Young Adult Book List I
Classic/Literary (includes a list of critical texts)

This list is a compilation of contemporary young adult novels (written for readers in middle through high school). All are popular and many are bestsellers spanning a wide variety of topics and genres. Some have particularly compelling plot lines, others innovative styles of narration and others have surprisingly mature or self aware characters. All blur the line of acceptability in young adult fiction and each has captured the hearts of a young American subculture. Go Ask Alice is the most dated book on the list, but it is still relevant to the life of current young adults and a precursor to many of the newer books. Note: A list of critical text for instructors and those who wish to delve deeper is attached to this list.

Novels

Marketed as the diary of an anonymous teen, there is still debate, 35 years later whether it was really written by a troubled teen. But the lasting strength of the debate shows how affecting this novel about a girl falling and eventually drowning in a world of drug abuse still is.

A novel set in Victorian England; it is alight with magic and the ageless connection between girls of the same age. A mix of a boarding school drama, the story of a wiccan circle, and interracial love in historical England, the plot is full and rich and the prose is well crafted.

Magic weaved into reality in a beautifully abstract collection of linked short stories. A wonderful introduction to Block's writing style which never makes too much effort to ground the reader in too much of the "real world" but not in the way usually expected in children's literature.

Told in alternating chapters by two different authors, the story explores people through the music that they listen to or rather how people show who they are through that music. Also a sweet love story and a jaunt through New York City, a whole book about one night, all of these elements work to create a realistic world where subculture meets relate-able human experience.

Marrying science with the elf world, this series about a child genius makes the
boy character the smartest person in the book, a crowd favorite for young readers. Solving a series of magical mysteries, the main character's overt flaws are revealed to the reader but not necessarily to the main character, a tool that causes young readers to also self evaluate.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. Scholastic Inc., 2010. 386 pages. Sometimes referred to by fans and critics alike as "An American Take on Battle Royale", the book acts as an easily digestible but still wholly complicated entrance into the world of science fiction. At its base it is an exploration of human nature during war and how the act of violence mirrors the loss of innocence in adolescence. More palpable than battle royale and therefore more American. When paired together the two can also shine light on cultural ideas about age, innocence, and the nature of violence.

Dessen, Sarah. *Someone Like You*. Penguin, 2004. 150 pages. Dessen is strangely able to capture the clumsily universal nature of young adulthood and give it an elegant nature on the page. Unlike many authors who use humor or fantastical setting to highlight the awkwardness of youth, Dessen instead writes it so that the reader sees beauty in their own everyday strangeness by seeing beauty in the characters.

Duane, Diane. *So You Want to Be a Wizard (20th): The First Book in the Young Wizards Series Twentieth-Anniversary Edition*. Harcourt, 2003. 348 pages. A book that leaves behind the Merlin idea of wizardry and makes it literally child's play, this series puts all power in the hands of the 13 year old protagonists and expects them, and through them young readers, to create as well as fulfill responsibility. With such a complex plot line it may never have been published without *A Wrinkle in Time* having been published before it and it therefore blurs the line of what is expected from young adult readers.

---. *A Wizard Alone (digest): The Sixth Book in the Young Wizards Series*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005. 352 pages. The sixth book of the So You Want to Be a Wizard Series deals with a difficult and rather abstract subject matter for both children and adults alike: Autism. All challenges faced by the characters happen inside the head of an Autistic boy and the main battle is that of winning over his mind. By making the topic even more abstract through magic, it becomes more graspable for young and old alike and teaches readers to awe and respect for the power of the human mind and mental illness. It also reevaluates society's ideas about limitations of all kinds and forces the question "What are boundaries really?"

Green, John. *An Abundance of Katherines*. Re Speak, 2008. 272 pages. With a nod to postmodern structure, this book includes math problems, word puzzles, historical references, and footnotes. It still manages to be very funny while delving into all these forms and prove to young, future worried readers that any contribution they make to the world matters.
A reconstruction of Cinderella without the magic, Haddix tells the story after the marriage, where a bored miserable Cinderella cannot escape her royal life. A feminist text to the core, the heroine is the ultimate anti-Disney princess and the book is a perfect example of what mothers want their daughters to read.

A play on Plato's cave and a predecessor to M. Night Shamalot's The Village, the novel introduces the concept of a world outside of that of the familiar and the danger that lies in both through a young female heroine who must save her entire village from death.

A prose retelling of the Shakespeare classic by the Newbery Award winning author Julius Lester, this version eliminates race as the reason for villainy by making Iago black. Well written, socio politically intriguing, and a wonderful YA bridge for real Shakespeare.

From one angle, just another look at awkward teenage girlhood. From another, a wonderful glance at British slang and especially the unique word play created and used by young girls as well as awesome comedic writing aided by said slang.

This hilarious series became the delight of children the world over when it decided to not insult their intelligence. It could be described as one long satire of the 19th century classic, from plot to narrative voice, even cover art, as it pushes its characters from one horrible incident to another all the while making the reader burble with laughter. The narrator/psyeudonymned author is himself a character in the series, adding an interesting writing aspect worthy of exploration.

Thought of as a "Lord of the Flies for the 21st century", Battle Royale is a Japanese pulp fiction classic that blurs the boundaries of young adult fiction. Violent and terrifying, it makes the reader question their own ability to withstand the terror inflicted on the characters and therefore proves its own points about innocence in childhood and its relation to the rest of society. Thought of as exploitative when first released because of the age of the characters (junior high school students), its intense popularity and effect in a way prove its merit.

Cintrón-4

A book about wanting, branding, buying, and the hierarchy of it all. It asks why we should care about any of it and why we do through the voice of a pithy in the thick of a consumer pyramid. It highlights both youth language and culture but most especially points to the transient nature of both causing young readers to question the transient nature of their own youth much earlier than normal while still reveling in the beauty of it. Westerfield is a master of naturally highlighting slang and this book is a perfect introduction to the topic, especially when paired with his *Uglies* series, because it takes place in contemporary New York as opposed to a fantasy dystopic future.

The first in a trilogy, the book is set in a dystopic future where everyone receives plastic surgery at the age of 16 and moves on to a world of beautiful people and pleasure. The Book is riddled with creative slang and a plot that clearly addresses how its themes relate to current society. The fast paced, relate-able, and symbol ridden book acts as a lighthouse to young readers and also defies the restraints of the tech sci-fi genre, partially because of its emphasis on the female perspective.

Deals semi-reflexively with the shallow nature of young Upper East Side New Yorkers. Gives an in-depth view of the city itself as a character and uniquely uses the second person in parts of the narration. The book also seamlessly incorporates the internet as a mode of plot movement and was published before it was a commonplace occurrence.

**Criticism**

Chronicling the development of the LGBTQ-themed YA lit, this book takes a historical approach by examining changes decade by decade, discussing important works in detail. Each chapter includes an annotated bibliography and a list of notes or works cited. Despite the drippy title, how could any YA scholar not want it in their library?

Marketed as a "survey [that] helps YA librarians who want to freshen up their readers advisory skills," this book explores the definition of the title "young adult", the history of the YA genre, and breaks down the sub genres within YA in movements and decades. It is written by a chair of the 2006 Printz committee (a committee that picks a YA book of the year) and thereby a literal judge of current YA's "literary merit." Its pacing is fast and its tone humorous.

This book uses recent and past young adult fiction as a gateway to often taught literature classics. A great way to study how young adults relate to fiction and the merits of current young adult fiction when put in direct comparison with what is already considered great literature.


The essays in this book analyze not only the texts, but the films and fandom of the Twilight series, creating a layered look at the phenomena it has become. With *Twilight* being a series rich in, if nothing else, subtexts, the essays may be more intriguing than the series itself. Or the over analyzation my suck the life out the little that made it interesting. Depends on the student.


A collection of literary criticism on Scott Westerfeld's Uglies series written for young adult readers, this book works as a great way to analyze how Uglies relates to young readers but also how literary criticism can be directed toward them so that they two recognize how they absorb general fiction reading into their own lives.