



10-2

# English Language Arts

---

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction  
Annotated List

---



# THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MISS JANE PITTMAN

Ernest J. Gaines

*“Just one more time, and I’ll kill you.’ She looked at everybody there. ‘That go for the rest of y’all,’ she said. ‘You free, then you go’n act like free men. If you want to act like you did on that plantation, turn around now and go on back to that plantation.’” p. 19*

*The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* is a searching portrayal of life as a black woman living in the deep American south. Ernest Gaines taped Miss Jane Pittman’s reminiscences in 1962 when she was already over 100 years old. Her account details the suffering and humiliations that blacks faced in their daily lives. However, through it all, Pittman maintains her faith. As a result, this uplifting perspective celebrates the unfolding of a determined spirit in the face of adversity.

Gaines writes in a clear, readable style, using Pittman as the first person narrator.

New York, NY: Bantam Books,  
Inc., 1972  
[original 1971]

ISBN 0553205854

**Awards:**

Commonwealth Club of  
California, 1972

# THE BLUE SWORD

Robin McKinley

In *The Blue Sword*, Harry Crewe's father dies, so she leaves her home and travels to the frontier where her elder brother, Richard, is stationed. Living under the care of her brother's superiors, Sir Charles and Lady Amelia, Harry finds life confining until Corlath, ruler of the neighbouring kingdom of Daria, comes seeking an alliance against the threat of Thurra and his empire. Inspired by his "gift," or "kelar," Corlath believes that Harry is important to the survival of his people, and so he kidnaps her. She trains as a king's rider, and in the end defies Corlath, whom she has come to love, and saves his kingdom. Corlath admits his misjudgement, and this fantasy ends happily. In this novel, women are shown to be equally powerful and worthy of respect as are men. The relationship between Harry and Corlath demonstrates the importance of love and respect in keeping people together. Tolerance for other cultures and for the differences between people is encouraged. *The Blue Sword* may appeal particularly to female readers, though the action should attract the interest of all students.

*"Take strength from your own purpose, for you will know what you must do, if you let yourself; trust your horse and the cat that follows you, for there are none better than they, and they love you; and trust your sword, for she holds the strength of centuries and she hates what you are learning to hate. And trust the Lady Aerine, who visits you ... and trust your friendships. Friends you will have need of, for in you two worlds meet." p. 164*

New York, NY: The Berkley Publishing Group, 1987  
[original 1982]

ISBN 0441068804

**Awards:**

Best Young Adult Book Award, American Library Association (ALA), 1982

Newbery Honor Book, 1983

# THE CAGE

Ruth Minsky Sender

*"I must remember my number. But I must not forget my name. I must not let them wipe out my name. Riva Minska. Number 55082." p. 175*

*The Cage*, set in and around 1942, is an autobiography relating coming-of-age experiences during the Holocaust. Sixteen-year-old Riva is a Jewish girl living in a hopeless Polish ghetto. After Nazis take her mother away, Riva struggles to care for her brothers and maintain a sense of family despite the horror around them. The narrative is presented as easy-to-read fragments of experience in Riva's diary. She uses the writing to keep herself together in an atmosphere of prejudice, discrimination and daily hardship.

Students will appreciate this enthralling perspective on adolescent suffering in the context of the Holocaust. Students might be invited to write their own memoirs and narratives about keeping themselves together during their own times of hardship. The novel contains ethnic/religious epithets, gender references, and descriptions of intolerance and violence. Teachers should discuss these issues critically within their historical context.

New York, NY:  
Simon & Schuster  
Children's Publishing  
Division, 1997  
[original 1986]  
264 pages

ISBN 0-689-81321-X

# A CHILD IN PRISON CAMP

Shizuye Takashima



In *A Child in Prison Camp*, artist Shizuye Takashima records in words and paintings, her experiences as a child in a prison camp. At the age of 11, she and her family, along with other Japanese Canadians, were removed from their homes on the West coast of Canada and sent by the Canadian government to an internment camp in the interior of British Columbia. The family lost their civil rights, their home, and their business. Takashima vividly describes the actual camp, the housing, the schooling, the humiliation, and the loss of freedom and rights.

The book is an example of racism in Canadian history. Not only does it describe the actual happenings, but Takashima's story shows the effects of childhood experiences on one's life. It was not until 1984 that the Canadian government condemned this internment and offered financial restitution.

Teachers may need to explain the historical background before beginning the book. Sensitivity to the subject is needed for successful presentation of this personal account. Discussion of why and how people react in a time of crisis is important. This book would work well with a combined English–social studies approach and could lead to student research on such topics as World War II, the atom bomb, Japanese culture, the human will to survive, and prejudice. Either full class or small group study would be effective.

*“That’s nothing—a Jap is a Jap, whether you’re born here or not!’ ‘Even if I changed my name?’ ‘Yes, you look oriental, you’re a threat.’ ‘A threat? Why?’ ‘God only knows!’ Yuki replies. ‘It’s mostly racial prejudice, and jealousy. Remember we had cleared the best land all along the Fraser Valley. Good fisherman. This caused envy, so better to kick us out. The damn war is just an excuse.’” p. 46*

Montreal, PQ: Tundra Books, 1989  
[original 1971]

ISBN 0887762417

**Awards:**

Canadian Association of Children's Librarians Gold Medal, 1971

Look of Books Award, 1972

# CHILDREN OF THE RIVER

Linda Crew

*“She liked the American ideal of everyone being equal—even a peanut farmer could be President—but at times like this she missed the strict rules one followed in Kampuchea. At home she would have known their respective ranks and spoken accordingly, but here it was all so treacherously free and loose. A person might make a terrible mistake without knowing it.” p. 101*

In *Children of the River*, Sundara flees Cambodia with her aunt, uncle, grandma and two nephews to the United States, where they struggle to make a living and adapt to a new culture. Sundara falls for an all-American boy, but their different political and cultural backgrounds make a relationship impossible until they are able to reach an understanding of each other’s heritage. Sundara also has to face her overwhelming feeling of responsibility for her niece’s death.

A tender, moving and believable story, this novel identifies and highlights the difficulties of moving into a different culture, especially when the past involves violence and sexual abuse. The flashbacks are well-integrated, and students in small group or full class study should find an interesting blend of internal and external conflicts that lead naturally to research. The book strongly emphasizes the idealistic universal message that individuals have a personal responsibility to make a positive difference.

Regardless of origin or mother tongue, students should be able to identify with the intergenerational conflicts and can be expected to respond strongly to the differences between Cambodian and North American culture and politics.

New York, NY: Doubleday  
Canada Ltd., 1989

ISBN 0440210224

**Awards:**

Best Young Adult Book Award,  
American Library Association  
(ALA), 1989

Children’s Book Award for older  
readers, International Reading  
Association, 1989

# CRABBE

William Bell



*Crabbe* is a highly entertaining novel by popular Canadian author William Bell. It captures the wilderness adventure of a mixed-up adolescent. The first-person narrator is Franklin Crabbe, a chatty, funny but troubled eighteen-year-old. Feeling like an outsider and fed up with what he sees as adult hypocrisy, Crabbe runs away from home and goes off to seek freedom. As he learns to survive in the Algonquin Park wilderness, he meets and falls in love with Mary Pallas, a kind woman who has her own secrets to hide. Through his relationship with her, Crabbe finds his identity and purpose, ultimately taking the help she gave him to become independent, be himself and learn to survive in a confused, often irrational world.

*Crabbe* contains minor contextualized coarse language, references to mercy killing and a few sexual references. Because the book is set up in journal entries, it provides opportunities to explore how point of view influences the presentation of characters and conflict. Students might also be encouraged to try their own journal writing.

*“Layer by layer I was being stripped away: the ordeal with the bear; the waterfall; my breaking down tonight and admitting what I never before admitted to anyone, including myself. What would happen, I wondered, when the last layer was peeled off? What would be left?” p. 81*

Markham, ON:  
Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2002  
[original 1986]  
169 pages

ISBN 0-7736-7483-7

# DARE

Marilyn Halvorson



*“He didn’t belong there. He belonged here. And that meant I was trapped. Life was such a rip-off. The whole world was full of people who wanted someone to need them. Me, I just wanted to be a loner and what did I get? A kid brother who thought I was the Lone Ranger and who just wanted to hang around with me and be Tonto.” p. 65*

**Dare** is the name of the angry and confused 15-year-old who, with his 12-year-old brother, Ty, have lived with their grandmother in the same small Alberta town for five years. When they are left orphaned after her stroke, Laura McConnell, a substitute teacher and rancher, lets them live with her. Dare is the typical rebel character—swearing, drinking and driving, fighting, and even spending some time in jail. However, Dare matures as he learns to accept responsibility and confronts his part in his mother’s death.

The realistic dialogue and intensity of Dare’s emotions enable students to identify with this character’s turmoil, yet realize how feelings can be changed without losing face. Effective characterizations of a rebellious, defiant teenager and sensitive and believable adults add to an action-filled story that is best suited for full class study.

Toronto, ON: General  
Paperbacks, 1990  
[original 1988]

ISBN 0773672672

# DEATHWATCH

Robb White

*Deathwatch*, a fast-moving and easy-reading narrative, revolves around the tale of Ben, a young geology student working as a hunting guide. Ben finds himself locked in an intense struggle to survive when the expedition he is on turns into a manhunt.

Madec, an oil executive, hires Ben to escort him through the Southern California mountains in search of bighorn sheep. Madec accidentally kills an old prospector, and Ben's sense of justice demands that he report this incident to the authorities; however, Madec wants to ignore the death and continue the hunt. These two men are chained together by their different outlooks on the situation. A struggle to outwit each other soon develops.

Deathwatch presents clear contrasts in setting, mood and character types. A study of foreshadowing, symbolism, conflict and plot could also be undertaken. The ending, although abrupt, provides opportunity for open-ended discussion and various writing projects relating to decision making and the question of ethics.

*"He and this man Madec were locked together, chained together in a struggle for life itself—a struggle with no niceties, no rules of behavior, no sportsmanship, no gentlemanly conduct. Madec could not leave him. The struggle had gone too far for that. Nor, on the other hand, could Ben escape." p. 67*

Toronto, ON: Doubleday  
Canada, 1972

ISBN 0440917409

# DOVE

Robin Lee Graham (with Derek L.T. Gill)

*“Loneliness was to ride with me for a thousand days, and throughout the longest nights. At time it was like something I could touch. Loneliness slunk aboard as the lights of Catalina Island began to fade, and I told myself that time and distance would destroy it. How wrong I was.”*  
p. 19

*Dove* is an inspirational nonfiction account of the author's remarkable five-year solo voyage around the world when he was only sixteen years old. Graham journeyed 30 000 nautical sea miles with his cats on a twenty-four foot sloop. Along the way, he became homesick, was joined by his father and friends, met his future wife Patti in Fiji, married her in Africa, and later returned home expecting their first child. Graham presents this odyssey chronologically, and has included photographs of different people and experiences from his journey.

The book portrays Graham's conflict with nature, contact with other cultures, personal growth, and battles with loneliness in a straightforward, entertaining journal style. In a postscript, there is a very brief reference to the Christian faith that the Grahams feel guides their lives. Teachers should be aware of a few examples of coarse language in the book.

New York, NY: HarperCollins  
Publishers, 1991  
Harper Perennial edition  
[original 1972]  
199 pages

ISBN 0-06-092047-5

# FISH HOUSE SECRETS

Kathy Stinson



In *Fish House Secrets*, Chad and his father arrive at his Nova Scotia grandparent's house, and it is here where Chad mourns and accepts his mother's death. He meets Jill, a Halifax runaway, and while helping her elude the authorities, Chad comes to terms with his own grief, guilt and rebellion. References to emerging sexuality and abortion reveal empathy for others and are dealt with sensitively.

Chad and Jill have typical teenage actions and characteristics, but their portrayals go beyond stereotyping. The clashing of youth and parents, the need to assert oneself, the need to communicate, the need for self-esteem and the need for independence are some of the discussion topics that this book should generate. The novel's style, using inner chapters, reveals both Chad's and Jill's personal struggles and their willingness to forgive and begin again. It could be used either for small group discussion or for full class study.

*"I say, 'my dad's a nice guy, I just wish he'd give me a little space, that's all.' 'Parents don't like to do that unless you make them,' Ian says, and sounds like he knows what he's talking about. If he's taken a job that gets him away from home for six weeks I guess he does. I have to admire his doing that, like some part of me admires the nerve of that girl hiding in our barn, asking me to feed her, then just—moving on." p. 60*

Saskatoon, SK: Thistledown Press Ltd., 1993  
[original 1992]

ISBN 1895449103

# THE GREAT ESCAPE

Paul Brickhill

*“There’s one thing we’ve got to keep in mind. Glemnitz doesn’t know how many tunnels there are or how advanced they are, and he won’t have the faintest idea everything is so organized. He mustn’t get to thinking it’s anything more than a little effort of a few blokes. If he does, he’ll turn the whole bloody camp inside out. He mustn’t find anything more.” p. 89*

*The Great Escape* is a suspenseful and spine-chilling thriller in which a World War II POW tells how more than six hundred British and American air force officers escaped from Stalag Luft III. Under cunning leadership, these prisoners outsmarted, even manipulated, their Nazi captors into unwittingly assisting them in their escape; which was made possible through persistence, camaraderie, humour and the coordination of a multitude of talents. The author follows the experiences of key individuals through to eventual escape or death, and includes the later war trials and the sentencing of the Nazi officers who ran the stalag.

The book is written in short chapters full of action and adventure. Brickhill inserts sketches of the compound, equipment used in the escape, maps and drawings. He uses technical vocabulary when describing the construction and excavation of the tunnels. Even though this book was written just five years after the war ended, Brickhill remains fairly objective in his portrayal of prison life. He writes with a sense of excitement, a touch of humour and dwells on the enormity of the task rather than the daily drudgery of living in a prison.

New York, NY: Fawcett Crest  
Books, 1978  
[original 1950]

ISBN 0449237176

# HATCHET

Gary Paulsen

The engaging story of *Hatchet* unfolds as 13-year-old Brian Robson flies to visit his father in the Canadian wilderness. The pilot of the plane dies from a massive heart attack. Brian crash-lands the plane in a remote lake and survives a two-month ordeal with only a hatchet, a few camping skills, and his instinct for survival.

This action-packed adventure offers plot detail and character development. Students should be interested in the physical and emotional growth of Brian, as well as his ability to cope with insurmountable odds.

Brian's fragmented thinking is juxtaposed with the narrator's sequential descriptions. This style of writing will be highly appealing to many readers. The novel is an easy read, but can provide interesting discussions in small group or full class situations. Gary Paulsen's autobiography *Guts* is included in the Grade 7 list.

*“And a watch. He had a digital watch still on his wrist but it was broken from the crash—the little screen blank—and he took it off and almost threw it away but stopped the hand motion and lay the watch on the grass with the rest of it. There. That was it. No, wait. One other thing. Those were all the things he had, but he also had himself. Perpich used to drum that into them—‘You are the most valuable asset. Don’t forget that. You are the best thing you have.’”*  
p. 51

Toronto, ON: Puffin Books,  
1988  
[original 1987]

ISBN 014032724X

**Awards:**

Newbery Honor Book, 1988

# HUNTER IN THE DARK

Monica Hughes



*"They loved him. They wanted to protect him, but he couldn't let them do that any more. When he got back he was going to have to be strong enough to find a way past his own fear to his parents' fear for him, and somehow cancel that out. Could he do it? Could they find a new way of being close and truthful? He could sure as hell try, though it wasn't going to be easy."  
pp. 53-54*

New York, NY: Avon Books,  
1984  
[original 1982]

ISBN 0380677024

**Awards:**

Alberta Culture Juvenile Novel  
Award, 1981

Canada Council prize for  
children's literature, 1982

Best Young Adult Book Award,  
American Library Association  
(ALA), 1983

Young Adult Canadian Book  
Award, 1983

In *Hunter in the Dark*, 16-year-old Mike Rankin comes to terms with himself, his family and his fear of death. The author develops relationships and conflicts through a rapidly-moving plot with realistic characters and dialogue. The survival theme is developed through the goal of taking one more hunting trip.

Tact and delicacy should be used in dealing with the mortality theme in this novel as many students have some personal knowledge of someone who has, or had, a terminal illness. The family's attitude of denial in this story may mirror the students' own experiences. This novel could facilitate discussions leading to creative writing and/or research.

# IN THE LAND OF WHITE DEATH: AN EPIC STORY OF SURVIVAL IN THE SIBERIAN ARCTIC

Valerian Albanov

*In the Land of the White Death* is an engaging true account of the *Saint Anna*, a Russian ship that became frozen for a year-and-a-half in the Kora Sea in 1912. The author and 13 other crew members finally made sledges and kayaks and set out for Franz Josef Land. This straightforwardly written thirteen-chapter book is a suspenseful, gripping diary written in the first person by one of the survivors. It tells a typical but amazing survival narrative, with humans overcoming isolation and seemingly impossible odds. The ship had inadequate provisions, an incompetent commander and inaccurate mapping. Over the course of the 18-month disaster, the crew members faced sub-zero temperatures, scurvy, starvation, blizzards, collapsing ice floes, wild animal attacks, snow blindness and rebellion. Although most of the crew eventually perished from starvation or hypothermia, Albanov persisted and finally found help.

The book includes a preface written by Jon Krakauer, as well as maps and photos to illustrate different aspects of the odyssey. Students might use a problem-solution approach in discussing or writing about the experiences of the crew. The epilogue suggests some further research possibilities for Internet or library explorations.

*“Why had I come to this frozen wilderness on the edge of an icy sea, when the weather was so beautiful in the sunny lands to the south? What madness! ... But what good would complaining do? All this torture is simply deserved retribution. One should not poke one’s nose into places where Nature does not want the presence of man.”*  
p. 45

Toronto, ON: Random House  
of Canada, 2001  
Modern Library Paperback  
edition  
[original 1917]  
243 pages

ISBN 0-679-68361-X

# LYDDIE

Katherine Paterson

*"She has me. Oh Charlie, I ain't perfect, but I do my best. Can't you see? I done my best for you. She's all I got left now. How can I let her go? But even as she stormed within herself, she knew she had no choice. Like the rusty blade through her heart she felt it. If she stays here with me, she will die."*  
p. 143

Set in the United States during the Industrial Revolution, *Lyddie* is a story of unions and personal courage. It follows Lyddie, a young girl who goes to work in the garment factories where she learns to weave and read—thereby finding her future. Lyddie's struggle for independence, for her rights as a woman, and for her rights as a factory worker, reflect the social conditions of that time.

The novel should encourage interesting discussions on character development, on the conflict between right and wrong, and on the value of education. Gender references, and the treatment of the birth of a child out of wedlock according to the social mores of the 1800s, are also potential topics. Some students might be interested in researching the emergence of unions and women's rights.

While the topic is universal, students may wish to consider the changing roles of women and examine the issues of women's rights today.

Toronto, ON: Puffin Books,  
1992  
[original 1991]

ISBN 0140349812

**Awards:**

International Board of Books  
for Young People (IBBY) Honor  
Book, 1994

This novel has a support  
video available through  
ACCESS: *Good*  
*Conversation: A Talk with*  
*Katherine Paterson, 1999*  
[21 min. BPN 2075908].

# NEVER CRY WOLF

Farley Mowat



In his fictional narrative, *Never Cry Wolf*, Farley Mowat embarks on a mission to investigate claims about the wolves' role in the diminishing caribou population. Isolated in the frozen tundra among howling wolf packs, Mowat develops a respect and admiration for these animals. The narrative is developed with humorous recollections of encounters between man and animal. In his journal, Mowat writes of observations, enlightened feelings and lonely encounters with the wolves. His findings conclude that the wolves have been wrongfully blamed for the destruction of other animals in the North.

This deceptively simple narrative with its humorous details provides another perspective about an animal that has been falsely maligned. The appeal of this book is in its presentation, simplicity and anecdotal recording.

*“He was lying down, evidently resting after his mournful singsong, and his nose was about six feet from mine. We stared at one another in silence. I do not know what went on in his massive skull, but my head was full of the most disturbing thoughts. I was peering straight into the amber gaze of a fully grown arctic wolf, who probably weighed more than I did, and who was certainly a lot better versed in close-combat techniques than I would ever be.” p. 36*

Toronto, ON: McClelland-Bantam, Inc., 1979  
[original 1963]

ISBN 0770421377

# ON THE LINES

Ron Finn (with David Boyd)



*"I fell hard and I'm thankful that I didn't break anything, but my legs, knees, and my back were sore for weeks. I was dazed for a few seconds because I didn't know what had hit me, but when I turned and realized it was Mason ... well, I was ready to go! All I wanted was a clean shot. That's when Andy stepped in and got Manson off the ice for the second and last time."  
pp. 112-113*

In *On the Lines*, Ron Finn tells a story of hockey from another point of view—that of a linesman in the National Hockey League. After he realizes he will not make the "big" league as a player, Finn begins to take up officiating. As a linesman, he is able to relate many important hockey incidents from the best view in the house. Finn's love of hockey has continued throughout his life. To him, hockey is a part of Canadian culture and tradition, and he displays a positive outlook toward life and people through his association with hockey.

This book will appeal to any student who has a strong interest in sports. Finn talks of not only the hockey players from the 1970s and 1980s, but also of others who are behind the "stars." He reinforces the view that, in order for a sport to continue at any level, there must be more than the "stars."

Coarse language is used in the book, but it is an easy read and will appeal to students interested in hockey. The foreword is written by Wayne Gretzky. Individual or small group study would be effective and could lead to research in areas such as hockey biographies, aspects of the National Hockey League, media in sports, violence in sports, and careers in sports.

Oakville, ON: Rubicon  
Publishing Inc., 1993

ISBN 0921156464

# THE PEARL

John Steinbeck

*The Pearl* tells the story of a Mexican pearl diver, Kino, and his wife who discover a valuable pearl. To Kino, this prize symbolizes comfort, security, health and happiness; and his dreams become larger and more urgent. Three attempts are made on Kino's life as thieves try to steal the pearl. Desperation and greed alter the lives of all who covet the wealth of the pearl.

In this novel, Steinbeck captures the ethnic flavour of this Mexican family, using a smooth-flowing style; many references reflect the rich musical heritage of the people. Detailed descriptions of the land and sea are presented.

The main characters are representative of human frailties. The structure is conducive to plot mapping, and the study of symbols, conflict and character. The novel can be used easily for either small group or individual study.

*"Kino had found the Pearl of the World. The essence of the pearl mixed with essence of mean and a curious dark residue was precipitated. Every man suddenly became related to Kino's pearl, and Kino's pearl went into the dreams, speculations, the schemes, the plans, the futures, the wishes, the needs, the lusts, the hungers, of everyone, and only one person stood in the way and that was Kino, so that he became curiously every man's enemy." p. 23*

New York, NY: Bantam  
Books, 1947  
[original 1945]

ISBN 0670545759

# THE ROAD TO CHLIFA

Michèle Marineau  
(Translated by Susan Ouriou)



*“Glancing up, I saw Karim, on his feet, looking totally shattered. There was nothing left of cold indifference in him. In his eyes were rage, horror, fear, but mostly terrible sadness. That’s when I understood that the newcomer wasn’t haughty or disdainful like some said. He was simply in despair.” p. 24*

*The Road to Chlifa* is a heartbreaking tale of what many young people in war-torn areas of the world face. It is midyear when Karim, a handsome Lebanese youth, registers in a Quebec high school. Right from the start, he attracts attention and seems to polarize factions. After living in a country torn by war, where bombs and bullets and land mines are part of daily existence, his life in Montreal should be easy, but Karim feels out of place and haunted by the memories of his horrible journey to Chlifa. When Karim discovers other students trying to take advantage of another newcomer during a ski outing, Karim is enraged. He attacks the students, ends up being knifed and almost loses his life.

The reasons for Karim’s anger become apparent when, in a lengthy flashback, the story of his life in Lebanon is revealed. His family had already left for Montreal, but Karim remained in Beirut to continue school and experienced the civil war in Lebanon. Finally, Karim makes a treacherous journey through the mountains to Chlifa. There, he finds safety but not without a tremendous price: the life of a young girl he is travelling with.

The story unfolds in a variety of narrative voices: Karim’s journal entries, a first-person account by a girl in Karim’s high school in Quebec, and third-person narration in the flashback to Lebanon. Students will need some background material about Lebanon and reasons for the civil war. The language and violence is hard hitting but credible, in the context of both the war in Lebanon and the locker rooms of a high school. The book emphasizes friendship, courage and the freedoms enjoyed in Canada compared to the homelands of some students.

Calgary, AB: Northern Lights  
Young Novels  
Red Deer College Press, 1995  
[original 1992]

ISBN 0-88995-129-2

# SPEAK

Laurie Halse Anderson

*Speak* is a painful but redemptive young adult novel about a Grade 9 student suppressing and eventually dealing with the trauma of a rape. The narrator, Melinda Sordino, is a high school freshman who is struggling in school and feels like an outsider. Gradually the reader learns the reason for her depression and withdrawal: during the summer she was raped by another student. In the ending, she finally confronts her attacker, thereby learning to stand up for herself and to become more self-empowered. Melinda's final character change is inspiring and progressive; she finds her literal and figurative voice and learns to "speak" up against what is wrong and unjust.

This gritty, realistic book will have an empathetic resonance for many female readers, especially those struggling in school. Overall, it is an easy read—episodic, and gripping. It is written in short descriptive paragraphs with some sections set up as dialogue suitable for reading aloud. Teens are realistically portrayed and students will likely want to discuss and write about Melinda's experiences as compared with their own.

*"We fall into clans: Jocks, Country Clubbers, Idiot Savants, Cheerleaders, Human Waste, Eurotrash, Future Fascists of America, Bit Hair Chix, the Marthas, Suffering Artists, Thespians, Goths, Shredders. I am clanless." p. 4*

Toronto, ON:  
Penguin Books Canada Ltd.,  
2001  
Puffin Books edition  
[original 1999]  
198 pages

ISBN 0-14-131088-X

# TERRY FOX: *HIS STORY*

Leslie Scrivener



*“He told them people could get cancer and die from it and still be winners. He told them he would never be called a quitter. Then he repeated a couple of sentences that made a few of the audience feel uneasy .... ‘If I stop,’ he said, ‘it’s because something’s happened. I’m in bed but I’m still going to think of myself as a winner.’ He knew just how good it felt to give.”*  
p. 128

**Terry Fox: His Story** is Leslie Scrivener’s sensitive account of the Marathon of Hope based on Terry Fox’s personal diary of the journey. The book begins by describing Terry’s first day of the cross-Canada run and then fills in his background. He was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma just after entering university. The amputation of his leg, and subsequent drug treatment, terminated Terry’s studies but did not dampen his determination to conquer his illness. His personal pledge to run across Canada was the result. In four and a half months, Terry ran two-thirds of the distance before he was again stricken with cancer. His run was given national news coverage and raised 18.5 million dollars for cancer research. Since his death on June 28, 1981 Canadians have continued to raise funds in his memory.

Scrivener follows Terry’s diary closely, quoting him directly in journalistic style and filling in details of the run from her own observations and from interviews with Terry, his brother Doug, friends, family and roadside observers. The story is an objective account of one of Canada’s modern heroes, and concludes with an epilogue written by Terry.

Terry Fox is portrayed as a man determined to reach his goal. This universal theme contributes to a reader’s knowledge and understanding of self. The book is enjoyable and thought-provoking, eliciting an emotional response from all who read it.

Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1981

ISBN 0771080174

# WAR OF THE EAGLES

Eric Walters



*War of the Eagles* is set in World War II on the West Coast of Canada. This young adult novel is about an Aboriginal youth, Jed, who is torn between loyalty to his country or his Japanese–Canadian friend. While his father is away flying fighter planes in Europe, Jed and his mother work at the nearby military base. Jed’s world is shaken when his best friend Tandashi and his family, along with all the other Japanese–Canadians in the community, are declared enemies by the government and sent away to detention camps.

The theme of Walters’ book is about choosing what one personally believes is right. This is symbolized through Jed’s release of a bald eagle that was being contained on the military base after he and Tandashi nursed it back to health.

*War of the Eagles* is an appropriate, balanced text for presenting racial and cultural conflicts. This readable coming-of-age novel will have a special appeal to students from Asian–Canadian, Aboriginal–Canadian or military families. It provides a reasonable critical reading challenge with respect to character, conflict, theme and symbolism.

*“You got to remember my people feel like that eagle chained out to your flagpole. We’ve had so much taken away; so much that belonged to us is gone, forever.’ There was a pause, a long pause. ‘Now, all that seems left to some of them is to snap and claw and fight. Like the eagle.’” p. 93*

Victoria, BC:  
Orca Book Publishers, 2000  
[original 1998]  
224 pages

ISBN 1–55143–118–1

# WHITEOUT

James Houston



*“They broke and flung away the wind-packed chunks of snow, then using all their strength heaved back the snow-laden bearskin. Jon jumped with fright when the small gray bitch that led the team scrambled out of Panee’s arms. They lifted the girl from her gravelike shelter.” p. 187*

Jonathan Aird, the protagonist of *Whiteout*, is a rebellious and fatherless 17-year-old city boy who is sent to a remote Arctic settlement on Baffin Island to fulfill his community work requirements as part of a rehabilitation program. Jonathan must come to terms with the harsh reality of the environment. While doing so, he matures and learns to accept responsibility for his actions.

Jonathan’s self-discovery is paralleled by his initial stereotyping of the Inuit and his final understanding of their ways. As he learns to admire their strength and courage, he develops into a mature young man. A strong emphasis on action and plot is highlighted by accurate descriptions of life in the Arctic.

The story contains characters of Scottish, Inuit and Polish origins, and these individuals are portrayed in traditional/stereotyped roles. Inuit religious beliefs are presented and the novel provides an empathetic look at Inuit culture, thus demonstrating a need for acceptance and understanding.

Toronto, ON: General  
Paperbacks, 1991  
[original 1988]

ISBN 0773673458

# WHY SHOOT THE TEACHER?

Max Braithwaite



In *Why Shoot the Teacher?*, Braithwaite writes about his first year of teaching in a small school district during the Dirty Thirties. He talks, in a series of light and humorous anecdotes, of the Depression years and the people who survived them. His experiences with school dances, Christmas concerts and political rallies present a good description of social activities in rural Saskatchewan.

The author's style is direct. He creates a concise set of episodes that facilitate easily organizable units for classroom discussion. The vocabulary is medium range. The point of view is that of an insecure, self-doubting young man who encounters employment, meager subsistent living, and poverty on the prairies. The book is recommended, not only for its historical perspective, but also for its readability and humour.

*"I was up before daylight to stoke my fire and, after eating, went up to the schoolroom and looked out the window. The wind hadn't reached its full force. I could still see the barn, but beyond that was a grey mass of swirling snow. No children would show up today, I knew, because this had the look of a two- or three-day blow. There was enough water in the cooler to last a couple of days, if I didn't wash, but the prospect of being with myself for that long made me sick to the stomach."*  
pp. 128-129

Toronto, ON: McClelland and Stewart, 1965

ISBN 0771015992

# YULETIDE BLUES

R. P. MacIntyre



*"It's one thing when you find out something about your friends that you don't particularly want to know, but it's a different thing again when you find out something about yourself that you don't particularly want to know." p. 99*

*Yuletide Blues* begins when Lanny, a young hockey player, plans to stay with his favourite aunt while his parents are on holidays. Before their departure, this aunt, an artistic eccentric, attempts suicide and Lanny must go to a reclusive great-aunt's place. During his stay, he breaks his leg, and discovers that his best friend has become a thief. Lanny comes to terms with individual differences and deals with the emotional, physical and psychological limitations of both aunts.

Students can easily relate to this episodic, humorous story that should lead to excellent class discussion and personal reflection on issues, such as delinquency, sexuality, aging, depression, loneliness, personal responsibility and peer pressure. The teenage vernacular will be appealing to students as well. Because the novel contains some swearing and references to sexuality and suicide, the book might best be offered for either small group or individual study.

Saskatoon, SK: Thistledown Press Ltd., 1992  
[original 1991]

ISBN 1895449049

# Z FOR ZACHARIAH

Robert C. O'Brien

In *Z for Zachariah*, sixteen-year-old Ann Burden believes she is the last survivor of an atomic war. She has subsisted by eating "safe" food from the nearby village store, farming her father's land as best she can, and keeping her sanity by writing a diary. The discovery of another individual, Loomis, leads to doubt and confusion, resulting in an escape from the comfortable valley. The conclusion amplifies Ann's courage and desire for self-preservation.

The narrative is straightforward, the vocabulary terse, and the structure chronological. Students should be able to comprehend the actions of the characters and go beyond the plot to understand the emotions that Ann describes so well in her diary. This novel can provide for interesting discussions regarding speculative fiction.

*"Except for this valley the rest of the world, as far as we know, is dangerous and uninhabited. I don't know how long its going to be that way—maybe forever."*  
*'But as long as it is, the suit is the only way to go out there and stay alive.' ...*  
*'...we've got to plan as if this valley is the whole world, and we are starting a colony, one that will last permanently.'*  
*pp. 150-152*

New York, NY: Dell  
Publishing Co., Inc., 1974

ISBN 0440999014

