

YALSA Presentation Topics: Jane P. Fenn, Nov. 2008

1. Literacy and teens – classics making kids a-literate (Gallo article handout: "How Classics Create an A-literate Society" from *English Journal*)
Owen article from *Orana* on love of reading and YA lit
Trites article on power and YA lit
Speak, Forged by Fire, Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, Peace like a River – still not always successful
Not just WHAT is taught but HOW it is used in the classroom
School-wide literacy events can get library collaborations for literacy on teachers' and administrators' radar screens – "Ask me what I'm reading!" and "This book changed my life!" as a guessing game or with teacher names; poems for every teacher during April – Poetry Month

Incorporating YA literature into classes OTHER THAN English may be easier because

- Non-English course teachers don't have pre-conceived notions of what should be chosen nor how it should be used;
- easier in Special Ed too because those teachers are more accustomed to looking for alternative ways to help students deal with similar content -- ***Out of the Dust*** for ***Grapes of Wrath***, ***Red Necklace*** for ***Tale of Two Cities***
- many districts and even states require reading and writing to be part of every curriculum, or require "literacy in content area" evidence, giving a natural opening to librarians offering to help
- if you provide teachers with the specific state standards that a particular use of fiction or poetry covers, they may be more likely to go for the project: PE examples -- **Standard 1: Personal Health and Fitness**. Students will have the necessary knowledge and skills to establish and maintain physical fitness, participate in physical activity, and maintain personal health.
Standard 3: Resource Management. Students will understand and be able to manage their personal and community resources.
Chemistry example: Students will analyze science/technology/society problems and issues at the local level and plan and carry out a remedial course of action.

2. Examples of fiction used in other subject areas

Physical Education – focus on sports, fitness, mental and physical health and well-being:
Chris Crutcher's ***Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes, Whale Talk*** Swimming as a team sport; also mental health, teamwork, sportsmanship, lifelong fitness.

Athletic Shorts sports-as-metaphor-for-life arena. The **short story** format encourages more reluctant readers to try this alternative. Try an **audio** version.

Will Hobbs' ***Downriver, River Thunder*** .

Mel Glenn's ***Jump Ball: A Basketball Season in Poems***

Bruce Brooks' ***The Moves Make the Man*** is outstanding at conveying what it feels like to be in the zone, to be giving a sport everything an athlete has, while its main characters play basketball, explore race relations, and confront mental illness

Re-Gifters – martial arts, graphic novel

Motion: American sports poems

Magazine articles from hard copy or databases; reference works like *Guinness Book of Sports Records*
Sports Talk: A Dictionary of Sports Metaphors
The Rule Book (The Diagram Group)

Picture books like *Teammates*, *Baseball Saved Us*, *Wilma Unlimited*

Chemistry/Physics/Philosophy of Science -- *Uncle Tungsten: Memories of a Chemical Boyhood*
Catalyst
The Radioactive Boy Scout: the True Story of a Boy and His Backyard Nuclear Reactor
Insultingly Stupid Movie Physics
Physics of Christmas, ... Star Trek, ... Superheroes, ...
The Science of Harry Potter: How Magic Really Works
The Science of Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials
The Science of Superman

Many science topics – *Science Verse*, *Spectacular Science* (both offer many poems on all science Topics); *Eureka! Poems about inventors*; *Earthshake: Poems from the ground up*
Science fiction: *Things Not Seen*, *Dr. Franklin's Island*, *Double Helix*; *Turnabout*, *House of the Scorpion*, *Double Identity*

Economics – *Lawn Boy*

Chapters: *Principals of Economic Expansion*, *Law of Increasing Product Demand vs. Flat Production Capacity*, *Capital Growth Coupled with the Principles of Product Expansion*, *Labor Acquisition and its Effect on Capital Growth*, *Economic Expansion Combined with Portfolio Diversification*, *Business and the Art of Creative Misrepresentation*

Government/Contemporary Issues – *Gospel According to Larry*, *Vote for Larry*

US History: *My America: Poetry Atlas of the United States* (organized by states/regions); *Hour of Freedom* (organized by historical topics, with sidebar info); much historical fiction – Rinaldi is notable for many eras and events – historical fiction is not hard to find!

Global Studies/World History – *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!*; folktales like *One Grain of Rice*, *Gifts of Wali Dad*, *The Enchanted Storks*; three biographies by Demi – *Buddha*, *Confucius*, *Muhammad*; longer novel like *Ties that Bind*, *Ties that Break*; *Single Shard*; *Red Scarf Girl*; *Cartoon History of the Universe*; *Alia's Mission: saving the books of Iraq*; *Persepolis*

Holocaust – picture book examples include *Erika's Story*; *The Flag with Fifty-Six Stars*; *Passage to Freedom: the Sugihara story*; *Maus*

Forensics – Malcolm Rose: *Framed*, *Lost Bullet*, *Roll Call*; *The Christopher Killer*

Psychology – *Downriver, Insatiable, Cut, Shark Girl, Every Crooked Pot*

Health – *Make Lemonade* – good decisions, teen mother, relationship with parent

First Part Last and *Hanging on to Max* – teen fatherhood

Twists and Turns – life after high school

Blind Sighted -- blindness

Of Sound Mind – hearing teen in deaf family

Left Carmichael Has a Fit -- epilepsy

Living with a Secret -- diabetes

Sweetblood – diabetes AND vampires!

Stop Pretending: What Happened when my Big Sister Went Crazy and *Memories of Summer* – mental illness

Alt Ed – anger management, appreciation of others

Iron Man – anger management, difficult relationship with father

Stoner and Spaz – drugs, disabilities

Pedro and Me (graphic novel – AIDS)

Math – *An Abundance of Katherines*

The Number Devil: a Mathematical Adventure

A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper

The Illustrated Principles of Pool and Billiards

Real Life Math Mysteries: a Kid's Answer to the Question 'What Will We Ever Use This For?'

Many titles by Theoni Pappas, like *Math Talk: Mathematical Ideas in Poems for Two Voices*

Mathematickles

Math Curse, One Grain of Rice

Art – *Girl in Hyacinth Blue, Chasing Vermeer, Seen Art?, Heart to Heart: Is This forever or What?*

Music: *Jazz* (Myers and Myers – also a blues title) 15 poems reflecting different styles of jazz;
Things Hoped For

Child Development – *Everybody Cooks Rice* for multicultural study;

3. Fiction/Nonfiction Pairs – make uses of fiction or poetry more “acceptable” because content related to the curriculum is involved through the more traditional nonfiction format

Chemistry: *Worlds Afire* by Janezko and “The Great Hartford Circus Fire” from *ChemMatters*, Feb. 2005 (can be found at

http://portal.acs.org/portal/acs/corg/content?nfpb=true&pageLabel=PP_ARTICLEMAIN&node_id=1090&content_id=CTP_005702&use_sec=true&sec_url_var=region1 along with a Teacher’s Guide)

Also – *A Drop of Water: a book of science and wonder* (great photo essay) paired with *Once*

Upon Ice – poetry by Jane Yolen

Early US History: Fever, 1793 (Anderson) focuses on a teen girl coping with death and chaos in Philadelphia during this epidemic. Pair that with **An American Plague** (Murphy) for a winning combination of fiction and non-fiction addressing exactly the same topic.

Slavery: *Fortune's Bones* by Nelson: poetry with primary source documents

Civil War: *Girl in Blue* and one of these -- ***A Separate Battle: Women and the Civil War*** OR ***They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers in the American Civil War***

Assassin and ***Good Brother, Bad Brother: The Story of Edwin Booth and John Wilkes Booth***

World War II: *Code Talkers* by Bruchac and ***Warriors: Navajo Code Talkers*** by Kawano

Holocaust: *I Am David* (Anne Holm) and ***Milkweed*** (Jerry Spinelli) are both pieces of fiction that focus on the wartime experiences of young people. Pair either of these with ***We Are Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers who Died in the Holocaust*** (Jacob Boas) to discuss fiction vs. personal diary as ways to tell a story. Another non-fiction book that would be effective with these fiction titles is ***Hiding to Survive*** (Rosenberg), stories of young people who survived the Holocaust in various ways. ***My Secret Camera*** vividly depicts through secretly-taken photographs of life in the Lodz ghetto

Early 20th C. Labor Movement: *Triangle, the Fire that Changed America* (von Drehle) examines the enormous implications for the US that we know today which grew out of a catastrophic factory fire. A shorter and more straightforward factual title on the topic is ***Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911*** (DeAngelis), and it is a good pick for basic factual information on this topic that might be useful to US History students. Pair that with ***Ashes of Roses*** (Auch) to give students a great look at how this event was felt and experienced by the women, especially immigrants, who lived through and died at this milestone disaster.

Racism: Two versions of a key case from the mid-'50's make an excellent study of the era of the Klan, segregation, and racially-motivated crime. ***Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case*** (Crowe) is a well-illustrated and interesting account. A fictional counterpart is ***Mississippi Trial, 1955***, and this partner to the nonfiction title happens to be written by the same author, Chris Crowe, adding a new dimension to this effort to study fiction/nonfiction pairs as they treat a single subject.

Vietnam War: The popularity of ***Fallen Angels*** (Myers), especially with high school boys, continues. For a comparable nonfiction look at the war, try ***Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam*** (Edelman) for first person accounts of the experiences of young people just like Myers' characters. This was not published for teens but should be very accessible to them, especially if excerpts are selected which focus on incidents, feelings, topics also addressed by the fictional characters. A movie of the same name is frequently found in high school video/DVD collections and would also make an excellent addition to any study of the Vietnam era.

Crime/Prison Life: *Monster* (also by Myers) is another of those great titles that really speaks to teenage boys, and it has even found its way into English department curricula as a title for class use. The biography

of popular children's author Jack Gantos called *Hole in My Life* focuses on the author's own brush with crime as an 18 year old, which included a stint in federal prison of several years' duration. Frank and moving without being too explicit, this nonfiction account of prison life would add to Myers' story and facilitate discussion of the self image questions crucial to both young men as they deal with the consequences of their actions.

4. English classes – teaching elements of fiction (plot, setting, character, theme) through picture books: setting (*Substitute Teacher Plans*), plot (*Jumanji*), characterization (*Duffy and the Devil*), theme (*Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*)

Elements of poetry through contemporary YA poetry: *Behind the Wheel* (Wong); *A Maze Me* (Nye); *Stardust Otel* (Janeczko); *Slow Dance Heart Break Blues* (Adoff)

Extensions of topics already there – Sylvia Plath verse novel by Hemphill: *Your Own, Sylvia*; *Song of the Sparrow* by Sandell (Elaine, the Lady of Shallot); Klein's *Ophelia*; *Son of the Mob*, Coffin Quilt and Romiette and Julio for Romeo and Juliet; Young Man and the Sea for Old *Man and the Sea*; picture book versions of Shakespeare plays by Coville

Connections with the classics: *From Hinton to Hamlet* by Donald Gallo