

YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE: AN ALTERNATIVE GENRE IN THE CLASSROOM READING LIST

Wei-Keong Too

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

In an attempt to examine the possibility of incorporating of young adult literature into the classroom reading list, a study on Malaysian young adult students' response to two young adult storybooks, *Audrey's Promise* and *The Dragon Lives Again*, written by K.S. Maniam (2003) was conducted. Drawing on Stover and Tway's (1992) common concerns of young adults, Havighurst's (1972) lifetime development tasks and Paul Zindel's (Zindel cited in Beckman, 1991) suggestions for writing a successful young adult novel, a questionnaire was developed and administered to young adult students to examine if they enjoyed reading the two young adult storybooks and if they could identify young adult issues in the two stories. The results of the study indicated that more than 90% of the young adult readers in the study enjoyed reading *Audrey's Promise* while 81% of the readers enjoyed *The Dragon Lives Again*. The young adult readers could also identify young adult issues in the two stories.

Introduction

In Malaysia, three different reading programmes have been introduced over the last three decades. The English Language Reading Programme (ELRP) was implemented in 1983, the Class Reader Programme (CRP) in 1993 (Malachi Edwin, 1993) and the incorporation of the literature in English component into the English Language syllabus in 1999 (Subramaniam, 2003). To date, the literature in English component in the English Language paper is considered to be the most successful reading programme because the texts that are being taught and read in the classroom are a tested component in the public examinations (Vethamani, 2004a; 2004b).

In a research conducted on students' perceptions on the literature component in English Language subject, Gurnam Kaur Sidhu (2003) found that most students showed little interest in reading the prescribed texts. More than 60% of the students considered the prescribed texts as boring. Most students disagreed that the prescribed texts aroused any reading interest among them. Also, studies have indicated that although most of the instructional materials are prepared and chosen for learners, learners themselves as individuals are not given much attention (Vethamani, 2003).

Young Adult Literature

To address the disparity between students' interests and reading habits, many researchers (Donelson and Nilsen, 1989; Brown and Stephens, 1995; Herz and Gallo, 1996; Bushman and Bushman, 1997; Vethamani, 2003) have recommended young adult literature to instill students' interest in reading. Young adult literature refers to works written for readers between the approximate ages of twelve and twenty (Donelson and Nilsen, 1989).

Most young adults are interested in reading young adult literature because the stories are written for and about them (Bushman and Bushman, 1997). Young adult literature is chosen by many educationists as the possible solution to the reading problem because it manages to evoke responses and stimulate students to think, feel and talk about their experiences in relation to the texts (Probst, 1988).

The themes in young adult literature attract young adult readers because they reflect the reality of young adults' lives, do not portray false optimism and are not didactic in nature. The acceptance of young adult readers towards such unpretentious themes provides guidelines for writers who are interested in writing for young adult readers. Moreover, it also causes young adult literature critics to give credit to books that present social issues that matter to young adults (Lukens and Clines, 1995).

Characteristics of Books Selected by Young Adults

The reasons young adults choose a book are different from adults. Unlike adults who choose books based on their preset values, young adults opt for books which satisfy their curiosity in searching for ideas, information, and values to incorporate into their personalities, and into their lives (Asher, 1992:79). Through their choice of books, young adults explore various possibilities of connecting the stories they read to their own lives.

Reed (1994) in her book *Reading Adolescents: The Young Adult Book and the School* summarises the characteristics of books selected by young adults. In terms of the characters, the protagonists in the books chosen by young adult readers are usually young, larger than life and realistic. Young adult readers are able to identify with the protagonist. Unlike the protagonist, other characters are usually not developed. Parents in the books are either single dimensional or out of picture, while other adults act as mentors for young adults. Protagonists' peers are portrayed either as protagonists' source of conflict or their best friends.

The story is told from the protagonist's point of view and presents the voice of the protagonist. The story is told from the first person point of view, but sometimes third person or an omniscient narrator is deployed by the writer too. On the other

hand, sometimes a more mature voice protagonist is presented too. The point of view and voice are of the protagonist or author and are never didactic and they are spoken directly to the readers (Reed, 1994).

Reed (1994) also indicates that despite the complicity of narration that has developed over the years, the flow of the story is still realistic and fast-moving. Dialogue is the common feature of these chosen books. The conflicts that occur in the story are problems of young adults themselves. Books chosen by young adults are usually a single plot line. Although the themes of the story vary, the story will present themes that are related to young adults lives. Some of the common themes include coming of age, alienation, building self-esteem, survival, heroism and more. These themes connect to and mirror young adults lives (Bushman and Bushman, 1997).

In tandem with Reed's (1994) suggestions, Chance's (1999: 67) examination of the seven literary characteristics character, plot, point of view, setting, style, theme, and tone of twenty-three most popular young adult books in 1997 that young adults prefer. concludes that

1. all novels (100%) have round protagonists;
2. the large majority (91%) of protagonists are dynamic characters;
3. almost all novels (96%) are progressive in action rather than episodic. Of the three patterns of progressive plot, the third or traditional pattern of rising action, climax, and falling action is dominant (70%);
4. the dominant (43%) type of conflict is a dual conflict composed of person-against-self and person-against-person;
5. a majority (70%) of novels are told from the first person point of view;
6. the type of setting divides almost evenly between integral (52%) and backdrop (49%). The most frequent (43%) function of setting is to clarify conflict;
7. of the variety of major stylistic devices, imagery is the most frequently used (35%);
8. the type of theme divides almost evenly between explicit (52%) and implicit (48%). Becoming self-aware and responsible for one's own life is the most common thematic idea (52%); and
9. the majority (74%) of novels are serious in tone.

The analysis of the literary characteristics of young adult books provides a glimpse on the literary devices employed in the books. Both Reed (1992) and Chance's (1999) analyses conclude that the books that young adult choose are character driven and the plot is fast. Most importantly, young adult books dismiss the criticism that the books that young adult prefer are not serious.

Havighurst's Lifetime Developmental Tasks and Young Adult Concerns

Young adult literature is closely related to the development of young adults. The transition from childhood to adulthood brings changes in many forms (Bean and Moni, 2003). The changes within this period are described in Havighurst's (1972) lifetime developmental tasks. The tasks describe challenges faced by young adults in their daily lives. In Havighurst's (1972) lifetime development tasks, he presents eight challenges confronting young adults:

1. Achieving new and more mature relations with age-mates
2. Achieving a proper masculine or feminine social role
3. Adapting to physical changes and using the body effectively
4. Achieving emotional independence from parents and other adults
5. Preparing for marriage and family
6. Preparing for an economic career
7. Acquiring a personal ideology or value system
8. Achieving social responsibility

(Adapted by Bushman and Bushman, 1997: 8)

All the eight tasks gear towards preparing young adults for their emotional, psychological and social development. Contrary to general belief, intellectual growth is less important during the adolescent period for young adults are looking for emotional social independence (Havighurst, 1972).

About two decades later, Stover and Tway (1992) delineate several common concerns of young adults that are applicable even in different cultures. In line with Havighurst's lifetime developmental tasks for young adults, Stover and Tway's seven young adult concerns suggest issues which deal with young adults. These seven concerns encompass various needs in young adults' lives, among which include society, family, ethics, physical changes, relationship with opposite sex, future career and forging niche in society at large. Both Havighurst's (1972) lifetime developmental tasks and Stover and Tway's (1992) issues in young adults' lives reflect, resonate and influence young adults' lives, and they are the common themes in young adult literature.

Paul Zindel's Suggestions for Writing a Successful Young Adult Novel

Examining young adult literature from the perspective of young adult concerns and characteristics of books chosen for young adults gives young adult readers an opportunity to voice their stand in reading. Many young adult story writers are aware of the development of young adults' lives and their reading preferences. As a psychologist, writer and critic of young adult literature, Paul Zindel (Zindel cited

in Beckman, 1991) outlines his criteria of a good young adult novel. His ten criteria for successful young adult stories are:

1. Stories should have related in part to the school environment since this is where teenagers spend most of their time.
2. Parents should be in the background because teenagers are interested in putting distance between themselves and their guardians.
3. Stories should be told by teenage characters-or at least from their viewpoint.
4. The language and dialogue should be contemporary but not trendy.
5. Romance and the characters awkward attempts at it should be incorporated into the stories.
6. Pretence and phoniness should be avoided.
7. Teenagers like mischief and rebellion in novels because they resent being ruled by adult society.
8. Fast-paced action and suspense are essential.
9. Transitional pictures^f such as graffiti, letters and doodling break up the linear print and simulate how teens often communicate.
10. Stories should be short.

(Zindel cited in Beckman, 1991:342-343)

Zindel s suggestions correspond with development tasks presented by Havighurst s (1972) and Stover and Tway s (1992) young adults concerns and general views on young adult literature. The suggestions given by Zindel range from setting, plot, language used, the pace of story, issues in the story and the length of the story reflect young adults needs and their reading preferences.

The Study

This study attempts to examine Malaysian young adult students response to K.S. Maniam s (2003) two young adult stories, *Audrey's Promise* and *The Dragon Lives Again*. This study was conducted with Malaysian secondary and college students whose age ranged from seventeen to nineteen years. A total of thirty-one students read *The Dragon Lives Again* while thirty students read *Audrey's Promise*.

Three English language teachers were also involved in this study. The inclusion of teachers in this study was to provide a monitoring dimension in the reading of K. S. Maniam s young adult storybooks by the respondents. The English language teachers reading of the storybooks was used as the basis to determine if the students had read the books accurately. The three experienced teachers have more than ten years teaching experience. All three teachers either hold a Masters

degree in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) or were undergoing post-graduate studies in TESL at the time of the study.

Method

A survey design using questionnaires was used in this study. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was constructed based on Stover and Tways (1992) common concerns of young adults, Havighurst's (1972) lifetime development tasks and Paul Zindel's (Zindel cited in Beckman, 1991) suggestions for writing a successful young adult novel. It was designed to elicit two sets of responses from respondents: reasons why young adults enjoyed or did not enjoy reading the young adult story books and what young adult concerns the students respondents were able to identify in the two stories. A pilot study was carried out prior to the present study. Based on students response, religion, politics, examination, money and entertainment were added as young adult concerns because these concerns were not mentioned by the earlier researchers.

The student respondents were given one week to read the storybooks. They were required to complete two parts of the questionnaire after they had read the storybooks. In Part A, respondents were asked if they liked the book they had read and to give reasons for their answers. In Part B, respondents were asked to identify any young adult concern they could find in the book they had read. In both parts of the questionnaire, respondents were also asked to provide their own reasons or concerns that were not listed by the researcher.

The second questionnaire was for the teachers (see Appendix 2). It was aimed at eliciting details about the teachers' reading of the storybooks. Based on Stover and Tways (1992) common concerns of young adults, and Havighurst's (1972) lifetime development tasks, the teachers were also required to identify the young adult concerns that appeared in the two storybooks. Teachers could identify as many young adult concerns as possible as long as the concerns appeared in the books. The concerns indicated by the teachers will be used as the basis for determining the accuracy of the respondents' identification of young adult concerns in the two young adult storybooks.

Findings

In this section, the researcher will present young adults' concerns identified by the young adult readers who had participated in *Audrey's Promise* and *The Dragon Lives Again*, and compare them to the concerns identified by the three teachers. Further, the researcher will also discuss reasons why young adult enjoyed or did not enjoy reading the two stories.

Audrey's Promise

Thirty young adult readers chose to read this title. Twenty-nine students (97%) chose relationship with parents as one of the concerns in the story. It was closely followed by moral and ethical issues (87%), future career (83%) and being part of society (80%). Other concerns that were identified by the young adult readers attention were job opportunities (67%), money (60%), relationship with same sex (53%) and opposite sex (50%), entertainment and recreation (37%) and examinations (30%). One young adult reader indicated that one needs to strike a balance between work and family life, so that no one would be hurt in the process of securing financial stability. Another young adult also mentioned the relationship between students and teachers. Of the ten most common young adult concerns identified in this story, eight of ten of the concerns were identified by fifty or more than fifty percent of the young adults who read this story.

In the three teachers reading of this story, they identified eight young adult concerns. The three teachers unanimously chose relationship with parents as the main concern that appeared in the book. Two teachers chose future career and money as concerns. Other concerns that were chosen by the teachers were relationship with same-sex and opposite sex friends, moral and ethical issues and entertainment and recreation. Other concerns which were not listed in the questionnaire but were identified by teachers were personal struggle to fame and selfishness and ignorance. Although most of the young adult concerns selected by teachers appeared in the young adult readers list, there was one concern not chosen by teachers job opportunities. Twenty out of thirty students chose this concern, but none of the three teachers chose it as the concern in this story.

Twenty-seven readers or 90% of the young adult readers liked reading this story. The reason that had the highest frequency among all the reasons selected was the appropriateness of language for young adults (78%). This reason was closely followed by the young adult in the story theme (70%) and the thought-provoking plot that readers could connect with (67%). The other two reasons as to why 59% of young adult readers enjoyed reading this story were (i) the story was told from the point of view of a young adult and (ii) the story dealt with the problems of growing up. Several readers also explained in the questionnaire that this story depicted the life of today's young adults because many of the realities in life were reflected in the story. One reader also noted that the story had shown bonding among family members.

The three young adult readers who did not find reading this story enjoyable claimed that story was slow in pace, uninteresting and did not have any message for

them. They found they could not relate to the story because the story was not real to them and the language used was not the language of young adults.

The Dragon Lives Again

A total of thirty-one young adults read this book. The two most popular concerns chosen by the young adult readers were entertainment and recreation and relationship with friends (same sex). Twenty-one or 68% of readers identified these two concerns in this book. The concerns that followed were relationship with parents and moral and ethical issues; both were chosen by twelve or 39% of the readers. Although the number of students who chose these concerns were not high, they were consistent with what the three teachers had chosen.

Future career, being part of society, money, examinations, job opportunities and physical changes were among the concerns that received the young adult readers attention. They also listed some concerns that they had observed that were not in the questionnaire which were freedom, mental changes, time, love, responsibility, patience, confidence and reality checks.

In the teachers reading of this story, all three teachers agreed that entertainment and recreation, relationship with same sex friends and relationship with parents were the three main concerns that appeared in this story. One of the teachers chose moral and ethical issues and money as important issues in the story too. Another teacher commented that she thought love was more important than money was a concern in the story.

Twenty-five readers or 81% of total readers mentioned that they enjoyed reading this story while six readers or 19% of the readers did not enjoy this story. The two main reasons that young adult readers cited for liking this story were (i) the story was centred on young adults (76%) and (ii) it was told from the point of view of a young adult (72%). Other reasons that 69% of readers gave for liking to read this storybook were that the story dealt with the problems of growing up and places where young adults spent their time. The other two concerns which had been chosen by 56% of the readers were that the language used in the story was appropriate for young adults and the story was thought-provoking.

The main comment of the all six readers who did not enjoy the story was that the pace of the story was slow and uninteresting. Four of the six readers also suggested that the story did not have any message for them. Three readers claimed they could not relate to the story as the characters did not resemble anyone they knew. Four young adult readers suggested that the story was not centred on young adults and thus, did not deal with young adult issues. These two criticisms were difficult to justify as many as nineteen out of twenty-five readers who enjoyed

reading this story noted that this story was about young adults and it was told from the perspective of young adults. Moreover, the three teachers' readings also clearly indicated that this story centred on the life of young adults.

Discussion

Comparing *Audrey's Promise* and *The Dragon Lives Again* to three different aspects of young adult literature, namely to Stover and Tway's (1992) common concerns of young adults, Havighurst's (1972) lifetime development tasks, Paul Zindel's (Zindel cited in Beckman, 1991) suggestions for writing successful young adult novels and students' responses to these two storybooks, the researcher found that most readers did not have problems in identifying the concerns in the books.

From the matching of almost all the concerns identified by the readers and teachers, it showed young adult readers and teachers' readings were identical in identifying the issues in the two stories. In this study, the student respondents and teachers concurred in almost all the concerns in the two stories except for one in the *Audrey's Promise*. Although 20 out of the 30 students identified Job opportunities as one of the concerns, none of the three teachers chose it. The researcher is of the view that this is a valid concern identified by young adult readers because it could be due to the different perceptions of what constitutes a job. For young adult readers, singing could be considered a career, but the teachers may not have thought so.

Of the thirty respondents who read *Audrey's Promise*, and thirty-one of *The Dragon Lives Again*, it was found that the young adult readers of this study generally enjoyed reading the two stories. Table 1 presents the young adult readers' response to reading *Audrey's Promise* and *The Dragon Lives Again*:

Table 1: Young adult readers' enjoyment of reading

No.	Storybooks	Total No. of Readers	Liked (%)	Disliked (%)
1	<i>Audrey's Promise</i>	30	27 (90%)	3 (10%)
2	<i>The Dragon Lives Again</i>	31	25 (81%)	6 (19%)

The results of this study showed that young adult readers enjoyed reading the two stories, *Audrey's Promise* and *The Dragon Lives Again*. They enjoyed reading stories which were young adult-centred and which allowed their views to be expressed. The language used was said to reflect young adults' lives and was appro-

priate for them. Moreover, the settings of the stories were places where young adults spend their time. Conversely, young adult readers were critical about stories that were slow-paced and uninteresting. They also were not interested in stories which did not reflect young adults lives realistically. They were interested to read stories that included places where they spent time in and stories which were imbued with messages for them.

There are several similarities between why readers enjoyed reading *Audrey's Promise* and *The Dragon Lives Again* and Reed's (1994) suggestions on the characteristics of books selected by young adult readers. Firstly, the protagonists in the stories are young adults and the stories are presented in a realistic manner. Next, the voices in the stories are of the young adult protagonists. In addition to the point of views and the young protagonists, the setting of the stories is usually at home, in school or places where young adults spend their time. Lastly, the conflicts in the stories are those experienced and understood by young adults. As such, the students could identify with them.

The findings of this study also matches several of Chance's (1999) seven literary characteristics of twenty-three most popular young adult books in 1997 that young adults prefer. The protagonists in the stories are developed and half of the examined books themes are of becoming self-aware and being responsible to one's life. These findings are in tandem with many researchers' claims that young adults are attracted to materials which are related and about themselves (Donelson and Nilsen, 1989; Brown and Stephens, 1995; Herz and Gallo, 1996; Bushman and Bushman, 1997; Vethamani, 2003).

Implications for Using Literary Texts for Young Adult Students

The inconsistency between what students need and the instruction that they are likely to receive in the classroom is evident in schools (Ivey and Broaddus, 2000). In Malaysia, this scenario can be seen in terms of text selection for literature in English component for the English language subject. Although English language teachers intend to inculcate the reading habit among students, the texts selected do not match with their students' interests (Gurnam Kaur Sidhu, 2003).

The provision of young adult related texts in the Malaysian English language syllabus is scarce. A study using the framework for teaching young adult literature developed by Vethamani (2002) to examine short stories and novels selected by Ministry of Education conducted by Lian (2002) concluded that only two out of the eight short stories, namely *The Pencil* by Ali Majod (2000) *Of Bunga Telor and Bally Shoes* by Che Husna Azhari (2000) deal with young adult issues or have young adult characters. These two stories are two of the four short stories selected for the lower

secondary reading list. However, there is no short story in the four selected texts for upper secondary reading list which deal with young adult issues.

Furthermore, of the lower secondary reading list for novels, only two of the five selected abridged novels have the voice of young adults; they are *Potato People* by Angela Wright (2000) and *Phantom of the Opera*, retold by Jennifer Bassett (2000). Of the upper secondary reading list, only one of three selected novels, *The Return* by K.S. Maniam (2000, the abridged text), discusses the issues of young adults. The irrelevance of themes to young adults lives in the prescribed texts in school is one of the reasons why students distance themselves from reading these texts (Vethamani, 2004a).

Although Lian s (2002) and Vethamani s (2004a) studies show the lack of young adult related texts in the school s prescribed text, their categorising *The Return* by K.S. Maniam (2000, the abridged text) as a young adult text is even questionable as the protagonist, Ravi, is a middle-aged man recollecting his youth. As such, *The Return* should be considered as an apprenticeship novel (Brown and Stevens, 1995). Although *The Return* deals with young adult issues and might appeal to young adult readers, it is strictly not a young adult literature text.

Although students are the stakeholders in learning, they are usually left out when it comes to text selection. However, Wilhelm (1997) believes that the development of literacy and the reading habit can be achieved through the limited choices provided that young adult literature is included in the text selection. He argues that teachers should guide and inform students about their choices for the students reading. The guidance on choices, either direct or indirect, is an intelligent balance and negotiation between shared and independent reading, a constant dialectic between guidance, preparation, and opportunities to become independent readers (1997: 41).

When decisions are made on the literature curriculum in secondary school, factors pertinent to the development of young adult and the learning of young adults should also be taken into account. Knickerbocker and Rycik (2002) suggest that:

“...consideration needs to be given to balancing content, process, and motivation goals in line with student development. Specifically, the level of student development should affect the choice of literature, the objectives for reading that literature, and the reading strategies that need to be taught in order to comprehend and respond to the literature (202).

They also stress the importance of relevancy between literature and students lives. Only through the continual experience of reading literature are students able to formulate and employ their own strategies and skills to interpret their reading.

Moreover, they also caution that students who perform well in the literature paper should be allowed to read relatively easy materials that are related to their lives. Reading relatively easy materials will enable students to learn about the forms, styles, and themes of both canonical and contemporary literature while maintaining their motivation in reading.

Struggling young adult readers need teachers assistance to develop their reading abilities and interests whereas competent readers who refuse to read in school need to be given sufficient time and opportunity to access materials that are of their interest in order to encourage them to read (Worthy and Mckool, 1996). Teachers also need to be aware that young adults are not only still developing as readers and writers, but also beginning to explore possible identities and a range of personal interests about the world (Ivey and Broaddus, 2001: 353).

Conclusion

Rosenblatt (1978) suggests that the education of youth cannot be just in the didactic manner. Instead knowledge should be imparted through experiencing, absorbing, accepting, incorporating in the personality through emotional and aesthetic experiences. Since young adult literature encompasses all the elements that young adult learners need, it should be encouraged in order to motivate them to read.

The findings in this study provide several guidelines for educators, textbooks selectors, parents and writers of young adult literature in relation to book selection and writing of young adult stories. The main reason why young adult readers enjoy reading a story is that the story is about young adult readers lives. Moreover, the language used in the story should be at a level which is appropriate to the readers proficiency level and should portray the real language of young adults. Attention should also be given to the pace and the content of a story. The story should be fast paced and have suspense. More importantly, the story should be of interest to the young adult readers.

In view of young adult readers reading habits and needs, the findings in this study provide an alternative approach to encourage young adults to read. In this study, the majority of the respondents expressed that they enjoyed reading *Steel Fingers* and *The Dragon Lives Again*. As there are only a few young adult texts in the current literature in the English component in Malaysia, introducing young adult storybooks that deal with young adult readers concerns and lives, we will not only provide materials that are to their interests, but also provide a much needed variety in the current reading lists.

References

- Ali Majod. 2000. The pencil. In *Selected Poems and Short Stories, Form 1*, pp. 23-39. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Asher, S. 1992. What about now? What about here? What about me? In V. R. Monseau and G. M. Salvner. (Eds.), *Reading Their World*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook.
- Bassett, J. 2000. *Phantom of the Opera: Literature in English for Lower Secondary Schools Student's Edition*. Selangor: Kompas Publishing.
- Bean, T. W. & Moni, K. 2003. Developing students critical literacy: exploring identity construction in young adult fiction. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46(8): 638-648.
- Beckman, J. 1991. Teaching the young adult novel. In R. W. Beach and J. I. Marshall, (Eds.), *Teaching Literature in the Secondary School*. New York: Harcourt Brace.
- Brown, J. E. & Stephens, E. C. 1995. *Teaching Young Adult Literature*. New York: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Bushman, J. H. & Bushman, K. P. 1997. *Using Young Adult Literature in the Classroom*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Chance, R. 1999. A portrait of popularity: an analysis of characteristics of novels from Young Adults Choices for 1997. *The ALAN Review*, 27(1): 65-68.
- Che Husna Azhari. 2000. Of bunga telur and bally shoes. In *Selected Poems and Short Stories, Form 1*, pp. 11-21. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Donelson, K. L. & Nilsen, A. P. 1989. *Literature for Today's Young Adults*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Havighurst, R. 1972. *Development Tasks and Education*. New York: David McKay.
- Herz, S. K. & Gallo, D. R. 1996. *From Hinton to Hamlet: Building Bridges between Young Adult Literature and the Classics*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Ivey, G. & Broadus, K. 2000. Tailoring the fit: reading instruction and middle school readers. *The Reading Teacher*, 54: 68-78.

- Ivey, G. & Broaddus, K. 2001. Just plain reading: a survey of what makes students want to read in middle school classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 36(4): 350-377
- Knickerbocker, J. L. & Rycik, J. 2002. Growing into literature: adolescent s literary interpretation and appreciation: The authors explore adolescents growth in appreaciation and interpretation of literature. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 46(3): 196-208.
- Lian, H. M. 2002. Selecting Young Adult Literary Texts for Malaysian Secondary School Students. Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Universiti Putra Malaysia.
- Lukens, R. J. & Cline, R. J. 1995. *A Critical Handbook of Literature for Young Adults*. New York: Harper Collins College Publisher.
- Malachi Edwin. 1993. The teaching of literature in English in Malaysian secondary schools. In C. Brumfit and M. Benton (Eds.). *Teaching Literature: A World Perspective*, pp. 44-49. London: Macmillan.
- Maniam, K. S. 2000. *The Return*. Kuala Lumpur: Skoob Books. Abridged text for Malaysian secondary school students.
- Probst, R. E. 1988. *Response and Analysis: Teaching Literature in Junior and Senior Schools*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook.
- Reed, A. J. S. 1994. *Reaching Adolescents: The Young Adult Book and the School*. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International.
- Sidhu, G. K. 2003. Literature in the language classroom: Seeing through the eyes of learners. In G. Subramaniam (Ed.). *Teaching Literature in ESL/EFL Contexts*, pp. 88-110. Petaling Jaya: Sasbadi Sdn. Bhd.
- Stover, L. T. & Tway, E. 1992. Cultural diversity and the young adult novel. In V. R.Monseau and G. M. Salvner (Eds.). *Reading Their World*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.
- Subramaniam, G. 2003. Literature programmes in Malaysian schools: a historical overview. In G. Subramaniam (Ed.) *Teaching of Literature in ESL/EFL Con-texts*, pp. 27-48. Petaling Jaya: Sasbadi Sdn. Bhd.

- Vethamani, M. E. 2002. Connecting learners to literary texts. Paper presented at the 36th International IATEFL Annual Conference, University of York, UK, 23-27 March 2002.
- Vethamani, M. E. 2003. Learner before text and teaching. *The English Teacher*, 32: 1-7.
- Vethamani, M.E. 2004a. Connecting learners to literary texts. In B. Wijasuriya and F. Hashim (Eds.), *Reading Connections*, pp. 89-104. Petaling Jaya: Sasbadi Sdn. Bhd.
- Vethamani, M.E. 2004b. Changing tides: teaching literature in English in Malaysian secondary schools. In M. K. David (Ed.), *Teaching of English in Second and Foreign Language Settings: Focus on Malaysia*, pp. 52-58. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Wilhelm, J. D. 1997. Of cornflakes, hot dogs, cabbages, and king. In B. P. Miller, J. D. Wilhelm and K. Chandler (Eds.), *Reading Stephen King Issues of Censorship, Student Choice and Popular Culture*, pp. 23-36. Urbana: NCTE.
- Worthy, J. & Mckool, S. 1996. Students who say they hate to read: the importance of opportunity choice and access. In B. J. Leu, C. K. Kinzer, and K. A. Hinchman (Eds.), *Literacy for the 21st Century: Research and Practice. 45th yearbook of the National Reading Conference*, pp. 245-256. Chicago: National Reading Conference.
- Wright, A. 2000. *Potato People: Literature in English for Lower Secondary Schools Student's Edition*. Selangor: Kompas Publishing.
- Zindel, P. 1991. In Beckman, J. 1991. Teaching the young adult novel. In R. W. Beach and J. I. Marshall (Eds.). *Teaching Literature in the Secondary School*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Storybooks Used in the Study

- Maniam, K. S. 2003. *The Dragon Lives Again*. Petaling Jaya: Maya Press Sdn. Bhd.
- Maniam, K. S. 2003. *Audrey's Promise*. Petaling Jaya: Maya Press Sdn. Bhd.

Appendix 1: Reader Response Questionnaire

School : _____ Age : _____

Title : _____

1. Did you enjoy reading the book?

If yes, please complete **Part A**.

If no, please complete **Part B**.

***Part A:** Complete this box if you answered “yes”. Put a tick (“”) next to the statement(s) with which you agree. You may add your own reasons.*

No.	Reasons	Tick (✓)
1	The story related to places where young adults spend their time.	
2	The story was centred on young adults.	
3	The story was told from the point of view of a young adult.	
4	The story was fast paced action and had suspense.	
5	The story dealt with the problems of growing up.	
6	The story presented young adults as rebellious and mischievous.	
7	The story made me think.	
8	The character(s) reminded me of people that I know.	
9	The character(s) reminded me of myself.	
10	The language in the story was appropriate for young adults.	
11	<i>Please state:</i>	
12	<i>Please state:</i>	

Part B: Complete this box if you answered “no”. Put a tick (✓) next to the statement(s) with which you agree. You may add your own reasons.

No.	Reasons	Tick (✓)
1	The story does not relate to places where young adults spend their time.	
2	The story was not centred on young adults.	
3	The story was not told from the point of view of a young adult.	
4	The story was not thought-provoking.	
5	The story did not have any message for me.	
6	The story was slow and uninteresting.	
7	The story did not present young adults in a realistic way.	
8	The story did not deal with young adult issues.	
9	The character(s) did not resemble anybody I know.	
10	The language in the story was not the language of young adults.	
11	<i>Please state:</i>	
12	<i>Please state:</i>	

Appendix 1 (*continued*)

2. Below are some concerns of young adults. Put a tick (✓) next to any concern that appeared in the book. You may tick as many relevant concerns as you wish. You may add other concerns in the book which are not given in the list below.

No.	Concerns	Tick (✓)
1	Relationship with parents	
2	Relationship with siblings	
3	Relationship with friends (same sex)	
4	Relationship with friends (opposite sex)	
5	Physical (body) changes	
6	Future career	
7	Job opportunities	
8	Being part of society	
9	Moral and ethical issues	
10	Religion	
11	Politics	
12	Marriage	
13	Sex	
14	Examinations	
15	Money	
16	Entertainment and recreation	
17	<i>Please state:</i>	
18	<i>Please state:</i>	
19	<i>Please state:</i>	
20	<i>Please state:</i>	

Appendix 2: Teacher Questionnaire

Teaching experience: _____ years.

Below are some concerns of young adults. Put a tick (✓) next to any concern that appeared in the book. You may tick as many relevant concerns as you wish. You may add other concerns in the book which are not given in the list below.

Title of book: _____

No.	Concerns	Tick (✓)
1	Relationship with parents	
2	Relationship with siblings	
3	Relationship with friends (same sex)	
4	Relationship with friends (opposite sex)	
5	Physical (body) changes	
6	Future career	
7	Job opportunities	
8	Being part of society	
9	Moral and ethical issues	
10	Religion	
11	Politics	
12	Marriage	
13	Sex	
14	Examinations	
15	Money	
16	Entertainment and recreation	
17	<i>Please state:</i>	
18	<i>Please state:</i>	
19	<i>Please state:</i>	
20	<i>Please state:</i>	