

Using Multi-Level Young Adult Literature in the Middle School American Studies

*A modified version was published by the Social Studies Journal,
Heldref Publications, January/February 2000*

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Talk to middle school teachers about the challenges of teaching today, and you are likely to be barraged with a long list of factors that make their jobs difficult. Class size, lack of materials, poor attendance-- the list of problems facing today's teachers sometimes seems endless. We often hear middle school teachers from all subject areas complain that, "It is so difficult to *motivate* students today." Another complaint, often made by teachers is, "My students read on so many different levels, it's hard to reach the students with average, high and low reading abilities in a mainstreamed inclusive classroom." Added to these comments, social studies teachers often suggest that, "students just aren't interested in the social studies curriculum. They don't see the relevance of my class."

It seems that these observations are somewhat interconnected. If teachers "teach to the middle" by using only grade level materials, students who read above grade level are not being challenged and will get frustrated. Students reading below grade level may find the material to be daunting, and are likely to be frustrated and unmotivated to learn. Likewise, many traditional social studies textbook series are simply not interesting nor motivating to students on any reading level (Beck & McKeown, 1991). Indeed, researchers have criticized social studies textbooks as being overwhelming or "encyclopedic" (Sewall, 1988; Tyson & Woodward, 1989). On the other hand, young adult literature and trade books, written on a variety of reading levels, can be integrated into the curriculum as a complement to traditional textbooks. It can make the study of history, geography, and the other social sciences more interesting, more relevant, and therefore more meaningful to middle school students. Social studies teachers at Wagner Middle School in New York City found this to be true when they began integrating multi-level young adult fiction into their 7th and 8th grade American History classes two years ago.

Harry's Story

A 30-year veteran social studies teacher, "Harry" admitted three years ago to a newly hired staff developer that he was getting disenchanted. He lamented, "Students just don't seem to care about the history of America anymore. The quality of student work has declined over the years, participation is mediocre, and I feel like I am talking to a brick wall most of the time." The staff developer agreed to visit Harry's classes to see if she would be able to offer any insight into the problem and to provide him with feedback and suggestions. What she found surprised her. Each day, Harry's students entered the room, sat in desks arranged in straight rows, copied a paragraph that Harry had written on the chalkboard, then listened as he lectured on the paragraph and asked them occasional questions for the remainder of the 45 minute period. The staff developer knew that she and Harry had quite a job ahead of them if they wanted to motivate the 7th grade students to learn about our nation's history.

For two years Harry and the staff developer worked together to reflect on teaching and learning, and to modify Harry's approach to instruction from being teacher-centered to student-centered. During that time, Harry discovered a great deal about kids, and completely modified his approach to teaching. Not only did he begin to integrate young adult literature into his

American history classes, but Harry discovered that it is beneficial to allow students choice in what they read, and began to rely heavily on small groups and cooperative learning strategies. In these small groups, students in Harry's classroom have the opportunity to look at American history from multiple perspectives, allowing them to explore various time periods of our nation's development from several points of view, including those of young adult characters in historical fiction.

Today, Harry is a forerunner in social studies teaching in New York City. His success with integrating multi-level, young adult literature into the curriculum is well known, and he, himself, participates in staff development with his colleagues. Following his example, a number of other social studies teachers at Wagner Middle School have begun teaching their courses from what we term a "multiple perspective literacy approach."

Why Integrate Literature in the Social Studies Curriculum?

Smith and Johnson (1994) suggest that, "Literature can become the lens through which content is viewed. This lens holds the young reader's attention while connecting content with the variety of human experiences" (p. 198). Indeed, as it does for many adults, fiction can bring historical figures alive for young people and allow them to explore the reality of life, culture, and society in a given historical period. In addition, the use of literature in social studies may help nurture children's creativity and imaginations, leading to higher level thinking skills. Jarolimek (1990) states:

Literature and literary materials should play an important part in social studies instruction because they convey so well the affective dimension of human experience. The realism achieved through vivid portrayals in works of literature stirs the imagination of the young reader and helps develop a feeling for and an identification with the topic being studied (p. 207).

Likewise, Savage and Savage (1993) urge educators to integrate literature into the middle school social studies curriculum, making it more relevant and meaningful for students. Indeed several states, in efforts to improve content acquisition, have published curriculum guides directing teachers to incorporate literature and trade books into the social studies curriculum (Arizona, 1988; {California} Crabtree & Ravitch, 1988; New York, 1982; Wisconsin, 1983). Alverman and Phelps (1998) name several additional benefits of using literature in content areas, including the following:

1. Reading increases vocabulary, including content-specific terms
2. Literature is often more up-to-date than textbooks
3. Trade books may be more appealing than textbooks
4. Literature goes beyond the facts
5. Literature allows readers to experience other times, other places, other people, and other cultures with empathy
6. Literature can be a powerful catalyst for thoughtful analysis and critical thinking

It has been our own experience, as well as that of "Harry," that the use of literature in the social studies classroom leads to more interesting discussions of historical periods, and increased understanding of the major figures who shaped history. In addition, through literature, students are able to explore the culture of the times and places about which they are studying. Reading and discussing literature also allows for more meaningful student involvement, and increased motivation and interest in discovering the past and its connection to our lives today. There seems

to be little argument that literature can and should be a valuable part of the social studies curriculum. We would argue that the most effective literature for use in the middle school social studies classroom is young adult fiction.

Young Adult Literature: Why and How to Use It?

There is some disagreement as to what actually qualifies as young adult literature. Nielsen and Donnelson (1993) define it broadly as “anything that readers between the approximate ages of twelve and twenty choose to read (as opposed to what they may be coerced to read for class assignments)” (p.6). Stover (1996) carries this definition a little further saying, “Contemporary young adult literature is written for and about young people from the age of eleven...through the age of eighteen” (p.5). She cites several characteristics of YA literature, including a young adult main character, realistic young adult language, and themes and issues of importance and relevance to young adults.

The genre known as young adult or adolescent literature is lauded and highly recommended by teachers (Atwell, 1998; Reif, 1992; Romano, 1987), scholars (Hipple, 1992; Gallo, 1992; Stover, 1996), and even national educational organizations (NCTE, NCTM, NCSS). Ted Hipple (1992) states passionately, “Yes, literature written for young adults is fine literature, about themes that are universal, with quality that is stunning. Such literature merits, and rewards, attention”(p. 14). Don Gallo, who urges educators to listen to students when selecting literature for classroom study, suggests that “young adult novels are valuable tools for helping teenagers to understand themselves and to see their place in the world...” (p. 26). Lois Stover (1996) goes so far as to call young adult literature “the heart of the middle school curriculum.”

We believe that young adult literature is appropriate in the middle school classroom because adolescent students can relate to the adolescent characters in the books. Even when the setting of a novel is far removed from the reader’s own world, the adolescent experience--the pains of growing up and exploring ones own identity--is universal. Kids like to read about other kids. “Harry” agrees with us. In a recent interview, as he reflected on the changes he has made in his approach to teaching, he stated, “Students enjoy reading young adult literature, as they can visualize themselves going through the experiences in history, since the books are often written from a peer’s point-of-view.” Through young adult literature set in other times, in other cultures, in other places, middle school students can learn not only about history, but also about the cultural, geographical, and economic concepts that comprise the social studies curriculum (Savage & Savage, 1993).

It has been suggested that there are three general ways to organize the integration of literature in the classroom: core novels, text sets, and individual self-selected reading in a workshop setting (George, 1998). Traditionally, teachers rely on the core novel approach, in which the entire class reads the same work of literature at the same time. These texts may often be chosen because they are “grade level appropriate.” There have been several articles published in the last decade suggesting specific core novels that middle school social studies teachers might wish to incorporate into their courses (Bilof, 1996; Guzzetti, Kowalinsky, & McGowan, 1992; Van Middendorf & Lee, 1994; Savage & Savage, 1993; Smith & Johnson, 1994, 1995). English language arts teachers report a great deal of success using the workshop approach described by Atwell (1998), Reif (1996) and Hindley (1996). In a reading workshop, students individually read and respond to books that they choose themselves, often from a classroom library. A social studies teacher wishing to incorporate the workshop approach may adapt this model to the social

studies class by selecting a number of works set in a particular historical period and allowing students to read any book set in that period.

Somewhere in between the core novel (whole class reading the same novel) and the workshop approach (each student reading a self-selected novel) is the text set approach. A text set may be built around a certain theme (i.e. War), geographical area (i.e. Appalachia) or historical period (i.e. The Great Depression). Several related books are selected, representing a range of reading levels. For example, when recently studying the Great Depression of the 1930s, Lois, one of Harry's colleagues at Wagner Middle, assembled a text set including *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (Angelou, 1983), *A Girl from Yamhill* (Cleary, 1988), *Grandpa's Mountain* (Reeder, 1991), *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (Taylor, 1976), and *End of a Dark Road* (Thrasher, 1982). These books represent reading levels from 5th to 8th grade, and include stories of African-American as well as white adolescents struggling with the realities of Depression-era America.

At the beginning of the unit on The Great Depression, Lois gave a book talk on each of the books in the text set, and allowed students an opportunity to browse through the books. At a professional conference that she had attended, Lois had been introduced to a new classroom strategy, literature circles, (Daniels,1994; Harste, Short, and Burke,1988). Lois felt that literature circles would work very well when using the text set approach, so she decided to implement them for her unit on The Great Depression.

When engaged in literature circles, students signed up for a book they wanted to read, making them part of a "book club" style discussion group in their social studies class. In these groups, over a 2-3 week period, students read and discussed the book they had selected. Reading took place both in and out of the classroom, with designated portions of the book due each day. Class time was provided each day for students to reflect on and exchange ideas and observations they may have had about the reading assigned for that day. When asked about her experiment with literature circles and text sets, Lois said,

The students loved them! I've never had my students be so motivated and excited about what we were studying. Kids who don't read as well selected books that were not so difficult, and for the first time this semester, felt good about what they were reading. The advanced readers, for the most part, chose books that were more challenging. Even those who chose "easier" books were able to read them on a more advanced level, making connections to the things we had been reading about in the textbook. One day, kids from two of the groups began discussing the differing experiences of different ethnic groups during the Depression. I was so pleased!

While the core novel and workshop approaches each have their strengths, we feel that there is good reason for teachers to also try the text-set approach to incorporate a variety of literary texts in their social studies classes. This allows teachers to integrate literature into the social studies curriculum, and to provide valuable reading experiences at a variety of reading levels. In addition, reading and discussing a variety of selections allow students to view a topic from multiple perspectives as did Lois' students when they discussed the similarities and differences in the lives of different ethnic groups during the time of the Depression. Thus, teachers can address two major concerns at one time: meeting the needs of students reading on so many different levels and motivating students to be proactive in their learning.

Why Provide Student Choice?

Nancie Atwell (1998) insists that, “Allowing readers to select their own books has a major impact on students’ fluency, reading rate, and comprehension” (p. 37). When teachers use the text set approach, allowing students the freedom to decide which of the selected texts they will read, students may feel a sense of ownership in the curriculum and are more likely to take responsibility for actually reading the selected literature. Lois’ students agree. Tasha, a quiet African American girl, told us, “I was surprised when [Lois] told us we could pick which book we wanted to read. Since I was the one that picked it, I made sure I finished it on time.” In the social studies classroom, we believe this choice also motivates students to want to learn more about the subject matter content.

As mentioned earlier, in any given classroom, there are as many different interests and levels of reading ability as there are students in the class. Teachers are always looking for ways to meet the needs of their students who have a wide-range of reading skills. By providing several options for students to read, including books of varying degrees of difficulty, and allowing them to select which book they want to read, teachers are able to meet the needs of more students while accomplishing the content area objectives they have set. It has been our experience that when given a good introduction to the books, and allowed to peruse the books for interest and reading level, students usually select a book that they are capable of reading. Echoing Tasha’s sentiments, Melissa, one of Harry’s 7th grade students, told us, “I’ve never been asked what I wanted to read for class before. When [Harry] told us to choose one of six books, I took it really serious[ly] and took my time picking the one I thought I would like best.” We did suggest to both Lois and Harry, however, that students be allowed to switch books after the first day or two if they feel the one they have selected is too difficult or does not capture their interest.

Why Rely on Small Groups and Cooperative Learning?

Cooperative learning has been quite popular for the last 10-15 years, particularly at the middle school level. Stover (1996) defines collaborative strategies as “those that involve students in clarifying existing knowledge and constructing new knowledge together through talk” (p.91). Furthermore, she believes that collaborative learning strategies require structured organization in which students “work together as teams toward a common objective and team reward while demonstrating individual accountability within the team structure” (p.91). Indeed, meaningful interaction with peers can be a powerful motivator for middle school students

Cooperative learning not only can produce a greater understanding of social studies content (history, economics, sociology, etc.), but may also nurture the development of social skills. Middle school students are social creatures by nature, so collaborative strategies allow them to do what they love to do best—work and communicate together. Daniels (1994) states that, “Small groups can be efficient, energizing, sometimes almost magical structures for learning. Why are they so powerful? The limited size invites—almost compels—every individual to be an active participant in sharing ideas and constructing interpretations” (10). Indeed, the arguments for cooperative learning are strong, and the use of text sets and literature circles provide middle school social studies teachers an excellent way to integrate literature in their curriculum and incorporate cooperative learning all at the same time.

Classroom Activities for Follow-up to Literature Circles

After students in the various groups have completed reading and discussing their books, it is important that they have the opportunity to share what they have read and what they have learned with classmates from other groups. Aronson (1978) suggests that interdependent team learning from texts may be achieved through the use of jigsaw groups. In this case, a jigsaw

group, or team, is made up of representatives from the various literature circles. Each member of the jigsaw team brings information from his or her literature circle to share with the newly formed jigsaw team. Following are two activities, using the modified jigsaw approach, which we initially used successfully in middle school English language arts classes. We found these to be appropriate and easily adapted for social studies classes in which young adult literature was being used. Having tried it for the first time in his social studies class last semester, Harry reported, “Both ideas were popular with the kids, and successful in helping us meet our proposed objectives. I now have two more strategies in my repertoire that I *will* use again!”

Billboard Box

Begin by forming cooperative groups comprised of one student from each of the literature circles for books the class has read. If your text set included five novels, each cooperative group will be made up of five students. Give each group a Billboard Box to work with (This may be a shoebox or other similar box). Cut a slit down the center of each box’s lid. The teacher generates a list of questions for students to consider. The questions should be open-ended enough so that they can be applicable to each of the books in the text set, and will address social studies related topics the teacher wishes for the class to discuss. Print each of these questions on both sides of an index card, which may be placed in the slit on the lid of the box. Encourage students to decorate the box in a nice manner. Each student in the group responds to the question, drawing examples from the book he/she has read. For instance, Harry and his students developed the following list:

- ◆ Describe a typical day in the life of the main character of your book.
- ◆ Describe in detail the strength or the weakness of the main character in the book. Explain in detail, which of these strengths you find admirable. Explain which weaknesses you can relate to.
- ◆ In what ways is the setting of Colonial America described in your book different from your hometown or city?
- ◆ Generate a list of qualities that the young adolescent has in your story that differ from your own.
- ◆ Describe in detail the conflict or the problem that your young adolescent faces. If you were his or her friend, in what ways would you aid them if you lived back then?
- ◆ Describe in detail how the environment is having an effect on the main character in the book.
- ◆ Describe the tensions between the main character and other characters in the book.
- ◆ Describe what is happening historically that creates tension within the story.
- ◆ Describe events and relate them to your own personal experiences.
- ◆ Describe in detail the main issue. In what ways do you believe it could be resolved?
- ◆ If you were living back in that historical time period, what do you find most disturbing that you would want to change? What do you find most appealing that you would like to experience?

Each student will respond in writing and/or by creating a visual image (sketch, chart, symbol), drawing on events from the book he or she has read. Using tape, each student posts his/her response to the side of the billboard box. When all students have completed the task, they share their answers with one another, showing their answer on the box to the others in the group.

After the sharing process, the group takes notes on what they have learned about the other books, and discuss the similarities and differences in their individual responses. This allows students to learn about the books others in the class have read, and at the same time provides them the opportunity to make generalizations and draw conclusions from the literature about the time period being studied. Once students have completed the activity, you may choose to encourage them to write their own open-ended questions. The class could then accumulate a

“bank” of index cards containing questions from which to draw on other occasions. When we did this in a classroom in New York City, students were able to compare and contrast the lives and experiences of African-Americans and Whites, urban and rural residents, and Northern and Southern Americans during the Great Depression.

Wall Collage

Students of all ages seem to enjoy creating collages. They can take whatever composition they want to work with, and shaping them in any fashion with a unity of color or linear design, glue or paste them to a chosen surface. Like the previous one, this activity allows the students to share the books they have read with their classmates who chose to read different books, as well as synthesize information to generate new understandings about the historical period being studied.

This activity can be ongoing throughout the unit, or may serve as a culmination. The objective of the activity is for the students to create a wall collage (or bulletin board) that addresses major themes or issues in the unit. The collage is divided into a selected number of sections, with a question or heading given at the top. For example, in a wall collage made for a unit on the American Civil War, the bulletin board may be divided onto three sections, with the headings *Causes*, *Events*, and *Results*. Sheets of legal-size paper are placed beside each section of the wall collage. As in the previous activity, jigsaw cooperative groups are formed, made up of students from each of the novels in the text set. As students read the books, they meet once or twice a week in their cooperative groups to work on the wall collage. Each of the groups is given a list of open-ended questions, (or they may draw from the “bank” of open-ended questions described above) which are extensions of the categories listed on the board. Each student in the group responds individually to the questions in writing. This may be done as homework or in-class work as a preparation for the group meeting. From the list of questions, students in each group decide which they want to discuss and answer as a group. They should represent the answers to the question with a visual to be placed on the wall collage. These visuals may be things such as a drawing, pictures, words and phrases cut out of magazines, a 3D physical object that is representative of their answer, or any variation thereof (a song sheet of music, photograph, etc.). As students present their item for inclusion on the collage, a scribe from the group records on the legal paper beside the collage the name of the person who places each item on the collage, and a brief explanation of what that item represents. The result is a class collage that addresses the three overall questions for the unit: in this case, the causes, events, and results of the Civil War, as represented in the novels they have selected to read about that era. By the end of the activity, students will have a better understanding of their own book, as they will have had the opportunity to verify and give credibility to their answers pertaining to the questions. They will also learn more points of view from their peers to enrich their understanding of the literature as well as the time period being studied. Finally, this may also serve as a motivating factor for students to become interested in reading other books.

A Teacher and His Students Respond to These Activities

Harry’s story is not an unusual one. Many teachers who allow textbooks to guide their curriculum planning, and who rely heavily (or solely) on teacher-centered instructional practices such as lecturing, often are frustrated when students don’t seem motivated to learn. Teachers sometimes look to one another for advice on how to improve their teaching or to get students more interested. In a recent interview with Harry, we asked him what advice he gives to colleagues who hear of his success in the classroom. After giving it some thought, he said,

Using multiple perspective instruction gives the students a chance to understand the area of study with much greater meaning and perspective. Students enjoy reading young adult literature as they can visualize themselves going through some of the experiences in history, since the books are written from a peer's point-of-view. They are also more engaged, because each member of the cooperative group is discussing their books with the others. This brings the percentage of active learning from one out of 37 bodies (including me) in the classroom to one out of four, meaning that at least 25% of my class is active at one time. I never thought that I could pull this off with 36 students in my class; however, with these techniques, I could have 100 students during a 45-minute period. Size no longer matters!

Harry's students have also responded very positively to the use of multi-level young adult literature and cooperative learning jigsaw groups in their study of American history. After doing the wall collage activity, 12-year-old Geoffrey stated, "It is the most enjoyable thing we've done this year." After participating in a jigsaw group, in which students discussed five different books they had read about the American Revolution, Su Chin reflected, "It's a good thing to learn about other people's perspective of things. Sometimes they [other group members] mention things that you never thought about and it really gets you thinking." Finally, Hadji, a mainstreamed ESL student, commented that "The book was sort of hard, but not like the textbook. Since it was a story, I kept reading to find out what happened. I'm glad I wasn't in America during the Revolutionary War, but I'm glad it happened so that I could come to this country."

Conclusion

In this article, we have tried to give a rationale along with practical teaching ideas for integrating literature, specifically young adult literature, into the social studies curriculum. By using literature that is written about adolescents and for adolescents, teachers will be able to motivate students to study and learn about the culture, history, and geography of people and places in our world. By allowing students the opportunity to make decisions about what they read, and providing them with activities that rely on cooperative learning groups, teachers of social studies enable their students to take ownership in their learning, and show respect for the various reading abilities that exist in all classrooms. Will including literature in the social studies classroom solve all of the problems facing teachers today? Probably not. But because of what we've seen and heard from teachers who have incorporated literature into the curriculum and cooperative learning into their instruction, we feel fairly certain that it will make life more interesting, more pleasurable, and more productive for both students and teachers.

Resource List of Text Sets of Literature for Middle School American History

We have created an extensive list of young adult fiction and trade books from a variety of reading levels, which social studies teachers may use in teaching American history. Although our text sets are unified through the historic period of America in which they are set, teachers might also develop text sets focusing on universal themes, specific places, cultures, or people related to the social studies. Following are selected text sets from several time periods in the history of the United States.

Name of Book	Author/ Year	Reading Level/ pages	Description
<i>Beginnings: Colonial America</i>			
<i>Guests</i>	Michael Dorris 1994	RL: 4 119 pp.	Moss and Trouble, Algonquin boy and girl, struggle with the problems of growing up in Massachusetts during the time of the first Thanksgiving.
<i>The Sign Of The Beaver</i>	Elizabeth George Speare 1983	RL: 5 135 pp.	A young boy in Maine, when rescued by an Indian chief and his grandson, must decide whether to spend the winter alone in the woods waiting for his family to return or move on to a new life with his new friends.
<i>The Serpent Never Sleeps</i>	Scott O'Dell 1988	RL: 6 240pp.	A story about a young woman who immigrates to the New World and comes to live in the Jamestown settlement.
<i>The Witch of Blackbird Pond</i>	Elizabeth George Speare 1990	RL: 6 223pp.	Puritan neighbors regard Kit Tyler, a 16 year old girl who traveled from Barbados to Connecticut, with suspicion, fear and anger, when she befriends an old woman accused of witchcraft.
<i>Sarah On Her Own</i>	Karen Coombs 1996	RL: 7 212pp.	14-year-old Sarah arrives in the new colony of Virginia alone from England. While trying to earn her fare to return to England, she finds strength, courage and even love for her new country.

<i>Struggle for Independence: Revolutionary America</i>			
<i>Fighting Ground</i>	Avi 1987	RL: 5 157pp.	Thirteen-year-old Jonathan got his chance to be part of the war against the British, which he always wanted, but discovers that the real war is fought within himself.
<i>Sarah Bishop</i>	Scott O'Dell 1980	RL: 5 230pp.	Sarah, a young New Yorker, finds herself a fugitive from the British Army, living outside the law during the Revolutionary War.
<i>My Brother Sam Is Dead</i>	James Lincoln & Christopher Collier 1974	RL: 6 216pp.	A young man is torn between his brother's patriotism and his father's Tory sympathies during the Revolution.
<i>Johnny Tremain</i>	Esther Forbes 1943	RL: 6 238pp.	The story is of a young apprentice from a tragic accident in a silversmith's shop to his dramatic involvement as a patriot in the days just before the Revolution.
<i>Winter of Red Snow: The Revolutionary War Diary of Abigail Jane Stewart, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania</i>	Kristina Gregory 1996	RL: 7 173pp.	A young girl records the despair and hope she witnesses, while George Washington is getting his soldiers ready in Valley Forge during the winter of 1777-1778.
<i>April Morning</i>	Howard Fast 1961	RL: 8 184pp.	A young man's baptism of fire during the Battle of Lexington, in April 1775.
<i>An Enemy Among Them</i>	D.H. DeFord Harry Stout 1987	RL: 8 200pp.	Margaret's German American family supports the revolution in 1776. A historically based, romantic spy adventure.

<i>A Nation Divided: War Between the States</i>			
<i>Charley Skedaddle</i>	Patricia Beatty 1987	RL: 5 186pp.	A 12-year-old from New York City joins the Union Army as a drummer boy during the Civil War, but deserts during the battle in Virginia, and meets a hostile old mountain woman.
<i>Shades Of Gray</i>	Carolyn Reeder 1989	RL: 5 152pp.	At the end of the War, 12-year-old Will unwillingly goes to Virginia, after losing all his immediate family, to live with his aunt and uncle he thinks is a “traitor” because he refused to take part in the war.
<i>Jip: His Story</i>	Katherine Paterson 1996	RL: 6 181pp.	While living on a poor Vermont farm in 1855, Jip learns his and his mother’s identities and comes to understand how he arrived at this place.
<i>Red Cap</i>	Clifton G. Wisler 1991	RL: 6 160pp.	This is the story of a young drummer boy who shows great courage when he is captured and sent to Andersonville Prison.
<i>Tamarack Tree</i>	Patricia Clapp 1986	RL: 7 214pp.	During the siege of Vicksburg in the spring of 1863, an 18-year-old English girl finds her loyalties divided as she experiences the hardships.
<i>Last Silk Dress</i>	Ann Rinaldi 1988	RL: 7 350pp.	During the Civil War, Susan helps the Confederate Army and uncovers a series of mysterious family secrets.
<i>Soldier’s Heart</i>	Gary Paulsen 1998	RL: 7 102pp.	In the Minnesota Volunteers, fifteen-year-old Charlie learns how to be a soldier and a man.
<i>Across Five Aprils</i>	Irene Hunt 1964	RL: 8 223pp.	A young boy's experiences of pain, suffering and courage as the war comes close to home, while his brothers are fighting at opposite fronts and his father is ailing, he takes over the major farming chores.
<i>Becca's Story</i>	James Forman 1992	RL: 8 192pp.	This is a novel, based on documentary, about Becca's two boyfriends marching off to the Civil War.

<i>A Nation Grows: Westward Expansion</i>			
<i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i>	Patricia MacLachlan 1985	RL: 4 59pp.	A loving story of a family who lost their mother and the tall, plain woman who comes to stay with them.
<i>Little House On The Prairie</i>	Laura Ingalls Wilder 1971	RL: 4 334pp.	The original story of the Wilder family, their journey to the Indian territory by the covered wagon, and the founding of their first home on the prairie.
<i>Mr. Tucket</i>	Gary Paulsen 1994	RL: 5 166pp.	The story of a young boy who was captured by Pawnee Indians on the Oregon Trail.
<i>Prairie Songs</i>	Pam Conrad 1985	RL: 6 167pp.	Louisa and her loving pioneer family were living on the Nebraska prairie, but her life is altered by the arrival of a new doctor and his beautiful, tragically frail wife.
<i>Borderlands</i>	Peter Carter 1993	RL: 7	A 13-year-old orphan learns how to survive on his own in the Old West.
<i>Dragon's Gate</i>	Laurence Yep 1993	RL: 7 273pp.	A young immigrant boy from China joins his father and uncle in their efforts to build the transcontinental railroad.
<i>Beyond The Divide</i>	Kathryn Lasky 1995	RL: 8 297pp.	14-year-old Meribah defies convention by leaving her secure home in Pennsylvania to travel to American West with her father.
<i>Slavery: America Struggles with Human Rights</i>			
<i>Breaking Free</i>	LouAnn Gaeddert 1994	RL: 4 136pp.	Two slaves escape to Canada from a New York farm in 1880.
<i>Next Stop, Freedom: The Story Of a Slave Girl</i>	Dorothy & Thomas Hobler 1991	RL: 5 64pp.	Addy and her family decide to escape from slavery but the family is separated in their effort to gain their freedom.
<i>Steal Away Home</i>	Jane Kristof 1996	RL: 5 127pp.	Two slave boys runaway from their South Carolina plantation in an attempt to reach their freed father about 500 miles to the north.

<i>Which Way Freedom?</i>	Joyce Hansen 1992	RL: 6 120pp.	Ever since he was sold as a slave, young Obi always wanted to find his mother. When Civil War began, Obi knew that was time to move which could be life and freedom or back to slavery or death.
<i>My Name Is Not Angelica</i>	Scott O'Dell 1990	RL: 6 144pp.	The experiences of a young Senegalese girl brought as a slave to a Caribbean island where she takes part in the slave revolt of 1733-1734.
<i>The Slave Dancer</i>	Paula Fox 1973	RL:6 176pp.	Spellbinding novel of suspense and survival of a young musician who is hired to play for the slaves aboard a ship bound for America.
<i>Hard Times in America: The Great Depression</i>			
<i>Grandpa's Mountain</i>	Carolyn Reeder 1991	RL: 5 195pp.	Story of eleven year old Carrie and her grandfather's struggle to save his Blue Ridge Mountain home and property from becoming a "New Deal" National Park.
<i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>	Mildred Taylor 1976	RL: 6 284pp.	The struggles of a black family in Mississippi during Depression are told with warmth and humor.
<i>A Girl From Yamhill</i>	Beverly Cleary 1988	RL: 8 320pp.	This is the author's memoir about her childhood spent on the family farm in Oregon during the Depression.
<i>End of a Dark Road</i>	Crystal Thrasher 1982	RL: 7 228pp.	This book shares the life of the Robinsons, a rural farm family, as they experience both joy and sorrow during the Depression years.
<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i>	Maya Angelou 1983	RL: 9 pp.	A young African American girl faces the hardships of growing up in Depression-era America.
<i>The World at War: World War II and the Holocaust</i>			
<i>Daniel's Story</i>	Carol Matas 1993	RL: 5 136pp.	This book reflects the experiences of children and their families during the Holocaust.
<i>Number The Stars</i>	Lois Lowry 1996	RL: 5 137pp.	10-year-old Annemarie, a courageous Danish girl, who hides her Jewish friend from the Nazis during German occupation of Denmark.
<i>Devil's Arithmetic</i>	Jane Yolen 1988	RL: 6 170pp.	Hannah resents her Jewish traditions until she is placed in a small village in Nazi-occupied Poland.

<i>Along The Tracks</i>	Tamar Bergman 1991	RL: 7 256pp.	The story of a young Jewish boy and his struggles to survive after he was driven from his home by German Invasion, becomes a refugee in Soviet Union and gets separated from his family.
<i>Man From The Other Side</i>	Uri Orlev 1995	RL: 7 186pp.	14-year-old Marek and his grandparents shelter a Jewish man in the days before the Jewish uprising, while living on the outskirts of the Warsaw Ghetto.
<i>Alicia: My Story</i>	Alicia Jurman Appleman 1988	RL: 8 356pp.	After losing her entire family to the Nazis, Alicia rescued thousands of Jews.
<i>Anne Harry, Diary Of A Young Girl</i>	Anne Harry 1952	RL: 8 340pp.	The diary of a young girl who lived in hiding with her family and friends during wartime Holland.
<i>Fighting for Liberty: American Civil Rights Movement</i>			
<i>The Fire Next Time</i>	James Baldwin 1988	RL: 6 141pp.	This book is about the racial climate of the 1950s and 1960s and the events leading to the Civil Rights Movement.
<i>Freedom's Children: Young Civil Right Activists Tell Their Own Stories</i>	Ellen Levine 1992	RL: 6 152pp.	A collection of true stories of children and teens actively taking part in the events between 1954-1968, with a epilogue telling what happened to the youth whose stories are collected.
<i>Ludie's Song</i>	Dirlie Herlihy 1990	RL: 7 212pp.	When Mary develops a friendship with a black woman in a small, southern town in the 1950s, she puts the people of the town to reexamine their beliefs and ideals.
<i>Just Like Martin</i>	Ossie Davis 1992	RL: 7 215pp.	14-year old Stone believes in Martin Luther King's nonviolent tactics and wants to participate in the March in Washington, but his father has different opinions and does not let him to participate.
<i>Now Is Your Time: The African American Struggle For Freedom</i>	Walter Dean Myers 1992	RL: 8 320pp.	This book tells about the African American experience from slavery to modern times, highlighting the Civil Rights Movement.
<i>Not Separate, Not Equal</i>	Brenda Wilkinson 1987	RL: 8 152pp.	Malene is one of the six black students to integrate a Georgia public high school during the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1960s. She experiences hatred and racism.

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