What’s New in Young Adult Literature: 2016 Edition

Dr. Bob Seney

Lakewood, Colorado

[rwseney@muw.edu](mailto:rwseney@muw.edu)

The **Underlined Books** are my personal *Top Ten Reads of 2016*. Books marked with a ++ are my candidates for my *Top Ten*. [This year 24 novels were candidates. Five Candidates for **The** *Top Read*.] All books listed meet Halsted’s (and my) criteria for books most appropriate for gifted readers. **The list on the NAGC Conference Web Site is not complete. It was submitted in early October to meet the deadline for conference inclusion. Email me for final list.**

Applegate, Katherine Crenshaw (e) 2015

Wow! Homeless theme and the importance of imaginary friends.

Auxier, Jonathan *Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes: A Story* (e/ms) SR & ST 2011

Very fun and **very** different: the adventures of a blind thief in pre-Victorian

England – and elsewhere!

Beasley, Cassie *Circus Mirandus* (e) 2015

A story of love and magic! Micah looks for a way to save his grandfather.

Benjamin, Ali *the thing about jelly fish* (ms/e) 2015

**2015 National Book Award Finalist**. Oh wow! Dealing with the loss of a friend

and guilt. A science bent. Rules of research are great!

++Bertman, Jennifer C. *Book Scavenger* (e) TR 2015

Fun. If you liked *Escape from Mr. Lemoncello’s Library*, you will love this one!

Bradley, Kimberley B. *The War that Saved my Life* (e/ms) 2015

**2016 Newbery Honor**. Set in England WWII. Ada is a true heroine. Wow!

++Creech, Sharon *Moo: A Novel* (e) 2016

A really delightful novel. Creech doses it again! Formatting adds to mood and story.

Dayton, Arwen Elys *Seeker* (ms/hs) 2015

A contemporary setting with an unusual fantasy bent.

Dhariwal, Radhika R. *The Tale of a No-Name Squirrel* (e) 2014

A first novel. Reminiscent of the Redwall Series but more dark and with a

touch of *Peter Nimble*. A quest, intrigue, betrayal, a puzzle to solve – Fun!

++Flanagan, John *Brotherband: The Ghostfaces – Book 6* (ms/e) 2016

Another great story – so well written and a great adventure. The end is very

poignant and the theme of the book AND the series comes through loud and

strong. Flanagan is a master story teller and craftsman.

Frost, Helen *Applesauce Weather* (e/ms) 2016

A beautiful love story, told in verse. Faith, Peter & Uncle Arthur

++Keesha’s House (hs/ms) 2003

**2004 Printz Honor: A True Whoops Book!**

A Safe House for teens who have no place to go in poetical form. Endnotes on poetry

are very good. Frost is fast becoming a favorite author. More of her books are on order.

Hawker, L. S. *The Drowning Game* (hs)\*# 2015

A real thriller – confusing identities and mysterious motives. Denver Author

++Kennedy, Katie *Learning to Swear in America* \*moderate (hs/ms) 2016

Fun, humorous. Seventeen year old Russian astrophysicist genius saves

the world from a threatening asteroid. A First Novel

Larson, M. A. *Pennyroyal Academy* TR (e) 2014

An interesting re-take on Fairy Tale Characters

*The Shadow Cadets of Pennyroyal* *Academy* (e) 2016

Fairy Tale Princesses redefined. Great fun and great adventure. Book 2

moved more quickly.

Lasky, Kathryn *Wild Blood: Horses of the Dawn Book* *3* (e) 2016

Last book in series – more intense

Lerangis, Peter *The Promise: Seven Wonders Journals*. (ms/hs) 2016

The prequel to the Seven Wonders Journal series.

++Levy, Aaron *Blood Don’t Lie* (ms) TR 2016

Middle school can be tough: bullying, searing or self-identity, your family in crisis,

the loss of a close friend, and …I’m going to stop there. The last few chapters are

dynamite! Several layered themes. A middle school in Mississippi has chosen this

as the book all eight graders will read

Lincoln, Jenna *The Protector Project* (ms) 2015

**Colorado Author, First Novel**. The mix of sci-fi and fantasy that I love. A bit of the

*Hunger Game* genre but less violence and more subtle in political comment. Exciting

Adventure. *Author’s Note* lists influences and inspirations for the book.

Maas, Sarah J. *A Court of Thorns and Roses* # (hs) 2015

A very interesting twist to the *Beauty and the Beast* story. Sexual content is

unfortunate and thus the high school (hs) ranking. Deals with the danger and

consequences of lack of knowledge and illiteracy.

++Peck, Richard *The* B*est Man* (e/ms) 2016

Peck at his best but for a bit younger reader but still lots of messages here. Teachers

should read for Archer’s take on school. Lots of humor. Loved it. Good take on gay marriage.

Pennypacker, Sara *Pax* (e/ms) 2016

Wow! Poignant and yet very subtle anti-war story: the relationship between

Peter and his pet fox, Pax.

Riggs, Ransom *Hollow City: The Second Novel of Miss Peregrine’s Peculiar Children* (ms/e) 2014

Misplaced in the move. I forgot how much I like this series. One fifth grade

girl told me: “You do know, Dr. Seney, this is an allegory about gifted children!

++Riordan, Rick *Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard: The Sword of Summer* (ms/e) 2015

Riordan at his best with more humor! – Norse Mythology on this go-around.

++*The Trials of Apollo: The Hidden Oracle-Book 1* (e/ms) 2016

Riordan your humor is showing, again! Great fun! Apollo must meet his punishment

as the mortal, Lester Papadopoulos, who by the way has a bad case of acne.

Rossi, Veronica *Riders* (ms/hs) 2016

A great take on the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse moves quickly, high

Adventure. Contemporary setting. Guide at end is good.

++Rowley, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child: A New Play by Jack Thorn & John Tiffany* (ms/e) 2016

Albus Potter and Scorpius Malfoy (Sons of Harry and Drako) are best friends! Albus is in

House Slytherin! Oh, my! Oh, my! Both boys are estranged from their fathers, will time

travel by using an illegal Time-Turner make things right? Looking for a script to move

your students into reading this genre? Will be highly motivating and perhaps a bit of a

difficult read since so much of the action is visual. Story line is there but maybe not the

sparkle of the Potter Series.

Ruby, Laura *Bone Gap* (hs/ms) 2015

Is it reality or is it fantasy – maybe both! Kidnapping to another dimension set in a

Midwestern rural setting Finn discovers his strengths. A bit of a more difficult read.

**2016 Printz Award** and a **2015 National Book Award Finalist**

Ryan Pam M. *Echo: A Novel* (Level: I’m not sure – Everyone and their Mother!) 2015

**2016 Newbery Honor.** The novel reinvented. Tragedy but there is always hope.

Sedgwick, Marcus *The Ghosts of Heaven* (ms/hs) 2014

Four separate stories connected only with the symbol of a spiral – or are they separate?

Really interesting and something of a modern horror story. Readers keep at it!

**2016 Printz Honor**

Selznick, Brian *The Marvels* (ms) 2015

Wow! Selznick has recreated the graphic and the textless novel. Two stories:

One in Selznick’s amazing style of intricate drawings by pencil and one in

Narrative. What is the connection? I could not put this one down until finished!!!

You might think it is for elementary but I rather think it is for the sophisticated reader.

++Schusterman, Neal *Challenger Deep* (hs) 2015

**2015 National Book Award Winner**. Oh wow! A beautifully and creatively written and

conceived story of a young man’s (Caden) descent into mental illness peopled with

caricatures of the real people in his life. A difficult read in several ways.

Question: Is it a mark of good novel that you can’t keep at it and have to put it down,

but you must come back to it?

Author’s Note and Resources at the end are very important.

Tahir, Sabaa *An Ember in the Ashes\** (hs/ms) 2015

**A First Novel**: Hunger Game Genre with a twist. It is Fantasy rather than Dystopia.

Intrigue, betrayal, honor, trust, and the importance of relationships. Wow! Some

violence but suspense and excitement to the galore!

++*A Torch Against the Night: Ember in the Ashes – Book* 2\* (hs/ms) 2016

More engaging that the first – hard to put down. Tahir creates a fantasy society somewhat

based on Ancient Rome with intrigue, evil, and treachery. Complicated plot told from the

points-of-view of the three protagonists.

Tucholke, April *Wink, Poppy, Midnight\** (hs/ms) 2016

“A hero, A villain, A liar, but who is who?” Told from the points-of-view of the three,

protagonists, this is a tale of mystery, love and revenge. Light sexual situations. A good

read, but I must admit that it did not always hold my attention. Reader keep on: Be ready for a real surprise. This is a new author for me. I intend to read more of her works.

Wolk , Lauren *Wolf Hollow* (ms/e) 2016

**A debut novel for young readers:** Take *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, add a bit of

*Ruby* *Holler* (Creech, 2003 List) and a bit of Moon Over Manifest (Vanderpool, 2011 List)

and mix with Wolk’s own creativity and craftsmanship and you have *Wolf Hollow*,

a bit dark but an amazing read of a remarkable and courageous young girl, Annabelle.

Hard to put down!

**A Book That Almost Didn’t Make the List”**

Maas, Sarah J. *A Court of Mist and Fury* #\* (hs) 2016

On the list, then off and now back on. I think Maas has crossed the sometimes subtle

line between engaging ya lit and engaging adult fiction because of the sexual content.

I know why it is here (for story line and particular character development) but too

explicit – better to suggest than describe – a mark of better craftsmanship. But since

she freed herself from an interesting take on the Beauty and the Beast theme in *Book 1*

(see Maas above), she has unbound her creativity to create interesting and complex

characters, the fantasy Faerie world of Prythian, and a complex plot. While not a

Robin McKinley, Maas is a step above Stephanie Meyer (*Twilight Saga*) in craftsmanship.

Her *Throne of Glass* series is very popular. Again: Explicit sexual content) warning.

But will I read *Book 3*, you bet. Will it go on the list? We will see.

**Great Nonfiction: Should be in Every Gifted Resource Room**

Strauss, E. L. *Chaos Theory Uncovered: How Chaos and Fractals Shape our World (*ms/hs)2015

Strauss, E. L. *Complex Systems in Our World: A Creative Exploration of Systems and* 2015

*Complexity Theory* (ms/hs)

Strauss, E. L. *Global Explorer: The Southern Hemisphere* (ms/hs)2015

Strauss, E. L. *Our Universe Revealed: A Cosmic Exploration* (ms/hs)2015

All are published by Thinyxgen [www.thinyxgen.com]

**Special List: Books I found interesting that don’t necessarily fit the List:**

Isaacson, Rupert *The Horse Boy: A Memoir of Healing* (hs/ms) 2009

A well written and very moving account of Isaacson’s search for the healing

of his autistic son through both traditional and non-traditional means including a

trip to Mongolia to visit shamans. **A National Bestseller**. Reviewed for *2e Newsletter*.

Perry, Bob *The Broken Statue* (ms/hs) Historical Fiction 2006

The E.W. and Lydie Marland story of Oklahoma. Author’s Notes are good.

Garfield, Leon *Smith: The Story of a Pickpocket* (e) 1967

A New York Review Children’s Collection Book. (2013) Book and series was

recommended by Dr. Susannah Richardson. A Dickensian tale of a young lad

set in Victorian England, full of adventure and intrigue. Fun!

**Challenging and Appropriate For Very Young Gifted Readers (K-2)**

Jim, Tonton *Max and the Lowrider Car: Hound’s Glenn Series – Book 1* 2013

Really fun: Well written with humor and sophisticated vocabulary!

*Harold and the Hot Rod: Hound’s Glenn Series – Book 2* 2014

Ditto!

**Underlined Books are *My Ten Personal Best Reads* for this Year. ++ marked books were contenders.**

**Codes:**

# Language Alert

\* Situation Alert

e = elementary school

ms = middle school/junior high

hs = high school

SR Student Recommended

TR Teacher Recommended

Whoops Books! = Books that got by me that are really great!