



# Young Adult Literature

Pedagogy, Empirical Research, & Critical Review



To advance YA in schools K-20 we must act aggressively and persistently on four fronts:

- 1) **Continue to find the books that fit all kinds of readers** (resistant, sporadic, recreational, passionate);
  - 2) **Continue to provide resources for secondary teachers** (lesson ideas, rationales for texts, bibliographies of novels, critical commentary);
  - 3) **But we also must design qualitative/quantitative research to measure the efficacy of our pedagogical strategies;**
  - 4) **And we must build and aggressively present the critical merit of this body of literature we love.**
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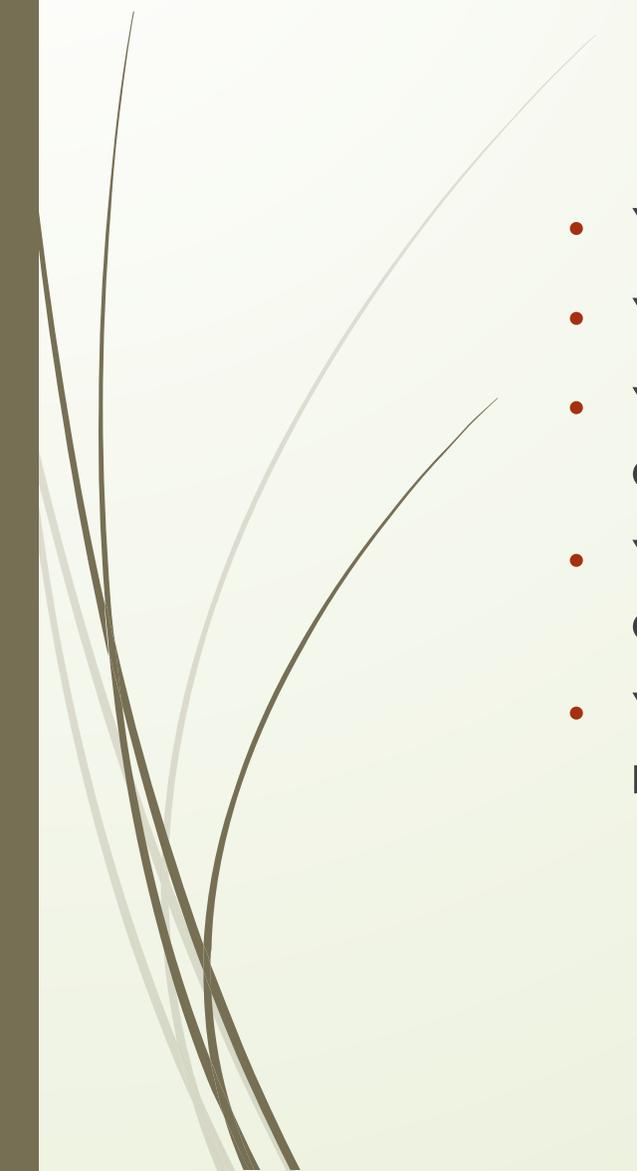


# Front One: Relevant Books for All Kinds of Readers

- Since at least the 1970s we have implemented an array of strategies to get books into the hands of young readers.
- We have a multitude of publications guiding teachers, librarians, and others involved in literacy to identify books relevant to a wide variety of students.
- I believe these efforts sustained YA literature during the 1990s when the bottom of the publishing market fell out.
- **This remains the field's greatest strength.**



# Front Two: Pedagogy

- YA literature has been used to **teach literary conventions**.
  - YA literature as a **bridge to the classics**.
  - YA literature has been used as **a vehicle to incorporate literary criticism** into the secondary curriculum.
  - YA literature has been utilized YA **to promote the acceptance of others**.
  - YA literature has also been utilized **to broaden the curriculum in many different ways**.
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# Front Three: Instructional Effectiveness

- **Much work still needs to be done in documenting the instructional effectiveness of YA literature in classrooms** (Hayn, Kaplan, & Nolen, 2011; Hayn & Nolen, 2011; Hill, 2013; and others).
- Hayn and Nolen (2011) write, “We know much about what good books are available, but we know little about what actually happens when teens read young adult novels (2011, p. 8).
- **Of the nearly 400 articles published between 2000 and 2010 on young adult literature that Hayn and Nolen analyzed, only “36 articles (9.4 percent) were empirical studies** focusing on the user of the text, rather than on the text itself” (p. 9).



# Front Four: Building a Body of Literary Criticism

- Now is the time for scholars of YA literature to **build a body of criticism that poses questions about producing and reading YA literature** in order to drive discussion among readers, writers, educators, and researchers.
- **In terms of theoretical criticism, the field of YA literature has not yet separated itself from children's literature. Why?**
- Hunt (1996): **Many young adult books 'date' more swiftly** than their counterparts for younger children
- That many YA literature courses are tied to teaching certification also "continues to exert a strong influence toward **'applied' criticism**"



# YA literature as a destination literature

- Rather than an in-between phenomenon that is useful for pedagogical applications and/or diverting entertainment before readers enter into the more serious work of studying capital L literature. (Coats 2011)
- Coats believes we must establish **a history of YA literature and even a canon of significant texts.**
- Showing **these texts' ability to stand up to the rigors of critical scrutiny** are all part of the process of legitimizing a marginalized literature.