



TNT Book Club



Using the Medium of Entertainment to Inform and Educate

May 15, 2005



Favorite Authors; M-Z

McKinley, Robin

A Newberry award-winning author of fantasy novels, Robin was born in Warren, Ohio, and traveled throughout the world with her father who was a Navy man. She recalls having a passion for reading since she can remember and states that this probably started here on her journey as a writer.

She writes about characters that fit how she felt as a young woman: clumsiness, plainness, bookishness, and disinterest in the usual social games that involve flirting and dating.

Robin attended a preparatory school in Bethel, Maine, and Dickinson College from 1970-1972. She completed here formal education as an honor student at Bowdon College in 1975. Since graduating from college she has worked as a research assistant, bookstore clerk, teacher and counselor, editorial assistant, barn manager, freelance, and full-time writer.

She enjoys opera and long walks. She writes about strong young women because she believes that fantasy literature tends to leave girls out or presents them in limited roles (www.robinkinley.com).

Selected Books By Robin McKinley:

The Blue Sword. Harry, bored with her sheltered life in the remote

orange-growing colony of Daria, discovers magic in herself when she is kidnapped by a native king with mysterious powers.

Deerskin. Heir to her late mother's legendary beauty, Princess Lissar becomes the victim of her grief-maddened father's desire. Fleeing her home, she seeks solace and solitude in a great forest--and discovers a magic that leads her toward healing and justice.

Rose Daughter. Beauty grows to love the Beast at whose castle she is compelled to stay, and through her love he is released from the curse that had turned him from man to beast.

Spindle's End. The infant princess Briar Rose is cursed on her name day by Pernicia, an evil fairy, and then whisked away by a young fairy to be raised in a remote part of a magical country, unaware of her real identity and hidden from Pernicia's vengeful powers.

Myers, Walter Dean

Born in West Virginia in 1937, Walter Dean Myers moved to Harlem as a boy after his mother's death to live with his father's first wife and her husband. His fifth-grade teacher saw

something special in his poetry and introduced him to quality literature and encouraged him to continue writing. A gifted youth, he attended one of the top high schools in New York City, but did not enjoy its emphasis on the sciences. As an African American, he did not believe that he would enjoy the same opportunities as his white classmates.

He skipped school a lot and spent time reading and writing. He enlisted in the Army when he was 17 because he was in trouble with gangs and saw few other options. After his three year stint, he started writing again and found a job with a publishing company. His first book (*Where does the Day Go*) was the winning entry in a contest sponsored by the Council on Interracial Books for Children. He has written a HUGE number of books across different subjects, formats, and genres, mostly for young adults. Many of his books are about life in Harlem. He presents urban, black youth in his stories because these images were absent from literature in his childhood (www.walterdeanmyersbooks.com).

Selected Books By Walter Dean Myers:

The Beast. A visit to his Harlem neighborhood and the discovery that the girl he loves is using drugs give sixteen-year-old Anthony


Today Not Tomorrow INC


CLUB TNT


Saturday, 11 a.m.


My Madison 14


Witherspoon a new perspective both on his home and on his life at a Connecticut prep school.


 **The Dream Bearer.** During a summer in Harlem, David relies on his mother and a close friend and on an old man he meets in the park to help him come to terms with his father's outbursts and unstable behavior.

 **Fallen Angels.** Seventeen-year-old Richie Perry, just out of his Harlem high school, enlists in the Army in the summer of 1967 and spends a devastating year on active duty in Vietnam.

 **The Journal of Joshua Loper: A Black Cowboy.** In 1871 Joshua Loper, a sixteen-year-old black cowboy, records in his journal his experiences while making his first cattle drive under an unsympathetic trail boss.

 **Monster.** While on trial as an accomplice to a murder, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon records his experiences in prison and in the courtroom in the form of a film script as he tries to come to terms with the course his life has taken.

 **Slam.** Sixteen-year-old "Slam" Harris is counting on his noteworthy basketball talents to get him out of the inner city and give him a chance to succeed in life, but his coach sees things differently.

 **Somewhere in the Darkness.** A teenage boy accompanies his father, who has recently escaped from prison, on a trip that turns out to be a time of, often painful, discovery for them both.


Oates, Joyce Carol


Born in Lockport, New York in 1938 to working-class parents that had not graduated from high school, Joyce Carol Oates was an honor student and avid writer as a youth. Graduating as her high school's valedictorian, she earned a full-scholarship to attend college at Syracuse.


After earning a Bachelor of Arts in English, she enrolled in the University of Wisconsin and earned a Masters of


Arts degree in one year. As one of this country's most prolific and versatile contemporary writers, she has won numerous awards and her work is well represented in most libraries. Currently, she is the Roger S. Berlind Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at Princeton University (www.joycecaroloatesbooks.com).


Selected Books By Joyce Carol Oates:

 **Big Mouth & Ugly Girl.** When sixteen-year-old Matt is falsely accused of threatening to blow up his high school and his friends turn against him, an unlikely classmate comes to his aid.

 **Foxfire.** Foxfire chronicles the life of five unforgettably real teenage girls in upstate New York in the 1950s. This controversial, topical tale captures the exhilaration of conspiracy, the blaze of youth, and the inevitable end of violence.

 **Freaky Green Eyes.** Fifteen-year-old Frankie relates the events of the year leading up to her mother's mysterious disappearance and her own struggle to discover and accept the truth about her parents' relationship.

 **Sexy.** Sixteen-year-old Darren Flynn, a popular, good-looking high school athlete who lacks self-confidence, learns that his jock friends are hatching a revenge act against their English teacher for failing a member of the swim team.

 **Small Avalanches and Other Stories.** A collection of twelve short stories for young people including "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been," "Life After High School," and "How I Contemplated the World."


Paulson, Gary


A Native of Minneapolis, Minnesota (1939), Gary Paulson spent much of his youth living with his grandmother and other relatives because his parents were alcoholics. The many experiences this gave him


and the variety of jobs he held developed a sense of adventure. He writes about growing up and rites of passage.


Like his life, the main characters in his books are not from "perfect" families. The themes of overcoming obstacles like alcoholism, death, and survival in the wilderness provide a strong foundation for his stories. He writes about things he knows about, which gives his work a credible, meaningful feel. His books challenge readers to pursue knowledge. In 1977, after being sued for libel, he almost gave up writing. Readers all around the world are glad that he did not follow through with that (www.garypaulson.com).


Selected Books By Gary Paulson:


 **Caught by the Sea: My Life on Boat.** On the coattails of Guts (Delacorte, 2001) comes another collection of Paulsen's autobiographical vignettes, this time about sailing. His love for the sea began at age seven, aboard a troopship headed to the Philippine Islands. A plane crashed into the water and Paulsen watched as sharks attacked the women and children. Though gruesome, the account is typical of the author's unaffected, matter-of-fact writing style. The rest of the stories are dull in comparison, however, as Paulsen chronicles his experiences with various sailboats over the years.


 **Father Water, Mother Woods: Essays on Fishing and Hunting in the North Woods.** Gary Paulsen, in a foreword to this collection of autobiographical essays, identifies his youthful experiences in the woods and rivers of northern Minnesota as the source for his Newbery Honor novel Hatchet (about which he receives 30,000-40,000 letters a year), and its sequel, The River. "In the normal course of things," he writes of himself and his companions, "our lives hurt. When we were in the woods or fishing . . . our lives didn't hurt."


 **Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Book.** The author relates incidents in his life and how they inspired parts of his books about the character, Brian Robeson.

 **Hatchet** (Brian Stories Series). After a plane crash, thirteen-year-old Brian spends fifty-four days in the wilderness, learning to survive initially with only the aid of a hatchet given him by his mother, and learning also to survive his parents' divorce.

 **The Quilt.** After a plane crash, thirteen-year-old Brian spends fifty-four days in the wilderness, learning to survive initially with only the aid of a hatchet given him by his mother, and learning also to survive his parents' divorce.

 **Alida's Song.** A fourteen-year-old boy who has been neglected by irresponsible parents spends a wonderful summer on a farm where his grandmother cooks for two elderly brothers.

 **Nightjohn.** Twelve-year-old Sarny's brutal life as a slave becomes even more dangerous when a newly arrived slave offers to teach her how to read.

 **Sarny:** A Life Remembered. Continues the adventures of Sarny, the slave girl Nightjohn taught to read, through the aftermath of the Civil War during which time she taught other Blacks and lived a full life until age ninety-four.

Soto, Gary

Having grown up in a Mexican-American in a Chicano district of California, Gary Soto writes about his own life experiences. His works reflect the adversities of his ethnicity, poverty, and destitution throughout his youth. He has written poems, novels, short stories, and there are many collections of his works.


When Soto was just five years of age, his father was killed in a factory accident, thus leaving his widowed wife with three children: Gary, his older


brother, Rick, and his younger sister, Debra. His family did not have books and was not expected or encouraged to read. Soto's grandparents had emigrated from Mexico, making Soto roughly half-Mexican.


Soto spent most of his childhood working for money to help support his family. Still, he continued on through high school in California and went on to attend California State University at Fresno. There, Soto received his English Degree in 1974 and proceeded to attend the University of California at Irvine, where he obtained his Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.


During his transition from high school to college, Soto gradually began writing, at first only for satisfaction. He wished to express himself and to inform the world about his perspective: the life and times of a poor Mexican-American growing up in a Chicano community in California.


Selected Books By Gary Soto

 **The Afterlife.** A senior at East Fresno High School lives on as a ghost after his brutal murder in the restroom of a club where he had gone to dance.

 **Chato and the Party Animal.** Chato decides to throw a "pachanga" for his friend Novio Boy, who has never had a birthday party.

 **Chato Goes Cruisin'.** Chato and Novio win a cruise but are disappointed to find that everyone else on board is a dog, and things go from bad to worse when the dogs party themselves sick and it is up to the cats to find help.

 **Jesse.** Two Mexican American brothers hope that junior college will help them escape their heritage of tedious physical labor.

 **If the Shoe Fits.** After being teased about his brand new loafers, Rigo puts them away for so long he grows out of them.

 **Marisol.** Dancing is Marisol's life so when she finds out that her

family is moving to a neighborhood without a dance studio she has to take action. With help from two new friends, Marisol must figure out how to combine the best of her old Chicago neighborhood with her new suburban neighborhood.


Staples, Suzanne


Fisher. The daughter of an engineer (father) and business manager (mother) Suzanne Fisher Staples was born on August 27, 1945, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She describes her family as being very "literal," that everyone communicated very directly and saying only what they mean without embellishments – regardless of how other's felt or whether what they were saying made any sense.


Before becoming an author, she build a solid career in international journalism. By combining her "reporter's eye" with an accepting attitude and ability to weave a captivating tale, Staples has "opened the minds" of her readers alike. While she recognizes that she has a gift for words and stories, she credits her success to her ability to refrain from passing judgments.

Perhaps her interview with Teenread.com best summarizes her positive impact on YA Lit when she says, "We're born accepting, but we learn to fear. The difficult thing is getting adults to give up their fears so they don't pass them on to their children. Literature, film, visual arts, television, magazine articles, music – these express what we all have in common. Art makes the differences among cultures appealing." (www.suzannefisherstaples.com)

Selected Books By Suzanne Fisher Staples:

 **Dangerous Skies.** A gripping, award-winning story about friendship and betrayal.

 **Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind.** The New Your Times called this book set in modern Pakistan "a small miracle."

 **Haveli.** In this sequel to the Newbery Honor book *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*, a young woman walks a perilous line between tradition and her fierce independence.

 **Shiva's Fire.** A girl in India learns to use her magical powers wisely.


Mildred D. Taylor


Born in Jackson, Mississippi, Mildred's family moved to Toledo, Ohio, when she was young. She attended the public schools and continued her education after graduating from high school at the University of Toledo. After earning her degree, she joined the Peace Corp and spent two years teaching English and history. While living in Africa, she observed black pride and independence, which reminded her of stories her father told her.

She returned to the United States to teach and recruit for the Peace Corp. She then studied journalism at the University of Colorado, where she received her Master's degree. While attending the university, she joined the Black Student Alliance (BSA) and helped to create a black studies program at the school.


She has received widespread critical acclaim and support for her work, which has focused on the African-American experience. In 1997, she was the recipient of the ALAN Award.

Selected Books By Mildred D. Taylor:

 **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry.** A black family living in the South during the 1930's is faced with prejudice and discrimination, which their children don't understand.

 **Let the Circle Be Unbroken.** Four black children growing up in rural Mississippi during the Depression experience racial antagonisms and hard times, but learn from their parents the pride

and self-respect they need to survive.


 **The Road to Memphis.** Sadistically teased by two white boys in 1940's rural Mississippi, a black youth severely injures one of the boys with a tire iron and enlists Cassie's help in trying to flee the state.


Voigt, Cynthia


The second of six children, Cynthia Voigt was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1942. She knew she wanted to be a writer by the time she entered the ninth-grade. She attended college at Smith College and majored in English.


Working as an elementary/junior high teacher, she began writing part-time in 1972. She has won numerous honors and awards, including a Newbery Medal (*Dacey's Song*, 1983).

Selected Books By Cynthia Voigt:

 **Bad Girls.** After meeting on the first day in Mrs. Chemsky's fifth-grade class, Margalo and Mikey help each other in and out of trouble, as they try to maintain a friendship while each asserts her independence.

 **Bad Girls in Love.** Now in the eighth grade, best friends Mikey and Margalo try to figure out boys, crushes, and falling in love.

 **Callender Papers.** In nineteenth-century Massachusetts, orphan Jean, employed to sort out the family papers of a reclusive artist, becomes curious about the mysterious, long-ago death of his wife and the subsequent disappearance of their young child.

 **Dacey's Song** (Sequel to *Homecoming*, Tillerman Series). Now that the four abandoned Tillerman children are settled in with their grandmother, Dacey finds that their new beginnings


require love, trust, humor, and courage.


Woodson, Jacqueline


Born Columbus, Ohio, in 1963, Jacqueline Woodson spent most of her youth in Greenville, South Carolina and Brooklyn, New York. After high school, she earned a B.A. in English. While she now writes full-time, she used to support herself as a drama therapist for runaways and homeless children in New York City.


Her books take on tough issues like race, culture, teen pregnancy, sexual abuse, lesbian parenting, parents that desert their children, death, and jail. A prominent African American writer, she has received The Kenyon Review Award for Literary Excellence in Fiction and most recently, two Coretta Scott King Honor books (www.jacquelinewoodson.com).


Selected Books By Jacqueline Woodson:

 **Behind You.** After fifteen-year-old Jeremiah is mistakenly shot by police, the people who love him struggle to cope with their loss as they recall his life and death, unaware that Miah is watching over them.

 **Coming On Home Soon.** After Mama takes a job in Chicago during World War II, Ada Ruth stays with Grandma but misses her mother who loves her more than rain and snow.

 **I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This.** Marie, the only black girl in the eighth grade willing to befriend her white classmate Lena, discovers that Lena's father is doing horrible things to her in private.

 **If You Come Softly.** Love comes unexpectedly, gently, and tragically, to teens Elisha and Jeremiah.

 **Other Side.** Two girls, one white and one black, gradually get to know each other as they sit on the fence that divides their town.