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## *LAJM* Resources: 75+ Recent Novels That Can Work in the Classroom

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**LAJM RESOURCES:  
75+ RECENT NOVELS THAT CAN WORK IN THE  
CLASSROOM**

**Diana Mitchell**

**Editor's Note**

*The books listed below have been coded as follows:*

*– Suggested grade levels are represented by the numbers **6 to 12***

*– college prep or general classes = **cp** or **gen.***

*– whole class use suggested = **w***

*– small group/individual use suggested = **s/i***

Avi. *Wolf Rider*. Bradbury Press, 1986.

After receiving an apparent crank call from a man claiming to have committed a murder, fifteen-year-old Andy finds his close relationship with his father crumbling as he struggles to make everyone believe him. Excellent, engrossing. I read it in one evening. Some of the issues are adjusting after the death of a mother, losing the trust of a father, and, most devastating to the main character, no one believing him. (7-11, w)

Behrens, Michael. *At the Edge*. Avon Flare, 1988.

Terri comes into Dan's life at a time when nothing seems to be making much sense, and she becomes the center of his universe. She is not only the most beautiful girl he has ever seen but also one of the most troubled. As he is working out his relationship with his recently divorced mother and his separation from his father and his new, young wife, Dan allows himself to

become involved with this girl who has even more problems than he has. She seems to fill the void in his life until he realizes that her glamour and recklessness mask very deep problems that he can't deal with. A caring English teacher is a positive influence on Dan, and he eventually realizes his real feelings towards his father and can put his relationship with Terri in perspective. Too much sex to use as a whole class novel. Older teens will especially be drawn to this book. This novel was the winner of the Avon Flare Young Adult Competition and is a powerful, complex, and outstanding book. **(10-12, s/i)**

Bell, Claire. *Tomorrow's Sphinx*. MacMillan, 1986.

Two unusual black cheetahs share a mental link, one cat coming from the past to reveal scenes from his life with the young pharaoh, Tutankhamen, and the other struggling to survive in a future world ravaged by ecological disaster. A bit strange but very interesting. Lots is learned about cheetahs as well as about their links to pharaohs. **(9-12, s/i)**

Bell, William. *Forbidden City*. Doubleday, 1990.

Alex accompanies his CBS News cameraman father to Beijing and ends up being a part of the student demonstration and subsequent shootings at Tiananmen Square. Separated from his father and carrying illegal videotapes, Alex must trust the Chinese students to help him escape. A riveting, frightening story that brings the drama of Tiananmen Square home to Westerners. Fantastic! Fascinating! A real learning experience. Probably most appropriate for juniors and seniors, although almost any class could be drawn into the horror of what was happening. **(9-12, w)**

Bennett, James. *I Can Hear the Mourning Dove*. Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Gifted but severely mentally disturbed, sixteen-year-old Grace moves back and forth between school and hospital, where she receives unexpected support from an antisocial delinquent named Luke. An excellent book that can sometimes be depressing when we realize what a struggle it is for some people just to get through a day. The reader is inside the head of Grace, and we vividly experience her craziness and fear. **(9-12, s/i)**

Bond, Nancy. *Another Shore*. MacMillan, 1988.

Seventeen-year-old Lyn, working in a reconstructed colonial settlement in Nova Scotia, suddenly finds herself transported back to 1744, when the French inhabitants were at war with England. Another wonderful book by Bond, whose characters are beautifully drawn. The reader is absolutely involved in the lives and times of Bond's main characters. Living in the 1740's is vividly portrayed, and even all the annoying discomforts are brought out. I cared about Lyn, a very resourceful and positive young woman, and what happened to her. Slight sexual references. Would also make a wonderful addition to a humanities curriculum, since the times are so realistically shown. **(9-12, s/i)**

Branscum, Robbie. *Cameo Rose*. Harper & Row, 1989.

Fourteen-year-old Cameo Rose's insatiable curiosity about the murder of a local ne'er-do-well gets her in trouble with her taciturn neighbors in the Arkansas hills. This spunky, outspoken girl involves us in the mystery as she lets Billy Joe know the place she wants him to have in her life. This short, fast-moving novel would work in middle school classes. **(6-9, w)**

Brooks, Bruce. *No Kidding*. Harper & Row, 1989.

In his twenty-first century society, fourteen-year-old Sam is allowed to decide the fate of his family after his mother is released from an alcohol rehabilitation center. A complex novel that gives the reader a lot to think about regarding the family and problems in society. **(9-12, s/i)**

Carter, Alden R. *Wart, Son of Toad*. Pacer Books, 1985.

Sixteen-year-old Steve's adjustment to high school is made more difficult by the unpopularity of his strict father, a biology teacher known as Toad. Presents a vivid, believable picture of why school is such a struggle for some kids. Steve is still dealing with the death of his mother and sister, has real problems with his father, and is still fighting for who he is. A powerful book. I loved it. Rich in all kinds of themes such as death, identity, father-son relationships. **(8-12, w)**

Charnas, Suzy McKee. *The Bronze King*. Bantam, 1988.

This is a haunting story that starts with an explosion in a New York City subway that no one but Valentine hears. After that, things of hers begin to

disappear and then the huge statue in Central Park disappears. Valentine senses evil around, her but it takes a strange old fiddler to help her understand it. This knowledge launches them on a fantastic and dangerous quest to save the city and the world from an evil power. Engrossing, fast-paced. Realistic elements and conflict with a parent are present too. Thus this book will appeal to all kinds of readers. (8-12, w)

Charnas, Suzy McKee. *The Silver Glove*. Bantam, 1988.

A New York City teenager teams up with her sorceress grandmother to protect her mother from her new boyfriend, an evil wizard bent on stealing people's souls. Suspenseful, fun. It's neat to see an old lady behave as the grandmother does. (7-11, s/l)

Charnas, Suzy McKee. *The Golden Thread*. Bantam, 1989.

Bosanka, an alien witch from another world, wants Valentine, a New York City teenager, to use her magical powers to help Bosanka return home. This book is the last in the Sorcery Hall Trilogy and as full of adventure and magic as the first two. Readers are drawn to the heroine Val because of her ordinariness, honesty, and courage. I loved the poignant scene when Val's beloved grandmother dies. Issues of growing up and dealing with death are woven into this wonderful story. (7-11, s/l)

Cole, Brock. *The Goats*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987.

A boy and girl are stripped and marooned on a small island for the night by the kids at their camp, who labeled them as the goats. But the goats escape from the island and decide not to go back to camp. On the run, they gradually discover how strong they are and how much they depend on one another.

Reading this fascinating, involving novel, you're with these kids all the way. This wonderfully written book made me remember the confusions and the vulnerabilities that are part of being thirteen. I loved this book. Themes of loneliness, isolation, kid's cruelty, and finding our own strengths make the adventurous book an ideal book to use in the classroom. (7-10, w)

Cole, Brock. *Celine*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989.

Celine, a 16-year-old artist is living with her 22-year-old stepmother while her father is out of the country. The difficulties these two have getting along is one of the focuses of the book. Another is Celine's relationship with

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Jake, the little kid across the hall. Her response to his difficulties with his parents' divorce make her a very likeable character.

This novel is peopled with an array of unusual characters like the little girl at the party who makes chip dips out of dog food. Humor abounds, and even though the issues tackled are tough ones, this book never dissolves into depression or helplessness. Mention of sex. Themes include dealing with stepparents, divorce, keeping one's individuality, and maturity. (9-12, w)

Conrad, Pam.  *Holding Me Here*. Harper & Row, 1986.

Fourteen-year-old Robin tries to patch up the broken home of a battered wife and in the process discovers how deeply she's been hurt by the divorce of her own parents. Moving. (7-11, s/i)

Cormier, Robert.  *Fade*. Dell, 1988.

A mysterious power has come into Paul Moreaux's life. In the summer of 1938 he discovers that he can fade. For 13-year-old Paul the possibilities of invisibility are at first bewildering, then thrilling. But in a New England mill town torn by union strife, bigotry, and shocking sexual secrets, he soon sees things it is better not to see. This "gift" bears a future there is no foretelling and a chilling act from which there is no forgiveness, no forgetting. A fascinating, compelling story for more mature students. Mention of sex, incest. (10-12)

Crutcher, Chrs.  *Stotan!* Greenwillow Books, 1986.

A high school coach invites members of his swimming team to a memorable week of rigorous training that tests their moral fiber as well as their physical stamina. Excellent portrayal of male friendships, competition, will to excel, and even of coming to terms with a close friend's impending death. Some language and talk of sex. (9-12, w)

Cross, Gilbert B.  *A Witch Across Time*. Atheneum, 1990.

Spending the summer with her great aunt on Martha's Vineyard while recovering from a period of emotional imbalance, fifteen-year-old Hannah encounters the ghost of a young woman, who was executed as a witch in 1692 and seeks to clear her name. A love story on two levels, one in the past and one in the present. Excellent writing and character development. Time travel

fans will love this one. Also could be used in a social studies or English class when the Puritans are being studied. I really liked this one. (7-11, s/i)

Curry, Ann. *The Book of Brendan*. Holiday House, 1989.

When the evil magician Myrddin appears, determined to subdue the monks of Holybury Abbey and the surrounding villages, Father Brendan and his young friends must rely on magical beasts and the help of Arthur, Guinevere, and Merlin, summoned from their sleep on the Isles of Truth. A beautifully done, satisfying first novel. (6-9, s/i)

Davis, Jenny. *Good-Bye and Keep Cold*. Orchard Books, 1987.

Edda's mother is courted by the man responsible for her young father's death in a mine accident in a small Kentucky town. Well-written story, although the end seems a bit forced. (8-11, s/i)

Davis, Jenny. *Sex Education*. Orchard Books, 1988.

As a project for an unusually open class in sex education, Livvie and her boyfriend David learn to care for a pregnant young neighbor, and as they become deeply involved with her and with each other, they learn about love and caring and eventually pain and courage. Excellent presentation of young love. Ending does seem a bit overdone. (9-11, s/i)

DeClements, Barthe. *I Never Asked You to Understand Me*. Viking Kestral, 1986.

Two teenage girls attending an alternative high school for problem students find that their disintegrating family lives have pushed them to the edge. One girl's mother is dying, the other is sexually abused by her father. Tastefully done. Mention of drug use and sex. A more mature book that really shows the reasons some young people are alienated from school. (9-12, w)

Duncan, Lots. *Don't Look Behind You*. Dell, 1989.

April Corrigan feels like her life is over when she learns that her father has been working undercover for the FBI and the family must relocate under the Federal Witness Security Program. Another suspenseful, action-packed book by Duncan. (7-11, s/i)

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Dyer, T. A. *A Way of His Own*. Houghton Mifflin, 1981.

A lame boy from a very primitive nomadic tribe of Native Americans is abandoned by his family and, together with a girl stolen from another tribe, tries to survive a cruel winter. Shutok, the lame boy, is blamed for his own condition and shunned because he can't keep up with the group when they walk to their winter grounds. His determination, intelligence, and skill help him survive. This book describes much about what it meant to live so closely to nature and also shows a boy learning to believe in himself despite the tribe's view of him. A very satisfying book that could be used in the social studies classroom. **(6-10, w)**

Follett, Ken. *The Mystery Hideout*. Morrow Junior Books, 1990.

Exploring in an old, unused film studio, two boys run across clues to a series of unsolved bank robberies. This 88-page book will be a joy to reluctant readers. Not only is it short but it moves fast and never gets off track. Fun. **(6-10, w)**

Forman, James D. *Cry Havoc*. Scribner's, 1988.

An army experiment gone wrong unleashes upon a quiet village a group of large and vicious killer animals, and fifteen-year-old Cathy Cooper watches her world turn into a bloody nightmare. Compelling, gripping, a real page turner. In addition to the foreboding atmosphere, many important issues are dealt with in this book. The main character is trying to resolve her feelings about her suicidal mother as she and her father work out other family issues. Is insanity genetic? That question presses on Cathy. On another level is the question of the genetic engineering of animals and how moral and ethical it is. Rich in discussion possibilities. **(9-12, w, c.p.)**

Gallo, Don R. (ed). *Connections: Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults*. Dell, 1989.

An excellent collection of short stories grouped around the themes of Encounters, Clashes, Surprises, and Insights. Authors include Richard Peck, M. E. Kerr, Chris Crutcher, and Gordon Korman. **(9-12, w)**

Garfield, Leon. *The December Rose*. Puffin, 1986.

Secrets whispered up a chimney, a golden locket with a broken chain, murder in the streets of London—and suddenly young Barnacle is plunged

into terrifying mystery. Leon Garfield does it again— the mystery deepens and deepens as the reader absorbs the vivid sights and sounds of early England. Many social issues are touched on, and there is much to discuss in this novel. **(7-10, w)**

Garfield, Leon. *The Empty Sleeve*. Delacorte, 1988.

Though he dreams of going to sea, fourteen-year-old Peter is not entirely displeased to be apprenticed to a locksmith, especially as it means getting away from his "saintly" twin; but when the ghost of a former apprentice and a murder put him in grave danger, it is only his despised brother who is able to save him. Spooky, interesting, but somewhat predictable. **(7-10, s/1)**

Garfield, Leon. *Smith*. Puffin, 1967.

He was called Smith, and was twelve years old. He lived in the slums around St. Paul's in London and was a pickpocket. This is an adventurous story of magnificent proportions, full of vivid, strongly drawn characters and overflowing with description and incident. With this book Garfield has been called the children's Dickens. Exciting, fast-paced. **(7-10, w)**

Gilmore, Kate. *Enter Three Witches*. Houghton Mifflin, 1990.

Bren is fearful of having the girl of his dreams meet his family of witches, but after his family attends a school production of *Macbeth* and cause startling effects, he realizes a meeting has already taken place. Bren's grandmother and mother are extremely interesting characters. This humorous novel deals with typical teen problems of dating, being embarrassed by one's own parents, and adjusting to a parent dating. **(8-12, s/1)**

Hahn, Mary Downing. *December Stillness*. Clarion Books, 1988.

Thirteen-year-old Kelly tries to befriend Mr. Weems, a disturbed homeless Vietnam War veteran who spends his days in her town's library, though the man makes it clear he wants to be left alone.

Moving, poignant. I especially loved the way the author wove poems like Shel Silverstein's "What's in the Sack?" into the text. This story also deals with the alienation Kelly feels when she's around her father, as well as her struggle to fit in with other 9th graders at school. There are so many issues in this book that it could easily be used as a whole class book. **(7-11, w)**

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Hahn, Mary Downing. *The Doll in the Garden*. Clarion Books, 1989.

After Ashley and Kristi find an antique doll buried in old Miss Cooper's garden, they discover that they can enter a ghostly turn-of-the-century world by going through a hole in the hedge. Another page-turner, this story also goes beyond the typical ghost story in that we come to understand how a childhood event can lead to someone's becoming a crotchety old lady. I especially liked that part. **(6-10, s/i)**

Hahn, Mary Downing. *Wait Till Helen Comes*. Clarion Books, 1986.

Molly and Michael dislike Heather, their spooky new stepsister, but realize that they must try to save her when she seems ready to follow a ghost child to her death. Fascinating and fast-paced. You won't be able to put it down. Also deals with remarriage and step-siblings. **(6-10, s/i)**

Hamilton, Morse. *Effie's House*. Greenwillow, 1990.

A teenage girl with a terrible secret runs away from home, seeking counsel from the father she will not believe was killed in Vietnam. An intense, sometimes upsetting story unfolds as we slowly realize that all the times she describes with her father were only in her mind and that she is pregnant with her ex-step-father's child. Touching. Might be too much emotion for some to handle. Sexual references and scenes. **(10-12, s/i)**

Haven, Susan. *Is It Them or Is It Me?* Putnam, 1990.

Molly Synder begins her first year of high school with a burning desire to be on the school paper and to get a boyfriend. Her tryout assignment for the paper is to write an article on the 30th teaching anniversary of the school's worst and most unpopular teacher.

Molly turns in a very truthful but controversial article but is told she'll have to change it if it is to be published. Her acceptance onto the newspaper staff depends on this article. While she is involved in this, other issues surround her, such as her mother's breast cancer, her best friend's coolness towards her after going to an elite, private school, and a budding relationship with Derek. The descriptions of the sadistic teacher's classroom behavior are very realistic and will keep readers turning the pages to see what happens to him and to Molly. I liked this one, even though it ends a bit happier than it might in real life. **(6-9, s/i)**

Herlihy, Dirlie. *Ludie's Song*. Puffin Books, 1990.

In rural Georgia in the 1950's, a young white girl's secret friendship with a black family exposes them all to unforeseen dangers. Everyone thinks Ludie is a crazy witch, mostly because she can't talk clearly after a disfiguring accident. Then Marty, a girl from a larger city, through her friendship with Ludie realizes that the prejudices she's learned and the prejudice she sees around hers are just that—prejudices. A frightening book because this small town is shown as a closed society which has its own sanctions and its own way of dealing with what they perceive to be "racial problems." This book is realistic but disturbing because it recreates those times when blacks were at the mercy of the whites in places such as this. **(6-9, s/i)**

Hoffman, Alice. *At Risk*. Berkley Books, 1988.

The heart-breaking discovery that their eleven-year-old daughter has AIDS plunges a family into despair and depression as they cope with this tragedy. At first family members are unable to share and comfort each other because they feel so raw and vulnerable. But eventually they do learn to draw on the others' strengths. Good picture of the impact a terminally ill member has on the family. The two children are realistically drawn also. **(7-12, s/i)**

Hotze, Sollace. *A Circle Unbroken*. Clarion Books, 1988.

Captured by a roving band of Sioux Indians and brought up as the chief's daughter, Rachel is recaptured by her white family and finds it difficult to adjust, as she longs to return to the tribe.

Excellent, exciting, interesting. I couldn't put it down. Gives us insight into the strange ways of the white man. Would be excellent in social studies classes to show the clash of cultures and why the Indian had such a tough time fitting into our culture. Mention of rape. **(7-11, w)**

Hughes, Monica. *Hunter in the Dark*. Avon/Flare, 1982.

A teen age boy goes on a secret hunting trip alone in an effort to come to terms with his leukemia and to test his strength and resourcefulness in battling the elements and stalking the white-tailed deer that is his quarry. Themes of hunting, dealing with death, and self-reliance are developed. **(8-12, s/i)**

Irwin, Hadley. *Kim/Kimi*. Puffin Books, 1988.

Despite a warm relationship with her mother, stepfather, and half brother, sixteen-year-old Kim feels the need to find answers about the Japanese-American father she never knew. This story tells of her trip to California and of her grappling with what her ethnicity means. She finds out the effect the WWII concentration camps in the West had on the Japanese, and she meets Japanese-Americans for the first time. A warmly-told, sensitive novel. (7-11, s/i)

Irwin, Hadley. *So Long at the Fair*. McElderry Books, 1988.

The summer fairgrounds provide a temporary refuge for eighteen-year-old Joel as he struggles to deal with his memories of Ashley, the friend he loved and expected to have as a part of his life always. Suicide is dealt with through the effects on the survivors such as Joel. Joel has trouble handling his feelings and submerges himself in a minimum wage job at the fairgrounds, a far cry from the affluence he is used to.

We see in retrospect the relationship Joel had with Ashley and why her death was so difficult to handle. Very well done. Doesn't sensationalize the issue. (7-12, s/i)

Johnson, Annabel and Edgar. *The Danger Quotient*. Harper & Row, 1984.

A super-genius in a small underground colony of survivors of a nuclear war, eighteen-year-old Casey risks journeying back to the twentieth century to discover why the survivors are dying and how he can save them all. Casey's involvement with one family over a period of 70 years is fascinating as we see the grandmother as a very young woman. Casey unravels the mysteries of this family's background as he finds out what his part in saving his colony is. A warm, funny book that deals with conflicts with parents, old age, addictions, love, future societies, nuclear warfare, and even problems of Vietnam vets. I genuinely liked this book. It gave me much to think about. (8-11, w)

Katz, Welwyn Wilton. *False Face*. MacMillan, 1987.

Thirteen-year-old Laney, troubled by the animosity between her divorced parents, and 14-year-old Tom, determined to preserve his Indian identity, form an uneasy alliance after finding rare Indian false face masks and realizing their terrifying power. Fast! Exciting! (8-12, s/i)

Kidder, Tracy. *Among Schoolchildren*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

A nonfiction book that takes the reader to the heart of teaching with its joy and failures. A very comprehensive book that tells what it's really like to teach in an urban, fifth-grade class. We come to know the teacher, her students, and some of their parents. This author must have been there every day to capture the essence of teaching as he did. Wonderful model for non-fiction writing. Pre-service teachers should read this. I loved it because it was wonderful to know that someone could capture so beautifully the struggles and joys we know daily.

Korman, Gordon. *A Semester in the Life of a Garbage Bag*. Scholastic, 1987.

Sean Delancey, an eleventh grader, becomes involved with Raymond Jardine on an English project and eventually in an off-the-wall scheme to win a trip to a Greek island. This hilarious madcap book is fun to the very end. One of Korman's best. **(7-12, s/f)**

Lackey, Mercedes. *Arrow's Fall*. Donald A. Wolheim, 1988.

With Elspeth, the heir to the throne of Valdemar, coming of marriageable age, Talia, the Queen's Own Herald, returns to court to find Queen and heir beset by diplomatic intrigue as various forces vie for control of Elspeth's future.

When Talia is about to uncover the traitor behind these intrigues, she's sent off on a mission to a neighboring kingdom where a cruel ruler is waiting for her. Excitement and action abound. Some sexual references. For fantasy lovers of all ages.

Lackey, Mercedes. *Arrow's Flight*. Daw Books, Inc., 1987.

Talia earns full rank of Herald and must now ride forth to patrol the kingdom of Valdemar, dispensing Herald's justice throughout the land. While on this internship, her self-doubts surface, and because of her empathetic powers this is dangerous to others. Her companion Chris helps Talia learn to believe in herself and her powers. A wonderful fantasy. Some muted sexual scenes. For fantasy lovers of all ages.

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Lackey, Mercedes. *Arrows of the Queen*. Donald A. Wolheim, 1987.

Chosen by the Companion Rolan, a mystical horse-like being with powers beyond imagining, Talia, once a run-away, has now become a trainee Herald, destined to become one of the Queen's own elite guard. Opposed by unknown enemies capable of both diabolical magic and treacherous assassination, the Queen must turn to Talia and the Heralds for aid in protecting the realm and ensuring the future of the Queen's heir. Engrossing, magical, adventurous. The first in the series. For fantasy lovers of all ages.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *An Acceptable Time*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989.

When Polly O'Keefe visits her grandparents in Connecticut, she plans a quiet fall, filled with study and star-watching. But an old family friend, Bishop Colubra, and Zachary Gray turn her visit into an extraordinary one as they are tumbled back in time with Polly to a society of three thousand years ago. Traveling across the millennia to play a crucial role in a prehistoric confrontation, Polly discovers that time means everything and nothing in the history of human relationships, and finally, that love is the tie that binds.

Another beautifully written, intricately plotted story by L'Engle that makes us think about ourselves and our relation to people and things as we are drawn into Polly's adventure. This book makes the reader want to know more about the Celts and the Druids and life in America three thousand years ago. **(9-12, whole class for c.p.)**

MacLean, John. *Mac*. Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Fifteen-year-old Mac's personality undergoes a sudden change as he tries to come to terms with the trauma of being sexually abused by a doctor during a physical examination. This is a powerful, hard-hitting book that shows how this kind of experience can cause a boy to withdraw from his family as he represses the experience. Fast moving, realistically done. Kids will read this one. Some strong language. **(8-11, w)**

Mayher, Ardath. *Makra Choria*. Atheneum, 1987.

The ruling family in Sherath has an inherited Gift bringing fabulous power, but when its dark side leads the tainted Theona to seize control, it is only her sister Choria who can save the land. Fast-paced and adventurous.

An excellent novel for fantasy lovers. The major characters are women, and the power of the Kingdom is in their hands. **(8-12)**

Mayne, William. *Antar and the Eagles*. Walker Books (London), 1989.

Antar was carried away to the mountains by an eagle, not as food but for a mission vital to the survival of the entire eagle race. Before he can begin his task, however, Antar must first learn how to be an eagle. This book is almost like a fairy tale. In his quest to help the eagles, Antar gains new perspectives on humans and on life. **(8-9, s/i)**

Mazer, Norma Fox. *Silver*. Avon Books, 1988.

"My mother is determined that I will have a wonderful life— better than her own. I guess she can't imagine what it is like for me, a kid from a trailer park, to transfer to the junior high school where all the rich kids go. But somehow miraculously, I've become part of a little clique of pretty popular girls who have everything money can buy. And sometimes they also have secrets in their lives more painful than anything I've ever known." This novel gives a glimpse of sexual abuse and how trapped the victims of it feel. It also warmly portrays a young widow who is struggling to help her daughter grow up happily. **(8-9, s/i)**

Melling, D. R. *The Singing Stone*. Puffin Books, 1986.

Kay Warrick, a lonely girl living in a modern city, is haunted by dreams of a past she does not know. She is drawn to Ireland, where she is plunged into the drama of an ancient Irish race. Her quest is to find four treasures of power, and this quest involves her in mystery and adventure.

I loved this book. It was magic! Plunging back into Celtic times makes this beautifully written and fast-paced novel one that will appeal to fantasy lovers.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Fallen Angels*. Scholastic, 1988.

Seventeen-year-old Richie Perry, just out of high school, enlists in the Army in the summer of 1967 and spends a devastating year on active duty in Vietnam. Really shows the fear and uncertainty they lived with. Also, death is made real as they struggle to make sense of the deaths of their friends. Shows the absurdity of this kind of war. Lots of strong language but otherwise would make an excellent all-class book. **(9-12, w)**

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Nixon, Joan Lowery. *The Other Side of Dark*. Delacorte, 1986.

Seventeen-year-old Stacy awakens from a four-year coma ready to identify, locate, and prosecute the young man who murdered her mother and wounded her. Suspenseful. (7-11, s/i)

Okimoto, Jean Davies. *Molly by Any Other Name*. Scholastic, 1990.

As a senior in high school, Molly, a likeable Asian girl adopted by Caucasian parents, finds out from a speaker at school that an organization exists to help adopted children explore the issues involved in finding birth parents, something she has always had a secret desire to do. This story movingly shows the intense emotions experienced by the adoptee, the birth mother, and the adoptive parents. While Molly's family grapples with whether or not they will support her in her efforts to find her birth mother, Molly is involved in typical high school issues and in a very close relationship with her best friend Roland.

This fast-paced story is a must read for students who were adopted and who wonder whether to seek out their birth parents or not. Well-written. I loved it. I think it speaks to a deep need within all of us to be cared about and cherished. (7-12, s/i)

Paterson, Katherine. *Park's Quest*. Dutton, 1988.

Eleven-year-old Park makes some startling discoveries when he travels to his never-before-met grandfather's farm in Virginia to learn about his father, who died in the Vietnam War. Fast-moving novel that draws readers in quickly as we begin to share Park's desire to know something about the father his mother never talks about.

Issues of death of a parent, divorce, and dealing with a previously unknown sibling should involve most students. A spit-fire Vietnamese girl is one of the most interesting characters. (6-9, w)

Paulsen, Gary. *Canyons*. Delacorte, 1990.

Finding a skull on a camping trip in the canyons outside El Paso, Texas, Brennan becomes involved with the fate of a young Apache Indian executed by soldiers in 1864. A mystical link ties the two boys, and Brennan knows neither boy will find peace until Coyote Runs' skull is returned to its final grave. Told in chapters that alternate the narration between Coyote

Runs and Brennan, this gripping, beautifully told story will have wide appeal. I like Paulsen's writing because powerful emotion lies just below the surface of the words. His stories are never maudlin or sentimental, but the emotional impact is felt for a long time. **(6-11, w)**

Paulsen, Gary. *The Crossing*. Orchard Books, 1987.

Fourteen-year-old Manny, a street kid fighting for survival in a Mexican border town, develops a strange friendship with an alcoholic and emotionally troubled American soldier who decides to help Manny get across the border.

Powerful! This book is so intense it could even be used to read aloud to classes. The reader gets so involved in the life of this desperate ruffian that we care deeply what happens to him. Another issue in this novel is that the soldier drinks to black out memories of his dying friends in Vietnam. This is a violent story, but one which will be remembered. **(7-11, w)**

Paulsen, Gary. *Dogsong*. Bradberry, 1985.

A fourteen-year-old Eskimo boy who feels assailed by the modernity of his life takes a 1400 mile journey by dogsled across ice, tundra, and mountains seeking his own "song" of himself. **(9-12, s/i)**

Paulsen, Gary. *Hatchet*. Puffin, 1987.

After a plane crash, thirteen-year-old Brian spends fifty-four days in the wilderness, learning to survive with only the aid of a hatchet given him by his mother—and learning to survive his parents' divorce. The reader is quickly drawn into this book because we care about Brian. It is fascinating to see how he learns to tackle new, tough situations. Themes include dealing with divorce, building self-confidence, and dealing with having to handle situations about which you have no choice. **(6-9, w)**

Paulsen, Gary. *Tracker*. Puffin Books, 1984.

A gentle story of thirteen-year-old John who must go hunting alone this year since his grandfather, his usual companion, is terminally ill. John's views on life and death are changed by his experience of "walking a deer down," which took him two and a half days. **(7-10, s/i)**

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Paulsen, Gary. *The Winter Room*. Orchard Books, 1989.

A young boy growing up on a northern Minnesota farm describes the scenes around him and recounts his old Norwegian uncle's tales of an almost mythological logging past. This gentle story touched me emotionally, and even after I finished the book, my mind kept drifting back to it as I grappled with the different issues and feelings it brought up. A very comforting book. (7-11, s/i)

Paulsen, Gary. *Woodsong*. Bradbury Press, 1990.

Although this book is classified as non-fiction and autobiographical, it is a wonderful story of Gary Paulsen's life with his dogs. He shares with us the wisdom he gained from these dogs, his closeness to them, and the incidents with them that made him believe hunting was wrong. His descriptions of the Iditarod help us see the realities and hardships of the race.

A thoroughly engrossing book. As a non-lover of dogs I gained new appreciation and respect for dogs. This book would work wonderfully with social studies units on Alaska, science units on hunting or on dogs, and in writing classes as an example of autobiographical writing. (7-12, w).

Peck, Richard. *Voices After Midnight*. Delacorte, 1989.

Living with their sister and parents in a rented house in New York City during the summer, Chad and Luke uncover a mystery involving the former tenants of the house when the two brothers go back in time to 1888. Fast, exciting reading. (7-12, s/i)

Pike, Christopher. *Spellbound*. Archway, 1988.

When Karen Holly is found in the mountains with her skull crushed, her boyfriend is under suspicion. But instead of the traditional mystery story following, Pike turns this into a mystery with a novel twist when the grandson of a powerful African shaman, with powers of his own, gets involved. Keeps your attention until the end. (7-12, s/i)

Salassi, Otto R. *Jimmy D., the Sidewinder, and Me*. Greenwillow, 1987.

Hoping to get a more lenient sentence, Dumas Monk writes a series of letters to the judge from jail explaining why he did some of the things he did. This is a very different and very humorous book which I thoroughly enjoyed.

The antics and slightly illegal adventures of Dumas will fascinate most middle-schoolers. Issues include being an orphan, having little knowledge of parents, and self-sufficiency. **(6-9, w)**

Service, Pamela. *The Reluctant God*. Fawcett Juniper, 1988.

Lorna, an archeologist's daughter who prefers Egypt to her own country of England, is drawn into an exciting adventure with a teenage pharaoh when she unearths his tomb. This engrossing story begins with alternating chapters told by Lorna in the present and by Ament in Egypt over four thousand years ago. When Lorna frees him, he is able to begin to fulfill his ancient oath as he is propelled into modern times. A terrific book. **(8-12, s/i)**

Service, Pamela F. *Vision Quest*. Fawcett Juniper, 1989.

Recovering from the death of her father and from frequent moves because he was in the military, Kate Elliot tries to adjust to life in a half-deserted Western town. In her quest to understand and appreciate this region, Kate comes across a small, smooth charm stone which draws her into the ancient Indian world of this area and its magic. She feels compelled to help Wadat, an Indian boy she sees in her brief visions, and seeks help from Jimmy Fong, who knows much more than she does about the Indians and the artifacts left. Helping Wadat deal with the death of his revered shaman unexpectedly helps her come to terms with her own feelings.

A compelling, fascinating book steeped in Indian lore and history but modern in that Kate is grappling with her own father's death. **(7-11, s/i)**

Staples, Suzanne Fisher. *Shabanu*. Knopf, 1989.

When eleven-year-old Shabanu, the daughter of a nomad in the Cholistan Desert of present-day Pakistan, is pledged in marriage to an older man whose money will bring prestige to the family, she must either accept the decision, as is the custom, or risk the consequences of defying her father's wishes.

Excellent, fast moving story that would work well especially in a unit on cultural differences. This book provides a clear look at this desert culture with the warm family units and caring adults. The heroine is spunky and interesting. Mention of puberty, i.e., the development of breasts and

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beginnings of menstruation. This novel could prompt research on Pakistan, legal structures, religions, camels. **(6-10, s/i)**

Spinelli, Jerry. *Maniac Magee*. Little, Brown and Co., 1990.

After Jeffrey Magee's parents die, he is sent to live with his aunt and uncle, who hate each other. At eleven he runs away and becomes a legend among children for his awe-inspiring courage and accomplishments. He is taken in by a black family, where he finds the love he wants, but his presence there causes racial problems for other family members, so he takes off again. Living in the zoo, he's found by a groundskeeper and they enjoy a warm, close relationship until the old man dies a few months later. Next he camps out in the home of the two little boys he has prevented from running away from home. The family's racist attitudes puzzle Jeffrey.

Through all of this Maniac is involved with one adventure after another and is admired by both the black and the white kids. His ultimate triumph, of course, is cracking the wall of prejudice and giving both blacks and whites a glimpse of the humanness of each race. A warm, poignant, funny, well-written book that I couldn't put down. This kid really worms his way into the readers' hearts. It's easy to see why this book won the Newbery Award. **(6-9, w)**

Stine, R. L. *The Sleepwalker*. Fear Street Series. Archway Paperbacks, 1990.

One week after she starts her summer job on Fear Street with old Mrs. Cottler, Mayra Barnes begins to sleepwalk. She is terrified when she wakes up outdoors in the middle of the night, not knowing where she is. A fast-paced thriller that kids will like. **(7-12, s/i)**

Taylor, Mildred D. *The Road to Memphis*. Dial Books, 1990.

Sadistically teased by three white boys in 1940's rural Mississippi, a black youth severely injures one of the boys with a tire iron and enlists Cassie's help in trying to flee the state. A fast-moving, intense account of a few traumatic months in the lives of the Logan family and their friends. Discrimination is shown so vividly that it hurts to read it.

Another beautifully written story by Taylor. Cassie is at the heart of it, and we live through her daily struggles. The fear and uncertainty and powerlessness that blacks experienced in 1941 is shown. This powerful,

thought-provoking book would work wonderfully in a social studies class, too. **(8-12, w)**

Taylor, Theodore. *Sniper*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989.

Fifteen-year-old Ben must cope alone when a mysterious sniper begins shooting the big cats in his family's private zoological preserve. This fast-paced novel pulls readers into it, and they become involved in trying to figure out who would commit a senseless act like this. What we learn about the big cats further involves us as we begin to see them the way Ben, who knows and cares for them, does.

A very satisfying book. Themes in the novel include resentment against very career-oriented parents, trust and friendships, and competence of young adults. The mystery and information on the big cats could keep a whole class involved. **(9-12, w)**

Tolan, Stephanie. *A Good Courage*. Morrow, 1985.

Having been dragged by his mother from one commune to another as she searches for a place to belong, 14-year-old Ty finds conditions at the new place, the Kingdom, intolerable even while realizing that for some, such as his mother, this way of life is comforting. "A searing, suspenseful novel" that in spite of being disturbing provides lots of food for thought especially about religious communes. **(9-12, w)**

Tolan, Stephanie. *Plague Year*. Morrow, 1990.

Sixteen-year-old David becomes intimately involved when a scandal is discovered about the strange new boy in his high school and everyone else turns against him. This engrossing book deals with teens taunting someone who looks different and with adults who stone the boy's house and threaten him when it is found out that his father had been arrested for being a serial killer when he lived with his son in another state. The reactions of the town are appalling as the question of whether criminal tendencies are genetic or not is discussed. The town and the teens also assume that because the boy lived with the father at the time of the murders, he must have had some part in them. Powerful The kind of irrational fear that gripped the town needs to be discussed by teens today. **(9-12, w)**

Turner, Ann. *Third Girl from the Left*. MacMillan, 1986.

Itching to do something different, 18-year-old Sarah leaves Maine for the harsh Montana environment as a mail-order bride, and is soon left a widow with a 2000-acre ranch to run. Sarah is independent, spunky, and interesting, since she refuses to accept the limitations placed on females in the earlier history of this country. In this fast-paced and adventurous story, the heroine's encounters with Chang, her husband's household worker, are often humorous. Sarah is a good role model. **(7-10, s/i)**

Voigt, Cynthia. *Seventeen Against the Dealer*. Atheneum, 1989.

Dacey struggles to make a go of a boat-building business while facing family concerns, romantic problems, and the uncertainties of a drifter who offers to help her in her work. Dacey is still stubborn and does things her own way, but she does learn from her mistakes. The drifter is an interesting character who the reader suspects is really Dacey's father. No sentimental portrayal here.

Older teens who feel their lives are all planned out once they leave high school would enjoy this book, since it shows how making a straight path from high school to a desired goal or job is highly improbable. Mention of sex. **(9-12, s/i)**

Wersba, Barbara. *Wonderful Me*. Harper & Row, 1989.

Sixteen-year-old Heidi, a lonely child of divorced parents and a confirmed dog-lover, becomes entranced by a young man until she realizes that, for now, she must have her independence. A fast, funny, interesting book that deals with individuality, divorce, and young love. **(8-12, s/i)**

Westall, Robert. *Blitzcat*. Scholastic, 1989.

During World War Two a black cat journeys all across war-ravaged England in an effort to track down her beloved master. Readers are plunged into the war through the adventures of this determined cat. Excellent chapters on the war from many points of view, such as the fliers and the women waiting out the war.

Engrossing and educational. Using the cat as the thread that draws this book together works well, and we are curious to know whether or not the

cat will ever find his master. Could easily be used in a social studies classroom. **(9-12, w)**

Wignell, Edel. *Escape by Deluge*. Holiday House, 1989.

In the heart of the large Australian city, Shelly encounters a time of searching and terror as something booms and wails in the basement of her building. The book is strangely compelling as we also learn about the folklore of the bunyip, a sea monster. Some of the Australian phrasing would need to be explained. Suspense, fantasy. **(6-10, s/i)**

Willey, Margaret. *Finding David Dolores*. Harper and Row, 1986.

Thirteen-year-old Arly's private obsession with an older boy, the mysterious David Dolores, becomes complicated when she makes friends with an eccentric, demanding new girl in town. Beautifully written book. It really gets into the interworkings of two girls' relationship and shows what it's like being thirteen. Not a book with a slick ending. It made me remember how tough it was to be an adolescent and how hard it is to communicate intensely personal feelings. Insightful! Wonderful. **(7-12, s/i)**

Wiseman, David. *A Tie to the Past*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

An impulsive prank leaves an English schoolgirl in possession of a box of personal effects belonging to a now-dead suffragette, whose diary fills her mind and her dreams with vivid scenes of the struggle for women's voting rights in England in 1909. This would be an excellent book to use in social studies to compare the treatment of suffragettes here and in England. **(6-10, s/i)**

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