MS. ECKAM’S

CLASSROOM LIBRARY

What Will You Read Next?
Elaine Eckam

LIT 515

Final Project Narrative

06/27/2012

One of the biggest pushes in our content area classes is the need to get books into the hands of our students. Though this appears to be a daunting task, I am confident that there are ways that teachers can make young adult literature appealing to even to most reluctant of readers. Traditionally teachers give book talks to entice their students into choosing a text they can read for pleasure, but we need to remember that we live in an age of media where many students would rather sit in front of a computer for hours browsing the internet than sit and read a book for twenty minutes. As an English teacher my greatest ambition is to generate the same loving relationship that I have with literature inside of my students by providing them with texts that pique their interest as well as reach them on a deeper level.

For my final project I wanted to make something that I could use as a tool in my future classroom as a way of introducing books to students. I wanted it to be something that I could pull out when I needed a book talk for a unit as well as a resource that my students could peruse before, during and after class that would spark their interest in all different types of literature that they may not have thought to read before. I accomplished this by creating a book of my creative responses to different formats and genres of Young Adult literature that are accompanied by a book talk that I have created. Currently the books are arranged in alphabetical order according to the title, but aren’t organized in any other cohesive way. In the future I hope to continue to expand the literature in this book to include all of the possible choices that students have in my classroom library. By that time I will have several binders containing book talks and creative responses that will be organized first by the genre the book is classified into, and then by the author’s last name. I look forward to seeing the reactions from my students as the browse through the binders as well as seeing just where this project is going to take me.
Did you ever dream of being Cinderella when you were a young girl? Or did you ever wish you could be prince charming and sweet the most perfect maiden off of her feet and rescue her from the clutches of her evil stepmother and sisters? Haven't we all dreamed of planning a role in these traditional fairy tales? What about when these classic stories are given a new life, and perhaps a new direction and purpose? Malinda Lo does just that in her novel Ash. This fractured fairy tale takes the original version and gives the romance portion a serious twist, Ash (Cinderella) does not want to live happily ever after with a boy at all, instead she finds herself fancying women.

The story itself is very intricate and contains a lot of information that has to be remembered for later in the novel. There is a huge magical presence in this book that concerns fairy folklore, which some of you may know something about. This magical aspect of the world is a huge part of Ash's connection to her past and her link to her dead mother. But the fairies in this story don't just give humans everything they want because they are asked, no. Instead you become indebted to the fairy, the higher the cost of the wish you ask be granted, the higher the price you will pay to the fairies in the end, perhaps even the cost of your human life! If you enjoy fractured fairytales and unlikely romances then you should pick up this book and give it a try.
In this graphic adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft's classic chilling tale the reader is able to catch a glimpse of what the author intended his readers to imagine when reading this gruesome story. The pretext for the story is based around explorations in Antarctica that took place during Lovecraft's early adult life. The scientists who went on these expeditions and dug deep into the frozen ground, found remains of beasts that are ancestors of the animals that we now find in the region, and several that could have become extinct. Lovecraft took this idea one step further, posing the question that all believers of Cathulu fear, what beast or force lies frozen beneath the ice, waiting for his chance to awaken and reign again?

The story follows a group of paleontologists that are intent on making new discoveries for mankind to marvel at. When they begin digging they are soon rewarded with the frozen remains of creatures from another world. They unearth them and begin studying them and dissecting them, as all real scientists do. But what have they unleashed by disturbing these ancient beings from under the tundra? Why do they constantly hear the shrill call of "Ack-acka-ackkkka!" echoing through the blowing winds? Could all the myths and legends be true? Find out in this adaptation of one of Lovecraft's most well-known stories.
Almost everyone can recall bits a pieces of Little Red Riding Hood’s story, if not recite the entire story from memory. Have you ever wondered why the story is set up the way it is? Why is little red riding hood sent into the dark woods to meet her granny across town? Why does she stop to talk to a wolf, especially when real wolves don’t talk? And why would anyone send a girl out in a bright red cloak when she is surrounded by woods that she should be trying to blend into? In Cloaked in Red Vivian Vande Velde offers up eight new stories that take details of the original version and fracture them so that a new story is born.

Each story in this book is quite different from them next, save the focus of the story. In each one you will find phrases that are taken directly from the original fairy tale. Not only are each of the stories different, but each one begins with the traditional “Once upon a time...”, but Vivian takes the phrase to a whole new level by adding sarcastic comments and witty language to draw the reader in. There is even a scary story in the collection that will have all of the hairs on your body at attention and you think, “Don’t do it little red! Don’t you go into that quiet, dark house if Granny didn’t invite you in!” This book will have you laughing and wondering, ‘What else might little red riding hood be up to?”
We all know the tale
of little red hood
who journeyed into the dark forest
once upon a time

Now what if the tale
gets fractured and twisted
and the cloak has the brains
and the girl remains clueless

Or what if little red hood
Wasn’t a girl at all
But a doll come to life
With no morale at all?
Are you a fan of books such as *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy? Do you like mythological creatures, beautiful and wicked imagined worlds and fantastic folklore? Do you crave to find a quest hidden between the pages of a book? Then you really need to pick up Christopher Paolini’s *Eragon*, the first book in his Inheritance Cycle series, better known as the Dragon Riders series. Though the author is young, the world he creates within the pages of this book can rival those thought up by Tolkien himself! The story takes place in a fictional kingdom of King Galbatorix and centers on the story of Eragon, a young boy who, by works of fate, finds a mysterious blue rock near his village. Though he attempts to sell the beautifully crafted rock at the local market, no one will buy the stone from him. When the stone begins to heat up and move, Eragon realizes that the stone is not a stone at all. When a tiny dragon emerges from the stone all of the tall tales of Eragon’s youth come flooding back to him as he realizes what the dragon really means.

After learning more about dragons from the local storyteller, Brom, Eragon’s destiny starts to take shape before him. Before he even has a chance to accept his newly made fate Eragon begins his quest which takes him all over Galbatorix’s kingdom and introduces him to all of the different peoples that live in his world. As Eragon moves closer to finding out why he was chosen by Saphira, a name taken from one of history’s noted dragons that both she and he agree on, he begins to see all of the forces he is up against as the only dragon rider in the kingdom. Where will his new found fate lead him? Find out in this beautifully written book. Pick it up and begin your adventures at the side of Eragon, the dragon rider.
"To put it bluntly, I'm a storyteller and I happen to think that you will make a fine story. You're the first Rider to exist outside of the King's control for over a hundred years. What will happen? Will you vanish as a legend? Will you join the Varden? Or will you kill King Galbatorix? All fascinating questions. And I will be there to see every bit of it."

Excerpt taken from Eragon by C. Paolini
Do you love a good, bone-chilling mystery? The type where the detective’s every move is being watched by the bad guy? David Levithan’s *Every You, Every Me* will make you feel like you have someone who is always watching you. In the story you will meet Evan, a teen who is left all alone at school because his only real friend, Ariel, is gone. I cannot tell you why she is gone, Evan pieces this together for you as he works through the mystery of who is leaving him photographs. The first photograph that he received is an image of him, only he doesn’t know who could have taken it. What’s even more chilling about these planted photographs is that many contain images of places that were significant to Evan because he shared them with Ariel.

To make matters worse for Evan, Ariel’s ex-boyfriend receives a photograph of a gravestone, that is left inside his locker. Why a gravestone you ask? Let’s just say that it has something to do with him and Ariel, you’re just going to have to read the book to find out. This book is great for anyone who enjoys reading texts in multiple formats as well as for those of you who like to play detective while you read. It is fast paced and is quite different in content from Levithan’s usual subjects, so if you’re a Levithan fan, you might just catch a glimpse of a different side of the author in this book. Enjoy reading this creep-tastic book and let me know if you solved the mystery before Evan has put all the pieces together.
I remembered
A time we were going through
Magazines

There was this one
Model who looked icy
To the touch

In total control.

I told you that, and
You said, “That’s
What makes it
a good photograph.”

You think you know
What’s going on in her head.

But the truth?

No Matter how good
A photograph is, you can
Never tell what’s going on in
The person’s mind.

There’s no way to get
From here
To there.

I was treating the past as if
it could be mined for clues,
for reasons.

But the past resists that.
It holds too much evidence of too many things.

Found Poem: words taken from Every You, Every Me by David Levithan
“People are real. People matter.”

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be the son or daughter of a serial killer? Jasper “Jazz” Dent knows all too well what it’s like to grow up with a serial killer as your father, not to mention the most infamous serial killer since Jeffery Dahmer, having taken well over one hundred victims, or as Billy Dent would say; prospects. Being the Artist’s, Green Jack’s, whatever name you picks son is not easy in such a small town, especially when a body of a young woman is found in a field, curiously killed in the same manner that your father killed his first victim.

In this darkly crafted story we follow Jazz and his faithful, anemic friend Isaac, as well as his tough, honest girlfriend Connie, as they follow the case. Even with his conditioned expertise on the workings of a professional, courtesy of ‘Dear old Dad’, the killer eludes them and the bodies continue to pile up. Even though Jazz knows he’s innocent, there remains a constant voice in his head trying to convince him otherwise and make him do things that would make a normal person cower in fear, but Jazz is not a normal person, is he?

Barry Lyga has created a terrifyingly intricate and exciting novel that will have readers glued to every gruesome detail splattered on the pages. With twists, turns, surprises, and yes, even a touch of teenage romance, this book will be passed around your classroom as students start talking about the murder mystery of the decade that will leave them on the edge of their seats with each cliffhanger. I Hunt Killers is soon to be a favorite among our adolescent students who desire a murder mystery with a twist that changes the tables by introducing a new breed of detective that one would not consider likely.
Most of
These guys,
They want to get caught.

You understand what I’m saying?

I’m saying
Most of the time,
They get caught cause

They want it.

Not cause anyone
Figures ‘em out,
Not ‘cause

Anyone outthinks ‘em.

Found Poem: words taken from *I Hunt Killers* by Barry Lyga
Winner of the National Book Award, and a Newberry Honor Book, this novel in verse will give you a glimpse into the life of a 10 year old girl, Ha, who is struggling to find her place in the world after she and her family moves from her home in Saigon in South Korea to the United States. Back in Saigon everything was familiar and comfortable for Ha, and every day she looked to her papaya tree to see if it was bearing fruit, proving that all of her love and care were worth it. When she is told that she is to evacuate with her family, all of her hope for tasting the literal fruits of her labor are lost. In its’ place are feelings of uncertainty and fear for what lies ahead for her and her family in their new home.

The poems in this book are easily accessible for any type of reader. Even if you are not a fan of poetry, I am sure this book can change your mind. All of the poems flow together to tell Ha’s story and each one is brief but leaves a lasting impact on the reader. They are chock full of images that will give you a glimpse into what Ha is seeing and feeling and will help you empathize with those who were displaced during the Vietnam War as well as when the capitol of Saigon was taken over by the National Liberation Front and the People’s Army of Vietnam. Through this text you will be able to see things from the other side and live through Ha’s experiences as she is faced with new obstacles to overcome.
If you’re looking for a book that you can kick back with and fall into, *Looking for Alaska* by author John Green should be the next on your list. The story opens with an introduction to our less than ordinary narrator, Miles Calvery, who is a week away from moving to the same boarding school that his father attended, Culver Creek Preparatory School, in search of the ‘Great Perhaps. Having no friends or real ties to his home, he is looking forward to starting anew. After he is dropped off by his parents Miles decides to take a quick shower and is (quite literally) caught with his pants off by his roommate, Chip Martin (who you’ll come to know and love as the Colonel), who immediately makes him feel welcome by giving him nickname, ‘Pudge’. Although the Colonel gives him a new name, he doesn’t give him an in with any of the other students, he simply lays down the ground rules; number one being don’t be a rat.

After the two unpack the Colonel’s belongings, Pudge follows him down to room 48 where he meets the most beautiful girl he has ever seen, Alaska Young, who happens to be the most outspoken and mischievous girl in the school. She lives her life looking for answers to the great question, and last words, posed by Simon Boliver, “How will I ever get out of this Labyrinth?” And Alaska does everything in her power to challenge and find answers for her personal labyrinth of secrets and suffering; she smokes, drinks, plays pranks, drives entirely too fast, never brakes, and loves sex, to name a few of her favorite pastimes. Pudge also meets the fourth member of the crew, Takumi, another juvenile delinquent who loves pranks and mischief as much as the Colonel and Alaska. Before Pudge even realizes who he’s befriended he’s handed his first cigarette and begins his search for the ‘Great Perhaps’ that’s his junior year.

Though there has been a lot of controversy raised over the contents of this novel, I found that the scenes depicted were those that most teenagers and young adults face when they are coming of age in their middle and high school years; The uncertainty of smoking your first cigarette, the awkwardness of your first kiss, the inability to say no when presented with the temptation of alcohol. *Looking for Alaska* is a story about a young boy who faces the challenges that students in our schools and classrooms are facing daily, including identity, grief, and sexuality and is not only a pleasurable read, but gives the reader insight into how different people deal with the pains and pleasures of life’s labyrinth and what lay ahead in the ‘Great Perhaps’.
Smoke.

Drink.

Have Sex.

Self-Destruct.

I am my Vices.

Reaching out, but none really hear.

You smoke for fun; I smoke to die while I'm young.
One of the honor books for the National Book Award, *Nation* by Terry Pratchett, will have you believing that you are reading a chunk of our collective human history that has been left out of our history books like so many other important dates and figures. Pratchett paints a beautiful and believable story that will have you questioning values and beliefs that we hold near and dear in our society. The story begins by introducing a scene and fact that doesn’t seem relevant until further in the text. (don’t let this discourage you from continuing to read) After this brief and confusing chapter, we meet Mau who is finishing up his final day as a boy. Not long after his canoe is in the water all of the birds in the surrounding trees fly into the air all at once. Mau is puzzled by this until he sees what is coming his way, a huge tsunami! Mau miraculously makes it through the ordeal, but upon arriving home he realizes that he has lost everything else.

This book is a fantastic read, and I’m not just saying that because it received one of the National Book Award honor positions. This book really does make your mind work by shedding light on our current world by drawing parallels between our society and the one that is reestablished by Mau and Daphnie (Ermintrude), another lost soul that was spared by the wave. Their paths cross accidentally, but what grows and flourishes as a result of their friendship will have you hooked until the very last page. Please don’t hesitate to pick up this book, or browse through the can to see if it interests you.
I have decided to "can" the book Nation by Terry Pratchett in lieu of writing a poem or drawing a picture. There was just so much to love about this book that I had to share it in this format instead. Inside of this can you will find different quotes, characters, plot point, excerpts from the text, etc. that will interest students in reading this phenomenal, best-selling book.
Do you ever feel like you live in the shadow of your siblings? That despite all of your accomplishments, that you will never measure up to or even be able to compete with them? Now think about all of the secrets you keep for your siblings. What if the biggest secret you kept was the dual life that your sibling is leading? This is the issue that Julie Anne Peters addresses in her novel *Luna* using the characters Liam and Regan. Regan is Liam’s twin sister who keeps the secret of his transgender identity secret from everyone; their parents, their friends, everyone. Every night she has to cover for her brother after he transforms into Lia Marie, and then later as Luna. Liam decides to change his name to reflect the idea that he is only able to show his true self at night.

This novel deals with a lot of issues concerning socially acceptable behavior, medical procedures, family relationships, life as a teenager, sexual identity, etc. Though the novel’s central focus is on Liam’s decision to become a woman, the narrator, Regan shows the reader the bigger picture of what life is like when you have to keep such a huge secret from everyone. Unlike her brother, Regan sinks into the background in order to avert any slipping of the tongue. This becomes increasingly difficult as Liam starts to show more of his Luna side and things start to fall apart at home because of Liam’s lack of masculinity and their father’s disapproval. How is Regan supposed to figure out what she wants and who she is with Liam’s identity constantly in flux and the threat of his exposure? Find out in this unique novel. You may be surprised at what you learn.
Are you a young and aspiring writer with an affinity for juicy stories and intrigue? Do you enjoy reading books where the characters become detectives and try to solve a mystery? Do you love ghost stories and legends? Then you need to sink your teeth into Joan Bauer’s *Peeled*. The story follows the life of young reporters Hildy and Zach, who write for their schools’ newspaper, *The Core*. They find that the problem with writing articles for the school paper is that there just isn’t enough material that will interest the student body. At least, not until there is a murder at the old abandoned Ludlow house, which is also said to be haunted. For these small town reporters this is the story they’ve been waiting for! The only problem is they want to unravel the truth, especially when their town’s newspaper is fabricating outlandish theories as to how the murder occurred and what it could mean for their small town.

Filled with a new purpose this unlikely pair set out in search of the real story, becoming detectives and uncovering a mystery that will leave you on the edge of your seat and bite you down to the core. Their articles cause an uproar and the two must find new ways to get the truth out to the public and ensure that all of the facts are straight. You won’t know who or what to believe as you read through the story. Do the students solve the mystery of who or what murdered the stranger on the Ludlow’s property? Do they save their town amidst all the chaos? Do they unmask the ghost? Find out by reading this delicious story. I guarantee it will make you hungry for more.
Andrea Anderson is the girl that you forget sits in the seat next to you because she never speaks in front of anyone. Preferring to stay blended into the background, she doesn’t do anything that will draw too much attention to her. Andrea lives with her single mother, her father having walked out on them when she was a little girl, who is too busy with work to cook dinner; so the two eat frozen dinners together every night in front of the television. It would seem that Andrea was defeated even before the story begins. But fate intervenes when her mother asks her to do her a favor and look after the neighbor’s dog up the street. Andrea knows the house she’s referring to, the one with the yard overgrown with weeds and the haunted air that hangs about the place. Not to mention everyone thinks that the old woman who lives there is a real live witch!

Andrea does as her mother asks and soon learns that it is the best decision that she has ever made in her life. She meets the owner of the house, Honora, who isn’t a witch and isn’t old at all and falls in love with her slobbery and loyal Saint Bernard, Zena. The two form an unlikely friendship that opens Andrea’s life up to possibilities that she would have shied away from in the past. Honora teaches her that her name is special because it is a continuum, Andrea Andreson, and that she has so much to look forward to. But what’s left for Honora to look forward to when she becomes dangerously ill? Find out in this wonderful book.
If you love the way that John Green writes and don’t mind getting seriously emotionally involved with the characters in a work of fiction then the next book you should pick up is The Fault in our Stars. This book centers on the character Hazel, a sarcastic and extremely intelligent girl, who lives with a special kind of cancer that infects her lungs. This leaves her strapped to an oxygen tank and dependent on a “miracle drug” that won’t cure her cancer but can offer her a few more years. Realizing that she is alive based upon the effectiveness of a drug, Hazel falls into a clinical depression and her parents begin forcing her to attend a support group. Though Hazel attends this support group every week she never says a word to anyone, until the day that a new member joins their group, Augustus Waters.

Augustus is a cancer survivor and sports a fake leg to prove it. The two immediately hit it off and find that they both have an obsession with reading, though their favorite books lay on different ends of the genre spectrum. Their story really begins when Hazel lends Augustus her favorite book, An Imperial Affliction, the one and only book written by the author Peter Van Houton. What’s even stranger is that the two find that they have the same peculiar attraction to the book and both have a desire to see it finished properly, not ending without any resolutions for any of the characters. What happens next to these two tragic adolescents? How do you live life like a normal teenager when you live with cancer? What do you do when there are so many restrictions placed upon you because of your condition? How do you make your ultimate dream come true when your request has always fallen on deaf ears? Find out the answer to these questions and more in this moving story that will creep its way into your heart. I highly recommend this book to any and all students.
An Imperial Affliction

I believe the universe

wants to be noticed.

I think the universe

is improbably biased

toward the consciousness,

That it rewards intelligence

in part because the universe

enjoys its elegance being observed.

And who am I,

living in the middle of history,

to tell the universe

that it—or my observation of it—
is temporary?

Found Poem: words taken from The Fault in our Stars by John Green
In *The God Box*, Alex Sanchez asks his readers to question the rationale behind the church’s aversion to homosexuality. Though the text deals with Paul’s, a high school senior, struggle in finding his identity and coming to terms with his sexuality and religious beliefs, the text is not preachy and does not try to sway the reader in either direction. In this story Sanchez uses biblical excerpts that have traditionally been used to condemn homosexuality to explain why homosexuality isn’t really a sin. Did you know that the word homosexual doesn’t even appear in the bible at all? I didn’t until I read this book.

I would like to tell you more about the characters and the basis of the story but I fear that I will give too much away and spoil the story for you. If you are intrigued by the above description then please consider reading *The God Box*. There is so much to consider when it comes to sexuality, “the ability to choose” and conflicting feelings because of religious beliefs. This book will help you work through these concerns and may open your eyes to what life is like inside the mind of a teenager struggling to find out who he is and why he seems to have feelings that he shouldn’t.
I grabbed his hand
  Tight
  Whispering,
I need you to teach me how to love

You already know that,
  He whispered back,
Tears running down his own
  Cheeks

You’re born knowing that.
You just needed to learn
  To let it out.

Found Poem: words taken from *The God Box* by Alex Sanchez
Are you interested in science and genetics? Do you like debating about the ethical arguments concerning cloning and thought control and the limitations of government control? Do you enjoy stories with a touch of unrequited love mixed in with all of the madness? If you said yes to any or all of these questions then you need to run out and pick up this book as soon as possible. In *The House of the Scorpion*, Nancy Farmer explored all of these ideas, and many more that deal with scientific, societal, and ethical dilemmas. She does this by having the reader follow Matteo Alacran, a clone of the most notorious drug lord El Patron, as he grows up in a world where clones are considered cattle.

In the text you will walk beside Matt while he spends his childhood locked in a house in the middles of a field, where his only companion is a television during the day and his surrogate mother, Celia, one of El Patron's many servants. One day while daydreaming and gazing out of the window he catches the attention of a group of children who are playing out in the field near his home. One thing leads to another and before you know it, Matt breaks the window and steps out into the world that he hasn't seen since being harvested, or rather, born, and immediately cuts his feet on the broken glass. The children rush him to the main house where Matt learns that being a clone means being an animal; less than human. To learn more about Matt's journey and the issues addressed in this novel pick up this book. You won't be able to put it down.
Very dark indeed is his majesty
when he wants to be
When he was young, he made a choice,
like a tree does when it
decides to grow one way
or the other

He grew large
and green until
he shadowed over the whole forest,
but most of his branches
are twisted

Found Poem: words taken from *The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer
Do you enjoy reading books about adventure, secrets and mystery? Are you interested in history, steampunk, and film? Then you should really consider reading *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick. The story takes place in 1931 in Paris, France and follows the adolescent boy, Hugo Cabret, as he embarks on a journey that he could never have imagined. The reader quickly learns that he is a clock keeper in a major train station, a gifted thief, and an orphan. Despite the minor setback of being on his own at the ripe age of twelve, Hugo manages to go unnoticed until he is caught stealing a windup toy mouse from the toymaker, George Melies. Not only is Hugo caught red-handed but the toymaker takes away one of his two most precious possessions, his father’s notebook.

But what is his other most precious possession you ask? Hugo’s father was a clockmaker and taught Hugo everything he knew, inadvertently, as Hugo watched him while he worked. One day, not too long before this story took place, Hugo’s father brings home a magnificent surprise, an old automaton that he found at the museum. (An automaton is a self-operating machine) Although the automaton is fairly old, and in serious need of repair, his father promises that they will fix it. But, as you know, his father isn’t around when this story begins so, what is Hugo to do without his notebook for help? Will he ever fix the automaton and find out if his father left him a message?

This Caldecott award winning book will have you captivated from the very first page where an introduction is included, written by a mysterious Professor H. Alcofrisbas. The story is complimented with black and white sketches that give the reader a glimpse into what is happening behind the pages they read and helps enhance the story in ways that words simply could not. In this book you will find friendship, intrigue, mischief, mystery, adventure, sorrow, and even a little bit of magic. Brian Selznick does an amazing job in this text of blending history with fantasy and creates a unique and compelling story that will leave you wanting more even after you have closed the book.
I like to imagine that
the world is one big machine.

You know, machines
never have any extra parts.

They have the exact
number and type of parts they need.

So

I figure if the entire world is
a big machine,
I have to be here for
some reason.
And that means you
have to be here
for some reason, too.

Found Poem: words taken from The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick
Do you enjoy reading books about adventure? What about books containing quests, menace, danger, and senseless bloodshed? Novels that contain stories that cover great distances but never leave you with a second of downtime? If you answered yes to any or all of these questions then you really need to pick up *The Thin Executioner* by Darren Shan. He is considered one of the contemporary masters of the fantasy and horror genres and with characters such as monstrous beasts and cannibals, the reader knows that they are in for a real treat.

This novel follows the quest of young Jebel Rum, the youngest and puniest son of the most revered executioner, Rashed Rum, and his acquired slave Tel Hesani. In Jebel’s town there is no higher honor than to be the village executioner and his greatest ambition is to one day take his father’s place. The story begins with an announcement from Rashed Rum stating that he intends to hold a Mukhayret, a traditional battle of strength and endurance, to determine who will take his station as executioner. During the announcement he mentions his eldest sons’ names as potentials for the position, but fails to mention Jebel as a possible candidate, disgracing him in front of the entire town. After confiding in his closest friend, Bastina, about his feelings of shame due to his father, he remembers that there is a way for him to gain back his dignity and win the Mukhayret to become the next great executioner; he must petition to quest to Tubaygat.

The purpose of his quest to Tubaygat is to gain the power of invincibility, not to be confused with immortality. The power of invincibility will enable him to live through anything but age as a mortal. After developing his plan Jebel soon acquires the slave Tel Hesani, who agrees to allow Jebel to sacrifice him for invincibility in exchange for his family’s freedom from slavery. After he is granted permission and branded with the mark of the quest, a coiling snake, the unlikely pair set off on their journey through places that Jebel had only heard about in stories. Jebel and Tel Hesani soon learn just how treacherous life on a quest can become as they encounter terrible beasts, monstrous men, and cannibal cults. To learn more about what Jebel and Tel Hesani encounter on their perilous quest pick up *The Thin Executioner* and watch the heads start rolling!
They thought they'd broken his spirit.
And were using gifts to make him feel
Indebted to them.

The tyrants were cunning
But arrogant

It never crossed their minds that Jebel
Might be acting, pretending
To be more disheartened then he was

Letting them think
He was beaten
When in fact he was constantly
Plotting his escape.

Found Poem: words taken from *The Thin Executioner* by Darren Shan
Tragedies affect all of our lives in different ways, and none of them are easy to work through emotionally or mentally. The worst of these, at least in my mind, is the tragedy of a suicide. There are so many questions that are left unanswered when we lose someone close to us to a suicide. Questions such as, “Why didn’t s/he reach out to anyone for help?” and “What happened to them that would make them believe that suicide was their only option?” In Jay Asher’s novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* we are given a second chance to understand the events that led up to the narrator’s, Hannah’s, suicide.

We are introduced to the character, Clay Jenson, who comes home from school one day to find a package waiting for him with no return address. He takes the passage inside and opens it only to discover that it is full of mixed tapes, thirteen to be exact, each one labeled with a number in the corner. Clay innocently pops one in his father’s old tape player and his heart nearly stops as the voice of Hannah fills his home! Clay gets what he wanted ever since he learned of her death, an explanation, but after learning that he received the tapes because he is part of the reason for her final decision. Does Clay get more than he bargained for? Find out in this break-through novel that shows a side of suicide that you’ve never seen before, the thirteen reasons why.
When we’re young we believe that we are going to live forever, that we are invincible because of our youth. There are limitless possibilities that lay before us. What happens when you’re told, after years of intensive cancer treatment that you have a limited time left and you’re only ten years old? What do you do when all of your limitless possibilities have to be accomplished in a limited amount of time? In *Ways to Live Forever*, author Sally Nicholls introduces us to the character Sam, who is struggling to come to terms with his fate and trying to find ways that he can accomplish his ‘bucket list’ before his time runs out.

This book deals with the very tough topic of children with cancer, one of the very harsh realities of our world today. Because the topic is dealt with in a semi-positive light this book could be a great read for anyone willing to put themselves into Sam’s shoes. The text contains questions that many of us have difficulty finding answers to such as, “Where do we go when we die?” and “What can I do with my time on this Earth that will leave a mark that will outlive my life?” This book is very easily accessible and will have you thinking about these difficult questions and how they apply to your life. Through Sam’s eyes we are given new hope for what we can all do in this world that will fulfill our childhood dreams of wanting to live forever.
Do you enjoy reading books with a sense of intrigue and mystery? Do you like ready stories where you are given multiple perspectives? Do you enjoy stories that are enhanced by drawings? Have you ever read a book where all of these things are possible at the same time? Well, if you haven't yet then you should consider reading Wonderstruck by Brian Selznick. In this beautifully written and illustrated book Selznick takes us on another marvelous adventure where the lives of a young boy and young girl are twisted together even though their stories happen decades apart.

In Wonderstruck the reader follows the stories of two separate, but equally important people. Our first narrator uses text to tell his story, while our second narrator uses pictures to tell hers. The reason for the shift in style is because our female narrator is deaf and using the pictures highlights this exceptionality and gives the reader the opportunity to see the world as she does. Ben’s story is set in 1967. After his mother, Elaine, passes away in a car crash he sets out on a journey to find his father in New York City. Luckily he finds shelter in the American Museum of Natural History where he meets a new friend and begins the task of finding his father and discovering where he came from.

The second narrator, Rose’s, story takes place in 1927 and begins at her home in Hoboken, New Jersey, where she lives with her father. Because she is deaf, she cannot attend a ‘normal’ school and is tutored at her house. When her tutor gives her a book to assist her in learning American Sign Language, she tosses it in the trash and fleas to New York City to meet her idol, actress Lillian Mayhew, but finds herself taking refuge in the same place where Ben finds shelter forty years later. Are you curious to see what else brings these two characters, separated by time, together? Then pick up Wonderstruck today!