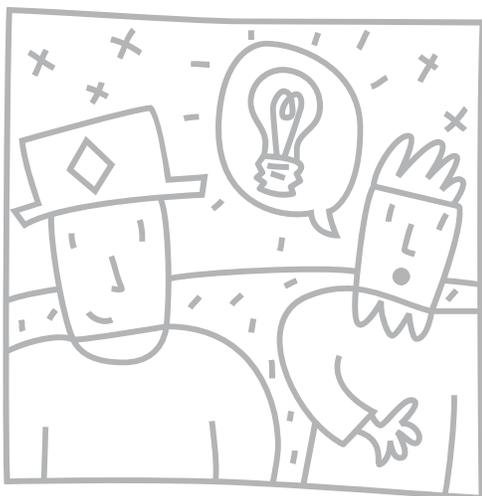


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The Giver

An Eye-Opener!

Jonas lives in world where everything is under control. Everything is planned out for everyone, and everyone is the same. If someone breaks a rule, they are released from the community. Jonas is selected to be the next “Receiver of Memories” the person who gathers the memories of the past. This job includes pain, sorrow, and happiness. Jonas realizes that the world he lives in is not all that great after all.

I have heard that this book has been banned from some schools, and personally, I think that is ridiculous. These are the only reasons that the book has been banned: a 12 year old having sensual feelings toward a girl he likes, and injecting a deadly needle into someone who is being released. OK, well the injecting is not really pleasant, but the reader does not need to focus on that. For this book focuses on more important issues than that.

The Giver gives an important message to people: Living in a world where there is independence and choices is better than living in a world where everything is perfect.

Lois Lowry did an awesome job making this book. I like the way she always kind of hinted that the perfect world was not that good after all. I recommend this book to people ages 10 and up.



This is Lowry's Best Book

In this book, Lowry captures your heart and soul. She makes you think about the things in life we take for granted and what you would do without them. She makes you realize that there is no perfect world. In this book, there are very strong emotions and acts of bravery and love.

This book has changed my life forever and I will always treasure the memory of reading it. I would recommend this book to any one who likes Lois Lowry's writing skills and who loves books that change your life. In the book there is a world with no pain or suffering and the people who live there are always protected. It sounds like a place you'd want to live but after you read it you just might change your mind!



An Adult Book Disguised as a Children's Book

This book preaches on the dangers of conformity as the supreme value. It includes such topics as infanticide, mercy killings, and child suicide. This book is not meant for children. Yes, blind conformity is evil. But this vehicle to preach against conformity is not for children under 14.

Adults: Read this book before you decide to give it to a child. Is your nine or 12 year old ready to read about the killing of a newborn with an injection in the skull? Do you want your 11 year old to read about how suicide solved a twelve year old's problem? This book haunted my sleep and thoughts for quite a while. I pulled this book from my elementary school library shelves.

The Giver

“Disturbing” is a Good Thing

While reading some of the reviews that gave the book less than five stars, I was simply shocked. I loved this book. I believe I have three copies at home, and I’ve read it at least eight times. Some of the reasons people gave for not liking the book were that the novel was confusing, they didn’t like the ending, it didn’t explain things enough, or (and this is the worst) it was “disturbing.” I’m sorry, people, but that is the whole point of the book.

I’ll first address the fact that this book is confusing. I think it is a valid point, the book does confuse the reader. The reader goes into the novel with assumptions, and the author takes those assumptions and smashes them down the garbage disposal. The first thing you must realize is that this world is entirely fictional, but like *Fahrenheit 451* and *Brave New World*, it is set in the future of humanity. Any confusing events are there to make the reader think. If you are wanting a simple read, just to take your mind off life, I do not recommend this book. The book is thought-provoking. Lessons are revealed on many levels, and after many reads. If you find the book confusing, stick with it, read it again, and again, and I guarantee it will make sense.

The ending of the novel is just another method the author uses of involving the reader, making the reader think. I won’t describe it (you’d all hate me forever), but the ending is basically a fill in the blank. It kills me every time I read it, but every time, I fill in the blank with hope. You’ll understand when you get there. Basically, it is ambiguous for a reason. The question the author is asking you is, how will you make the story end? Will you give up your humanity for peace and contentment and boredom, or will you fight for your right to feel, and see, and think?

As for the people who thought the author didn’t explain things enough, just deal with it. The author wrote the book the way the author wanted to write the book, and maybe the explanations have a reason for being ambiguous. The novel isn’t a detailed science report, it is a book with a message, and the author is entitled to whatever poetic license the author wants. Think about the ambiguity and maybe there is a purpose behind it. Facts that don’t illuminate the message would just detract and confuse people.

And now for the other point. Granted, I only read one review that said that the book was disturbing, but that made me so angry that I had to put down my thoughts right away. The book is SUPPOSED to be disturbing. If you didn’t think it was, then YOU are disturbed. But the point is to look at the disturbing parts. It disturbs you to make you look at your life. Are you the kind of person who would go along with this society that murders babies and those who don’t conform? The message is about the price of individuality.

Don’t just take a shallow view of this book. If you want shallow, read *The Boxcar Children*. This book is for kids, a lesson against peer pressure, but also for anyone who is willing to take the author’s challenge and actually THINK for once.

The Giver

Suspenseful Plot and Awesome Theme

I loved *The Giver* because the plot was very creative, the theme was magnificent, and the setting was vivid.

I think you should read this book for many reasons. The theme of this book is clearly represented: freedom, the right to make your own choices, uniqueness, and individuality are worth dying for.

In a community that is all the same lives Jonas, who discovers he is very different. In Jonas's community, a committee selects one's job, war is unheard of, all people wear the same attire, and all are assigned spouses and families.

When Jonas is given the special, wonder-filled occupation of becoming the Receiver of Memory, he finds that there is much more to life. Through his task of becoming the Receiver, he discovers the meaning of love, pain, frustration, color, and cold.

Life soon becomes overwhelmingly unbearable in his world of "sameness." He finds life isn't worth living without the qualities (ones that we often take for granted) he discovered. That is when Jonas goes on a dangerous journey to find a land that is different.

The setting in this book made it quite a pleasure. Everything in the community was predictable and pre-planned. The housing units were all the same. There were designated spots for everything.

The mysterious ending leaves one filled with curiosity and wonder.

This book is guaranteed enjoyment, especially for someone who likes a good theme and a plot that ties in with the setting. I loved this book, and I truly believe that everybody should read it!



Amazingly Vivid

Can you imagine a place where the people that live there have no memories of the past, no emotions, no colors, and none of earth's wonders? *The Giver* by Lois Lowry takes place in this kind of a community.

Jonas is an 11-year-old boy who is about to turn twelve. He is soon to receive a job assignment because at that age one is considered an adult. At the birthday ceremony Jonas is chosen to be the only holder of memories in the community. Once Jonas receives a few, he realizes that his community isn't quite as perfect as he had been brought up to believe. What will Jonas do to help his community see the error of its ways?

The Giver is a truly unique book because it tells about a different kind of lifestyle in a strange community. People are assigned their jobs and their families. And everyone just does whatever they are told.

You should read this book because it is very realistic and it has true emotions attached to the characters. When Jonas sees the way his community is living, his emotions of sadness, anger, and regret are extremely vivid.

This book might appeal to you because it is an intriguing story that tells about a turning point in a young man's life. In the story Jonas is turning twelve and experiencing

The Giver

Excellent Book But I Don't Get the Controversy

There are a few books released every year that gain both wide-ranging critical acclaim and deep popular support. They are few and far between, and fewer still when they stir up as much controversy as has *The Giver*. Personally, I don't see what all the controversy is about; everything in here that could possibly be seen as questionable is an echo of a canonized piece of science fiction. Yet, as soon as you try to boil down the classics for the kid-lit crowd, hackles get raised.

A distillation this may be, but it is in the same way that *Things Fall Apart* is a distillation of Greek tragedy; there's enough there for the author to have worn her heart on her sleeve, but the themes are places within a different framework of characters well-enough drawn that no one's ever going to be accusing Lois Lowry of plagiarism.

Jonas, on the brink of turning twelve at the beginning of the novel, in a utopian society where there's no crime, no poverty, etc. Jonas is chosen to be the new Receiver of Memory for the colony; he's something of an uber-consultant, the person to whom the ruling council turns when they come across something they have no way to understand. Jonas, and those Receivers before him, store the collective memories of those things which their society has managed to forget over the time they've been apart from the rest of the world (by the way the characters talk about the world previously, it's been hundreds, if not thousands, of years).

Lowry sets things up well. There's a wonderful revelation about halfway through the book that alone is worth the price of admission when Jonas figures out he sees things (literally) quite different than everyone else. Lowry has managed throughout the beginning of the book to lull the reader into such a state that the reader hasn't even realized what it is that's missing.

While this is the only real surprise here, the predictability of much of what comes after is forgivable enough. Lowry sets up a number of easy endings, none of which she takes, and the predictable pieces to the puzzle are all part of that setup. Just because the end result could have been done better doesn't mean it's not good as it stands. Highly recommended.



A Disappointment Compared to Lowry's *Number The Stars*

My son's 6th grade teacher read *The Giver* to his class a few months ago. I am into children's literature of all types and I as his mother like to read what he is assigned in his class. I was very disappointed with *The Giver*. *Number The Stars* was absolutely 5 star fabulous. But, *The Giver* — too adult for one.

I especially didn't like the way Ms. Lowry degrades womanhood and motherhood in this book. To be called as a 'birthmother' in this book is to have a dishonored scum life. I already see enough in our society of the degradation of motherhood — I don't want to read it in a book — much less have my son exposed to such absurdity.

Also, the part in the book where all boys had to take a pill once the pubescent stirrings begin was a very out-to-lunch kind of notion. I realize this is a fictional book. But, how about keeping books perfectly clean in all aspects?

Number The Stars was clean and uplifting in all regards. Ms. Lowry has such a gift for writing. I'd like to see her keep to clean, uplifting, inspiring content. Good books are my escape from society's ills. *The Giver* reminded me too much of our own social problems.

The Giver

***The Giver*: Worst book I've Ever Read!**

The Giver by Lois Lowry is a very opinionated book. Different people will think different things about the book and I think there are too many choices to make at the end of the story. In *The Giver*, a child named Jonas is getting his new 'assignment' for his life and he just happens to get the 'Receiver of Memory'. He then must receive memories of things that other people in the community do not know.

In *the giver*, Lowry tried to make some sort of utopia (a perfect world) and wanted to show that this would probably never happen and that this world might be perfect but that there are still some flaws in it. The author also tries to show that our world also has flaws. I think the author tried to go too far into the future because it might be a long time until we invent or do things as bad as what they have in the story.

I believe this book should not be intended for children or young adults. I think it should be for people 14 years and up. This book should not have been made for everyone because it shows a kid that committing suicide will get you out of a problem or a bad situation.

This book haunts me in my sleep and I am 12. I'm not scared of hardly anything but this book scared me. Just think about it, would you want your child to be reading a book where a 12 year old washes and cleans an elderly person? Would you want your child to be reading a book where somebody injects a baby in the head with some sort of liquid? Would you want your child to be reading a book where a boy dreams of bathing a girl in his sleep? If I could, I would ban this book in any library or store. Because of these reasons, I think *The Giver* is a terrible book. I wish I'd never had to read it.



Makes You Think About Life

Jonas is the twelve-year-old protagonist of this novel. He is living in a world without colors, pain, and love. In the Ceremony of Twelve he receives his assignment: He is the one who is chosen to be the new "Receiver of Memory". When he meets *the giver*, who gives him these memories of pain, love, and the ability to see colors, his life changes.

The journey to Jonas's realization that his society's system is not the right way to achieve peace and silence is suspense-packed. At first, the daily life of the members of the community is described so well that you think it is almost real. Every detail that the author mentions helps to create the apparent harmony of this "clean" atmosphere.

When Jonas realizes that there must be a change, the dark secrets of the system come out and the action rises. The suspense keeps growing right up to the end. You can describe the development as a chain reaction — everything Jonas believed in was a lie.

I think that Lois Lowry has created a world like this to show us that our life — with all its positive and negative sides — is better than living in a utopia without the thing that made us human-beings: our humanity.

Holes

A Lead . . .

How would you like it if you had to dig holes day after day in the hot sun? That's what Stanley Yelnats had to do in the book *Holes* by Louis Sachar.



Background From the Author's Life . . .

You might be wondering why Louis Sachar wrote *Holes*. He got the idea of writing this when he moved to Austin, Texas. It was so hot in Texas that he decided to write a story about suffering in the scorching heat.



Insights About the Main Character . . .

In the beginning of the book I think Stanley was very lonely. It never mentioned anything about him having a friend. He seemed to hate his life. He was always glum and depressed.



On the Theme of "Fairness" . . .

A question Louis Sachar might want us to ask is, Is life fair? Based on the book, I would answer that life can be fair, even though it might not seem like it. Life wasn't fair for Stanley because something bad was always waiting around the corner ready to spring on him. But in the end, life was fair for Stanley because he persevered and got rewarded by making a life-long friend, finding treasure and getting released from Camp Green Lake.



On the Main Idea . . .

In *Holes*, Louis Sachar wants you to know that you can't control things that happen in life. For example, Stanley couldn't control the fact that he was falsely accused of stealing shoes and ended up at Camp Greenlake. Zero couldn't control the fact that his mother left him one day and never came back.



A Recommendation . . .

I highly recommend *Holes* to most readers all around the world because I think they will learn a lot and I'm sure they will enjoy it. They will think about life and take it more seriously. They will also think twice before doing anything bad.

Holes

A Wonderful Book Called *Holes*

Holes is a wonderful book for the young reader which will jumpstart kids' imaginations. Because of its well constructed structure, *Holes* won the Newberry Medal for the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

Stanley Yelnats is a young teen who is going to camp Green Lake for the summer, but this is no fun camp, it is a camp for juvenile delinquents. In fact there is no lake and definitely no fun. There, Stanley meets a crazy group of guys called Armpit, X-ray, Zigzag, Magnet, Squid and Zero. They named Stanley Caveman, but it isn't as good as it looks, because each day the kids have to dig a five-by-five foot hole on the bottom of the lake, "to build character". You would think they could find a way out of this, but they all fear the Warden, who was known to kill kids who disobeyed her.

During the story, Stanley thinks to himself about his no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather. Stanley's family blames everything on him when anything goes wrong. But there was one factor missing there. How did his great great grandfather become so unlucky? It was because of Kissin' Kate Barlow, who robbed him and left him in the desert. Some people said that she buried her treasure out here somewhere. Could it be that the Warden is making them dig to try and find Kissin' Kate's treasure, or is there something else we don't know?

This is an exciting and exhilarating story that will amaze you. Your breath will be taken away by Stanley's actions and how he slips out of the Warden's grasp. But can he do this forever? Don't be surprised if you can't put the book down because that is what happened to me when I read the fabulous book *Holes*.



Not What I Thought it Might Be

The story is about a kid who gets sent to court and then out to a boys camp for a crime he did not do (stealing a pair of shoes). He meets some kids out there, becomes buddies with them, and near the end makes a break for home with one of them named Zero.

Being a fan of jail break stories, I thought the book sounded pretty good. Boy, was I wrong about that.

The story was totally unbelievable, is over done, and makes no sense at all. I should have thought more about what I was getting into. I could see where a little kid would like this, or someone who dose not think about the realism of what they are reading. This book had lots of holes in it.

Holes

I'm 25, and I Love It!

This is a great and amazing book! I highly recommend it for adults! I read this book as my 8-year-old had a copy and proclaimed it his favorite. I was shocked at how much depth and richness there was to it. I hope this book takes off like Harry Potter.

It is a rich, detailed story; funny and smart. The book starts out with a boy who is cursed. He's sent to a detention camp for a crime he didn't commit, sentenced to digging holes to build character. From there, the author sets up some history, essentially telling several different stories at once. There are so many twists and turns, layers of stories. But the book is quite easy to follow. It's a great adventure

This is a fun and serious with a pack of kids just like such great movies as *Stand by Me*, or *Sandlot*, with a touch of *Lord of the Flies*. The book is more about enduring bonds. It's suspenseful and thrilling. You'll be rooting for the main character from beginning to end.

The cover and back page don't do justice to the book, but I guess that makes it that much more exciting when you discover what's waiting inside. I am so excited about this book that I will be buying copies for my friends' kids and my nieces and nephews.



Holes

“Camp Green Lake is a camp for bad boys. If you take a bad boy and make him dig a hole every day in the hot sun, it will turn him into a good boy.”

Stanley Yelnats wasn't really a bad boy. He had just been in the wrong place at the wrong time. It must've been the curse that began with his “no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-great-grandfather.” The bad luck of his family landed Stanley at Camp Green Lake. Sure, it sounds like a nice place, but in fact it is not; it's just the opposite. There is no lake at Camp Green Lake, hardly anything is green, and it's certainly not the kind of camp most kids think of going to. The boys spend their days digging holes five feet wide and five feet deep. This labor is said to build character, but it isn't before long that Stanley suspects that the Warden, who runs the camp, is looking for something. But what?

Twisted into this book is a second and third plot line, another plot about Elya Yelnats, Stanley's “no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing great-great-grandfather”, Madame Zeroni, and one about an outlaw, Kissin' Kate Barlow. In the end, all three plots are tied together so that everything fits perfectly like a jigsaw puzzle.

Louis Sachar won the Newbery Medal for this prize story. It is fun-filled, imaginative, and unique. This is a story that will make people laugh, and it is perfect for a variety of readers. It's written in a simple manner so it is easy to read and could probably be read by a 9-year-old, yet the plot is fully developed.

There is never a dull moment; there is always action. I couldn't put this book down. It's like a mystery to the reader trying to figure out how the three story lines relate. It's not until the end that all the loose ends are tied up. This is a light, humorous story everyone should read.

Young Adult Books Too Young?

Where Have All the Real Books Gone?

I just finished skimming a teen book news letter that I can not seem to unsubscribe from. Every week or two this newsletter infects my e-mail box with its presence. Sometimes when I have nothing better to do I will skim it. I am almost always disappointed with what I find. The majority of what is reviewed are serial books that are based on “teen aimed” TV series. Along with their reviews of these pathetic spin-offs, they also include nauseating polls, usually on the subjects that the writers believe are the “latest teen crazes.”

One day, though, they printed something that seemed useful for a change. A list of authors who write for the young adult genre but whose prose and subject matter could also have a place in the regular fiction section. Despite their best efforts, I was once again for the most part disappointed. Included in the list were Walter Dean Myeres and Cynthia Voight. Walter Dean Myeres intentionally type casts himself, thus effectively limiting his audience to those who like reading books of that type. Cynthia Voight’s era has passed, and though I have not read any of her books I also suspect that her books are aimed at a female audience.

As I was looking at this newsletter today, I saw more of what I have just described and I thought to myself: Where have all the real books gone? I remembered as I was skimming that I had read an article in Time where the author thought she was making an astute observation when she noted that books aimed at teens were dealing with tougher issues and that they were a far cry from the “teen problem novels” of her youth. She used three books to support her argument: *Monster* by Walter Dean Myeres, *The Facts Speak for the Themselves* By Brock Cole and Louis Sachar’s *Holes*. I had read Cole’s book and enjoyed it. I was not interested in Myeres’ *Monste.r* So that left Sachar’s *Holes*. I decided to look it up on Amazon and read some reviews.

One review was by a mother who’s third and fifth grade children had enjoyed this book. That proved my suspicion that *Holes* would be nothing more than a sugar coated children’s book. Which brings me back to my question: Where have all the real books gone?

For those who want a more serious read, I do have a few suggestions: anything by Raymond Chandler, John Steinbeck, and John Grisham. I realize that it is possible that I am getting too old for the young adult genre (I am 14, now) and that my age might be the reason I am discontent with it’s offerings. But on the other hand, the only reason many books are classified as young adult is because they feature a teenager as the protagonist. And so, I ask one more time: Where have all the real books gone?

Catcher in the Rye

Universal Tale

I've read *The Catcher in the Rye* many times—when I was 11, 13, 15, and 17 years old. Seriously. I loved it from the first time I read it, but it didn't hit home until I was a junior and senior in high school.

I AM HOLDEN CAULFIELD. Well, not literally and exactly. But almost. Holden is an extraordinary character. His absolute terror of leaving the wonderful, innocent, carefree world of youth is something everyone can relate to. I'm about to graduate from high school, and even though I'm excited to be a free, independent adult, I can't help but be terrified of the corruption and hard reality that lays ahead, which I have been blind to, as a young person. I mean—who wouldn't miss being a kid?—living at home for free, not having to do anything or be responsible for yourself or anyone. Holden embodies this. To me, that's what I related to most from the book.

Most kids I know don't like the book cuz they're forced to read it for class, which is understandable. I wish they could see the beauty, and heartbreaking universality of Holden's story, though. It is something J.D. Salinger had the talent to grasp and share with the rest of the world.



Dear Holden: Please Jump

I'll be the first to confess to a cultural Achilles' heel that runs up my back, over my skull, and down to the unlovely bags under my eyes. As such, I am frequently at a loss to understand what the fuss is about. And it is perhaps for this reason that I still remain perplexed — nay flummoxed — by the cult status of this book and that of its repulsive protagonist, Holden Caulfield.

When I first endured this merciless literary thumbscrew, it was in the late 1970s, at the behest of a high school English teacher who wore clogs, wooden jewelry, and ambulatory tents made of faded denim. She believed with almost anguished sincerity that her students would “connect” with Holden, or find something “relevant” in the book.

I quickly came to a conclusion that a recent re-reading has done nothing to dispel: Holden is a jackass. He's a spoiled prep school jerk who's so sickeningly self-involved that he has no clue that the people around him exist as anything other than background figures in the melodrama going on entirely in his own head. He constantly refers to anything that doesn't meet with his schoolboy approval as “corny” and labors under the delusion that he's the first person who ever noticed that the transition out of childhood is awkward and uncomfortable. Listen, you pompous little spud, we all go through it, and it's about as cosmically significant as a crumpled wad of used Kleenex.

Maybe half a century ago, this hog wallow of teen angst was something fresh. But if Salinger had some larger point to make about coming of age it has all but disappeared in the fetishization of adolescence that took off not too long afterward, and has clung to our culture ever since.

Catcher in the Rye

True Feelings of Coming of Age

I've read this book many times over the years, from my first encounter in high school, to the most recent times, discussing it with my high-school children as they read it for the first time. Each time I read it, I'm struck more deeply by how truly it captures the rebellion, exhilaration, worry, fear, and rootless wandering which faced or faces us all as we journey from youth to adulthood.

The language is crisp, funny, never lags. Holden Caulfield's adventures catch and keep our interest, and we care what happens to him as we accompany him through his wanderings. But the thing that strikes me after all these years is how deeply JD Salinger captured the feelings that Holden was living with each day: What happens to those ducks in winter, what happens to us all as our warm and safe childhood lives slowly become the cold, hard, unyielding lives of adulthood, and who is there to catch us as we pass through the rye? Does anyone look out for us any more? Are we alone, on our own?

"Catcher in the Rye" is a beautiful, evocative book, for teenagers, adults, or parents helping their own teenagers navigate this remarkable journey.



Drop Dead, Holden Caulfield

First of all, I can see why people might like this book. J.D. Salinger writes well, and this novel was certainly different from anything else being published at the time. However, I think this book stinks. Why? You see, the backbone of the book is the protagonist, the self-absorbed, shallow, wimpy, bitchy, neurotic Holden Caulfield. *Catcher in The Rye* is basically the ramblings of a lame character, and if you can't stomach Holden's incessant whining there is nothing else to enjoy.

Holden Caulfield is not someone I can relate to, nor do I see similarities between him and my peers. He's like the weirdo in high school you felt sorry for but made fun of anyway. I have absolutely no sympathy for Holden. He's a stereotypical rich, privileged snob, and too stupid to realize that he's as affected and materialistic as the "phony" people he despises.

Holden is depressed, I'll admit that. But instead of facing his problems, he gets kicked out of school, drinks too much, treats women poorly, and spends obscene amounts of money. What a role model. Let's not forget about his relationship with his kid sister, Phoebe. I don't understand why a sixteen-year-old boy would brag about his exploits to his prepubescent sister, burden her with his troubles, and pinch her bottom.

Is Holden Caulfield the voice of a generation? I hope not. He is undisputedly a depressed, hormonal teenager. He is not, however, hip, edgy or worth reading about. Holden Caulfield is, in his own famous words, completely and utterly "phony."

Catcher in the Rye

To All the Phonies Who Hated This Book

The only dispassionate thing one can say about J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* is that it is a book that cannot be read dispassionately; both its numerous supporters and detractors are equally ardent in their respective admiration and disdain.

The novel is already noteworthy on the strength of its style, which represents the culmination in the development of a distinctive American idiom — a process begun by Hemingway and continued by the likes of Hammett and Chandler. In the deceptively simple voice of Holden Caulfield, Salinger strikes a tricky balance between slang and profundity that many writers have since striven for, but rarely duplicated. Holden may or may not be “phony” himself, but his voice is most decidedly not, as it is free of pretension or self-consciousness.

To call the novel a self-indulgent outpouring of “teenage angst” does it a grave disservice. Holden's problem is as old as Hamlet's, probably as old as mankind itself — a struggle to find purity of purpose amid intense feelings of fright and confusion toward the strangeness of human behavior. While Holden's various adventures alternately amuse and move the reader, the novel's real heart lies in his relationship with his sister Phoebe, who manages to be cute, earnest, and intelligent all at once; their climactic encounter near the end has the force of genuine tragedy.

In the final analysis, *Catcher in the Rye* proves to be nothing less than one of the major literary achievements of the 20th century.



Read it First Without the Reviews

I think part of the reason why some people can hate this book so much is because they began with a preconceived notion of what it was already about. I read it with barely any prior knowledge. I knew it was a famous classic, but I didn't know anything about its plot or characters or adolescent cynicism, and it turned out to be one of the best books I've ever read.

It wasn't because I felt like Holden Caulfield was a great guy or my friend, I probably couldn't stand him as a friend. He's a jerk and as moronic as he says he is. Nor because of the plot. It's not that it lacks one, but that the plot can't proceed because Caulfield is too paralyzed emotionally and mentally to push forward. He just gives up all together.

The book is great because it gives you a chance to see the world in a different way. If you ever wanted to know what life would be like if you just gave up, this book gives you a chance to explore that in great depth, in the most extreme way, as opposed to the idiotic-American-Pie, mushy-teen-coming-of-age-romance way we see in too many movies and TV shows. And there is a sort-of plot, and there is some heart to it, especially in the scenes where Holden's with his little sister. It's almost adorable.

Catcher in the Rye

I Read it Like a Madman

After you read *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield will live on in your mind, hanging around, speaking through you, informing the way you think of yourself and others. It's a masterpiece of writing, in which the author clearly and completely presents to you another person's mind and soul.

It is an incredible exercise in empathy. It really was. As I read it, I realized that Holden was far from perfect, but I cared so much what happened to him, I could feel his loneliness and could see him resisting getting the help he needs. Salinger's recreation of a boy headed "to a fall," as Mr. Antolini tells him, is an amazing opportunity to be someone else for awhile.

The colloquial speech of the novel is well suited for reading aloud, and I really enjoyed that aspect of it. I really did. I read it like madman whenever I could. I'm not kidding.

I guess I just want to say that I like Holden Caulfield, and I hope, somewhere, he's alright.



The Book Kids who Hate Books Love

It might be that Salinger invented adolescence. Previous to this American standard or classic, whichever you choose, we were a less adolescent-obsessed, less teen-preoccupied society. That maligned condition has since expanded by many years. It now starts at 11 and ends around 32. Give or take.

The book transforms kids from book-bored to book-possible. I have never come across, in 30 years of work with kids, one young person, in any culture, of either gender, who having read the book, (implying that they could), did not love it. They claim it, and feel as though it were a personal match, ("That's how I feel!") They are still, of course, in a state of complete self-centeredness. They join with it in symbolic affiliation.

No matter how desperately close the imitators have gotten, there just is no other book that generates this kind of response. It is a one shot deal, but often sufficiently positive to further attempts with the literary life.

Only in America could a Holden Caulfield come along and capture generation after generation. Just as Huckleberry Finn did before him, great characters show us who we are, they help us define ourselves more sharply.

Catcher in the Rye

The Difference Between This Book and Other Books

I first read this novel in college. That was forty years ago. Ever since, I have always had a copy of it in my library. I think about it every so often.

The difference between this book and other books is the immediacy of the writing. From the famous first sentence, Holden Caulfield talks to you as a real confidant. You are immediately his best friend. He confides his private thoughts to you without any hesitation as to your relationship to him. There is an unspoken conclusion that he needs to talk to you about. And he needs you now.

David Copperfield, which opens with that other famous first sentence, addresses you formally. His verbs are properly conjugated. and his diction is polished. David does not get close to you. He tells you his story from the podium.

Holden sits right next to you, leans against you, and chats. His language is informal, his diction not so great. But you don't care. Suddenly, someone is confiding in you. You want to hear him out.

That is why the novel works. Holden immediately accepts you, blemishes and all, as his best friend. He tells you his story even though you've just met.

Thomas Hardy tells a good story. He converses plainly and directly to the reader. Dickens addresses the reader skillfully and stylishly. Salinger confides. This is the immediacy of the novel.

That is the difference between this book and the others. We all want to be someone's confidant.



Just J.D. and Me

Anyone who has yearned to tell a spontaneous, elaborate lie to a total stranger, just for the heck of it, will love the character of Holden Caulfield in this book. That's OK as far as it goes, but when assassins of pop cultural icons, like John Lennon's killer, seek to relate their motives for evil actions by referring to this book, what does that mean? It means this book can also function as a magnet for the unhinged, who wish to be free by reinventing themselves.

The whole catching image articulated by irresponsible young Holden is hard to understand, too, and who really knows what a field of rye looks like anyway? Why the cliff? Could it be that being caught in a big whopping lie is like suddenly falling over a cliff? No way to repair it? Just time for sudden, dramatic consequences?

Salinger is a riveting personality in his own right, and also a great anti-hero, exemplified by his resolution never talk to a single critic about this book, with the sole exception of a girl writing for her high school newspaper. Maybe he was tired of over-serious, over-credentialed literati types, who are too late and too ill-equipped to redeem their ponderous and boring lives from their earlier failure to embrace a little more spontaneity, a little more fun, a little more high school newspaper derring-do.

Whatever it is, it's still fun to read. Buy this book and carry it around and just watch the looks you get. Especially at airports and bus stations teeming with would-be foils for the next Holden Caulfield whoever he (or she) may be.

Catcher in the Rye

The Quintessential Teenager? Puh-leeze!

What a prison of pessimism. Reading *Catcher in the Rye* felt like bathing in a toxic waste plant.

T.S. Elliot said, “April is the cruelest month” of the year because the sun reveals some things we’d rather not see. Likewise, Salinger’s work conjures up the darkest memories of adolescence, memories I’d ceremoniously burned (along with my acid wash jeans and Debbie Gibson cassettes) years ago.

Of course, I must recognize that my response is perhaps reflective of my aged removal from young adulthood. As an educator, it is imperative that I am tuned in to what makes my students tick. If there’s one redeeming element of the book, it is that I was reminded of what a potential time bomb is the teenage brain. Regardless, I’m sure that point could have been made without harping on the most banal aspects of adolescent existence.

Having recently observed the teaching of *Catcher in the Rye* in a high school classroom, I experienced first hand student’s reactions of apathy and distaste for the book. Student editorials discussed Holden’s narrow character development. One student made the point that if Caulfield is a character adults use to peer into the adolescent mind, they are largely misled. The common consensus among the students held that Holden is hardly the quintessential teenager.

So I think it unfortunate that students suffer through the *Catcher* experience. While I cannot speak for everyone, the specific classes I observed were most turned off by Holden’s language, poor decision making, and overall depression. Many explained that Holden is not a character they would strive to be like. Rather, he is merely someone to feel sorry for. Who wants to read an entire book where the primary emotion invoked is pity?

I will acknowledge that there are certain themes in the book that are universal. These include loss of innocence, rebellion from society, mental instability, death, immaturity in sexual relationships, and resentment toward parents. While these are issues most any teenager can relate to, presentation is of the essence. Unfortunately, based on my high school classroom observations, Salinger’s writing style and characters have little to offer today’s breed of students.

I wonder if my reaction to the book would be different were I ten years younger. But as for now, I already know how bad raw sewage reeks, so why expose myself to such noxious fumes page after page? The masochists can have their *Catcher*. I’d rather drink my tea with two sugars, thank you very much.

Harry Potter

The Magic Awaits

I turned eleven the month that *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* came out in the US. Harry Potter was not yet famous here. Nobody had ever heard of Harry, nobody knew what Quidditch was, and not a single person had any idea how to pronounce “Hermione.”

I bought the book at a book fair because I thought the cover looked very nice. I read it about six times before I found out that there was more to come in the form of six more books.

Every day of my eleventh year, I hoped and prayed for a parchment envelope with my name on it in green ink beckoning me to a school of witchcraft and wizardry. But the letter never came.

I turned twelve, and Hogwarts was forever closed to me. But the story was not, and it continued.

Each year Harry turned a year older, so did I. Harry has always been my age, every time a new book comes out, I just have time to catch up with him. When he finishes his story in the seventh book, it will be hard to pass him by, knowing that I will be leaving him behind, that *he* will never catch up now. But the magic won't leave the books, they will always be waiting. And the first one, the one that began it all, the tale that brought 11-year-old Harry to Hogwarts and started his long adventure, will still be lying on the shelf, holding within its covers a story that has created magic where once none could be found.

It is the book that created Harry, that brought the fantasy of a secret world to life, and it is why now the name “Harry Potter” seems more like an expression that means “delightful thrills” than an English schoolboy moniker.

So what more could a reader wish for, than to see the delightful collector's edition waiting for him under a Christmas tree in a colorfully wrapped package, its exterior pulsing with Hogwarts and wizarding, from the emerald leather to the golden gilding to the glittering lightning bolt spelling out Harry's name. As for the interior, well, what more need be said? Harry Potter is a magical being who exists only on paper, or so they say. But all who have avidly followed his every move for the past four years know better.

Harry may not be seen by others, but we know that he is there, whether in the kindly librarian who points him out on the shelf, the small child who weeps when Harry vainly tries to contact his lost parents in the Mirror of Erised, or in the man walking down the street, who barely comes up to your waist and has on a tall top-hat, complaining loudly about the commotion made by Muggles.

The book needs only opening, and it will do the rest on its own. The magic awaits.

Harry Potter

I am Ashamed of My Kinsmen

Why? Because I believe in God, and I believe in the Good, but I have been ashamed to read the misanthropic and vindictive attacks upon this book by people who claim to share my beliefs and values.

Harry Potter is a magnificent and fascinating book. There is nothing at all offensive about witchcraft or sorcery as portrayed within it, It is about the ultimate use of powers for the proper ends. Even the deceit is justified, following soul-searching and worries. That is life, and sometimes I suppose some people feel that it's better not to know such things. I disagree.

The book is imaginative and thrilling, with genuine originality used to spice up a well-trodden theme (*The Worst Witch* school stories, for example, predate the idea of a school for witchcraft), and references to the ancient myths. Thus, it is educational. It informs you about such things as mandrakes, unicorns, phoenix, and the like, and about the myths and legends connected to those beasts.

The book encourages you to imagine and to think for yourself. It was truly frightening, but everything ended happily and satisfactorily. The plot was logical enough for a child, yet elaborate enough to please the mature mind.

Of course, Harry's uncle and aunt are grotesque. They embody the narrow-mindedness of my so-called kinsmen, who lack magic and joy for life in their souls, and who lack the imagination to understand that magic is all in the mind. "But children will start dabbling in sorcery!" Indeed. And so what if they do? They are very likely to go on to become eminent scientists or great philosophers. They may write, paint, or create works of art. They will use their brains to make life interesting, and they will be open-minded.

In *Harry Potter* they are reading, and learning, and they know from the world around them that such things cannot happen to them. There are positive Muggles, too, just as there are positive and negative wizards, creatures and monsters, and there are people who are neither totally good or evil, just like in the real world.

If your child cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality at 8 years old, what kind of parent can you have been? There is fantasy everywhere. Even the wholesome *Sesame Street* is a fantasy. Do children grow up thinking that birds talk, and that monsters live in garbage cans? No. So why pick on this immensely popular book? It is a much, much better book than most books written for children. Long live *Harry Potter*.

Harry Potter

Bland, Unoriginal, Dull, Not a Thinking Book

I am a fifteen-year-old girl whose friends adore *Harry Potter*. I read this book in an attempt to see whether it would live up to all the hype surrounding it. I thought that I would perhaps enjoy it, as I am normally a big fan of “different world” stories. Boy, was I disappointed.

This story moves like a television series, each storyline acting as an episode. But there is one difference: television shows do a much better job depicting characters and storylines. J. K. Rowling’s use of description is bland and amateurish. I realize that this book was written for children, but couldn’t Rowling have at least attempted to use a higher sense of vocabulary? Roald Dahl uses very simplistic vocabulary in his stories, too, but he comes off as charming. Rowling just seems to be somebody who can’t use a nice vocab word every now and then.

Let’s move on to the actual story. This is where the “unoriginal” trait comes in. Can we say “Cinderella” here? The story of Harry Potter is too contrived. We’ve all seen the main storyline before: kind orphan boy/girl who just so happens to be whisked away to someplace “magical”; is great at everything and wins the admiration of practically everybody, with the exception of a few jealous enemies here and there. This storyline has been done to death and this book doesn’t do it any better.

This book is definitely not a classic. *The Chronicles of Narnia*, that’s a classic. *A Wrinkle in Time*, that’s a classic. *Harry Potter* doesn’t come even close.

My literature teacher once put books into two different categories: thinking books and non-thinking books. *Harry Potter* belongs in the latter. This is a book that will go in one ear and out the other, not something that will stay with you for years on end. If this book ever becomes as “classic” as *Cinderella* or *Snow White*, the world will have lost its mind.



Worthy of the Hype and Much Better Than I’d Hoped

So much has been written about this wonderful book and its sequels, but I really must add that not only should author Rowling be feted for creating books that kids really want to read, book after marvelous book, adults who avoid them are also missing a lot. While never wavering from her entirely readable prose, the author flawlessly interweaves endless references, allusions, and myriad other techniques and devices which move her work from the merely grand books for the “tweenager” to something considerably more literate and “critically sound,” in its most erudite and arrogant connotation.

Plot. Character. Incredible settings. It’s all there, but thankfully, blessedly, there’s so much more. Authors like Rowling and the wickedly wondrous Lemony Snicket are raising the standard for quality children’s literature to where it should always have been: identical to that of any great writing.

Maniac Magee

Not Everything Can Be Perfect

Maniac Magee (whose real name is Jeffrey) is a homeless kid who lost his parents in a trolley accident. He wants a real home with a family and that is what he looks for in the story. He's really unusual. He is famous for running everywhere. He's so fast no one can beat him. He's really good at sports. He even hit a "frog" ball and turned it into an inside the park homerun. He can untie very complicated knots. Little kids bring him all their troubles and he helps solve them. He wins a lifetime supply of pizza but he's allergic to pizza. Everyone loves him — well, almost everyone. That's what bothers him and keeps him running all night.

Maniac doesn't see any bad in people. He keeps thinking they're nice. But some are so mean that he finally figures out they don't like him. He blames himself. Maniac meets a girl, Amanda. She has lots of books and he really wants one. She lets him have one to read. When he returns it she invites him to live with her family in the East End. Only black people live there. Maniac doesn't see any difference between the black and white people. When he sees there are some who don't understand each other he tries to get them to like each other. But this doesn't happen very easily.

After Maniac runs away from Amanda's house, he lives with the buffalos at the park zoo. One day he meets Grayson who used to be a Minor league pitcher. Grayson and Maniac become really close like grandson and grandfather. They do everything together. You'll have to read what happens next. It's very emotional.

Maniac runs away from all of his temporary homes because he wants things to be perfect. He learns that not everything can be perfect. Does he find what he wants in the end? You'll have to read the book to find out.



Run Like a Maniac and Get This Book

Maniac Magee is not your typical kid. After all, do you know anyone who can run 200 miles in only 51 days and not even be tired? Well that's Maniac!

Throughout the story, Maniac meets many different kinds of people, some black and some white. For example, the Beale's are a black family who are quite nice and they take Maniac in. Other blacks in the town don't like Maniac (he's white) and he doesn't understand what the racism is all about. He believes that everyone is the same no matter what color they are.

Then Maniac has to teach Grayson, an old white man who is Maniac's closest friend, that blacks eat, drink, and use toothbrushes the same way that whites do. But this is not the only lesson *Maniac Magee* teaches about racial equality. You'll have to read this book to find out what else happened.

So if you're into modern-day tall tales and you have not yet read this book, then my advice is to run as fast as Maniac would to the nearest book store or library today.

Maniac Magee

What a Great Book

In “Before the Story”, an introduction to the novel, Jerry Spinelli writes, “What’s true, what’s myth? It’s hard to know.” Was Maniac Magee really a superhero in an urban legend of childhood or was he just an extraordinary, though very human, young boy? Again, even for those who have read the story several times, it’s hard to know. I doubt if Spinelli himself knows the answer.

Even the rest of the characters have that half-unbelievable, half-real quality about them, though not as powerfully. For instance, few people have ever known an Amanda Beale who carries her entire library to school everyday; but it is easy to believe that someone like Amanda does exist somewhere out there. And most kids could interview all the old park hands in their states and probably not find one who has struck out Willie Mays, or any other major league baseball player, for that matter. Yet it is still easy to believe that the novel’s Grayson has a real-life counterpart. Beginning with Chapter One, when the first strange characters, Uncle Dan and Aunt Dot, are introduced, readers may suspend their disbelief and experience one of the most wonderful adventures in modern children’s literature.

I call it an adventure because, whether he or the readers know it or not, Maniac is on a quest. He is looking for a place to call home, a place where he can be accepted and happy. Readers follow him from his first home in Bridgeport to his final home in a place you will have to read the novel to know about. This quest is not the only mythical element in this great novel: the hero also has several tasks to perform and dangers to brave before he achieves his dream. Along with all his “superpowers,” he even has a “fatal flaw” to overcome: his naive and trusting nature when it comes to others.

Some of the tasks Maniac has to perform are as simple as undoing an impossible knot. Others are as dangerous as trying to make peace between blacks and whites in a neighborhood. Something else mythical is Maniac’s experience in the West End, which can be called a “Descent into the Underworld”. Like a modern Odysseus, he makes many educational stops on the way to his own special Ithaca. (The three parts of the book mark these stops.)

All of this is told in Jerry Spinelli’s beautiful prose, which sometimes nearly becomes poetry. For example: “For most of November, winter toyed with Two Mills, whispered in its ear, tickled it under the chin. On Thanksgiving Thursday, winter kicked it in the stomach.” At other times, the narrative seems to come straight out of a character’s mind, with Spinelli taking on the voice of that character.

Interestingly, the novel does not make any fixed judgments about running away. First it seems to say that running away is not the answer and that homes must be worked on as much as found. Then it reminds us that Maniac would not have found his home had he not run away to look for it in the first place.

This story tugs at the heart and enriches the soul, but it also opens the mind.

A Wrinkle in Time

This Book Definitely Deserved the Newberry Medal

Meg Murry is miserable. She's an outcast of sorts at her highschool, her five-year-old brother, Charles Wallace, is a genius, and worst of all, her scientist father is gone on what seems to be a dangerous and mysterious mission in space. But help for her father comes in a very unlikely way. Charles Wallace meets three mysterious "witches" (Mrs. Who, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Whatsit) who soon have Meg, Charles Wallace, and Calvin O'Keefe (a newly-found friend of Meg's) journeying through space on a treacherous quest to save her Mr. Murry.

After stopping for rest on a breathtakingly beautiful planet during their travels through the galaxy, Meg, Calvin, and Charles Wallace find themselves on Camazotz, a planet that has succumbed to the "Dark Thing" (evil). Their quest for Mr. Murry becomes increasingly difficult as they realize the incredible evil they are fighting.

A Wrinkle in Time is definitely the best fantasy book I have ever read. Madeleine L'Engle's imagination is unrivaled, and her descriptions of the various planets the characters travel to are wonderful; it almost seems like L'Engle's been there.

But this book is more than just a meaningless yet prettily written fantasy. L'Engle's unique and moving thoughts on good and evil, as well as our responsibility towards fighting evil are readily apparent in this book. Some very profound things are said, and some very profound concepts are embedded where you'd least expect them. For a treat for your imagination and food for thought, just read *A Wrinkle In Time*.



A Wrinkle in Time

This science fiction thriller is almost impossible to put down. This book has a great, amazing and creative story line. It's a very strong book in that it is expressive and attention capturing right from the start. One second the setting is dull and gray, and the next you're zooming through a world of color and great mystery. These are only some of the things you will experience when reading *A Wrinkle in Time*.

This book is about Charles Wallace and his sister Meg. They lost their dad years before while he was working on a project for the government. But he was not dead he was just lost.

At the beginning they meet three mysteriously weird ladies, whose names was Mrs. Who, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Whatsit. They take Charles, his sister, and one of his sister's friend, Calvin, and wrinkle through time to try and find their father.

This was a great book. I liked it because it makes you not want to put it down. I think it is a great book and I think anyone that reads this book will agree with me. I encourage any that like to read to read this book and I am pretty sure that you will enjoy it as much as I did. So go read *A Wrinkle In Time*.

Bridge to Terabithia

The Story Comes Alive

This is a great book. I think children will enjoy it, even though it deals with death.

Jesse's main ambition is to be the fastest kid in the fifth grade. He practiced all summer, only to have a girl beat him. The girl is Leslie. At first Jesse refuses to be friends with Leslie, but after he sees how much they have in common they become best friends. Leslie is a very intelligent and imaginative girl who teaches so many things about life to Jesse, an average farm boy. They build a secret and magical kingdom called Terabithia. The only way to enter this magical kingdom is by swinging across the gorge on a rope.

One day, when Jesse returned from a trip to Washington D.C. with a teacher, he learns of Leslie's death. The rope broke as Leslie was swinging over the gorge into Terabithia. At first, Jesse refuses to accept her death. Then he almost feels happy because he is now the fastest kid in the fifth grade. He finally comes to terms with Leslie's death as he goes to Terabithia to perform a funeral ceremony.

Paterson develops the characters so well that they seem real. She gives an accurate description of their lives and of the events that occur on the playground. The reader can relate to the things that happen to Jesse and Leslie and how they handle these things. Paterson shows the reader that a boy-girl friendship can happen and that it can be a great one. She does an excellent job of making this story come alive for the reader.



A Very Good Book, Though it Contains Some Hard Lessons

This was a very sad, very difficult book. Not because of difficult language or readability, but because of the intense lessons it teaches about grieving and death. This book cannot be read lightly. It takes you through the main character's process of making a new friend, learning to love and trust her, having that trust betrayed, and finally, learning to move on with his life. Despite its deep and painful context, this book was very worthwhile, and I completely recommend you give it a try.



Too Depressing for Me

I found this book to be very depressing. Jess Aaron's parents are horrible parents and his sisters are the same, except for Mae Belle. The only uplifting point in this book is when he meets Leslie Burk, but that also ends tragically. I do not believe that the author did enough foreshadowing for the awful event that happens near the end of the book. It was a total shock! She could have done a better job warning the reader ahead of time, especially because this is a children's book. One of the main reasons that children read is for pleasure, and there is nothing pleasurable about this book. The tone was extremely sad throughout most of the book. The only reason I liked it at all is because I like Katherine Paterson as an author and it is well written, but I really think she has many other better books out there. This book was too depressing for me to read. I prefer something a little bit more uplifting.

Bridge to Terabithia

It'll Make a Grown Man Cry

“Leslie was more than his friend; she was his other, more exciting, self, his way to Terabithia and all the worlds beyond.”

Okay, before I make this unmanly confession, let me first state in my own defense that I have two small children and I was listening to the conclusion of this book at a very early hour, before I'd even had breakfast to fortify me for the day. That said, I'll now acknowledge that I very nearly started sobbing.

In 1976, Katherine Paterson's son David was 8 years old when his friend, Lisa Hill, was struck by lightning and killed. A year later *Bridge to Terabithia* was published, winning a Newberry Medal and becoming, if such a thing is possible, an instant classic. Ms Paterson drew upon this personal tragedy to create the story of a boy, Jess Aarons, and a girl, Leslie Burke, in rural Virginia, who become the best of friends. Jess is the middle child, and only son, of a reticent father, who struggles to earn a living. Leslie is the daughter, and only child, of two successful writers who have moved to the country, next door to the Aarons, for lifestyle reasons.

The friendship between the two kids is hesitant at first, particularly after Leslie usurps Jess's title as the fastest runner in their 5th grade class at Lark Creek Elementary. But both have some trouble fitting in with their peers, Jess because of his interest in Art, Leslie because of her scholastic ability and her parents' very 70s social attitudes (like not having a TV), and this shared awkwardness gives them a unique bond. Leslie creates an imaginary kingdom called Terabithia for them to rule over, accessible only by a rope swing over a local creek. The imaginary adventures they share there and a series of incidents at school bring the two closer and closer together. But then an ugly reality intrudes upon their idyllic world and the various characters are forced to deal with a tragic death. To say more might ruin the story, so let's leave it at that.

I understand that the use of this book in classrooms is frequently challenged by parents. If the reason for this is that they feel that the central crisis of the book may be too intense for children, I can sympathize with their feeling. But it seems like an intensity that is well worth their children's while. Ms. Paterson handles the situation quite beautifully and affords a real opportunity for parents to discuss the matter of death with their kids, a topic which most families hopefully haven't much had to cope with. Reading the book is a difficult emotional experience, but better to first confront these emotions in a controlled fictional setting and begin to learn how to deal with them, than to remain totally sheltered and have to deal with them, completely unprepared, when the tragedy is real.

Bud, Not Buddy

Bud, Not Buddy

Bud, Not Buddy is an award-winning book written by Christopher Paul Curtis that takes place during the Great Depression. This was a period of history when the overall world economy was suffering. The main character in this story is Bud Caldwell, a ten-year-old orphan, who is transferred out of the Home (i.e., orphanage) to live with a foster family, the Amoses.

After a short while, Bud finds it hard to get along with them. Therefore, he decides to leave the Amoses and go in search of a well-known musician, Herman E. Calloway, whom Bud believes is his father. That is when he stumbles upon a great discovery.

This is a book that is worth reading because the author makes the plot very unpredictable. For example, when Bud is in the Amos's shed, he finds what he thinks is a vampire bat. Because he does not want to get his blood sucked, he uses his jackknife to slice the creature. This fools the reader into thinking that Bud has just slaughtered an innocent animal. In reality, Bud has not killed a bat. He has cut off part of a hornets' nest and aggravated those living within.

In addition, the author also does an excellent job in giving Bud a distinct voice. He purposely uses some incorrect grammar and other casual diction so readers can actually hear Bud talking to them. The techniques that Curtis uses make this story seem realistic.

This is an excellent book with many interesting incidents, but my favorite part occurs near the end, when Bud shows Herman E. Calloway his collection of rocks with the writing on them that his mother had given him. This is the most suspenseful episode because at this point, Herman looks ready to give Bud a beating because he thinks Bud stole them from him, and Bud appears ready to prove that Herman is really his father. When Bud insists that he had received them from his mother, Herman demands that Bud reveal his mother's name. When Bud says that her name is Angela Janet, Herman looks stunned. Soon, Bud finds out that Herman is really his grandfather on his mother's side of the family, not his long-lost father.

I found this discovery very surprising because Bud's constant conviction that Herman was his father led me to believe that he was right. Bud's finding a relative makes the ending of this book satisfying.

Bud, Not Buddy

In Search of His Father

Can you imagine growing up without your mother and not knowing who your real father was? *Bud, Not Buddy* is a book about a young boy who has no parents and is still in search of his father. Bud adventures across the state meeting new and peculiar people while in search for the man who he believes to be his dad.

Bud, Not Buddy keeps you entertained with all the drama that this young child is going through. This book is very descriptive and gives great detail about the places and people Bud visits. It presents itself with real life examples and enough description so that you're able to picture what Bud is seeing. For example, "The cooler was drenched with bags of blood and blood stained ice." A book like this puts you right in Bud's shoes.

Bud, Not Buddy targets audiences of all ages, from teens to young adults. The entire book has easy and understandable words which keep you from stumbling. Bud goes through tough times, so this storyline is appropriate for mature teens and young adults. The amount of emotion in this book might be too much for younger kids. For example, "My mom died when I was little." This might be something too overwhelming for younger children to imagine. Teens and young adults, though, will understand and enjoy this book.

Emotion is found throughout this book. In the beginning, you're sad because you find out what Bud is living through, and in the end the whole mood of the story changes to being much happier. Seeing Bud fight and strive toward his goal is what makes *Bud, Not Buddy* a great book. Bud's determination to find his father moves you as you read about his perseverance.



Everyone Has a Place to Belong

Bud, Not Buddy, by Christopher Paul Curtis, is a book to be enjoyed by old and young alike. The story, based on events that took place during the Great Depression, is told from a child's point of view. It shows an orphaned child's journey to find where he belongs in the world.

Bud lost his mother when he was only six years old and spent the last four years in foster families and group homes before he set off to find Mr. Herman E. Calloway, whom he thought must be his daddy. Even though his momma never told him who he was, he thinks the old fliers she left behind with Mr. Calloway's picture will lead him to his father. Thus begins his journey that will take readers off for a surprise ending.

It doesn't take but a minute for the reader to take to Bud. His humorous ways of looking at what happens to him makes the reader laugh out loud. He quotes from his book, "Bud Cadwell's Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself," throughout. Rule Number 87 is "When a Adult Tells You They Need Your Help with a Problem Get Ready to Be Tricked — Most Times This Means They Just Want You to Go Fetch Something for Them." Kids will really identify with such humor, bringing them deeper into the story.

There is a valuable lesson to be learned through this wonderfully written story: everyone has a place to belong. There are many children who may feel the same emotions Bud felt about losing his mother. Even those who do not can put themselves in his shoes.

Bud, Not Buddy is a well-written story with a realistic plot and a character readers can identify. It is sure to be a favorite book of many and well deserving of the Newberry award.

Lord of the Flies

The Movie was Good, the Book is Even Better

This enthralling novel of survival will have you thinking and wondering. After a plane full of British school boys crash land on a deserted island, sense and savagery collide. Without adults to provide a “column of strength,” the boys are left to live on their own.

The boys started out as a united tribe of sorts, but somewhere down the line they begin to split. A small group of boys with the main character, Ralph, as their chief, believed that the most important thing was to keep a fire going and to be rescued. The other boys, lead by stubborn Jack, wanted to hunt and kill. This group was soon decorated in “war paint” and doing tribal dances around the fire.

As you read, you will most likely find yourself rooting for the sensible, protagonists of this story, but think about this: Do you think most people might end up acting the same way as the “savages” ended up? Is it not human nature to want to rule and survive? Can the boys be blamed for losing their heads, especially under the conditions they were in?



Symbolism Abounds

I have watched “horror” movies that scared me less than this book did. Equal parts *Robinson Crusoe* and *Children of the Corn*, *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding explores human nature in a way I’ve not seen before.

Stranded on a uninhabited island, a group of English boys are left to survive without the influence of an adult. Chaos slowly materializes as the boys gradually lose track of their main goal: to be rescued. Nighttime comes to symbolize fear and death as a mysterious “beast” rears its ugly head. Ralph and Piggy struggle to remain “civilized” while Jack and others begin to be absorbed by their animalistic urges.

One thing that stood out to me was Golding’s use of imagery. From the tiniest details of the island to the almost palpable tension that develops, Golding does a magnificent job of portraying it all.

However, the aspect of this book that makes it outstanding is the psychology behind the story. As the children begin to realize that there are no adults to give them guidance, a darkness falls over them. Long term survival becomes secondary to the immediate need to have “fun.” The children evolve from being hunted to being vicious hunters.

I highly recommend this as both a good story and as a psychological study. I believe it could be an invaluable guide for high school students leaving home for the first time and experiencing a sense of freedom that can parallel that of the boys in this novel. Even if you are well past that stage, it’s worth reading to get an understanding of what people might be experiencing.

Lord of the Flies

Absolutely Devastating, Absolutely Essential

This wicked parable of society is firmly in the Top 10 novels of the 20th century.

If you're reading this review, I'll assume you're one of the few people that didn't have read *Lord of the Flies* at some point for high school or college. If so, there's no excuse for not picking it up immediately.

It starts, famously, with English schoolboys in an airplane crash on a deserted island in the wake of nuclear war (and — lest we be too hard on the boys — this point is deliberately made to show that adults fared no better than they will). The pilot, the only adult on board, is killed and the boys have to create a civilization from scratch.

Eventually factions are formed, and tensions arise between the “rescue” faction led by a boy named Ralph, which focuses on keeping their shelters in repair and a signal fire burning, and the “hunting” faction led by a boy named Jack, which becomes less focused on prioritizing rescue and slowly start to like their hunting a little too much.

Eventually the rescue faction dwindles to Ralph, Piggy, a stereotypical nerd who nevertheless becomes Ralph's firmest ally in keeping some kind of order, Sam and Eric, two basically decent twins, and Simon, a kind, painfully shy epileptic who has the firmest handle on what's really happening to them.

With things spinning out of control, Ralph and Piggy confront Jack to try to restore a semblance of sanity, while Simon faces psychic battle with the Lord of the Flies, who represents, depending on the reader, Simon's prodigious understanding of chaos, the evil within not only all the boys but all of us.



Absolutely Atrocious

Symbolism is nice and quite beautiful in some places and for certain writers, but this book had way too much of it. Golding's novel is horrendous. His absolutely mind-numbing style immediately drove me away and his tedious and unnecessary description wasn't at all striking. I'll give it a bit for having good description in a few places, but only a miniscule few.

But that isn't even the reason why I hate it so much. What I found most unpleasantly appalling was the content of this so-called classic. It completely and utterly disappointed me in its horrific plot that I wouldn't even care to mention. Am I a happy-go-lucky reader? No. In fact, I quite often enjoy the sad and angry scenes in many novels, but there was an element of this one that I still can't quite name, and don't care to, that made those scenes so obtuse. This book should be completely wiped off and eradicated from the lists of classics to be read and analyzed in schools.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

A Powerful Book for Adolescents Learning About Courage

Mildred D. Taylor has given adolescent readers a powerful account of the Great Depression and the economic hardships it placed on many families, particularly blacks. As seen through the eyes of the Logan family, students learn about the inequalities between blacks and whites, beginning with the four Logan children being splattered by mud from a school bus that transported white children only. A further indignity occurs when the Logans are given dirty, tattered textbooks that have been discarded by the school for whites.

Much of what Taylor describes in this novel packs a strong punch for adolescents. Further, to fully understand the story's context, students need to understand a good deal of U. S. history, specifically, the Great Depression, the Restoration, the sharecropping system, and segregation practices in the South during this period. Yet, teachers and students who take on the challenge will be well rewarded.

Teachers and administrators in the Boston Public Schools have been so impressed by the powerful themes in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, that they have selected it as one of six core novels for sixth graders as part of the Max Warburg Courage Curriculum. The other five novels are: *Taking Sides*, *Number the Stars*, *Bridge to Terabithia*, *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*, and *Maniac Magee*. As with *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, each novel addresses the theme of courage — different types of courage, what it takes to act courageously, and how even small acts of courage can have enormous consequences in everyday life.

As an educational consultant for the Courage Curriculum, I highly recommend *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Taylor does not speak down to students. Instead she presents them with genuine characters in a drama that reflects the story-telling tradition she was steeped in as a child.



Don't Leave This One on the Shelf

In a word, I can describe this book as amazing. This book is about the Logans, a Black family living in Mississippi in the 1930's who overcome racial segregation and bias, struggle to stand up to their white neighbors, and fight to keep their land.

The land is the center of the Logan's love toward each other. Their land is what holds the family together. The story is written from the main character, Cassie's point of view. Taylor does a great job in maneuvering Cassie so she can overhear certain conversations that are important to the book's development.

I was introduced to this book when it was assigned as a literature study in my English class. Though I, along with others, groaned when the assignment was made, I must now take that moan back. Once I started, I couldn't stop. The author's suspense, humor, setting, and a great use of southern dialect for the dialogue make this book a hard one to put down.

Though I have only read this book once, I plan to read it many, many times in the future. Take my advice, this book is unbelievable. Don't let the dust gather on it too much longer; it deserves to be read and cherished.

Roll of Thunder

A Vert Good Book

Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry shows us the harsh realities of prejudice through the eyes of a child. I felt that this book helped me to understand prejudice in a more complex way. Ms. Mildred Taylor has a strong message and she chose to bring it to us through the young character, Cassie. I believe that she succeeded in sending this message.

In this story, Cassie is telling the story of her family and friends. I thought this was very well thought out, because sometimes children are set aside as “too young to understand”, when in reality they are the ones who are witnessing it all. They are the ones that need to be taught about these hardships so they could understand. Ms. Taylor knew this very well. This is one of the book’s strongest aspects. I feel that if this book would’ve been told through an adult’s views, there would have been much more anger and hostility. When Cassie tells it, you see and almost feel the innocence that she has inside her. You see the problem of prejudice the way it should be seen, with a clear mind, so that it could be fixed.

The characters in this book were also very good. You had people of almost every personality, and almost every age. My favorite ones, however, were Little Man and Christopher-John. Although they were very close in age, they were also very different.

Christopher-John is much calmer about the things they go through. He seems to find a more cheerful way to deal with it instead of getting mad about the situation. He is the brighter figure in this book. Christopher-John is the one who could probably keep you from going and beating someone up. He could probably make you smile by simply looking at his face.

Little Man, on the other hand, gets very angry about their problems and doesn’t stay quiet about it. He is young and chooses to just speak his mind. This could be a good or a bad thing. It could be good because you know how he feels and are able to help him with his feelings. However, it could be a very bad thing, considering their situation of prejudice. The white people did not tolerate the kind of behavior that Little Man portrayed. So he could’ve gotten in a lot of trouble. However, this is what makes him my favorite character. He speaks his mind and doesn’t think anything of it.

Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry is a great book and I would recommend it to anyone over the age of ten. The reason I say ten is because I feel that that is the age when they would probably start to understand the hardships presented in this book. I thought this book was really good and I could tell you right now that I really do not like to read. So, for a book to be able to grab me the way this book did takes a very good book.

Romeo and Juliet

Innocent Young Love Doomed Due to Unavoidable Circumstances

At least that's what I feel should have been a worthy epitaph for these two ill-fated lovers. I read this classic work of fiction because I've never read anything by Shakespeare before. Being a romantic, I found it appealed to me as one unfathomable story of doomed love, and may I say the ending could not have been any other, even if it hadn't been a fictitious story. I agree with Ms. Paster, who in this edition gives a final, parallel account of the story in comparison to modern times; when she says that Romeo and Juliet's only way out to consummate their love was through death, because they had trespassed socially acceptable conventions of the era, and not just due to a family feud. This is true especially of Juliet, who, because she was a woman, had the least advantages and the most pressures to be married to someone previously chosen and approved by her father. She defies the world, literally, and runs to the arms of her Romeo to be married in secret. I cannot imagine the terrible strain and fear a woman would have gone through in the 1500's should she choose to follow her heart in such a way. I find Juliet, in this sense, a true pioneer of women's rights. She definitely risks it all, defying even her own father (the man who would "own" her until she got married). The passage where he confronts her about her arranged marriage to Count Paris has to be one of the cruelest speeches in classic literature. She certainly would have to make use of a humongous supply of nerve to defy convention.

Romeo, on his behalf, is truly besotted with Juliet. He admires her beauty more than her courage and, like most men when in love, shows himself a pathetic spectacle. However, he loves her and cannot live without her. He only has eyes and, what's really important, heart for her. That is why, when he receives news of her death, he decides to go to her tomb and kill himself there. The ill-fated destiny plays these lovers a bad hand when Romeo does not get a letter in time explaining his beloved's circumstances for her death.

I enjoyed Shakespeare's language the most during the first half of the book. When Romeo climbs to Juliet's window and stays with her for a few hours in the night (the only time the young lovers have for each other throughout the play). He expresses his love with unforgettable lines. He wishes he would be someone else, so that he could love her freely: "Call me but love, and I'll be new baptized." (2.2.54)

This edition by the Folger Library has new comments and offers historical background on the life of William Shakespeare as well his times and his theatre. Dimensions of The Globe and explanations on how the plays were acted are shown in detail; together with illustrations of engravings of the period. It all helps to give a good understanding of the play. If, like me, you are new to Shakespeare, you will find the left pages in the book an invaluable resource since they are like a mini-dictionary clarifying words, idiomatic expressions of the era and even full verses. Above all, fear not; dare to dive into this torrent of love.

Romeo and Juliet

Not Shakespeare's Greatest Work; Read His Other Plays

I love the works of Shakespeare. They offer life, comedy, tragedy, love, and more, but of all Shakespeare's plays, *Romeo and Juliet* ranks very low.

The story is rather tragic, but it is unoriginal and over done (as it was even in Shakespeare's time). After all, Shakespeare got it from another contemporary story which got it from another story and so on. It is also rather extreme and unrealistic. Many say it is the perfect teen love story, however, it does little to explore true love. Bring me proof that "love at first sight" can actually exist and I might consider this a realistic love story that real people can relate to.

Many educators wonder why so many children and teenagers are so uninterested in Shakespeare. Perhaps it is because they are required to read this particular play. For those who love tragedy, I recommend *Othello* or *Oedipus Rex*, and for those who like Shakespeare, I recommend *Much Ado About Nothing*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, the history plays (i.e. *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, etc.) and almost any other play by Shakespeare, except *Romeo and Juliet*!



Give Me a Break

I'm sorry, but this was awful. You can burn me for a heretic, but it was. It was supposed to be tragic; I thought it was hilarious.

First, everybody says that Romeo and Juliet were lovers torn apart by fate. Fate had nothing to do with it. They died through sheer stupidity and melodrama on their part. Had they not been so hasty, they both would have come out alive.

Second, the characterization was extremely shallow and one-dimensional. Third, Romeo and Juliet weren't "in love" at all. How can you love someone you've known for all of five minutes? When they meet at the Capulet party, all Romeo does is ramble about pilgrims and hands and prayer. Then he leaves and Juliet declares she's in love. They didn't even have a real conversation.

On the plus side, the language was very pretty, once you got used to it, although it did become irritating by the end. Sometimes you wish someone would just say something straight out, instead of dressing it up with so many frills and flowers you don't know what they're trying to say. But I have nothing against Shakespearean English.

If you want to read good Shakespearean tragedy, read *Macbeth*. Now that was good. *Julius Caesar* wasn't too bad either. And if you want a good comedy by the Bard, go with *Much Ado About Nothing*. But don't waste your time on this one unless you have to. It was that bad.

On the Reactions of Other Readers

I have heard that this book has been banned from some schools, and personally, I think that is ridiculous. These are the only reasons that the book has been banned: a 12 year old having sensual feelings toward a girl he likes, and injecting a deadly needle into someone who is being released. OK, well the injecting is not really pleasant, but the reader does not need to focus on that. For this book focuses on more important issues than that.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

I'll be the first to confess to a cultural Achilles' heel that runs up my back, over my skull, and down to the unlovely bags under my eyes. As such, I am frequently at a loss to understand what the fuss is about. And it is perhaps for this reason that I still remain perplexed — nay flummoxed — by the cult status of this book and that of its repulsive protagonist, Holden Caulfield.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

While reading some of the reviews that gave the book less than five stars, I was simply shocked. I loved this book. I believe I have three copies at home, and I've read it at least eight times. Some of the reasons people gave for not liking the book were that the novel was confusing, they didn't like the ending, it didn't explain things enough, or (and this is the worst) it was "disturbing." I'm sorry, people, but that is the whole point of the book.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

As for the people who thought the author didn't explain things enough, just deal with it. The author wrote the book the way the author wanted to write the book, and maybe the explanations have a reason for being ambiguous. The novel isn't a detailed science report, it is a book with a message, and the author is entitled to whatever poetic license the author wants. Think about the ambiguity and maybe there is a purpose behind it. Facts that don't illuminate the message would just detract and confuse people.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

There are a few books released every year that gain both wide-ranging critical acclaim and deep popular support. They are few and far between, and fewer still when they stir up as much controversy as has *The Giver*. Personally, I don't see what all the controversy is about; everything in here that could possibly be seen as questionable is an echo of a canonized piece of science fiction. Yet, as soon as you try to boil down the classics for the kid-lit crowd, hackles get raised.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

The only dispassionate thing one can say about J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* is that it is a book that cannot be read dispassionately; both its numerous supporters and detractors are equally ardent in their respective admiration and disdain.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

On the Reactions of Other Readers

I am ashamed of my kinsmen. Why? Because I believe in God, and I believe in the Good, but I have been ashamed to read the misanthropic and vindictive attacks upon this book by people who claim to share my beliefs and values.

Harry Potter is a magnificent and fascinating book. There is nothing at all offensive about witchcraft or sorcery as portrayed within it, it is about the ultimate use of powers for the proper ends. Even the deceit is justified, following soul-searching and worries. That is life, and sometimes I suppose some people feel that it's better not to know such things. I disagree.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

If your child cannot distinguish between fantasy and reality at 8 years old, what kind of parent can you have been? There is fantasy everywhere. Even the wholesome *Sesame Street* is a fantasy. Do children grow up thinking that birds talk, and that monsters live in garbage cans? No. So why pick on this immensely popular book? It is a much, much better book than most books written for children. Long live *Harry Potter*.

—Excerpt from a review of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

I understand that the use of this book in classrooms is frequently challenged by parents. If the reason for this is that they feel that the central crisis of the book may be too intense for children, I can sympathize with their feeling. But it seems like an intensity that is well worth their children's while. Ms. Paterson handles the situation quite beautifully and affords a real opportunity for parents to discuss the matter of death with their kids, a topic which most families hopefully haven't much had to cope with. Reading the book is a difficult emotional experience, but better to first confront these emotions in a controlled fictional setting and begin to learn how to deal with them, than to remain totally sheltered and have to deal with them, completely unprepared, when the tragedy is real.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bridge to Terabithia*

On the Author

Salinger is a riveting personality in his own right, and also a great anti-hero, exemplified by his resolution never talk to a single critic about this book, with the sole exception of a girl writing for her high school newspaper. Maybe he was tired of over-serious, over-credentialed literati types, who are too late and too ill-equipped to redeem their ponderous and boring lives from their earlier failure to embrace a little more spontaneity, a little more fun, a little more high school newspaper der-ring-do.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

On the Main Character

In the beginning of the book I think Stanley was very lonely. It never mentioned anything about him having a friend. He seemed to hate his life. He was always glum and depressed.

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

Holden is a jackass. He's a spoiled prep school jerk who's so sickeningly self-involved that he has no clue that the people around him exist as anything other than background figures in the melodrama going on entirely in his own head. He constantly refers to anything that doesn't meet with his schoolboy approval as "corny" and labors under the delusion that he's the first person who ever noticed that the transition out of childhood is awkward and uncomfortable. Listen, you pompous little spud, we all go through it, and it's about as cosmically significant as a crumpled wad of used Kleenex.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

Is Holden Caulfield the voice of a generation? I hope not. He is undisputedly a depressed, hormonal teenager. He is not, however, hip, edgy or worth reading about. Holden Caulfield is, in his own famous words, completely and utterly "phony."

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

Maniac Magee is a homeless kid who lost his parents in a trolley accident. He's really unusual. He is famous for running everywhere. He's so fast no one can beat him. He's really good at sports. He can untie complicated knots. Little kids bring him all their problems and he helps solve them. He wins a lifetime supply of pizza but he's allergic to pizza. Everyone loves him — well, almost everyone. That's what bothers him and keeps him running all night. Maniac doesn't see any bad in people. He keeps thinking they're nice. But some are so mean that he finally figures out they don't like him. He blames himself.

—Excerpt from a review of *Maniac Magee*

On the Reader's Favorite Part

This is an excellent book with many interesting incidents, but my favorite part occurs near the end, when Bud shows Herman E. Calloway his collection of rocks with the writing on them that his mother had given him. This is the most suspenseful episode because at this point, Herman looks ready to give Bud a beating because he thinks Bud stole them from him, and Bud appears ready to prove that Herman is really his father. When Bud insists that he had received them from his mother, Herman demands that Bud reveal his mother's name. When Bud says that her name is Angela Janet, Herman looks stunned. Soon, Bud finds out that Herman is really his grandfather on his mother's side of the family, not his long-lost father.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bud, Not Buddy*

On Making a Recommendation

If you are wanting a simple read, just to take your mind off life, I do not recommend this book. The book is thought-provoking. Lessons are revealed on many levels, and after many reads. If you find the book confusing, stick with it, read it again, and again, and I guarantee it will make sense.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

Don't just take a shallow view of this book. If you want shallow, read *The Boxcar Children*. This book is for kids, a lesson against peer pressure, but also for anyone who is willing to take the author's challenge and actually THINK for once.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

I believe this book should not be intended for children or young adults. I think it should be for people 14 years and up. This book should not have been made for everyone because it shows a kid that committing suicide will get you out of a problem or a bad situation.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

I highly recommend *Holes* to most readers all around the world because I think they will learn a lot and I'm sure they will enjoy it. They will think about life and take it more seriously. They will also think twice before doing anything bad.

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

So much has been written about this wonderful book and its sequels, but I really must add that not only should author Rowling be feted for creating books that kids really want to read, book after marvelous book, adults who avoid them are also missing a lot. While never wavering from her entirely readable prose, the author flawlessly interweaves endless references, allusions, and myriad other techniques and devices which move her work from the merely grand books for the “tweenager” to something considerably more literate and “critically sound,” in its most erudite and arrogant connotation.

—Excerpt from a review of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

If you're into modern-day tall tales and you have not yet read this book, then my advice is to run as fast as Maniac would to the nearest book store or library today.

—Excerpt from a review of *Maniac Magee*

I highly recommend this as both a good story and as a psychological study. I believe it could be an invaluable guide for high school students leaving home for the first time and experiencing a sense of freedom that can parallel that of the boys in this novel. Even if you are well past that stage, it's worth reading to get an understanding of what people might be experiencing.

—Excerpt from a review of *Lord of the Flies*

On How the Book Affects the Reader

In this book, Lowry captures your heart and soul. She makes you think about the things in life we take for granted and what you would do without them. She makes you realize that there is no perfect world.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

This book has changed my life forever and I will always treasure the memory of reading it.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

This book haunted my sleep and thoughts for quite a while. I pulled this book from my elementary school library shelves.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

This book haunts me in my sleep and I am 12. I'm not scared of hardly anything but this book scared me. Just think about it, would you want your child to be reading a book where a 12 year old washes and cleans an elderly person? Would you want your child to be reading a book where somebody injects a baby in the head with some sort of liquid? Would you want your child to be reading a book where a boy dreams of bathing a girl in his sleep? If I could, I would ban this book in any library or store. Because of these reasons, I think *The Giver* is a terrible book. I wish I'd never had to read it.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

This is an exciting and exhilarating story that will amaze you. Your breath will be taken away by Stanley's actions and how he slips out of the Warden's grasp. But can he do this forever? Don't be surprised if you can't put the book down because that is what happened to me when I read the fabulous book *Holes*.

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

I've read this book many times over the years, from my first encounter in high school, to the most recent times, discussing it with my high-school children as they read it for the first time. Each time I read it, I'm struck more deeply by how truly it captures the rebellion, exhilaration, worry, fear, and rootless wandering which faced or faces us all as we journey from youth to adulthood.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

On How the Book Affects the Reader

After you read *Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield will live on in your mind, hanging around, speaking through you, informing the way you think of yourself and others. It's a masterpiece of writing, in which the author clearly and completely presents to you another person's mind and soul.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

The book transforms kids from book-bored to book-possible. I have never come across, in 30 years of work with kids, one young person, in any culture, of either gender, who having read the book, (implying that they could), did not love it. They claim it, and feel as though it were a personal match, ("That's how I feel!") They are still, of course, in a state of complete self-centeredness. They join with it in symbolic affiliation.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

This was a very sad, very difficult book. Not because of difficult language or readability, but because of the intense lessons it teaches about grieving and death. This book cannot be read lightly. It takes you through the main character's process of making a new friend, learning to love and trust her, having that trust betrayed, and finally, learning to move on with his life. Despite its deep and painful context, this book was very worthwhile, and I completely recommend you give it a try.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bridge to Terabithia*

Okay, before I make this unmanly confession, let me first state in my own defense that I have two small children and I was listening to the conclusion of this book at a very early hour, before I'd even had breakfast to fortify me for the day. That said, I'll now acknowledge that I very nearly started sobbing.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bridge to Terabithia*

On the Edition Being Reviewed

This edition by the Folger Library has new comments and offers historical background on the life of William Shakespeare as well his times and his theatre. Dimensions of The Globe and explanations on how the plays were acted are shown in detail; together with illustrations of engravings of the period. It all helps to give a good understanding of the play. If, like me, you are new to Shakespeare, you will find the left pages in the book an invaluable resource since they are like a mini-dictionary clarifying words, idiomatic expressions of the era and even full verses.

—Excerpt from a review of *Romeo and Juliet*

On Themes

This book preaches on the dangers of conformity as the supreme value.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

A question Louis Sachar might want us to ask is, Is life fair? Based on the book, I would answer that life can be fair, even though it might not seem like it. Life wasn't fair for Stanley because something bad was always waiting around the corner ready to spring on him. But in the end, life was fair for Stanley because he persevered and got rewarded by making a life-long friend, finding treasure and getting released from Camp Green Lake.

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

It might be that Salinger invented adolescence. Previous to this American standard or classic, whichever you choose, we were a less adolescent-obsessed, less teen-preoccupied society. That maligned condition has since expanded by many years. It now starts at 11 and ends around 32. Give or take.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

The whole catching image articulated by irresponsible young Holden is hard to understand, too, and who really knows what a field of rye looks like anyway? Why the cliff? Could it be that being caught in a big whopping lie is like suddenly falling over a cliff? No way to repair it? Just time for sudden, dramatic consequences?

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

Interestingly, the novel does not make any fixed judgments about running away. First it seems to say that running away is not the answer and that homes must be worked on as much as found. Then it reminds us that Maniac would not have found his home had he not run away to look for it in the first place.

—Excerpt from a review of *Maniac Magee*

But this book is more than just a meaningless yet prettily written fantasy. L'Engle's unique and moving thoughts on good and evil, as well as our responsibility towards fighting evil are readily apparent in this book. Some very profound things are said, and some very profound concepts are embedded where you'd least expect them.

—Excerpt from a review of *A Wrinkle in Time*

As you read, you will most likely find yourself rooting for the sensible, protagonists of this story, but think about this: Do you think most people might end up acting the same way as the "savages" ended up? Is it not human nature to want to rule and survive? Can the boys be blamed for losing their heads, especially under the conditions they were in?

—Excerpt from a review of *Lord of the Flies*

On Why the Reader Liked the Book

I loved *The Giver* because the plot was very creative, the theme was magnificent, and the setting was vivid.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

The language is crisp, funny, never lags. Holden Caulfield's adventures catch and keep our interest, and we care what happens to him as we accompany him through his wanderings. But the thing that strikes me after all these years is how deeply JD Salinger captured the feelings that Holden was living with each day: What happens to those ducks in winter, what happens to us all as our warm and safe childhood lives slowly become the cold, hard, unyielding lives of adulthood, and who is there to catch us as we pass through the rye? Does anyone look out for us any more? Are we alone, on our own?

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

The book is great because it gives you a chance to see the world in a different way. If you ever wanted to know what life would be like if you just gave up, this book gives you a chance to explore that in great depth, in the most extreme way, as opposed to the idiotic-American-Pie, mushy-teen-coming-of-age-romance way we see in too many movies and TV shows. And there is a sort-of plot, and there is some heart to it, especially in the scenes where Holden's with his little sister. It's almost adorable.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

The book is imaginative and thrilling, with genuine originality used to spice up a well-trodden theme (*The Worst Witch* school stories, for example, predate the idea of a school for witchcraft), and references to the ancient myths. Thus, it is educational. It informs you about such things as mandrakes, unicorns, phoenix, and the like, and about the myths and legends connected to those beasts.

The book encourages you to imagine and to think for yourself. It was truly frightening, but everything ended happily and satisfactorily. The plot was logical enough for a child, yet elaborate enough to please the mature mind.

—Excerpt from a review of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Paterson develops the characters so well that they seem real. She gives an accurate description of their lives and of the events that occur on the playground. The reader can relate to the things that happen to Jesse and Leslie and how they handle these things. Paterson shows the reader that a boy-girl friendship can happen and that it can be a great one. She does an excellent job of making this story come alive for the reader.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bridge to Terabithia*

On Why the Reader Didn't Like the Book

The story is about a kid who gets sent to court and then out to a boy's camp for a crime he did not do (stealing a pair of shoes). He meets some kids out there, becomes buddies with them, and near the end makes a break for home with one of them named Zero.

Being a fan of jail break stories, I thought the book sounded pretty good. Boy, was I wrong about that.

The story was totally unbelievable, is over done, and makes no sense at all. I should have thought more about what I was getting into. I could see where a little kid would like this, or someone who does not think about the realism of what they are reading. This book had lots of holes in it.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

One review I read was by a mother whose third and fifth grade children had enjoyed this book. That proved my suspicion that *Holes* would be nothing more than a sugar coated children's book. Which brings me back to my question: Where have all the real books gone?

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

First of all, I can see why people might like this book. J.D. Salinger writes well, and this novel was certainly different from anything else being published at the time. However, I think this book stinks. Why? You see, the backbone of the book is the protagonist, the self-absorbed, shallow, wimpy, bitchy, neurotic Holden Caulfield. *Catcher in The Rye* is basically the ramblings of a lame character, and if you can't stomach Holden's incessant whining there is nothing else to enjoy.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

What a prison of pessimism. Reading *Catcher in the Rye* felt like bathing in a toxic waste plant.

T.S. Elliot said, "April is the cruelest month" of the year because the sun reveals some things we'd rather not see. Likewise, Salinger's work conjures up the darkest memories of adolescence, memories I'd ceremoniously burned (along with my acid wash jeans and Debbie Gibson cassettes) years ago.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

I am a fifteen-year-old girl whose friends adore *Harry Potter*. I read this book in an attempt to see whether it would live up to all the hype surrounding it. I thought that I would perhaps enjoy it, as I am normally a big fan of "different world" stories. Boy, was I disappointed.

My literature teacher once put books into two different categories: thinking books and non-thinking books. *Harry Potter* belongs in the latter. This is a book that will go in one ear and out the other, not something that will stay with you for years on end. If this book ever becomes as "classic" as *Cinderella* or *Snow White*, the world will have lost its mind.

—Excerpt from a review of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

On Why the Reader Didn't Like the Book

I found this book to be very depressing. Jess Aaron's parents are horrible parents and his sisters are the same, except for Mae Belle. The only uplifting point in this book is when he meets Leslie Burk, but that also ends tragically. I do not believe that the author did enough foreshadowing for the awful event that happens near the end of the book. It was a total shock! She could have done a better job warning the reader ahead of time, especially because this is a children's book. One of the main reasons that children read is for pleasure, and there is nothing pleasurable about this book. The tone was extremely sad throughout most of the book. The only reason I liked it at all is because I like Katherine Paterson as an author and it is well written, but I really think she has many other better books out there. This book was too depressing for me to read. I prefer something a little bit more uplifting.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bridge to Terabithia*

Symbolism is nice and quite beautiful in some places and for certain writers, but this book had way too much of it. Golding's novel is horrendous. His absolutely mind-numbing style immediately drove me away and his tedious and unnecessary description wasn't at all striking. I'll give it a bit for having good description in a few places, but only a miniscule few.

—Excerpt from a review of *Lord of the Flies*

I love the works of Shakespeare. They offer life, comedy, tragedy, love, and more, but of all Shakespeare's plays, *Romeo and Juliet* ranks very low. The story is rather tragic, but it is unoriginal and over done (as it was even in Shakespeare's time). After all, Shakespeare got it from another contemporary story which got it from another story and so on. It is also rather extreme and unrealistic. Many say it is the perfect teen love story, however, it does little to explore true love. Bring me proof that "love at first sight" can actually exist and I might consider this a realistic love story that real people can relate to.

—Excerpt from a review of *Romeo and Juliet*

I'm sorry, but this was awful. You can burn me for a heretic, but it was. It was supposed to be tragic; I thought it was hilarious. First, everybody says that Romeo and Juliet were lovers torn apart by fate. Fate had nothing to do with it. They died through sheer stupidity and melodrama on their part. Had they not been so hasty, they both would have come out alive. Second, the characterization was extremely shallow and one-dimensional. Third, Romeo and Juliet weren't "in love" at all. How can you love someone you've known for all of five minutes? When they meet at the Capulet party, all Romeo does is ramble about pilgrims and hands and prayer. Then he leaves and Juliet declares she's in love. They didn't even have a real conversation.

—Excerpt from a review of *Romeo and Juliet*

On Relating to the Main Character

I AM HOLDEN CAULFIELD. Well, not literally and exactly. But almost. Holden is an extraordinary character. His absolute terror of leaving the wonderful, innocent, carefree world of youth is something everyone can relate to. I'm about to graduate from high school, and even though I'm excited to be a free, independent adult, I can't help but be terrified of the corruption and hard reality that lays ahead, which I have been blind to, as a young person. I mean—who wouldn't miss being a kid?—living at home for free, not having to do anything or be responsible for yourself or anyone. Holden embodies this. To me, that's what I related to most from the book.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Catcher in the Rye*

Holden Caulfield is not someone I can relate to, nor do I see similarities between him and my peers. He's like the weirdo in high school you felt sorry for but made fun of anyway. I have absolutely no sympathy for Holden. He's a stereotypical rich, privileged snob, and too stupid to realize that he's as affected and materialistic as the "phony" people he despises.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Catcher in the Rye*

It doesn't take but a minute for the reader to take to Bud. His humorous ways of looking at what happens to him makes the reader laugh out loud. He quotes from his book, "Bud Cadwell's Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself," throughout. Rule Number 87 is "When a Adult Tells You They Need Your Help with a Problem Get Ready to Be Tricked — Most Times This Means They Just Want You to Go Fetch Something for Them." Kids will really identify with such humor, bringing them deeper into the story.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bud, Not Buddy*

On the Problem or Conflict

Holden's problem is as old as Hamlet's, probably as old as mankind itself — a struggle to find purity of purpose amid intense feelings of fright and confusion toward the strangeness of human behavior. While Holden's various adventures alternately amuse and move the reader, the novel's real heart lies in his relationship with his sister Phoebe, who manages to be cute, earnest, and intelligent all at once; their climactic encounter near the end has the force of genuine tragedy.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Catcher in the Rye*

On How the Book Compares to Others

My son's 6th grade teacher read *The Giver* to his class a few months ago. I am into children's literature of all types and I as his mother like to read what he is assigned in his class. I was very disappointed with *The Giver*. *Number The Stars* was absolutely 5 star fabulous. But, *The Giver* — too adult for one

Number The Stars was clean and uplifting in all regards. Ms. Lowry has such a gift for writing. I'd like to see her keep to clean, uplifting, inspiring content. Good books are my escape from society's ills. *The Giver* reminded me too much of our own social problems.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

This is a fun and serious book with a pack of kids just like such great movies as *Stand by Me*, or *Sandlot*, with a touch of *Lord of the Flies*.

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

The novel is already noteworthy on the strength of its style, which represents the culmination in the development of a distinctive American idiom — a process begun by Hemingway and continued by the likes of Hammett and Chandler. In the deceptively simple voice of Holden Caulfield, Salinger strikes a tricky balance between slang and profundity that many writers have since striven for, but rarely duplicated. Holden may or may not be “phony” himself, but his voice is most decidedly not, as it is free of pretension or self-consciousness.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Catcher in the Rye*

The difference between this book and other books is the immediacy of the writing. From the famous first sentence, Holden Caulfield talks to you as a real confidant. You are immediately his best friend. He confides his private thoughts to you without any hesitation as to your relationship to him. There is an unspoken conclusion that he needs to talk to you about. And he needs you now.

David Copperfield, which opens with that other famous first sentence, addresses you formally. His verbs are properly conjugated, his diction is polished. David does not get close to you. He tells you his story from the podium. Thomas Hardy tells a good story. He converses plainly and directly to the reader. Dickens addresses the reader skillfully and stylishly. Salinger confides. This is the immediacy of the novel.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Catcher in the Rye*

Plot. Character. Incredible settings. It's all there, but thankfully, blessedly, there's so much more. Authors like Rowling and the wickedly wondrous Lemony Snicket are raising the standard for quality children's literature to where it should always have been: identical to that of any great writing.

—Excerpt from a review of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

On the World of the Book

Jonas lives in world where everything is under control. Everything is planned out for everyone, and everyone is the same. If someone breaks a rule, they are released from the community.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

In the book there is a world with no pain or suffering and the people who live there are always protected. It sounds like a place you'd want to live but after you read it you just might change your mind!

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

I think that Lois Lowry has created a world like this to show us that our life — with all its positive and negative sides — is better than living in a utopia without the thing that made us human-beings human beings: our humanity.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

On the Book's Organization

Twisted into this book is a second and third plot line: another plot about Elya Yelnats, Stanley's "no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing great-great-grandfather", Madame Zeroni, and one about an outlaw, Kissin' Kate Barlow. In the end, all three plots are tied together so that everything fits perfectly like a jigsaw puzzle.

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

You might be wondering why Louis Sachar wrote *Holes*. He got the idea of writing this when he moved to Austin, Texas. It was so hot in Texas that he decided to write a story about suffering in the scorching heat.

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

In 1976, Katherine Paterson's son David was 8 years old when his friend, Lisa Hill, was struck by lightning and killed. A year later *Bridge to Terabithia* was published, winning a Newberry Medal and becoming, if such a thing is possible, an instant classic. Ms Paterson drew upon this personal tragedy to create the story of a boy, Jess Aarons, and a girl, Leslie Burke, in rural Virginia, who become the best of friends.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bridge to Terabithia*

On the Main Idea

The Giver gives an important message to people: Living in a world where there is independence and choices is better than living in a world where everything is perfect.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

In *Holes*, Louis Sachar wants you to know that you can't control things that happen in life. For example, Stanley couldn't control the fact that he was falsely accused of stealing shoes and ended up at Camp Greenlake. Zero couldn't control the fact that his mother left him one day and never came back.

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

There is a valuable lesson to be learned through this wonderfully written story: everyone has a place to belong. There are many children who may feel the same emotions Bud felt about losing his mother. Even those who do not can put themselves in his shoes.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bud, Not Buddy*

On the Author's Technique

Lois Lowry did an awesome job making this book. I like the way she always kind of hinted that the perfect world was not that good after all.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

Lowry sets things up well. There's a wonderful revelation about halfway through the book that alone is worth the price of admission when Jonas figures out the he sees things (literally) quite different than everyone else. Lowry has managed throughout the beginning of the book to lull the reader into such a state that the reader hasn't even realized what it is that's missing.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

One thing that stood out to me was Golding's use of imagery. From the tiniest details of the island to the almost palpable tension that develops, Golding does a magnificent job of portraying it all.

—Excerpt from a review of *Lord of the Flies*

On the Ending

The ending of the novel is just another method the author uses of involving the reader, making the reader think. I won't describe it (you'd all hate me forever), but the ending is basically a fill in the blank. It kills me every time I read it, but every time, I fill in the blank with hope. You'll understand when you get there. Basically, it is ambiguous for a reason. The question the author is asking you is, how will you make the story end? Will you give up your humanity for peace and contentment and boredom, or will you fight for your right to feel, and see, and think?

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

The mysterious ending leaves one filled with curiosity and wonder.

—Excerpt from a review of *The Giver*

On Why the Reader Read the Book

When I first endured this merciless literary thumbscrew, it was in the late 1970s, at the behest of a high school English teacher who wore clogs, wooden jewelry, and ambulatory tents made of faded denim. She believed with almost anguished sincerity that her students would “connect” with Holden, or find something “relevant” in the book.

—Excerpt from a review of *Catcher in the Rye*

I was introduced to this book when it was assigned as a literature study in my English class. Though I, along with others, groaned when the assignment was made, I must now take that moan back. Once I started, I couldn't stop. The author's suspense, humor, setting, and a great use of southern dialect for the dialogue make this book a hard one to put down.

—Excerpt from a review of *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*

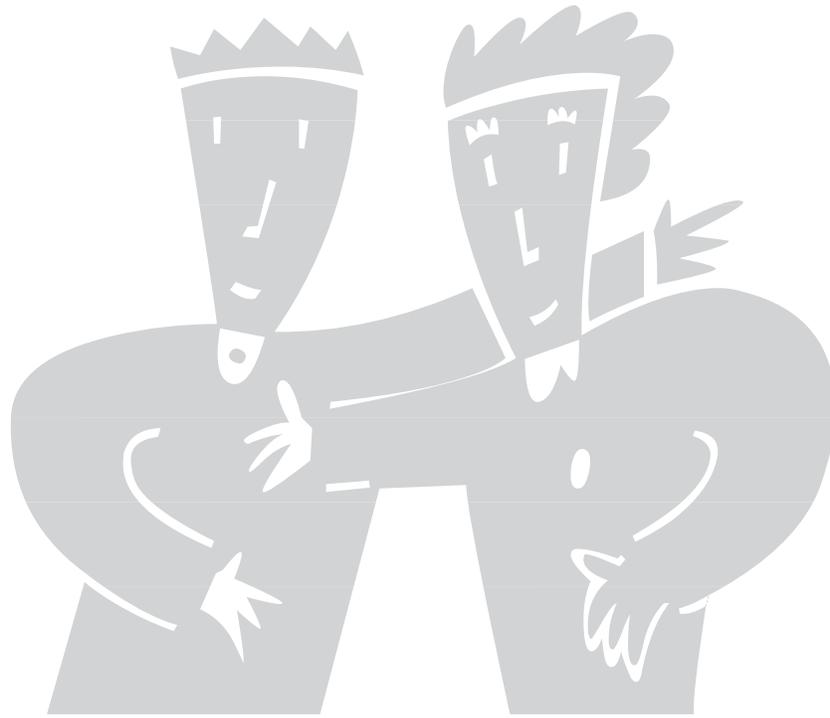
On the Book's Reading Level

It's written in a simple manner so it is easy to read and could probably be read by a 9-year-old, yet the plot is fully developed.

—Excerpt from a review of *Holes*

Bud, Not Buddy targets audiences of all ages, from teens to young adults. The entire book has easy and understandable words which keep you from stumbling.

—Excerpt from a review of *Bud, Not Buddy*



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