is disconcerted and uncomfortable around these people he thinks of as primitive. The longer he lives there, the more he comes to admire them. He is especially drawn to Ayoshe, and when he finds that she knows what his watch is, he wonders if he's in the past or the future. Great book. Really gets one to think about our lifestyle and its ultimate effect on the earth. I loved it. 6-12 /i.

Katz, Welwyn Wilton. **Whalesinger**. Dell, 1990. 212 pages.

Nick takes the job as research assistant on a conservation project on the coast of California to forget about his brother's death. Marty takes a job as babysitter for two kids whose parents are scientists on the project because she feels babysitting is one of the few things she's got any talent for. Together they discover that the

whale does have a song as they discover the real and self-serving motivation for the project on the part of the director. Confronting him almost ends Nick's life. Although this book is a bit slow at first, it sweeps the reader into its center as we get involved with the whales and the dark secret Nick and Marty are trying to uncover. Issues and ideas include whales, ethical behavior, conservation, discovery, and appreciation of self. 9-12 s/i

Kerr, M.E. **Deliver Us From Evie**. HarperCollins, 1994. 177 pages.

Parr is used to the kidding about his older sister Evie who the kids call one of his older brothers because she loves farm work and dresses as she pleases. Then Evie meets beautiful, wealthy Patsy Duff. For the first time she feels someone understands her, and she's willing to admit to her family that she's a lesbian. The story is told from Parr's point of view, and much of the novel deals with how his family, as well as the family of Parr's girlfriend, handles this news. Evie is portrayed sympathetically and family reactions seem realistic. No easy answers or solutions are offered. 9-12 s/i

Klass, David. **California Blue**. Scholastic, 1994. 199 pages.

When 17-year-old John Rodgers runs through the forest to keep in condition and to collect butterflies, he doesn't know that the chrysalis he finds will have such a big impact on his lumbering town or on his relationship with his dad. John's never been tough enough or athletic enough for his dad, and their relationship becomes even more strained when his dad is diagnosed with leukemia. As John realizes the impact of the butterfly on his town and his family, he also sorts out who he is and what's important to him. A very satisfying read. Issues include dealing with endangered species, dealing with death, standing up for one's principles, being different from others in your family. 8-12 s/i

Klass, Sheila Solomon. **Kool Ada**. Scholastic, 1991.

When Ada, a tough, street-fighting transplant from coal-mining country to the Chicago slums, gets the no-nonsense Ms. Walker as a teacher, she learns that there are other ways to stand up for yourself. This character is so well drawn that we root for her to make it and cringe each time she makes a decision that will take her further from her goal of being accepted and getting an education. Middle schoolers will be drawn to this book because of the spunkiness of the main character and because the fighting and name calling described is so realistic and often so much a part of their lives. 5-9 w

Klass, Sheila Solomon. **Rhino**. Scholastic, 1993. 161 pages.

Annie, a well adjusted teen, decides she needs to have her nose changed so she doesn't have to spend so much time worrying about it. She works to convince her grandfather and father, from whom she inherited the nose, that this operation is a good idea. She works to show her boyfriend, her mom, and sister how hard it is to be a teenager when you don't like how you look. We live with Annie through her school days, her efforts to support her boyfriend who has an abusive father,

and her pain at her grandfather's health problems as she wrestles with this issue. An involving book. Teen feelings are not trivialized. Issues include appearance, abusive parents, dealing with illness of grandparents. 7-12 s/i

Konigsburg, E.L. **T-Backs, T-Shirts, Coat and Suit.** Atheneum, 1993. 165 pages.

Spending the summer in Florida with her stepfather's sister who operates a "meals-on-wheels" van, twelve-year-old Chloe and her aunt become involved in a controversy surrounding the wearing of T-back bathing suits. I loved this one. It's funny and involving as we see the bonds deepen between Chloe and Bernadette, her step-aunt. This aunt treats her visitor with respect and understanding and sees her as a person, not a preteen. Bernadette takes strong personal stands as she deals with the controversy at work. She also stands strongly against a religious coalition who wants to label her a "witch" for her seemingly eccentric views. A very satisfying read because it deals with personal freedom issues as well as peer pressure. 6-10 s/i

Lasky, Kathryn. **Memoirs of a Bookbat.** Harcourt Brace, 1994. 215 pages.

At seven, Harper's best friends are her books. She reads so she can't hear her parents fighting. Then her parents find religion and everything changes. Her parents are happier but now become suspicious of Harper's reading, worrying that the devil's hand might be in it. Now they travel around the country first working to censor books, then to challenge what is taught in schools, and eventually to work against abortion. Through all these years Harper sees her parents change and become more and more judgmental and unaccepting. Harper invents ways to hide what she's reading. At 14, settled into an area for more than a few months, she makes a real friend who her parents later decide is too liberal for their tastes. Harper has to decide how long she can go on living a lie and living surrounded by the hypocrisy of many of the people in the movement. This book vividly describes what it's like for one little girl to grow up in a home that doesn't value books or independence of thought. 7-10 s/i

Lasky, Kathryn. **A Voice in the Wind.** Harcourt Brace, 1993. 256 pages.

The Starbuck twins (both sets of them) hate going to conventional schools, so when their dad is sent on an assignment in New Mexico, they are thrilled. Now they'll get their tutor back, the one who plans their lessons around adventures. As soon as the twins arrive in New Mexico, they are catapulted into an adventure after they, by chance, find two pottery fragments. When the fragments are stolen, they know they must be important. Returning to the area they found them in, they enter a kiva and meet the spirit of a young girl who was killed there. The plot thickens from there and the twins find themselves in the middle of a desperate race to return the fragments to the kiva so the spirit of the young girl may rest. Fast-paced and interesting, but I wanted to know the characters better. Would work well in a unit on Southwest Indians. 6-9 s/i

Lee, Marie. **Finding My Voice.** Houghton Mifflin, 1992.

As she tries to enjoy her senior year and choose which college she will attend, Korean-American Ellen Sung must deal with the prejudice of some of her classmates and pressure from her parents to get all A's. This excellent book shows examples of racism in teachers who think making Asian jokes to the only Asian-American in school is funny. Also vividly shows how much pressure Ellen's parents put on her to make sure her report card is perfect. 9-12 s/i

Levine, Ellen. **Freedom's Children.** Avon, 1993. 172 pages.

This collection of true stories gives the reader a real sense of the horrors and joys of being a teen during the Civil Rights Movement in the South. Levine's interviews of 30 people bring new insights into this turbulent time. Although the descriptions of the 1950s and 1960s are painful to hear about, the pride and joy that these young people at the time had of being involved in something bigger than themselves and in something they knew to be right sings from these pages. This book is a wonderful addition to the information already available on the Civil Rights Movement because it makes the time period come alive for the reader. 6-12 w

Lowry, Lois. **The Giver.** Houghton Mifflin, 1993. 180 pages.

In this novel, the seemingly "perfect" society is shown. Everyone has a job, there is no crime, lives seem to be led happily, harmony reigns. Then when Jonas is given his lifetime occupation, we become aware of cracks in the smooth surface of this society. What actually happens when people are released? Why does everyone do what the loudspeakers tell them to do? This moving, haunting story forces us to look at ourselves and our society and to take stock of what's important to us. This compelling book could easily be paired with *Brave New World*. Issues include the "cost" of a perfect society, how much freedom and choice people really want, rules, religion, diversity, how society defines murder, and alternatives to our violent society. 8-12 w

Lynch, Chris. **Gypsy Davey.** HarperCollins, 1994. 179 pages.

This sad story is of Davey's life. His mother really didn't want to take care of him, his father was gone, so when his sister was seven she started taking care of him. He was put in front of the TV and could spend endless hours happily watching it. Davey seems slow because he's never had much attention paid to him. When his sister at 17 has a baby, Davey wants to take care of baby Dennis and give him the love he's never felt. Abruptly, his sister leaves with a strange man and the baby, and Davey is left without anyone to love him. He thinks that soon he should start having babies so he can give them the kind of love they deserve. This story is poignant and moving but somewhat depressing as we see the cycle of kids having kids they aren't capable of nurturing, repeating itself. 9-12 s/i

Lynch, Chris. **Ice**man. HarperCollins, 1994. 181 pages.

Eric is an animal when he's playing hockey. His dad seems to love to see him pound and punch people on the ice. Eric is always booed and spends lots of time in the penalty box. His brother had been a star hockey player a few years before but then decided to quit forever. Now Eric is all his dad has to count on. Eric suddenly realizes he hates hockey and tells his brother that he too plans on quitting. Duane comes to what is to be Eric's last game and he clearly sees what's going on. His observations have an impact on Eric. Powerfully written novel in which we see how different kids respond to family tensions and expectations. 8-11 s/i

Lynch, Chris. **Shadow Boxer**. HarperCollins, 1993. 215 pages.

When George's father died of boxing related injuries, George became the man of the family. He cares deeply about his little brother Monty and tries to teach his brother everything he knows about life and about boxing. He tries to drill into his brother that he should only fight if he absolutely has to. But his brother who was too young to remember how boxing damaged his father, is enamored of the sport, and George finds out you can't always make someone do what you want. He struggles in his role as child-parent to find a way to reach his brother. Although this novel is about boxing, it is much more about love and caring and family. Powerful! A fantastic first novel. Themes include responsibility, siblings, what children owe parents. 6-12 w

Mazer, Norma Fox. **Out of Control**. Avon Books, 1993. 217 pages.

Valerie Michon is different than other high school girls. She speaks her mind, dresses to be comfortable, and isn't willing to play games with anyone. Her confidence and sense of safety, however, are shattered when she is assaulted by three males in school. The novel focuses on how others perceive the assault, how the boys are dealt with, and the impact this does or doesn't have on each of them. The effect on the victim is vividly shown, and once Valerie's anger surfaces she knows this incident must be made public. Well drawn characters. One of the boys, Rollo, is shown as a person who also has a compassionate side. Lots of issues surface in this book such as emphasis on appearance, dealing with a retarded sister, parents who are willing to overlook anything their child does, how prominent families are often protected by the school, and of course, blaming the victim. Lots of food for thought and discussion. 9-12 s/i

Meyer, Carolyn. **Rio Grande Stories**. Harcourt Brace, 1994. 257 pages.

Elghth graders become involved at school with the Heritage Project. To share what they learn about their culture, they decide to write a book and sell it to support a school project. This novel is a compilation of the lives of each fictional character and the story they turn in to be published. Set in New Mexico, these stories reflect the racial diversity of the class. Jeremy wrote about the hidden Jews of New Mexico, Ricky wrote about the important work the Navahos did as "code talkers" in WWII. Pauline wrote about pot mak-

ing, an art that seemed to be passed down through the generations in her family. Through these stories we see the students sharing the richness of their cultures and their pride in their heritages. 7-12 s/i

Meyer, Carolyn. **Where the Broken Heart Still Beats**. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 196 pages.

Based on the true story of Cynthia Ann Parker who was kidnapped at nine by Comanches, this novel illuminates the huge cultural chasm between whites and Indians in the 1800s. Cynthia, who was raised as a Comanche and married a Comanche chief, had three children. But then Texas rangers recapture Cynthia and her young daughter. The novel focuses on Cynthia's struggles to understand her "true" family and her hope that her warrior son will rescue her. Readers come away with a rich understanding of Comanche life as well as a new perspective on the white man's ways. This book would be a great addition to any studies of Native Americans or cultural difference. 6-12 s/i

Mori, Kyoto. **Shizuko's Daughter**. Fawcett Juniper, 1993. 213 pages.

Yuki's mother committed suicide partially because of her father's involvement with another woman. A year after her mother's death he marries the woman and Yuki has to learn how to adjust to a stepmother who is not very fond of her. The story focuses on Yuki as she tries to figure out what this tragedy meant and what is important in her life.. What gives this beautifully written book such depth is that we are allowed into the minds of many of the characters and so come away with a more complete understanding of Yuki's family. In this engaging and satisfying book, readers learn much about Japanese culture and Japanese family life. 7-12 s/i

Myers, Walter Dean. **The Glory Field**. Scholastic, 1994. 375 pages.

It started with 11-year-old Muhammad Bilal in chains and shackles forcibly taken to South Carolina. After his death he was buried in a field that eventually his heirs were able to purchase That was the beginning of the land they owned and the living they made. This novel is the story of generations of the Lewis family and their struggles and joys. It is the story of one family and one field. Five members of different generations are spotlighted, and through them this sweeping, thought-provoking story is told. 7-12 s/i

Myers, Walter Dean. **Somewhere in the Darkness**. Scholastic, 1992. 168 pages.

Jimmy lives with his grandmother in New York City and although very intelligent, finds it hard to motivate himself to go to school. Unexpectedly, the father he only vaguely remembers and who has been in jail, shows up. He insists on taking Jimmy with him as he goes back to places that meant a lot to him. Their relationship takes on an urgency as Jimmy learns that his father escaped from jail and is seriously ill. All his dad, Crab, can think about as he realizes how little time he has left, is how much his child means to him and how important it is to establish a relationship with him. A sad but satisfying book about a boy who had dreams about his father and a man who got his head together in jail but

had too little time to do anything with what he learned. I loved this very moving book. Themes include father/son relationships, staying out of trouble, results of making poor impulsive decisions. 7-11 s/i

Namioka, Lensey. ***April and the Dragon Lady***. Harcourt Brace, 1994. 214 pages.

April, who is Chinese, is used to looking different than others at her school but she sometimes wonders if people like her because they have a stereotype of what an Asian is like. She's comfortable with her Caucasian boyfriend who doesn't even seem intimidated by her grandmother. But when Grandma gets wind of her widowed son's plans to remarry, she throws all of her energy into preventing it. April wonders if she'll be the one stuck home to care for grandmother after her father's remarriage. This book gives us a look at the strong family bonds and sense of duty within this Chinese family. Interesting insights into why so many Chinese men are pampered. Issues include interracial dating and duty to family. Would work well in a unit looking at families across cultures. 6-10 s/i

Nixon, Joan Lowery. ***The Name of the Game was Murder***. Delacorte, 1993. 182 pages.

When Samantha visits her great aunt and uncle at their island mansion, she mainly plans to meet her uncle who is a great novelist. Instead, she becomes involved in figuring out who the murderer in the house is. Her uncle had invited prominent people to the island who all had something to hide. He had included these secrets in a forthcoming novel, but whichever guest solved a mystery he had set up would be excluded from the book. The whole scheme backfires, and then the intrigue truly begins. Whose secret was so incriminating that he or she had to kill the novelist? Another compelling story by Nixon. 8-12 s/i

Paulsen, Gary. ***The Car***. Harcourt Brace, 1994. 182 pages.

Terry's only 14 but both his parents have left and he's alone in a rented house. The only thing of value is the "kit car" someone gave his dad instead of paying him. Forbidden to touch the car by his dad, Terry is drawn to it and quickly assembles it in a few days. These are to be his wheels to getting his own life. With money he has made from yard work and his few belongings, he sets out to seek an uncle out West.

His first surprise is how a hitchhiker, Waylon, talks him into letting him go along. Waylon, a Vietnam vet, takes Terry to meet Wayne, another vet, and the two of them decide to show Terry America. I loved this book. I loved the contrast between the naive 14-year-old and the "weighted down with experience" Vietnam vets. I loved the way it made me think about men with combat experience and I loved what they decided to show Terry about America. This is a book about learning and caring and about how war can change priorities. 8-12 s/i

Paulsen, Gary. ***The Haymeadow***. Delacorte, 1992.

Fourteen-year-old John comes of age and becomes self-reliant during the summer he spends up in the Wyoming mountains tending his father's herd of sheep. Unbelievably action packed as John deals with flash floods, coyotes, injured animals, and a bear. A reflec-

tive kind of book which people who appreciate the outdoors and the beauty of nature will especially like. 7-12 s/i

Paulsen, Gary. ***Sisters/Hermanas***. Harcourt Brace, 1993. 66 pages.

Pay attention to appearance. Being young and pretty can get you what you want. Both Rosa 14, an illegal Mexican immigrant, and Traci 14, a rich future cheerleader, learn this message in very different ways. Rosa sells herself on the streets of Texas while Traci hides behind her appearance in hopes of pleasing others—especially her mother. What do they have in common? Read this brief, powerful novel to find out. It can raise many important questions like what it is we're telling females and asking of them when we tell them appearance is their most important attribute. 6-11 s/i

Paulsen, Gary. ***The Tent***. Harcourt Brace, 1995. 84 pages.

Steven's dad Corey decides he's tired of being poor. His plan is to get a large tent, a Bible, and make money by preaching. And he does just that. Both Steven and Corey change imperceptively at first, but big changes come fast after they start making up to one thousand dollars a night. A heartwarming, gentle story that raises the question of how important sincerity is when preaching the word of God. 6-10 s/i

Philbrick, Rodman. ***Freak the Mighty***. Scholastic, 1993. 169 pages.

Max is big and has a lot of trouble learning. In 8th grade he meets and teams up with Freak who has a brilliant mind in a stunted body. The two of them make a powerful team, helping each other when they need help the most. When Max is kidnapped by his ex-con father, Freak helps figure out where he's being kept. Freak's friendship and devotion and concern help Max deal with long buried issues. In turn, Max is there when Freak is once again hospitalized. This poignant story shows the emotional connectedness of these two seeming opposites who accept and understand each other. A fabulous story that will touch its readers. Issues include acceptance of self, appearance, effects of traumatic experiences, dealing with the life you've got. 7-11 w

Pitts, Paul. ***The Shadowman's Way***. Avon, 1992. 118 pages.

Nelson Sam liked to keep to himself and stay out of trouble on the Navajo reservation. Then Nelson befriends a white boy who's new to town and the trouble starts for him. Tough guy Benjamin and his friends decide that Nelson is a turncoat and feel they must teach him a lesson. Now Nelson has to choose sides and learn some difficult lessons. This terrific novel shows the prejudiced attitudes some Navahos have toward white people. Students could benefit from reading this book by realizing that majority members are viewed differently and sometimes with hostility by minorities. Fast-paced, interesting book. Themes include prejudice, friendship, Navahos. 6-10 s/i

Plummer, Louise. **My Name is Susan Smith. The 5 is Silent.** Dell, 1991.

Susan wants to escape the dreariness and ordinariness of life in a small town in Utah. Her extraordinary artistic abilities and the way she perceives the world make her very different from the people in her life. When an aunt from Boston offers Susan the chance to pursue her artistic dreams there, she jumps at it. This well-written, coming-of-age story shows Susan having to come to terms with her blind devotion and affection for a man who was once her uncle. Aside from being with Susan while she makes discoveries about herself, the other wonderful thing about this book is that the reader begins to see the world through the eyes of an artist. I learned a lot about art and loved it. Themes include divorce, struggles with parents, keeping one's artistic integrity, and finding oneself. 9-12 s/i

Rana, Indi. **The Roller Birds of Rampur.** Random House, 1993. 309 pages.

Sheila, born in India but raised in England is shocked and hurt by an experience with racism and a rejection from her best Indian friend. Too much is happening to her too fast, and she doesn't feel she really belongs anywhere. She decides to spend time with her grandparents in India to sort things out. Once there, she is greeted by sounds, sights, and customs she doesn't understand. From the time Sheila arrives in India, the reader is thrust into the middle of the country and through descriptions sees and experiences what Sheila does. One of the best things for Sheila is her relationship with her grandfather who is willing to talk to her about life, death, karma, and how he lives his life. I was engrossed by this richly detailed book that so vividly showed Sheila's difficulties in growing up with two cultures. Many philosophical issues are raised. 10-12 s/i

Reaver, Chap. **Bill.** Delacorte, 1994. 216 pages.

Jessica lives alone with her father in the backwoods of Kentucky. Since her father is gone on frequent trips to distill and sell bootleg liquor, her real companion is her dog Bill. When her father is jailed, Jess sets out to search for the hidden treasure that is rumored to be hidden not far from their property. The story becomes complicated by Jess's deviousness since she's not sure who she can trust. But Bill is always there for her and willingly gets involved in her adventures. This girl-and-her-dog story has a startling ending that helps Jess see her dad for the alcoholic he really is. A gentle and satisfying story filled with memorable characters. 5-9 s/i

Reiss, Kathryn. **Dreadful Sorry.** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993. 340 pages.

Molly's fear of water and her terrifying dreams seem to be taking over her life. To get away from it all she flies to Maine to spend the summer with her father and his new wife. As soon as she steps into their house she recognizes it because she has visited it so often in her dreams. Instead of getting away from all that is plaguing her, being in the house brings it more to the forefront of her consciousness. In her dreams, which also invade the daytime, she is a young woman who lived in this house at the beginning of the century. This

fast-paced, suspenseful book is so engrossing the reader can't bear to put it down until the mystery of the young woman who disappeared 80 years ago is solved. Shows limitations on women early in this century as well as the family structure and the economics of the times. 8-12 s/i

Reiss, Kathryn. **The Glass House People.** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Sixteen-year-old Beth and her brother discover that their mother has been estranged from her sister and the rest of the family because of the mysterious death of a man both sisters loved. Really shows what it's like to live in a tense atmosphere. Also vividly shows how elusive our memories can be and that often we remember only what we want to remember. A very engrossing story. Family problems, points of view 9-12 s/i

Rinaldi, Ann. **Finishing Becca.** Harcourt Brace, 1994. 356 pages.

Becca is sent to work as a maid for Peggy Shippen, the spoiled daughter of a Philadelphia Quaker. Becca's mom wants her to receive her "finishing" there and to improve her French, learn to dance, and to act like a lady. But Becca learns more than her mother bargained for. She sees firsthand someone whose social life takes precedence over the suffering from the Revolutionary War that is going on around her. She sees Peggy flirt outrageously first with Capt. Andre, then with General Benedict Arnold. She is also caught between her stepfather's wishes and her own dreams. The details on what the Revolutionary War was like in Philadelphia are excellent. It is also engrossing to see how Peggy leads Benedict to believe he owes the colonial government nothing. Excellent companion for work on the Revolution. 10-12 w

Rinaldi, Ann. **A Ride into Morning.** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991. 266 pages.

When unrest spreads at the Revolutionary War camp in Morristown, New Jersey, under the command of General Anthony Wayne, a young woman, Tempe Wick, cleverly hides her horse from the mutinous soldiers who have need of it. The main character, Mary Cooper, has been sent to live with relatives because she disagrees with her family's Tory beliefs. She ends up living with her cousin Tempe and her family whose farm is being used as a camp by Wayne's soldiers.

Very well told story that brings the reader into life as it was at that time. Living conditions of the soldiers play a prominent part in the story and are well described. An excellent book of historical fiction that would go well with any story of the Revolutionary War or the hardships of war. 7-12 s/i

Ryan, Mary E. **My Sister is Driving Me Crazy.** Simon & Schuster, 1991. 221 pages.

Tired of being an identical twin, thirteen-year-old Mattie seeks her own identity. After she cuts her hair and gets a friend of her own, she's able to be more objective about her sister's desire to be accepted by the "in" crowd. The twins come from an interesting family, and it's fun to see her health-conscious vegetarian

mother open up a restaurant as the girls try to resolve their own issues. 7-10 s/i

Rylant, Cynthia. ***I Had Seen Castles***. Harcourt Brace, 1993.

This gentle, touching book is a reminiscence of one man's involvement in WWII and how it changed him. It begins with his romantic relationship with Ginny—a girl who even in 1942 spoke her mind and was against war. It ends with his look at the part she played in his life, in his survival, and in the challenge to his belief system. The novel also explains why, when the war is over, John can't live in America where no one was touched by the war. Might be a good companion to a novel on returning vets from other wars or to a Hemingway short story on the topic. 9-12 s/i

Shoup, Barbara. ***Wish You Were Here***. Hyperion, 1994. 282 pages.

Jackson Watt plans on a wonderful senior year living in an apartment with his best friend. Then his best friend runs away, his mom finds a man she gets serious about, and his dad is almost killed in an accident. The year of carefree living turns into the toughest year of his life. He falls in love but then can't even write this girl of his dreams because he feels so awful about a sexual relationship he's begun with a girl at school. His grades plummet, his life seems out of control, and he wishes he were still the most important person in his mom's life. This wonderful, perceptively written book thrusts us into the anguished life and thoughts of a teen trying to figure it all out. It made me remember how awful those years were when nothing made sense and we were trying to define ourselves. A superb book—I loved it! Issues include divorce, parent dating, emerging sexuality, figuring out who our real friends are, having to be a parent to a parent, dysfunctional friends—the list goes on! 10-12 s/i

Soto, Gary. ***Jesse***. Harcourt Brace, 1994. 166 pages.

Jesse, 17, and his older brother Abel moved out of the house of their drunken stepfather and their concerned mother. They can eke out a living from the small Social Security checks they get because their father died and the work they do in the fields while they go to junior college. This coming-of-age story told while the U.S. was involved in Vietnam focuses on Jesse who is trying to figure out girls and how he can get out of the poverty that surrounds him and his Mexican-American family, friends, and neighbors. This gentle novel shows us what it is to be 17, Mexican-American, and trying to figure life out. Issues include sibling relationships, Vietnam War, Mexican-American civil rights, dealing with a hated stepfather, and the place of school. 8-12 s/i

Staples, Donna. ***Arena Beach***. Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

In a small northern Californian town, seventeen-year-old Terra Bliss is jolted out of the rhythms of her life by the appearance of the father she has never met. Terra, who is a part-time auto mechanic, and has an ex-hippie mother and a surfer boyfriend, has to decide if she wants a relationship with her father. Meanwhile, her boss and best friend has a heart attack, her boyfriend wants more from her, and her mom wants to

join the Peace Corps. Terra has to quickly find out who she is and what is important to her before she can decide the direction of her own life. This unconventional, well-drawn protagonist is one the reader will not soon forget. Her approaches to decision-making are refreshing since she works hard at figuring out what is best for her at this time and place in her life. 9-12 s/i

Staples, Suzanne Fisher. ***Haveli***. Knopf, 1993. 259 pages.

This book picks up five years after *Shabana* ended. As the fourth and youngest wife of Rahim, Shabana does not have an easy time with the other women who look down on her as being uneducated and strange. Shabana fiercely protects her young daughter and is able to find a measure of freedom for both of them. Then she is thrust into the intrigues of the family when her best friend is forced into an arranged marriage with her husband's retarded son. Throughout all of this, she knows she can count on her own family in the desert for support and understanding. As the marriage takes place, the father of the bride shows his greed and hunger for power with his cruel plan of action. Shabana is put into the center of this plot and must decide how she can save her own life and survive. Compelling, fascinating. I couldn't put the book down. 8-11 s/i

Stoeck, Shelley. ***Crosses***. Delacorte, 1991.

Unhappy at home, Nancy and her friend Katie adopt punk lifestyles and find relief in cutting themselves, until Nancy is forced to confront her problems. Alcohol, drugs, and sex also play large parts in this novel. Through the whole novel we get a clear picture of how much inner agony Nancy is in which forces her to continually hurt herself. Themes include self-worth, suicide, drugs, alcoholic parents, family problems. A shockingly powerful book. 9-12 s/i

Stoeck, Shelley. ***Weird on the Outside***. Delacorte, 1995. 212 pages.

Tracey can no longer stand to live with either of her estranged parents—her dad's so wrapped up in research she never sees him, and her mother's drug-induced incoherence soon drives her away. So she flies to New York City and works as a topless dancer to support herself. Tracey tries to keep the real world separate from her working life, but the two begin to blur together. She's determined to live with her choices and not go back to the rich, secure world of her distant father until the choice is taken away from her one night in her dark hotel corridor. 9-12 s/i

Tamar, Erika. ***Fair Game***. Harcourt Brace, 1993. 293 pages.

Told from three different points of view, this is the story of a mildly retarded teenager who is gang-raped. Since she seemed so willing, everyone is ready to blame her and not look at their own outrageous actions. Laura Jean doesn't want to believe her boyfriend did anything wrong, and she's determined to stand by him—until she talks to the girl involved. This stunning book is a close-up look at the sexual attitudes of teen boys, their girlfriends, and their families. Shocking and thought-provoking. Every teen ought to read it. 9-12 s/i

Tamar, Erika. **The Things I Did Last Summer.** Harcourt Brace, 1994. 294 pages.

Andy and his very pregnant step-mother are to spend the hot summer out of the city at the beach. He envisions a wonderful summer working at the local newspaper and finding a girl who will help him lose his virginity. Both things happen, but not the way Andy plans. He learns a lot about both the physical and spiritual dimensions of love while he learns about what it takes to be a good reporter. Well-balanced, interesting book in which the mystery of why the *au pair* Susan, Andy's girlfriend, seems to be imprisoned in her employer's home. Excellent book about first love. 9-12 s/i

Vogel, Ilse-Margret. **Bad Times, Good Friends.** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992. 232 pages.

In this non-fiction account, the author, who isn't Jewish, tells how she and some of her friends struggled to survive and resist Nazi domination in Berlin from 1943-45. This book gave me a peek at all the ways that people of good heart resisted Hitler and helped the people targeted for persecution. Fast-paced and interesting. This book would work well in a social studies class because it so vividly shows what it was like to live in the 1940s in Berlin and what it took to cope with daily bombings. 9-12 s/i

Voigt, Cynthia. **When She Hollers.** Scholastic, 1994. 177 pages.

Lies are woven into the fabric of Tish's family life. Her mother lies to herself about the horror happening in her own house. Her step-father couches his nighttime visits to Tish's room in lies. Even Tish lies by daily creating a new persona for herself at school in order to preserve her mystery and her "I-don't-care" attitude. Then Tish confronts her stepfather with a knife at breakfast. Will this change what's happening to her? Will this prevent her from ending up dead like Miranda?

This tension-filled, fast-paced book is hard to put down. My only discomfort with this novel is in the "solution" offered to Tish at the end which seems beyond the reach of many victims and a bit too easy. This terrifying, vividly written novel gives us a close-up look at the face of sexual abuse. 8-12 s/i

Watkins, Yoko Kawashima. **So Far From the Bamboo Grove.** William Morrow, 1986. 175 pages.

This true life story tells of a Japanese family who lived in North Korea during WWII when the father was part of the Japanese government that ruled Korea. When it becomes dangerous for them to stay, Yoko (12), her sister Ko (16), and her mother must flee to South Korea on a moment's notice. The train ride was horrifying and dangerous for them. Not even half way to Seoul the train was hit and the three of them walked the rest of the way. The harrowing ordeals they faced keep the reader involved and amazed that they survived. We also, in alternating chapters, hear the story of the older brother and what happened to him when the Chinese Communists came to kill all Japanese workers in the ammunition plant he worked in. Homelessness takes on new meaning when their mother insists the girls go to school in their rags even though they are living in the train station when they get back to Japan. The novel

could keep a whole class engrossed while they learn about WWII from a different point of view. 6-10 w

Watkins, Yoko Kawashima. **My Brother, My Sister, and I.** Bradbury, 1994. 275 pages.

This story picks right up where *Bamboo Grove* left off. It is the harrowing but inspirational story of how Yoko, her brother, and her sister live in post WWII Japan as refugees while waiting for word of their missing father. They survive a fire, an accident, and even murder charges as they continue to live in abject poverty. They never lose their hope of finding their father or improving their lives. This novel is as compelling as the first one. 6-12 s/i

Whelen, Gloria. **Goodbye Vietnam.** Knopf, 1992. 135 pages.

Thirteen-year-old Mai and her family embark on a dangerous sea voyage from Vietnam to Hong Kong to escape the unpredictable and often brutal Vietnamese government. The harsh realities of the time spent on the crowded boat is vividly described. The reader is also shown how powerless these boat people are and how difficult it is for them to gain entrance into another country. Red tape and seemingly nonsensical regulations work against these immigrants. Themes include cultural conflicts, concerns of the elderly, and handling hardships. This would also make an excellent book to use in social studies courses. 6-12 w

Wiley, Margaret. **The Melinda Zone.** Bantam, 1993. 135 pages.

Her mom calls her Mindy and she lives with her during the week. Her dad calls her Linda and she spends every weekend with him at his farm. Two parents with two different sets of expectations. Then Melinda spends the summer with her aunt, uncle, and cousin and decides she wants to be called Melinda. She also realizes that she'll have to figure out a way to get rid of all the anger she feels toward her parents who seem to want too much from her.

With the support of her aunt and the friendship and advice of Paul, the boy across the street, Melinda comes to know what is important to her. She also knows she needs to stop being the peacemaker between her parents and actually say NO. This sensitively written novel makes Melinda's conflicts real to the reader. Issues include divorce, parental expectation, young love. 9-12 s/i

Woodson, Jacqueline. **Between Madison and Palmetto.** Delacorte, 1993. 112 pages.

After Margaret returns from boarding school, she and her best friend Maizon try to resume their friendship while Margaret is dealing with the appearance of her never-been-seen father and Maizon is struggling with appearance issues and bulimia. A warm, gentle story of two girls who live in supportive families and communities. 5-9 s/i

Woodson, Jacqueline. **I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This.** Delacorte, 1994. 115 pages.

Marie is 12, has a father who is a university professor, a mother who left them and happily lives in a small town of mainly blacks. When Lena a poor white

girl starts school, Marie doesn't want to be Lena's friend but pain draws them to each other. Lena's mother is dead and she tells Marie that her father "touches" her. This poignant, gentle story touches the reader deeply as two young girls struggle to deal with the life that's been dealt them. Powerful and moving. 6-9 s/i

Wolff, Virginia Euwer. **Make Lemonade**. Scholastic, 1993. 200 pages.

LaVaughn, who's 14, needs a job so she can eventually go to college. Jolly, 17, with two children, desperately needs a babysitter. The two work out a deal and LaVaughn starts the job. Jolly's apartment is dirty and run down, and Jolly is disorganized. LaVaughn judges Jolly very harshly until Jolly confronts her, and LaVaughn slowly begins to understand Jolly and the kind of life she's led. Fast to read, this book is written as a series of what look to be prose poems.

Both girls learn much from the other as the reader sees how important family support is to the kind of life each girl leads. This book is heavy with themes and social issues and brings the reader face to face with poverty and an undereducated teen mom who wants to do right by her children. 7-12 s/i

Wurnfeld, Hope. **Baby Blues**. Viking, 1992. 72 pages.

After her father's death, Annie and Jimmy, another 16-year-old drop-out, become close friends because she can talk to him about anything. She hangs out with him and his alienated friends, riding motorcycles and spraying graffiti on bridges. Then she discovers she's pregnant after she's spent many months ignoring the signs. She and Jimmy are jerked into reality and into taking responsibility for their actions. Adoption seems to be their only alternative, but can they find the strength to do it? This very touching story was written by a woman who was herself adopted, in her quest to

figure out what it must be like for biological parents to give up their child. Themes include alienation, grief, being an orphan, pregnancy. 6-12 s/i

Wyeth, Sharon Dennis. **The World of Daughter McGuire**. Delacorte, 1994. 167 pages.

Eleven-year-old Daughter has been called a zebra at her new school because of her racially mixed background. Her parents recently split up and now she, her mom, and her two younger brothers live next door to her grandparents. She worries about getting in trouble with the local gang, the Avengers, and she worries about her parents. Finding friends seems to help some and then their teacher gives them a heritage project. In talking to her grandparents, she learns about her courageous namesake, not realizing that soon she will be called upon to show the same kind of courage.

This well-written book takes the reader to the heart of what it's like to be eleven. We feel Daughter's anger towards her father who left the family and towards her mother who she blames, and we experience her confusion about who she really is with her varied ethnic background. A very satisfying book. 5-9 s/i

Zindel, Paul. **Loch**. HarperCollins, 1994. 209 pages.

In a remote Vermont lake, Loch Perkins' dad is supposed to track and capture prehistoric creatures believed to inhabit the lake. The cold, cruel owner of the operation is only interested in fame and fortune and has no concern for the creatures. Loch comes across a baby creature and realizes it has feelings, is intelligent, and communicates through producing music, hums, and growls. He and his sister are determined not to let these creatures be destroyed. Fast-paced, compelling, and sometimes gory as these creatures fight for their lives. Issues include ethics, greed, rights of animals. 7-11 s/i