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South African Teenagers Reading about themselves in Fiction: Their Response within the Cultural Practice of Reading in South Africa

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I am grateful to Jesus Christ to whom all the glory goes. This dissertation has no significance without Him.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been previously submitted in whole or in part for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution and quotation in this dissertation from the work or works of other people has been cited and referenced as such.

Catherine Van Schoor Date

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Abstract

The Young Africa Awards Series (YAA) was commissioned as a competition challenging South African writers to produce novels for teenagers that were relevant to their lived reality in South African society today. All the novels examined in this dissertation can be defined as realism. In this study the text is examined as a written locus of meanings around which are constellated oral and written discourses that frame the text. I discuss the ideology operating through the competition's publishers and judges. They construct a context for readers that determines what is real and relevant. It prescribes how the reader should read the text, and positions the reader towards reality.

I also examine the meaning produced through the YAA competition through an analysis of reader responses to different YAA novels. Reader response is determined in part by the way the text encodes meaning through addressing a particular audience. This requires the real reader to adjust to the positioning of the reader modelled in the text in order to fully grasp its meaning. When realism, particularly "relevant" realism, describes reality and issues that are important to the reader, it not only positions the reader to the text but toward reality as well. It defines and circumscribes that reality. The cultural beliefs expressed in the text and the textual frames seek to determine the limits reality will reach in the novel. What these beliefs are and how successfully the reader receives them is the subject of this research.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Motivation

The winning novels of the Young Africa Award competition since its inception in 1986 have qualified because they can all be described as realism, are all addressed quite consciously to a teenage reader and deal with topics of some social and political relevance to contemporary South Africa. This research investigates the competition and the novels it produces. It examines the goals of the publishers in producing these texts, and critically examines their belief of the role literature plays or should play in society. Maskew Miller Longman, together with Tafelberg, have set the standards for South African teenage realism. They have influenced South African culture through these competitions in a significant way because some of these books have succeeded in being prescribed at schools around the country. They are available in libraries, prescribed at schools and recommended by teachers and librarians. This is an important book series therefore, and merits a study of both its ideological message and readers' responses to them.

Objectives

The objectives of this dissertation is twofold. Firstly, I hope to demonstrate and investigate the continuum between production and consumption of the novel. Secondly, by examining the readers' responses I intend to show how a culturally defined concept of reading determines the kind of stories that get published and limits the reading experience. This discussion leads to the important question: how and what do readers learn from reading? I argue that what can be learnt from texts is not what is superficially communicated in the story. Sometimes what is learnt is even indifferent to the surface level of the narrative and not always determinable by the author. In order to understand this one needs to look at what the experience of reading is.

Significance

This study aims to challenge current concepts of the value of literature for teenagers. It aims to show the futility of attempting to control the reader's response and dictate the limits of reality. The conclusion I point to is that imagination has great value for the reader. It provides the reader with the pleasure of reading but also enables the reader to play with the boundaries and rules of what makes reality. Through the active use of the imagination in interpreting the world through texts, the reader is able to solve problems and anticipate adulthood. Realism, particularly teenage realism, should therefore never inhibit the imaginative activity of the reader or reduce meaning. To prescribe meaning and limit the possibility of what reality can be is to stifle the hopefulness of the young reader. These statements distinguish realism, the genre with its atendant ideological assumptions from the use of realism as a rhetorical device to create the illusion of authenticity in non-realist genres, like romance or adventure.

1.2 Conceptual Framework: Key Concepts

Young Africa Awards — The Young Africa Awards (YAA) is a competition initiated in 1986 by Maskew Miller Longman (MML). It sets out as its criteria that the books should be for young teenagers (grade 6-8), and relevant to their experience in South Africa today.

Teenage Realism — This term is used in this dissertation to refer specifically to novels written for teenagers about subjects relevant to their experiences.

Model Reader — The model reader (also "narratee" by Gerrig, 1991) is a textual construction. It addresses the narrative towards a socially profiled reader so that meaning and intention in the narrative can be fully realised (Eco 1979, Iser 1978).

Reader Response — This is an approach to the text that argues that the reader co-labours with the author in the creation of the text and the evaluation of its meaning.

Production-Consumption Framework	This refers to the belief within cultural materialist theory that recognises the extent to which readers' responses are determined by production texts as well as primary texts. This theory is taken from Hall (in Fiske 1987).
Production Text	This refers to the levels of production that frame and prejudge the primary text – the book. Production texts are reviews, press releases, publicity and the comments of anyone who will influence the reader be they on television, parents, librarians or friends.
Primary Text	This refers to the actual work of fiction
Reader's Text	This term refers to the text that the reader recreates imaginatively as he or she reads.

1.3 Research Design

Delimitation

In order to investigate the production text, I conducted interviews with two of the judges and made a study of the reports they compiled for the publishers. Evidence from press releases, YAA publicity and newspaper reviews are also given in the chapter on the production texts. My interviews with the judges were concerned mostly with finding out what their assessment criteria were.

The section on the YAA novels summarises and critiques each of the eleven books. The critique is guided by Hollindale's guideline for determining ideology and conflicts of ideology within the text (1992).

The readers I interviewed were chosen or volunteered from three schools in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. The schools are all in proximity to each other. They service children from middle class homes. I specifically interviewed students, aged 12 to 13 (Grade 8) who either volunteered or whom teachers selected on the grounds that they were avid readers. Teachers preferred to control my access to students in this way. I chose teenagers who were readers because they are more likely to know the conventions of narrative and be able to understand the text better. Teenagers who are readers will not need to be forced to read and will more likely

volunteer insights into the novel they had read. Most importantly I chose South African teenage readers between the ages of 12 and 13 because they fit the profile of the model reader for the YAA books. I therefore examined the extent to which there is a continuum between the production and reader's texts and whether that continuum depended on the real reader's proximity to the model reader.

1.4 Outline of the dissertation

The methodology of this research proceeds more like the carving out of a tunnel than the building of a new road: it starts at two ends and by analysis hopes to show how these two prongs of research join together, to create a throughway that illustrates the circulation and negotiation of ideologies in society. By circulation I mean the flow of values and meaning from authority to subject, the response by subject to dominance, and the negotiation and struggle for meaning between the two.

The first direction of research looks at the way the reader is constructed by social and cultural practices communicated through social institutions like the library, education, media and the publishing house, using Maskew Miller Longman's (MML) Young Africa Awards as a case study. The second part of the research interviews eleven target audience readers of the YAA series. These interviews examine the extent to which response has been shaped by the ideological construction of the reader and reading.

In Chapter Two I discuss the theory that has informed and determined my method of analysis of primary, production and reader's texts. Of these contributors, the most significant are those who base their cultural analysis on cultural materialism, like Fiske (1987), Bourdieu (1991), and Bakhtin (1994). I also discuss reader response theory using Eco as my primary theoretical informer. These theories are situated in a discussion of theory of children's literature and the psychology of reading. Bruner and Gerrig are the two main theoreticians in this field. The psychology of reading is interesting to the study of children's literature where the focus is really the role of literature in the education of children.

In Chapter Three I discuss the concepts of reading and the reader articulated by the publishers and judges of the competition. This methodology is based on the assumption that the reader's own experience will be circumscribed by these influences. My theoretical basis states that there is a production-consumption

continuum, i.e., the reader consumes a meaning that is produced by social institutions and cultural practices. Based on this hypothesis there should be an overlap or over-determination of meaning as they get constituted and reconstituted by the social institutions through whose hands the texts pass before they land in the audience implied in the book (Fiske 1987).

In Chapter Four I discuss critically each of the eleven books read by my readers. I show how competition and winner collaborate to generate a particular set of meanings about the value of literature to the teenager. This criticism examines each book in the way it communicates its political and moral message. It discusses the construction of the reader in the book and the measure of interpretive freedom it gives to the reader.

In Chapter Five I discuss the readers' responses to the YAA texts. I interviewed eleven students between the ages of thirteen and fourteen in Grade Eight in Marist Brothers or St. Joseph's College, Westerford High School, and Wynberg Secondary School. The students from Marist and Wynberg were selected by their teachers. The students from Westerford volunteered to read and be interviewed. The students chose a YAA book from a selection of twelve YAA books. This was successful, as a number of students were able to choose books that appealed to them.

In Chapter Six I discuss the findings from the reader's responses and compare them with the findings of Chapter Three.

In the Conclusion I discuss some of the issues that were not raised, possible objections and further lines of inquiry for investigation.

Chapter Two: A Literary review: The reading experience

In this chapter I will review the theory that has informed this dissertation. I begin my literary review with a discussion of narrative as a primary means of knowledge. With this definition of narrative in mind, I look more closely at the role culture plays in regulating this knowledge form by defining what is relevant or story worthy and what the appropriate response to the story is. I then discuss juvenile literature separately, as a special case. This introduces the discussion of literature for readers aged 12-14. I apply theory introduced in the previous section to children's literature. I briefly discuss how the age of the readership affects the cultural practice of reading. Having done this, I discuss realism, the teenage readership and teenage realism in greater detail.

2.1 What is the Reading Experience?

In *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Bruner distinguishes between the two modes of knowing available to humanity (1986). One is the paradigmatic or logico- scientific mode. This is a mode of argumentation that seeks to know truth through proof, dialectics and empiricism. The other is the narrative mode. Narrative is interested in perceiving meaning in experience; it aims at believability rather than empirical truth. It is a way of knowing that does not seek to convince us of truth but of lifelikeness (Bruner 1986:11-13). Bruner argues that narrative

> ... deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience and to locate the experience in time and place (Bruner 1986:13).

Reading narrative is a meaning making activity. Readers use their own experience of the world, their knowledge and emotions to understand meaning in the text. According to Bruner, readers are required to fill the gaps in the story, the gaps of description and implication with their own meaning. They must interpret the characters, their dialogue and their actions (Gerrig, 1993:17). This forces a "meaning performance" upon the reader. The definition of reading as a meaning performance clearly locates the reading activity in the social realm. Reading depends on the reader's social knowledge in order to be understood.

This meaning performance may be confined to understanding what the narrative means or it may challenge real experience and affect the reader's perception of reality. The extent to which the narrative is able to do this depends on the author's intentions. The greater the gap filling performance required, the deeper the reader is required to interact with and attempt to understand reality, meaning and intention.

According to Bruner, literature is interested in representing a psychic reality – what we think, know, feel and believe. The psychic reality of the novel is the reality of human intention. Bruner claims that reading intention in human action is something so primitive to perception that even babies can identify it (1986:19). The reader finds the psychic reality of society and the individual interesting insofar as it helps one to understand the life, actions and circumstances of the individual; and shows how the conflict in the story is resolved through it. This psychic reality is in Bruner's terms, "a magnet for empathy" (1986:20). The reader enters into the experiences of the characters through emotional identification with the story.

A number of theorists of children's literature claim that narrative is a universal means whereby we gain knowledge about meaning. Like Bruner, Hardy argues that narrative is a primary act of mind, a way of thinking that precedes rational knowledge (1977). Through narrative we experience life and understand our emotions. Fictional narrative is an inexhaustible resource in the making of meaning and the expression of the complexities of meaning and experience. Unlike the logic-scientific mode of truth finding, irony and ambiguity are essential to fiction. Ambiguity allows the reader to fill meaning, to imagine the details, the characters, to co-create the text. The more ambiguous the text, the more meaning the reader is free to make. Meek argues that the ability to tolerate ambiguity is a sign of reader maturity (Meek 1988). It shows a grasp of the workings of language and discourse. It is a tolerance for the fact that language cannot express unchanging truth or transparently reflect reality. Hardy agrees with Meek about the importance of irony and ambiguity. She argues that the great value of reading is not merely the way it stimulates the imagination to create meaning, but also the way in which it draws the reader's attention to language, on a phonic and rhythmic level, as well as on a rhetorical and metaphysical level. It reveals the way language constructs perception (Hardy, 1977). Hence reading is not only concerned with making and recognising meaning, for the text also has the ability to show the reader what lies backstage of the meaning-making performance.

Narrative is able to make the reader aware of the process by which we interpret meaning out of experience because it is able to imitate experience and thus reveal the way

experience is constructed. Narrative, as we recall, is a primary means of gaining knowledge about the world, a means whereby we adduce meaning from experience. According to Britton, reading is a virtual experience. We learn to understand experience through playing with the form we give it, imitating its form in fictional narrative and playing with its boundaries (1977a). Britton claims that the pleasure of reading derives from the fact that reading is a virtual experience (1977a). It is a creation by the reader of a possible reality; it is like remembering an experience one never had. According to Harding, the pleasure of this virtual experience depends on the fact that the reader is in a non-participant or spectator role (1977). The reader watches the event and evaluates the text through the emotions evoked. Harding argues that the emotional involvement of the reader or the reader's empathy constitutes absorption in the text.

In "Response to literature", Britton differentiates between the critical response and the affective response to the text (1977b). The affective response is primary; it is the experience of the text, lived virtually and experienced emotionally and imaginatively by the reader. It is undifferentiated by critical reflection. Critical reflection helps us understand our affective response. Warlow makes reference to a study done by James Squire (Squire in Warlow 1977) of four adolescent readers. He found that those readers who were most involved with the text were those who retrospectively were able to make the most perceptive critical comments (Warlow 1977:95):

> The two types of response seem to reinforce one another, with readers who are emotionally involved formulating more literary judgements... We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else (96).

The affective response to the virtual experience of the narrative is thus crucial if one is to understand and critically evaluate the meaning of the narrative.

Harding believes that that reading is a kind of play. He develops this theory from Freud whom he follows in arguing that the value of literature lies in its encouraging the reader to play with, distort and experiment with the discourses that give us reality (Freud 1990a, Harding 1977). Play reveals the plasticity of that which represents itself as natural, real and certain. In doing this, the reader is able to recreate and to perceive the world rather than receive the given definition. Narratives vary in their playfulness. The more the text plays with words, meaning, ethical and physical laws, possibilities and personalities, the more freedom the reader is given personally to discover his or identity:

> Play takes us into a third area between shared, verifiable experience and the world of inner necessity. Its purpose for the individual is to relate inner necessity with the demands of the external world. Play and art/poetry, which is its perfected form, is an experience different from other forms of knowledge gaining behaviour in that it is a whole experience. It is assimilative. We are not required to constrain to the necessity of truth in external experience, and freed from this we are able to be more ourselves (Britton 1977b:40).

The playfulness of fiction is an important difference between paradigmatic knowledge and narrative knowledge. The knowledge of self is enabled because narrative disengages the reader from lived reality. The playfulness of the text also enables a disengagement from personal emotions. The experiential quality of reading enables the reader to search out and understand emotions – what they are and how they affect human behaviour. Moreover, Harding claims that narrative formulates wishes and gives them a defined, recognisable form. It stimulates rather than gratifies desire (Harding 1977). The way in which this desire is formulated plays a significant role therefore in the way we understand desire. To formulate desire and give it shape is a moral act. Desires and emotions are expressed according to a set of values that makes certain desires and emotions appropriate; and that determines appropriate means of their expression.

Thus far I have argued that not all literature achieves the potential set out for it by theorists and psychologists of literature. I have drawn on theory about the primacy of narrative as a form of knowledge that seeks to understand meaning and human intention through imitating the form of experience. Narrative is virtual experience. I have also referred to theorists like Harding and Meek who suggest criteria for the way literature should be. Fiction should be playful, and bring out a playfulness in the reader so that the reader is able to recognise that the discourses that inform his or her identity and sense of reality are masks that can be experimented with and tested, masks that conceal intention. In the next section, I continue to make this point in a discussion of how the cultural circumscription of the reading experience determines the way the reader interacts with the text. This cultural definition of reading may limit the interaction of reader and text, preventing the reader from making and playing with textual meaning.

2.2 The Cultural Practice of Reading

Narrative is a universal means whereby humanity ascribes meaning and order to reality. One could argue that culture is composed of many narratives; narrative is the form through

which culture replicates itself. To read or create a narrative is to involve oneself in a recreation of culture. In *Youth Culture in Late Modernity* (1995), Fornas locates culture in the communicative encounter between individuals and texts on the level of the intersubjective encounter. Culture is constituted intersubjectively in the interaction of individuals using symbolic modes. Because culture is constituted intersubjectively, it is polyphonous. Language is the primary symbolic form of communication and the aural, verbal or visual text is the medium through which culture is shaped: "Culture involves communicative encounters between interacting subjects and symbolic texts within contextual frames" (1995:2). Narrative would not be able to imitate experience and create a virtual experience were it not for the fact that we shape and interpret experience in narrative form, through language. It is because narrative is a primary way of knowing the world, a way that is concerned with attaching meaning to experience that it is the means whereby our beliefs and cultural practices are shaped, reproduced and enforced.

Though culture is polyphonous and heterogeneous, social power is not diversified. It is maintained through the controlled circulation of a particular set of meanings in society. The set of meanings circulated between subjects and texts in communicative encounters are called ideologies. All ideology craves hegemony. Hegemony is the control of social order through an ideological system. It can be compared to the use of physical power to control. Ideologies exert control symbolically, through texts. The communicative encounters between reader and reader, and reader and text are fundamental activities in the culture-making process; for whoever composes the narratives that determine meaning to the dominant part of society has the power to control social behaviour according to that meaning.

Ideology holds in place the economic and social structure of society. Social relations are configured according to their relation to the structures of domination and subordination within society. One's own set of social meanings sustains or challenges the ideological structure depending on our social and economic status. Subjects within their communities constantly contest for social power for themselves and their community. Meaning is expressed through cultural practices and products and whoever is able to persuade society of the rightful dominance of their culture will have acquired power.

Bourdieu makes the connection between the ownership of culture and the ownership of financial and political power (Bourdieu 1991). By culture, Bourdieu means the "high" or dominant culture of a society. According to Bourdieu, belonging to a "high culture" provides a kind of capital to its owners by which it enforces its dominion (Bourdieu 1991).

Ownership of such culture is comparable to owning real capital. According to Bourdieu, real and cultural capitals collaborate to sustain the dominant culture. One of the main ways in which it does this is through education. Cultural capital is "education conferred cultural skills" and is quantifiable by how many cultural skills we own (Bourdieu 1991). Culture is also qualitative; it is a disposition, or what Bourdieu calls "an aesthetic attitude". The aesthetic attitude refers to the value we give to certain artistic and cultural productions and practices. The value we attribute to culture is determined by our social position and education. Hence, though culture is negotiated and contested each time the individual interacts symbolically through texts, the interaction is not random; it is a subjection to a cultural hierarchy institutionalised in the text and in the reader, to maintain the symbolic dominance of a sector of society.

Fictional narratives vary in the extent to which they allow the reader to constitute meaning. The more freedom the reader is given to interpret meaning from the text, the weaker the hierarchy that attributes value to certain cultures and beliefs. The extent to which the text enables the reader to make meaning is clearly political. Narratives are polyphonic or heteroglossic, which is Bakhtin's term. But as Bakhtin argues the author accents narratives told within a society in a way that indicates authorial identification or objectification of these social narratives. The heteroglossia is thereby stratified according to the author's "intentional theme" (Bakhtin 1994:115). This intentional theme involves the ideological translation of social narratives and social languages (like slang or jargon) into the working ideology of the author (1994:120). The author stratifies the narratives and sets them up in dialogue with one another. This dialogue will represent the negotiation for power between the social narratives.

The text can vary in the extent to which it enables the reader to play with social language. It varies also in the extent to which it reveals the openness of meaning. In *The Role of the Reader* (1979) Eco distinguishes between the open and the closed text. The degree of openness of the text accounts for the range of responses readers make to a text. The open text brings the reader to an awareness of the ambiguities of language and the unlimitedness of semiosis. This is what Barthes calls the "writerly" text (Barthes 1975:4). The writerly, or open, text is more valuable than the closed, or "readerly", text: "because the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of text" (1975:4). The writerly or the open text is "ourselves writing" (1975:5). The division between reader and writer causes the reader to be constructed as a consumer or receiver rather than producer or creator of meaning in participation with the

author. The readerly or closed text is produced out of this division of labour. Reading in this context requires the reader to either agree or disagree but deprives the reader of the freedom of creating and playing with narrative. The closed text draws the reader's attention away from the instability of meaning and unlimited semiosis. It tries to control and direct the reader's response to the text and conceal authorial presence.

Eco and Barthes claim that semiosis is unlimited. According to Eco, if the author wishes to communicate meaning and intention, he or she must encode its intention through strategies in the text. Reading is an activity that seeks to indicate meaning from the unlimited expanse of possible meaning (or meaninglessness). Intended meaning is recognised by enlisting the readers' co-operation to make certain interpretive choices. This co-operation is invoked through generative strategies – strategies that generate meaning (Eco 1979:4).

The set of generative strategies that will lead the reader to make interpretive choices is called "the model reader". The author addresses the text to a model reader, who is familiar with these codes as convention and is able to decode all the intentions and meanings in the text. One of the reasons that fiction is able to impact on the reader is because it collapses the real reader with the model reader. When we read, "we assume for the sake of the experience, that set of attitudes and qualities which the language asks us to assume" (Gibson, in Gerrig 1993). The model reader is the one who is most equipped to recognise the attitudes and qualities the narrative requires in order for textual meaning to be understood. In this way the author selects the reader. From this we see how the reader's social position may influence the experience of the narrative and how being in the position of the model reader may constitute owning cultural capital.

The model reader is addressed in a number of ways. Firstly, through a specific linguistic code and specific literary style, for example, the model reader should be able to identify the connotative meanings of words and phrases. Metaphor and trope therefore require reader "co-operation" (Eco 1979:21). Secondly, the author may address the reader explicitly. As one often finds in children's literature, authors use phrases that presuppose a particular kind of reader. The author will also rely upon the reader's encyclopaedic (or world) and intertextual knowledge in order to create context and recognise genre (1979:7). Such knowledge enables the reader to interpret what he or she is reading and predict what will happen. It enables the reader to recognise causality and therefore the linearity of the narrative (1979:21).

Eco illustrates in his discussion how meaning is overdetermined from sentence to sentence in the text. This is because the unlimited semiosis of words requires that certain connotative and denotative meanings are invoked or "blown up", while others remain undisturbed or "narcotized" (1979: 23). Meaning is guided and pre-established by the author on sentence, discourse and narrative levels. In order for a story to have any meaning the reader has to co-operate on each level of meaning to close the "semantic space" created by the limitlessness of semiosis (1979:39).

The model reader is a generative strategy in the text; only the model reader can decode the optimal meaning that the text can generate. The ability to decode the text's meaning is therefore described as reading competence. The reader reads as close to the model reader as he or she can recognise, and adjusts his or her identity and beliefs in order to understand the text (Eco 1979). Through this generative strategy the hierarchy of social languages that Bakhtin refers to and the ideological perspective of the author is generated through the model reader strategy as the meaning of highest value. The reader responds to this strategy in a number of ways. Because he or she can only understand the implied text through the model reader strategy, the reader responds to this strategy in a number of ways and in so doing elects the extent to which intended meaning of the text will be recognised or own meaning will be supplemented. The reader may choose to adjust his or her own identity to fit the model reader identity in order to fully grasp the story, thereby entering into the entire value system that makes sense of the story. The reader may alternatively negotiate with the model reader identity rather than accept wholly the representation of reality and its hierarchy of values. This will depend on the reader's own knowledge and ideological stance. Eco explains that readers investigate the text from their own ideological perspective. The more the reader's ideology conflicts with the text, the more the reader reacts to the ideology in the text (1979:22).

It is also possible to read closed texts in an open way if the reader is not skilled in the strategies that indicate the intended meaning of the text. Eco calls such readers "aberrant readers" (Eco 1979:8). Aberrant readers make readings that unconsciously oppose the implied meaning. Children are notorious aberrant readers of books intended for adults. *Gulliver's Travels*, the children's classic, is a political satire. Such is clear to an informed adult reader, but taken out of its context, the intertextuality of the text and the many cross-references the text may make are lost on the child reader. The imaginative absorption in the story and its characters leads to a freedom of interpretation and a different

kind of reading pleasure. The child reader reads past the intentions the model reader should recognise and makes an aberrant reading.

Eco claims that only the text can determine its model reader (1979:10). But according to Fiske, hegemony is maintained in society through the over-determination of meaning. Using Fiske's theory I would add to Eco by claiming that the model reader is determined not only in the fictional text, but also by the non-fictional texts that frame and produce the texts and by the cultural definition of the reading experience. Moreover, meaning in the text is the more recognisable to the reader the more over-determined that meaning is throughout society. The model reader uses meanings produced outside the text in order to understand textual meaning. Althusser argues that ideology is instituted in society through "ideological state apparatuses" (Althusser in Fiske, 1987:287). These are the principal institutions that order and sustain society: the education system, the media and the political system are three examples. These various institutions operate autonomously to produce meanings that are shared. Hence each institution supports the values and meanings of a particular ideology. Through the overdetermination of meaning in and outside the text, ideology is naturalised and the power structures are reinforced (Fiske 1987:287).

Fiske describes in more detail the subtleties of this ideological negotiation of reader and text. Cultural theory uses the term "hailing" to refer to the process whereby language "identifies and constructs a social position for the addressee" (Fiske 1987:289). In narrative, the model reader "hails" the actual reader. The reader's response is determined by his or her social position in relation to the reader hailed in the text (Fiske 1987:285). Fiske explains that there are three types of readers: the dominant reader, the negotiated reader and the oppositional reader. The dominant reader is not socially subordinate; he or she is in a social position to agree with the text's ideology and is closest to the reader hailed in the text. The negotiated reader fits into the dominant ideology but not completely. This reader will inflect the text with meanings that take his or her social position into account. Such a reader is self-interested. Texts that may undercut the negotiated reader will be interpreted in a way that does not recognise this and supports the reader's own social position. Though meaning is determined on every level of narrative, the persistence of semantic space means that negotiated readers at various levels of subordination within society can adapt the implied meaning by filling the semantic spaces with personal ideological perspective without opposing it outright. The oppositional reader is one who is socially subordinate and conflicts with the dominant ideology completely. Such readers do not fill the semantic spaces; they oppose the text completely (Fiske 1987:292).

If the reader's intention in reading is to participate in higher culture and thereby purchase cultural capital, then the reader will expend energy in identifying with the model reader. This reader is in a social position to negotiate a reading, but chooses instead to adapt personal beliefs to the set of values implied in the text. Because the nearness of the reader's experience to that of the model reader is labelled competence, the body of encyclopaedic, ideological, intertextual knowledge and the emotive, moral stances associated with that knowledge are ascribed great cultural value. This presents an ideological challenge to the reader to be re-aligned by the quantity and quality of information communicated to the reader.

Fiske distinguishes between three kinds of texts: the production text, the primary text and the reader's text. He argues that because meaning is overdetermined, the meaning one may derive from a text and the model reader of the text is determined not merely by the text but on every level of textual production as well. Production texts are texts involved with the production of a primary text. The primary texts, in this case, are the YAA novels. The production texts are the reviews; YAA publicity and press releases; teacher and librarian responses to the YAA series; and the way the books get taught by their teachers. There is a continuum between these texts, the primary text and the text that the reader consumes. The interpretation of reader responses to the YAA novels should therefore involve a discussion not merely of the primary texts, but also the production texts that overdetermine a particular reading of the text. This production-consumption continuum theory, which says that readers' responses can be interpreted by the way the text is produced extra-textually by culture as well as intra-textually, presupposes the closedness of the text.

Many readers know that fiction is intended to have real world significance by the way it labels itself in the primary text and is labeled by the production texts. When the primary text labels itself as realism we can assume that it intends to provide some kind of insight into the real world. A label of realism for example, is the address that Lesley Beake leaves for the political lobby of Bushmen in Namibia after *Song of Be*. This address marks the author's clear communication to the reader that the story should have a real world effect. The label of educational value is even more explicit: it ranges from the dedications and acknowledgements in many of these books to educational departments and teachers, to the advertisements on the back for the accompanying teacher's guide. The labels of realism and educational value in the YAA texts are nearly impossible to avoid: one cannot read any YAA text without being informed in numerous ways of its intentions.

2.3 Juvenile literature, a special case

The term "juvenile literature" includes literature for children and teenagers. Juvenile literature has always had an educational interest. This interest was specifically focussed in the moral education of its readers. Hunt explains that it is only recently that the young reader's pleasure became important (Hunt 1991). Nina Bawden, one of the more popular writers of teenage realism claims:

> You can't prescribe a book like a bottle of medicine ...Their [sc. The children's] enjoyment seems to me of primary importance – enjoyment that is in the fullest sense, engaging and extending their imaginations and their sympathies (Bawden 1980:24).

Rosenheim differentiates between uncritical pleasure and the more valuable satisfaction that comes from using the imagination to apprehend, judge and experience. The worth of literature should be judged by asking,

> Does it call into play the child's imagination? Will it invite the exercise of genuine compassion or humour or even irony.... Will its characters and events call for – and even strengthen – his understanding of human motives and circumstances of causes and effects? (Rosenheim 1969:29).

Pleasure is not illicit or inferior to the serious business of education, with its even more serious intention of educating the child to earn lots of money. On the contrary, Rosenheim argues, children do not derive anything from books apart from pleasure (Rosenheim 1969). One cannot separate reading pleasure from what is learnt from the text, and an important component in learning from the children's novel is the pleasure taken in the way the lesson has been communicated.

Rosenheim's contribution is to show how important pleasure is to the learning experience. Yet his claim is no different to those who see children's literaure as being primarily didactic for he justifies reading pleasure by preferring the higher pleasure, which is the pleasure of a type of learning. Juvenile literature is in Hollindale's words, "inescapably didactic" (1992:30). According to Hunt (1991) the children's and teenager's text is always closed. Hunt uses the term "children" instead of juvenile but refers to stories that are written for the same readership as the YAA novels are. "Children's literature" in this case can be applied in the same way as "juvenile literature". It exerts greater control

over the reader and does the work of interpretation because it assumes the reader is unskilled. He claims that many books hand experience over ready-packaged and deal in stereotypes. Their prose is full of idiomatic English and "ready made phrases". They pre-digest the world for the reader (Hunt 1991:82-83). Such a readership is not implied so much as prescribed. The authorial voice is omnipresent in such texts and does not allow the reader to fill any semantic spaces (Eco 1979). It does not transfer new information, but rather confirms the status quo. It limits the interaction between child reader and author.

Hunt claims that there is such a pervasive attempt in children's literature to control the young reader's interaction with the text that it defines the genre. These books "suggest what the reader must be or become" if they wish fully to understand the meaning of the text (1991:91). Hunt recognises that these efforts to determine the reader are not able to limit the interaction of reader with text. In order for the reader to understand a text he or she needs to know the conventions of the narrative and the genre, which young readers often do not. Hunt celebrates the fact that many children are aberrant readers. The less skilled a reader the more aberrant, imaginative and open the reading has the potential to be. Readers play with the text and in this playfulness they are deconstructors: "Children are soon taught that words are not to be played with, but as long as they do play, they are deconstructors par excellence" (Hunt 1991:98)

2.4 Reading Realism

The playfulness of the juvenile reader enables him or her to deconstruct the text because as the narrative form — words, characters and virtual situations — are played with the reader learns about how we use narrative to perceive meaning in reality. At some point however the juvenile reader does discover that "words are not to be played with" and this happens when words are used to establish rules and govern behaviour, to discipline the emerging adult to conform to social priorities. Literature has a role to play in the development of consciousnesses that are conformed to social priorities. Literature that has such a purpose is not playful. Playful texts are subversive texts; they deconstruct rather than construct a particular reality; nor are they particularly funny as so much children's entertainment is; for humour too is subversive. Humour, according to Freud, is rebellious; it is the assertion of the ego over the real world. It refuses to be compelled to suffer or be provoked at all by the real world and is victorious in the assertion of the ego over circumstance (Freud 1990b:439). The literature I refer to is serious, concerned with morality and matters of

social relevance. The genre most frequently used for this purpose is realism. In this section I discuss realism with a view to understanding the special role this genre plays in juvenile literature.

I define the genre of all the YAA stories as realism. By realism, I mean that this genre pays attention to particularities of human experience. Realism is concerned with representing humanity warts and all. The aim of realism is to render as scientifically objective a representation of human society as possible, in its ordinariness and particularity (Watt 1974). It is therefore set in a specific temporal and spatial frame. It emphasises the individuality of the characters. The central criterion of the realist novel is truth to individual experience. Because of this, the novel form acquires a biographical quality. The plot becomes preoccupied with character development and human relationships to self, others, and the environment. Gestures, appearances and expressions are described as indices into the emotions and psychology of the characters. Because of its emphasis on truth to experience, the novel aims at transparency and referentiality in prose style. As Watt explains, the author's literary skill lies in how closely the word corresponds to the object. Language becomes "a purely referential medium" (Watt 1974:28). Language does not play with sound, form and effect in realism but is used to construct images of the real world. Realism is preoccupied with morality, and expresses its moral stance in the construction of causality and characterisation. It interprets the meaning of particular experience and attributes intentions to characters.

The YAA novels too are pre-occupied with the moral perspective; their characters without exception evolve into moral beings – often by learning the hard way. The moral conclusions of all the novels are intended to instruct the reader of the necessity of morality. The plots also resolve moral issues and are heavily didactic. The YAA novels are located quite consciously in time and place – South Africa in the present (excepting of course, the historical story, *Travellers*). The prose style also aims towards referentiality: it is plain and adopts a descriptive and unadorned style. Certain books have lyrical passages, but these are exceptional and come at the beginning or end of the book, or at significant, intensely emotional moments in the story. The use of the letter in a number of the YAA stories emphasises the biographical style of the realist novel. Slang and jargon are adopted by many of the stories in the dialogues of the characters to create the illusion of lifelikeness.

To recall Bakhtin's argument: the novel translates social languages into the author's own working ideology. The use of tropes, slang and jargon are all ideological translations according to Bakhtin, of real social languages (Bakhtin 1994). The way these social

languages are set up in dialogue with one another stratifies the social languages in terms of its cultural capital value. Meek makes a similar argument; she uses the term "discourse" as used by Foucault, but has the same meaning as "social language" in this context. She argues that literature doesn't teach the reader lessons so much as discourses (Meek 1988). Good literature enables the reader to play with the discourses that articulate reality to the reader. Meek claims that it is the ability to read intention behind discourse, what "lies behind the words", that inexperienced readers lack (Meek 1988:20).

Realism interprets reality; it suggests that there is an order inherent in reality that can be perceived by the individual. This order leads the reader to make moral conclusions about the way life should be lived. The text predigests meaning and conceals its pre-interpretation through its naturalistic, transparent prose style. Realism is effective precisely because it conceals its fictionality and its artifice.

The realist genre fits the description of what was required by the competition – books that were relevant and that appealed to the reality of South African teenagers. The term relevance implies that the text will directly address the reader's experience of reality; hence realism requires reciprocity between reader and text reality. More than any other genre, the meaning generated by the realist text depends on the reader's own knowledge of social discourses. It is easy to read realism in the same way as one would read an adventure if this realism is not shared. This is not to say that the reader will not identify with characters or derive any meaning from the text. Rather, as the genre changes, the kind of interpretation that it triggers changes. According to Bruner on the subject of the psychology of genre: "something in the actual text 'triggers' an interpretation that then dominates the reader's recreation of the virtual experience" (Bruner 1986:7). Genre prescribes a way of reading and tells the reader what to expect from the story (Hollindale, 1992). Realist texts whose reality the reader does not reciprocate are read differently because it is no longer able to verify the meanings and experiences any more. Lifelikeness is the genre trigger for realism and the intention of the genre is to reveal the meaning behind the shared reality of author and reader. In this way, realism prescribes, verifies, and reinforces the boundaries of possible experience. If the reader does not identify with the reality of a realist text, but recognises it as realism because it conforms to the conventions discussed above, the text may expand the reader's sense of possible experience and may cause the reader to re-examine belief. If the reader shares the reality, there is a significant chance, if it is a closed text, that meaning will be prescriptive and limiting for the reader.

Before I discuss teenage realism I digress briefly to discuss how the effectiveness of realism is determined by the fundamental cognitive processes that take place while reading. This section illustrates that realism is read differently from other fictional genres. The imagination is therefore occupied differently compared to reading fantasy and, consequently, different meanings are generated. After this I discuss the adolescent reader in order to provide some insight into how teenage realism is adapted to its implied readership.

According to Gerrig, we "reconstrue the world of fiction ... as being the closest possible to the reality we know. This means that we will project upon the world of the statement everything we know about the real world, and we will make only those judgements we cannot avoid" (Gerrig 1993). The reader adjusts the context in the narrative according to the distance from which it departs from the reader's own experience of reality. Gerrig's argument states that fiction has to be marked in the text in order for the reader to distance it from reality. The more lifelike the narrative the more the reader will believe that narrative refers to lived reality. This supports Watt's discussion of realism. Watt, a literary theoretician, argues that the conventions of realism make fewer demands on its readers – it provides few markers of its fictionality and thereby convinces the reader of its lifelikeness:

> Consequently, the conventions of the novel make fewer demands on the audience. This surely explains why the majority of readers in the last two hundred years have found in the novel the literary form which most closely satisfies their wishes for a close correspondence between life and art (Watt 1974:32-33).

The lifelikeness of the text depends on the fact that the reader will presuppose as true what the text does not show to be untrue. In realism the material reality of life is more often than not only implicit in the text: it is a presupposition that enables us to focus on the action of the characters. To presuppose is to believe true and hence the implicit background of material reality remains unquestioned. Realism depends on the fact that the reader will draw on real knowledge of the world to create context. In this way, realism has the power to normalise the status quo, for the author allows the "background" to remain undisturbed and unquestioned. It is taken by author and reader to be the natural disposition of society.

2.5 The Adolescent Reader

> The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy, but there is a space of life between, in which the soul

is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain.

Endymion Keats

It is clear from the discussion of juvenile literature and realism that one of the motivating interests of teenage realism will undoubtedly be the education of morality to its readership. In this section I will discuss the adolescent reader with a view to understanding the appeal realism may have to its readership. I hope to show in this section that the moral quest for meaning in realism may have positive repercussions in providing the reader with an opportunity to confront reality and moral value in an imaginative, exploratory way.

Maxine Greene argues that education should aim to encourage the adolescent to play with the boundaries and textures of reality imaginatively. This will enable the adolescent to recognise the plasticity of the status quo, and free the adolescent to reinvent him or herself and society. She calls it "education for freedom" (Greene 1978a). This echoes the arguments of Harding, Freud, Britton and Hardy, discussed at the beginning of Chapter Two. Moreover, education for freedom cultivates what is germane in the cognitive capacity of the adolescent: the ability to surpass given reality through the imagination and regard the world as if it could be otherwise (Cassidy 1998). Adolescence is a time of testing, evaluation and playful reflection.

According to Druker, adolescence is a time when all authority figures are tested as the individual seeks to gain autonomy (Druker 1996). In this striving for autonomy there is a moral and intellectual maturing. Druker cites Clarke, Stewart and Friedman (1987) who define moral maturity as the ability to understand reasons for behaviour; to sympathise with others; and to develop an advanced sense of personal guilt and social injustice (in Druker 1996:9). Moral maturity provides the individual with an understanding of the motivation behind our actions. Bruner argues that the recognition of intention and the prediction of consequences in narrative are the core activities of reading. Hence reading realism, which deals with lived experience and attempts to penetrate beyond it into the realm of human intention and moral truths, should be attractive to the teenage reader.

This development of a moral consciousness is enabled by an increase in cognitive abilities that take place at this age. A thought process called "formal operational thought" develops. With it, the adolescent is able to reason abstractly and is freed from exploring merely the tangible and the concrete: "They are now able to think about what might be, not simply about what is", and "reality is now secondary to possibility" (Inhelder and Piaget, 1958, in Druker, 1996). Donelson and Nilsen, who write on the young adult's novel,

recognise the importance of formal operational thought to the adolescent. It can explain why so many teenagers read avidly, and it can also explain the books they select and the way they read:

> "In short [the young person has] gained possession of all the powers of *If*" (Candless and Coop, 1979). In relation to imaginative literature there is probably no intellectual quality more important than possessing "the powers of *If*". This is true not only of science fiction and fantasy, but with any literature dealing with subjects and viewpoints beyond the reader's actual experience. Even in realistic novels, for example, we are asked to enter into the being and viewpoint of other characters and must think "as if" we were another (Donelson and Nilsen 1980:3).

The definition of formal operational thought tallies closely with one current definition of the imagination, as the "subjunctive mood of the mind". We use the imagination to think of what might, should, and possibly could be. We imagine the possible and impossible. Formal operational thought is an imaginative act, rather than a rational or logical one. Maxine Greene asserts that the inability to think imaginatively undermines the realisation of an authentic identity (Greene in Cassidy 1998:15). Imaginative thinking in the form of formal operational thought is crucial not merely to identity formation but to moral maturity. The imagination is not idle recreation but is integral to the concerns of social order, to our interpretations of our actions and emotions, and to our understanding of our own human value in relation to ourselves and others. Hence when the adolescent imagines "what might be otherwise" to what is, it is most often in the context of the moral questioning of the self in society (Greene 1978a). In "Imaginary gardens with real toads" Meek, Warlow and Barton tell us that because narrative embodies formal operational thought, there is a "storying burst" of reading and storytelling during adolescence (1977b).

Formal operational thought has an important effect on the young reader's concept of story and interpretation of meaning. Applebee describes this change as a shift from summarising the story to analysing parts of the story and generalizing about its meaning. The reader becomes interested in the logic and the reasoning behind the structure of the story and the behaviour of its characters. The reader begins to read the story in terms of its symbolism. The reader analyses personal response to the text and uses this analysis to evaluate the text. Formal operational thought reads the story in a way that is "now consciously concerned with understanding the world through the work" (1978:110). In his research on the responses of adolescents he also discovered that this form of thought brought the reader to a consciousness of empathy or identification with certain characters. This type of response begins from about the age of thirteen, as the reader matures; so does

the complexity of his or her response and his or her use of the story to generalise meaning of the text and the world (Applebee 1978:112-113).

Reading offers a critical opportunity for the teenager to interact virtually with society through the text. The more open the realist text is, the more it enables the reader to play and interact with the social discourses. The more closed the realist text is, the more it pre-digests meaning and prescribes its readership. It informs the reader of his or her identity rather than enables the reader to recognise the plasticity of the discourses that attempt ideologically to place and define him or her. The teenager reading realism responds to this construction of identity and experience in the text out of the perspective granted them by formal operational thought. They are interested in realism because they are interested in perceiving meaning and understanding the world through the text. In this next section I turn to teenage realism and discuss how the genre has been adapted to its readership.

2.6 Teenage Realism

According to MML publicity about the YAA, the competition is aimed at children between the ages of twelve and fourteen, although I would argue that two of the books reviewed in this dissertation are more suited to a readership of ten to twelve. All the YAA stories belong to the genre of teenage realism with the exception of *Travellers*, which is a historical novel. The teenage realist novel uses as its central theme the rite of passage – the teenager embarking upon adult life and the discovery of self, which, incidentally, is also the theme of *Travellers* (Rochmann 1993:18). The crisis of the transition from childhood to adulthood is so common to the teenage realist novel that one can define it as the novel of crisis. The crises of youth and social problems that concern that age are the raison d'etre of the form (1973 Burch). These crisis novels narrate the process of consciousness awakening that the reader is also experiencing. The novels are about coming to terms with the social influences that have contributed to personal development and developing new relationships. The crisis novel has been adapted to the teenage audience from the realist novel, which has similar concerns. The individual's search for meaning and significance is at the heart of the realist novel. Lukács argues that the inner form of the novel tells the story of the

> process of the problematic individual's journeying towards himself, the road from dull captivity within a merely present reality – a reality that is heterogeneous in itself and meaningless to the individual — towards clear self recognition (Lukács 1971:80)

In modernity, this rite of passage towards self-discovery and adulthood involves the teenager confronting the evil and corruption of this world and situating him or herself in relation to it. Examples of books that work with this theme are *The Pigman* by P. Zindel, *I am the Cheese* by R. Cormier and *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger. The recognition of the individual as separate from society requires the protagonist to move beyond present reality to an inner reality that "irradiates the individual's life" (Lukacs 1971:80).

Few genres are more conscious of its readership than teenage realism. It deals with social observations, personality studies and social problems both private and public. The relationship between parent and child, sexuality, the body, friendship, school and society are all recurring themes. Hence teenage realism is also described as the "problem novel". It is frequently accused of being either too closed and prescriptive – offending the literary critics, authors and readers; or too sensational — filling its pages with "pregnancy, pot and the pill" and offending teachers, parents and librarians (Townsend in Burch, 1973:286). Hunt describes the majority of such books as "socio-political treatises disguised as novels" (Hunt, 1995:89). Bashevis Singer complains that it is a literary genre that "aspires more and more to be didactic and utilitarian. It doesn't seem to matter what lesson it teaches – a sociological, psychological or humanistic one – as long as it teaches" (Bashevis Singer in Burch 1973:285).

One of the ways in which teenage realism identifies and directly appeals to its readership is the explicit way in which it marks its departure from the fantasy of childhood. This is often done at the beginning of the narrative. Central to this developing maturity is confrontation with reality and truth. This confrontation is what constitutes maturity. Hence a lot of teenage realism appeals to the reader through its honesty, which becomes a compositional tool of the narrative, determining the style of the prose, the personalities of their characters and the plot of the narrative. This opening paragraph from Bawden's *A Handful of Thieves* (1967) illustrates the two defining characteristics of the genre: firstly, its break from childish fantasy to a realistic mode, and secondly, its direct appeal to the implied reader through an appeal to the desire for maturity:

> This is the story of how we became a gang of thieves. My sister Jinny says I shouldn't start like this, giving away the story in the first sentence, but I think she's wrong. If you're writing a book, you've got to make sure the right sort of people read it, haven't you? Otherwise it's not fair to them or to you. So I'm starting off by saying this is a book about thieves and robbers so that no one who would rather read about fairies or magic or talking animals need bother to go any further. It's about me and my friends and how we turned thieves and brought a criminal to justice (9).

This beginning appeals to the developing maturity of the reader, a maturity that is clearly defined by a deeper interest in reality, a reality that is pre-occupied with justice and morality. From the singling out of the individual, we also see that one of its concerns is to show the triumph of the self over reality and the transcendence of appearance to meaning. Bawden's story tells of how a group of friends became a gang of innocent thieves — they were actually stealing back something that had been stolen from them. Her book does not encourage stealing, it clearly describes the heroes as good, but it does show the heroes testing their moral boundaries and facing responsibility for what they have done. Such a narrative is valuable because it allows the reader to test moral boundaries virtually rather than actually. It also shows the legal and parental consequences of the violation of law.

However not all realism for young readers does this and Hollindale criticises teenage realism of too often "tranquilising emotional complexities" (Hollindale 1995: 85). Its formal intention is honesty and realism, and its compositional tools reiterate this intention on every level. Yet many teenage realist novels fall short of this intention. Because of their didactic thrust, protagonists are not given moral choices in the crises they are faced with, so much as faced with choices the novel has pre-selected. This is the genre of literature employed most often to condition and control social behaviour, the genre that can be least playful and most interested in conforming the reader to a certain ideologically determined set of values.

Education is certainly one of the primary intentions for authors of South African teenage realism. The books intend to raise the consciousness of its readers and promote cross-cultural tolerance and understanding, as the South African critic Rochman claims: "books can make a difference in dispelling prejudice and building community" (Rochman 1993:19). But it is this very didactic intention that causes authors to censor the protagonist's actions and emotions, and hence compromise the realism of the story. For example, in the hope of building community and dispelling prejudice, many South African novels emphasise political correctness instead of the realistic representation of emotional complexity:

> There is too much evidence of pressure on writers (from all points of the politico-moral spectrum) to conform to a predetermined ideology issuing in visible surfaces of the text (Hollindale 1995:25).

Hollindale argues that the emphasis on content stems from a misunderstanding of the way texts work. The text carries ideology on many levels and one often finds that surface obedience to ideology may be sabotaged by the reader's unexamined assumptions. Hollindale argues that ideology is most successfully carried passively, through the literary organisation of the novel (1995:29). To fail to recognise this is to communicate one's political message at the "cost of imaginative depth" (1995:29) and at the risk of ideological self-sabotage. Communication of ideology through surface features like the race of the characters or the location of the story will not convert the unconverted. Surface ideology, "speaks persuasively to the persuaded only" (1995:35). The unconverted remain more often than not convinced of their beliefs.

In order to understand the meaning of a book, one has to "know how to read a novel" (1995:29). For ideology is carried more powerfully in the literary organisation of the text than in its surface features. The intention to conscientize the reader of teenager realism for political reasons creates a way of reading and attaches a particular value to reading, which I would argue limits the kinds of virtual experiences the reader may have. Moreover, changing superficialities of the outer form leads to stories that outwardly appear didactic but inwardly reinforce the status quo (Jordan 1973).

Many South African teenage realist novels are multiculturalist. By multiculturalist I refer to the intention in the text to play a democratising and didactic role to the readers:

> The definition of multiculturalist literature is contingent not on its literary characteristics, but on the purpose it is intended to serve (Cai and Bishop 1994:59). Multiculturalist literature thus is best considered a pedagogical construct (Taxel, 1997: 422)

The purpose of multiculturalism according to South African and American writers is to reflect in literature the multicultural reality of our communities. If we were to specify the kind of realism that the YAA competition represents according to its political intentions, then we could define it as multiculturalist realism.

According to Yokota, multicultural literature is addressed to two kinds of readers. Note how the author refers to "students" rather than readers:

> Students from non-mainstream cultures can profit from having opportunities for understanding and developing pride in their heritage and for building a positive self-concept. In addition, for *all* students, multicultural literature provides vicarious experience from cultures other than their own; and these experiences help them understand different backgrounds, thereby influencing their decisions about how they will live in this culturally pluralistic world (Yokota 1993:160).

This definition creates a primary and secondary model readership. It dictates the content of the literature by the responses it intends to bring about. Hence, the story must fill the own-culture primary reader with pride and build self-confidence, and it must expose secondary readers to other cultures in a way that enables them to recognise and respect cultural diversity. The author assumes that the value and function of literature is to provide a service to readers by helping them to orient themselves morally towards it.

According to Yokota, literature has this ability because it is vicarious experience. Because the vicarious experiences are entered into and believed by the reader, they "must be true to the culture represented" (1993:160). From this we see that multiculturalism attaches a truth-value to representation in the way it enforces a realism that is as accurate as possible. Accuracy and authenticity are strongly emphasised (Yokota 1993, Madigan 1993, Rochmann 1993, Taxel 1997). Because literature is assumed to potentially communicate true representation, multiculturalist thought attaches importance to diligent and accurate representation of surface features. By surface features I refer to the empowering of roles played by women, black and minority culture characters in literature, as well as accurate representations of minority cultures in literature, preferably by authors who belong to that culture.

This notion of authenticity is contestable; for example, according to whose values and understanding are certain representations more authentic than others? Are those values inherent to the culture being represented, or rather to that of publishers and the mainly first world readership of multiculturalist realism? It seems more apparent on looking at the YAA novels that the values are democratic and humanist, informed by the politics of our current cultural and political transformtion. However, one could argue that these values press on towards globalisation and homogenisation more than they affirm solidarity with one's culture and values. The only time that cultural values are celebrated in the global sphere is when they coincide with established Western values. In Chapter Four we will see how closer analysis of the YAA novels reveals that culture and cultural difference are mere iconic indicators of a surface difference that conceal an underlying thrust towards moral and ideological sameness.

From this point we move forward to an application of the theory discussed in this chapter to an investigation of the YAA competition. In the next chapter I examine the cultural values expressed in the production texts of the YAA novels.

Chapter Three: Production of the Novels

We established in the previous chapter that meaning is communicated in the production text as well as in the primary texts. The production texts frame the narrative and assign a role and value to reading. In this chapter I critically discuss what Fiske calls the production texts: the publishers, judges' reports and interviews with judges (Fiske 1987). I also briefly make mention of four informal interviews I had with two librarians, a book buyer and a teacher. Their contributions reflect interestingly upon the production texts. In *The power of the story: fiction and political change* (1994), Hanne explains that the only reason Dostoevsky's *Poor Folk* has been credited with bringing about the abolition of slavery in Russia, was that Russian society already believed that literature had the power to bring about revolutionary change (1994). Dostoevsky did not intend to have any such effect on his audience. Culturally provided expectations of the role and function of literature influences the nature and impact of the dialogue the reader enters into with the narrator (1994: 30). For this reason, I investigate the role the YAA novels are assigned by the production texts. I do this bearing in mind that we established in Chapter One that the author cannot determine appropriate reader response, only imply it.

3.1 The Young Africa Awards

The Young Africa Award competition was first run in 1986. It was MML's response to the Tafelberg Sanlam Prize for Youth Literature, which first ran in 1985. They were the first awards ever to be created by a publishing company. Both competitions solicited a specific kind of text and in doing so created and cornered a market in the South African publishing industry.

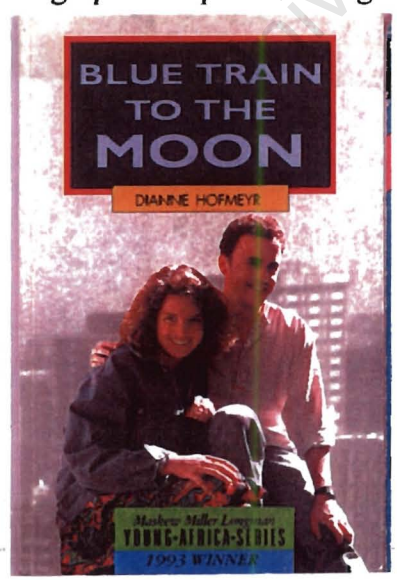
The award stipulated that the book be unpublished and untranslated by a South African author. The book had to be set in South Africa; it had to provide "a strong Southern African flavour" and "a fresh perspective on their [sc. the readers'] lives" (1996 MML publicity in *Educator's Link*). MML publish a winner, a runner-up and give an award to the most promising writer of English as a second language. The books read by my readers ranged from winners to runners-up over an eleven-year period, from *Love, David* in 1986 to *One Bounce*, the 1997 winner. Because the

readers were given a selection of winners and runners-up that span an 11-year period, one needs to ask whether it is indeed possible to generalise about the readers' responses to YAA. Though issues of relevance have changed over that time period, the intention to conscientize the readership through what is relevant has not. There is also sufficient commonality in the construction of the model reader to generalise about his or her response. Moreover reader response is determined as much by the way literature is represented when it is marketed and taught at school as it is by the book. Author, teacher, pupil, parent and publisher all engage with a common ideological perspective on the cultural practice of reading

3.1.1 The pre-selection process of the competition

All the books that were published have been chosen out of a number of entries. The winning novels have " 19__ Winner" emblazoned at the middle bottom of the front cover, beneath the MML Young Africa Awards logo, while the runners up have the MML YAA logo pasted to the middle bottom of the front cover.

There is a great psychological significance attached to medalling a book on its cover. The implicit approval of the text gilds the realism of the books themselves. All use images that indicate the realism and relevance of the story to South Africa, from images of protesting black people in *Day of the Kugel*, to the painted illustrations of poverty and alienation in *Love, David*. Some of the novels use black and white photographs and photomontage on the cover to indicate its realism; but framing this



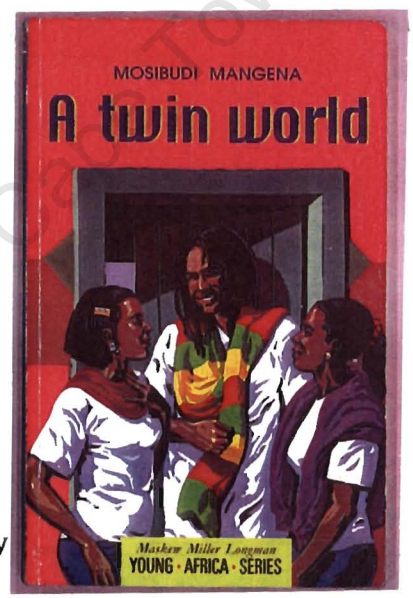
stance towards the reader and reality is the medallion of approval set upon it by the competition, which reinforces its value. The ordinariness of the local is made extraordinary by the way the text is set above or exalted as winner of the competition.

The approval awarded the book also relieves the reader from an element of personal judgement of the book's quality. The quality of the book is in a sense a presupposition according to which the reader's response is made. All the readers I interviewed prefer to read books that have been in a sense, already judged or approved of — they want to read

books that they know are good because parents, friends or the classical canon have recommended them. When a novel wins or is a runner up of a competition, this same purpose of prejudgement is fulfilled. In *Exclusive Books* in Claremont, I found that the only South African novels for adolescents on the shelves, were those that had won either the Sanlam Prize for Youth Literature (or the Sanlam Prys vir Jeug Literatuur) or the Young Africa Awards (May 2000).

In a quantitative study conducted by UNISA of the reading habits of South African children, it was discovered that readers between the ages of eleven and sixteen pay very close attention to a wide range of production texts in their selection of books (Machet, Olen and Chamberlain, 2001). The appearance of the cover is quite influential, as are the blurb and extracts of reviews on the back and inside cover of the book. The prize-winning status of a book, which is always pinned to the cover influences the book's recommendation to the reader.

In an interview with the buyer for the children's section of *Exclusive Books* in Claremont, she claimed that teenagers do not read realism because they want escapism. Teenagers do not like to read about South Africa or local issues, she claimed. The two librarians I interviewed stated that YAA books were read dutifully for school reading projects. A Rondebosch librarian added that she did not recommend YAA books because she knew they would not be read.



Gwen Sharland, the Head of the English department at Westerford High School agreed that the YAA novels were read from a sense of duty though she personally approved of the books. She liked them because she felt they had literary merit, but were not as sophisticated or complex as the classic novels. They were also cheap and copious. Yet Sharland claimed that even for her, reading South African literature was a dutiful activity: "It felt like English Three". She saw reading South African books as an activity that had an educational value. She didn't enjoy these books because she didn't read to be educated, but to "escape". It is clear that the teacher and librarians I interviewed are aware that reading South African literature is

part of a duty as a citizen of the country, though they do not enjoy the novels and would not recommend them.

Machet, Olen and Chamberlain found that of all the possible factors influencing book selection, the recommendations of peers is the most influential (Machet, Olen and Chamberlain, 2001:127). Pre-selection is as important to the prescribers of children's literature as it is to its readers. The importance of pre-selection to the educational departments who are interested in prescribing local literature is made by Van Vuuren:

> by presenting the educational departments with preselected books of a high standard (which is what an award-winning book is perceived to be), the publishing house stands to benefit by having the book set for that year. In addition, it is believed that libraries are more likely to buy award-winning texts than other undistinguished texts (1994:110).

The importance of prejudgement for the reader and the educational department challenges Barthes and those theorists who favour the open text to the closed one. The text is polysemous, and as Barthes argued, even readerly or closed texts may be read in a writerly or open way (Barthes 1975). However, it is the randomness of meaning that unsettles the reader who wants to be assured of the worth of the book even before reading. Not all stories and not all meanings are acceptable; readers only read what has been recommended, judged and approved, whether by friend, teacher or parent.

The process of selection reinforces the cultural practice of reading. This cultural practice determines not only what stories get published, but also what kind of stories gets read. It shows that reading is as much a public experience as it is a private one. This public experience is a heterogeneous one, different kinds of books are recommended in different social strata and in different subcultures. Peers recommend differently to the way parents do. The YAA competition recommends itself to the prescription market through the entire competition and publication process.

3.2 The publishers

The YAA books are authored not merely by the writers but by the publishers, who planned and published the competition. They solicited the texts they would be judging; and selected the judges with a specific "bottom line" objective. The publication of books depends on what Taxel calls the political economy of publishing

(1997:425). The books published by the industry are chosen according to market demands and should be seen as

> part of an entire structure of interrelated institutions in this country which respond to ever-changing political sentiment and to the economic imperative of making a profit from the sale of a product..." (Johnson 1990 in Taxel 1997).

According to MML publisher Sharon Hughes, the YAA competition was temporarily shelved in 1999 and 2000 because school budgets had been trimmed and could no longer afford to prescribe books. The bottom line objective of MML according to Fatima Dada, formerly of MML, is "any literature [that Maskew Miller Longman publishes] is geared to the prescription market" (Van Vuuren, 1994:66). This is the market that determines what gets published. The greatest buyers of books in South Africa are the public libraries and the schools. The public constitutes only 5% of the book buying market in South Africa (Van Vuuren 1994:69 and Dodd 1992). Hence the publisher's marketing strategies are directed at libraries and the education departments. To win their approval these books are marketed in particular ways:

> The marketing team use various strategies to sell the books and these would include, for example, emphasis on black characters and anti-bias material or a focus on a sports theme and so on (Van Vuuren 1994:67).

Publishers anticipate that political correctness will appeal to their market. They assume that the presence of black characters in a book will recommend the literary quality of the book. The publishers were pursuing the market when they aimed the YAA competition at teenagers from grades 8 to 10 in English medium schools (and all through senior school at English second language schools). Books are only prescribed from grade eight upward (Van Vuuren 1994:72). The publishing house identifies itself with education and formal institutions of learning. In an advertisement for YAA in *Educator Link*, a magazine for teachers, the success of the books is measured by the fact that they can be "found in most provincial and school libraries, and are starting to be prescribed in schools" (1996). The subheading makes this clearer:

> Encouraging children to read in a world of television, and finding enough good local literature that they can relate to, have always been a concern for teachers and publishers alike.

The YAA competition shows us how dominant cultural and social beliefs motivate the political economy of publishing — thereby creating a cultural practice that determines

our reader expectations, values and artistic productions. The economic support of the dominant culture through the school setwork market illustrates Bourdieu's theory of culture. The YAA competition dictates an aesthetic attitude by deeming only a particular kind of literature acceptable for educational purposes. In the YAA advertisement, realist, relevant and local stories are preferred. Hence cultural capital is gained through literature that is real, relevant and local. Put differently, the ability to read realism in a socially relevant way is a culturally approved, educationally conferred skill.

The YAA competition is a uniquely South African innovation to solicit texts for prescription. It has led to the creation of a genre of literature for teenagers. The impact of this on the content of books is telling. The content is expected "to bring about changes in South Africa" (Van Vuuren 1994:140) and to improve the reader. These changes are meant to mirror the political transformation South Africa has undergone since 1994. Speaking of the attitudes of librarians, teachers, publishers, judges and authors, Van Vuuren claims:

> Attitudes towards juvenile literature in South Africa vary, but an outlook that is common is the belief in juvenile literature as a means to heal splits in South African society (148).

Literature for young adults is becoming of important literary and political significance, even to university academics, who, until now, have ignored this literature, doubtful of its literary merit. As Mitchell and Smith from the University of the Witwatersrand explain in an unpublished paper about SA teenage realism[1]:

> In South Africa, where more than half of the population is under the age of 15, where change in a new South Africa is still in many ways 'visionary', and where topics of 'high interest' to young people are necessarily about the creation of this new landscape, social change is necessarily about a literary literacy at all levels (Mitchell and Smith 2000:11).

The model reader of YAA texts is influenced by the fact that the buying market is the prescription market. YAA appeals to what South African teenagers should be and should know according to what the publishing house anticipates the educational authorities want – stories that will "heal splits in South African society" (Van Vuuren 1994:148). It is no wonder that, as Van Vuuren explains, these books are not popular

[1] A version of "More than just a love story: Investigating the literary and social significance of the young adult novel in South Africa" by Mitchell and Smith was presented at the Association of English Teachers of South Africa annual conference, Pietermaritzburg, July 9-13, 1995. The year 2000 refers to the date I was electronically mailed these unpublished articles.

with teenage readers because they are perceived by their readers to be "educational" (147). It is for this reason that, in the literary review, I defined YAA literature and South African teenage realism as multiculturalist teenage realism.

3.3 The Judges

The decision to invite texts through a competition that would be judged independently shows the publishers' intent to elicit cultural material that could be stamped with the approval of educational authorities. The judges themselves were teachers and academic specialists in children's and African literature. They evaluated the books on moral, aesthetic and political grounds. The judges were selected for their experience in writing and education: "Our judges are known for their understanding of youth literature – they are either writers or critics in their field" (Educators *Link 1996*).

Brenda Cooper has written a book on Modern African writers, which was published by MML. Quite recently she has produced a compilation of short stories, *Nations of the World: International Stories for Southern African children*. Jay Heale is well known in the community of authorities on children's literature in South Africa. He was a schoolteacher for twenty-five years. He is the president of IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) in South Africa and produced *Bookchat*, the only magazine in South Africa about children's literature. He has been a judge on the Sanlam Awards as well as YAA a number of times. Lesley Beake was a teacher, and has also been published under the competition many times. Di Hofmeyr and Chris Van Wyk are well-known children's writers and previous winners of the competition. I conducted interviews with two of the judges, Brenda Cooper and Jay Heale. Both have judged the competition on more than one occasion and selected the winning authors who were later appointed judges.

After a discussion of their interviews I proceed with a discussion of the judges' reports. A particular conception of literature informs the judges, a conception they either wholly adhere to and zealously reproduce, as in the case of Brenda Cooper, or as in the case of Jay Heale, a concept they do not agree with but concede to.

3.3.1 Brenda Cooper

As an academic in African Literature, Brenda Cooper saw the invitation to judge as an opportunity to be involved in the creation of the market for indigenous literature for teenagers. She explained that it would not only encourage local writers but would provide stories for teenagers set locally. Cooper agreed to judge on the proviso that she would judge independently of the market demands the publishers wished to satisfy:

> So, even if a book did not look like it would be set for various reasons; there was one year where it had quite a lot of swearwords and it was quite controversial; and then the question of it being set for schools could not come into our judgement, we looked at it primarily from the point of view of the one that we thought should win (Interview with Brenda Cooper 2000).

Cooper admits, however, that the publishers were definitely looking for potential setworks, and succeeded with *Love, David*. During the interview, Brenda Cooper discusses her method of judging the entrants to the competitions. She emphasises that stories have what she calls "thematic drama" which she distinguishes from "plot suspense". "Plot suspense" includes any of the pat formulaic plot conventions that are used to heighten suspense and create drama. Such plot conventions are *skop, skiet en donder*, drug heists, cops and robbers and goodies and baddies. These provide "quick fix" excitement. Books that have only plot suspense (she calls it elsewhere "plot drama") lack moral or imaginative resonance because they have no thematic drama. Thematic drama is the use of conventions of plot, like suspense and action as a vehicle for the expression of the writer's own "politics and passions" (Cooper 1997:2). Without this thematic drama the story becomes a shallow, irrelevant tale.

As the interview proceeded it became clear how fundamental political correctness was to her judgement. These are the questions she asked of the book ("way before the transformation" as she pointed out):

> ... how did it educate, what were its standards, what kind of contribution or otherwise was it making in terms of transformation? ... And I'm looking for great writing, that is enjoyable, that is pleasurable, that the kids will enjoy but that will actually, that makes a contribution to values in an enormous way (Interview, 2000).

Cooper went on to say that reams of "Sweet Valley style writing" get submitted to YAA. She never chose these books because of the ideological standards that she brought to her judgement.

According to Cooper, South African literature should educate the reader and carry out the political transformation needed in this country. Through these criteria, Cooper has promulgated a particular notion of the cultural value of literature and, in teaching YAA books, this notion of literature has been conferred to students. Reading for education and to engineer political transformation has become an education conferred cultural skill through the YAA competition and other South African literature aimed at the prescription market, like the Sanlam youth literature prize winners (Bourdieu 1991).

3.3.2 Jay Heale

Heale was on the first panel of judges of the YAA competition in 1986, and then again two years later. He selected *Love, David* to win in 1986 with Brenda Cooper. The criteria for YAA were very similar to the Sanlam Awards prize, he explains. Though the publishers were vague, the fundamental criteria that the judges had to bear in mind was, "would these books sell and, linked to that, were they going to be prescribed for Grade 7-9 readers (Interview with Jay Heale 2000). Hence, because they were aimed at prescription, these texts had to be "acceptable to educational authorities" (2000). Heale also speaks of the unwritten limitations: no mention of God, no criticism of authority, no criticism of government and no alcohol, or any representation of immoral or excessive acts in a positive light. Heale gives an example of being asked to change the metaphor "beer brown water" by his editor in a book he was writing for teenagers because of the mention of the alcoholic beverage. "Forget about if kids enjoy them," he claimed.

YAA books were meant to be chosen for originality, character and plot. The books that were chosen also preached a message of some kind. Heale mentions how a teen panel of reviewers of some YAA books tore the books to shreds, much to the shock of the publishers. Of the book "Streams to Rivers" by Janet Smith (1988) they asked questions like, "How can people expect us to believe this?" From this response it is clear that the reading panel found the books condescending and unrealistic. This begs the question, if readers did not enjoy the book, why did the publishers publish it?

In support of the competition, Heale explained that it provided a new ingredient in what was available to be read. In comparison to the unreal adventure stories of Africa by Europeans, YAA books were meant to be fun, adventurous stories about realistic situations in South Africa. They had to be stories that could be possible. Heale also made the point that these stories in the interest of realism needed to make multiracial settings the point of a book rather than merely a fact. This statement also confirms the multiculturalist political intention of these realist books. Yet, Heale goes on to say that the reality seemed to put the readers off.

Heale said that one needed a teacher to lead the students into realistic literature. However, he makes the point that the negative reader responses to YAA can be explained by the way reading has been presented in South Africa. Reading is approached as a duty or as homework. This statement confirms the teachers and librarians comments discussed earlier. To say that books are read dutifully as part of the school requirements is to say that books are not read for pleasure and that reading possibly produces displeasure in the reader. It is to infer that reading is an outward act that has little inward effect.

An analysis of the judges' reports of Brenda Cooper, Lesley Beake and Di Hofmeyr follows. These reports are interesting to see consistency through the years of criteria. Entrants also showed consistency in the kind of stories they submitted which illustrates the kind of literature they expected the judges to award. One reason for including these reports therefore, is to show how pervasive this particular concept of the cultural practice of reading for teenagers is, not only amongst the educational authorities but throughout society. The producers of a text are never limited to those involved in its material production; reader reception depends on the meanings that are attributed to reading by the members of its society.

3.4 The Judges' Reports

All the reports I have were given to me by Hughes, the MML editor. A total of 154 books and short stories were reviewed individually between 1995 and 1998 in the 9 judges' reports I have. I have one page length report each from Lesley Beake and Di Hofmeyr from 1995, one report from Chris Van Wyk from 1997 and six reports from Brenda Cooper from between 1995 and 1998. In these six reports, Cooper evaluates

151 books. Only Van Wyk and Cooper reviewed books individually; Beake and Hofmeyr wrote general reports.

In the next section I discuss briefly each judge's perspective of the books.

3.4.1 Brenda Cooper

As Cooper is the most frequent judge on the competition I thought it worthwhile to discuss her reports in more detail. These were her criteria:

The works must be "specifically set in the environment of our continent" (Cooper, 1997:2). This demand creates a sense of national and African identity. Cooper rejects books that were well written and interesting, but "could have arisen out of any time or place and did not seem to me to be appropriate winners, however talented their authors obviously are" (1997:2). Books that had no clearly articulated political or moral message were not awarded. Books whose message was politically objectionable were also rejected:

> This story is competently written but I quite unashamedly put it into this bottom group, given that it is a totally reactionary tale of innate and insuperable differences between black and white, like the differences in species between the canary and the goldfish. This story is worthy of the worst days of Apartheid ideology (1998:6).

The way certain books handled issues was also regarded as outmoded and dated. For example, by 1995 the story of an interracial relationship told from a white perspective was outmoded. The setting of the book had also to "show an awareness of some of the complexities of the politics". Cooper rejected glossed-over or easy solutions to the problems of interracial relationships like the Rainbow Nation syndrome (1997:2).

The politics of the book should be "integrated into the emotional lives and relationships of the characters, which are not necessarily in and of themselves political" (1997:3).

The plot and themes of the book have to avoid clichés. As examples of this she refers to drug dealers, poachers, kidnappers, the problem parent, child abuse and illness. These "spectacular problems" tended to get solved in simplistic ways, with unreal happy endings.

Finally, the writing has to illustrate some creativity in its use of imagery, symbols, style and language. It has to have pace and preferably some humour.

It is clear from her criteria that the YAA novels were intended to play a political role for its readers. Her reports reveal something of the entrants' notions of the cultural practice of reading for teenagers. A dominant complaint across the six Cooper reports is didacticism. Cooper berates this tirelessly, not that the writer takes a moral and political stand, which she clearly insists on, but that the morality is simplistic, narrow, politically incorrect at times but most importantly, overriding. Cooper discusses the textual affect of the author's stance towards the reader:

> In fact, my general feeling was that too many of the novels shortlisted were too simply written and too geared to a readership younger, in fact, than a teenage audience. I felt this particularly in relation to their language, which was simplistic but also with regard less to their themes than to the manner in which these themes were handled and how easily they came to happy closure (Cooper 1997:2).

Hunt claims that the study of ideology in children's literature has confined itself simplistically to surface features of a text because of an ignorance of the way ideology is carried in a text (1994). One can compare this to the YAA entrants who when solicited to express a desirable ideology in the texts, sacrificed plot and character development for the moral lessons they wanted to instruct in the reader. Many of the entrants did not understand that ideology is most persuasively carried through the devices of narrative structure and rhetoric. This result has also something to do with the power differential between author and reader in the teenage novel, which these writers recognised:

> With books for "children" or "unskilled" readers, because of the status of the audience, the author-reader (or narrator-narratee) relationship is a more than usually unbalanced power relationship ... Drawing on the power-codes of adult-child, book-child, and written-oral relationships it prescribes what the reader must be, and indeed, because there is both an authoritarian and an educational element involved, what the reader can be (Hunt 1991:84).

These writers grasped the educational nature of literature for teenagers before they grasped the fact that teenage literature, like all fictional literature is recreational. Conversely there were those writers whose stories were purely "entertaining": action, fantasy, fairy tales, adventure, romance, time travel. Cooper claimed that there were many books like that already on the market and dismissed them as boring, superficial and formulaic.

3.4.2 Van Wyk, Hofmeyr and Beake

For Van Wyk, it was the lack of analytical insight into culture and contemporary society that marred the prize-winning book, *One Bounce* (Ntsele and Bregin 1997). It robbed the story and characters of depth and failed to be realistic. According to Van Wyk, not all stories need to convey a message, but if they do, he claimed it must be expressed through the story and the characters. Van Wyk's main complaint is that nothing innovative or original was being done, that the stories were all predictable and formulaic and their characters stereotyped. Van Wyk also complained that certain books were poorly fictionalised personal experiences. Books like these were "one large catharsis", heavily negative and making for uncomfortable reading.

Hofmeyr accused writers of being condescending. This is what she said about the model readership from the 1995 YAA submissions:

> I was struck while reading them that many stories remained on a superficial level, almost as if the writer felt the reader would not be able to grasp more complex issues. The reader was seldom challenged ... Too often, the authorial voice came through with regurgitated bits of preachy diatribe on sex, violence, AIDS etc... [Sic] schoolteacher proselytising type of writing. And while books for teenagers need to reflect moral issues, the questions should be posed rather than answered.

She remarked that the stories moralise, not through plot or character, but quite baldly, through preachy passages. Like Cooper she complained of a lack of sense of humour and a sense of fun. Another complaint is that the books were superficial and dealt with issues unrealistically. The plots lacked energy and the characters eccentricity. Finally, there was no suspense in many of the stories and none of them experimented with the narrative form.

Lesley Beake regarded rainbow nation relationships positively and said that the representations of South African politics in the 1995 YAA submissions were "accurate". It is not clear how a story can ever represent a political situation in a novel accurately, nor is it clear how one judges accuracy. Her main criticism was that the authors of these books themselves, did not read enough teenage literature or literature of any kind. They were not familiar with the conventions of narrative or the literary devices they could use.

Judging from the manuscripts that were submitted, the entrants clearly anticipated that the winning novel would need to fulfill a particular social function. The greatest problem the judges report is the extent to which the stories moralised.

The second problem conversely, was that some stories were filled with adventure and excitement but failed to analyse our social situation in a relevant or perceptive way. The third yet pervasive comment we read is that the stories are formulaic, the plots are unlikely and thin and the characters clichéd. Hofmeyr, Beake and Cooper all enjoyed and approved of the books they had selected.

Having looked at why certain books were disqualified and others awarded, it is interesting to read Philippa Garson of the *Mail and Guardian's* response to the 1994 YAA winners (*The Red-Haired Khumalo* and *Joe Cassidy and the Red-Hot Cha-Cha*):

> Maskew Miller Longman are bringing out these very PC, very "now" and very readable novelettes at a fast pace.... Like lots of readable (but often trashy) fiction, though, these two novels are rather formulaic, with plots that depend on outlandish coincidences, tumultuous climaxes and happy endings (Garson 1994).

This is the response of a reviewer to books that the judges had selected to win; books they had approved of, yet books that suffer from the same faults as the submissions that failed to be selected. It brings into question the judgement of winners; the teen panel on *Streams to Rivers* found the book unbelievable (Jay Heale, Interview 2000). Moreover, many of my own research subjects responded like Garson with claims to both their predictability and their unbelievable turns of plot. This begs the question as to how much power the judges ultimately had or, indeed, were the judges' own criteria too content-focussed and politicised.

3.5 Conclusion

MML's Young Africa Awards competition provides a case study of the way in which culture capital is created in particular cultural practices. In the award winning process of the competition, certain books were selected according to a highly politicised set of criteria. Only these books were selected. The critiques of all the judges discussed reveal that almost all the entrants to the competition had a cultural practice of reading for didactic purposes in mind, as most of the entrants erred on the side of didacticism and moralised at the expense of plot. Heale, who is more aware of the readers' responses to such books, spoke cynically at times about the educational and political agenda of the books. His comments anticipate the readers' responses. Teachers and

librarians seem also to recognise the politically educational value these books are meant to have. They describe the act of reading YAA novels as dutiful, something that will win approval.

The award winning process and the purchase of YAA books for prescription or library reading represents an education conferred cultural practice of reading literature. This cultural practice has determined not only why one reads, but also the kind of themes and stories that make this cultural practice most successful. The competition played a role of pre-selection and recommendation to the prescription market, and in doing so underscored those stories they believed were socially acceptable. Acceptable stories were stories that dealt with or anticipated political transformation or that deal with South African issues. They were stories that were concerned with conforming the reader in social behaviour and beliefs to what educational authorities deem desirable. Those texts did not encourage a playful attitude towards South African social realities, which is so important to engaging the reader as a creative agent in the reality being represented. I refer here to the discussion on the importance of seeing reading as an act of play or recreation in Chapter One, wherein it is argued that the reader is shown to have greater creative agency in the reading act as previously understood. This view has been propounded by amongst others, Freud (1990a) and Harding (1977). Seeing reading as a form of play and the reader as the co-creator of meaning through play with the text, loosens the fixed-ness of meaning and empowers the reader to conceive of new possibilities and solutions to the issues discussed in the issue-based realism, of which the YAA novels are examples.

We will see in the next chapter that many books fix or reinforce meaning rather than encourage playfulness.They do this by setting up within the plot a series of alternatives that end either with punishment by death, suffering or rejection or with the reward of love, family and romance. This education-conferred literacy of fictional literature is functional. It does not recognise the value of play to the developing imagination of the juvenile reader, nor the playfulness of reading. Play as we recall from the literary review, is something that Freud and Harding agree is a fundamentally creative activity; and reading is a sophisticated form of creative play. In and of itself, play does not appear to be functional nor does it produce anything socially valuable. Yet as Harding shows, it creates a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious, a dialogue wherein the player, who in this situation is the reader,

plays with the elements that compose reality (Harding 1977). In playing with reality, the reader begins to encounter it, and expand its plastic boundaries beyond the established status quo, to what could be. The playfulness of reading also enables the reader to understand himself or herself better and this, in turn, encourages intellectual agency, which is the ability to be both critical and creative (Harding 1977).

It is possible, as certain themes and genres become more acceptable than others, that the culturally determined value of literature will lead to the elimination of playfulness from the text. The cultural practice proposed through the YAA competition is not playful, but quite narrowly prescriptive. The more playful a story the more open the text, as Barthes explained (Barthes 1975). The playful text does not prescribe reality through the stories and themes that it selects, it does not determine the meaning the reader will arrive at and hence, one cannot determine the effects such readings will have on society. To prescribers of literature this may present a danger. Yet in challenge to judges, prescribers and teachers, I argue, following Eco, that the more closed the text is, the more likely it is that readings of the text will be aberrant. Reader response is not easily controlled, nor should eliciting a specific response from a reader be the motive of the text's producers. Not only is it a futile motive, but it also misunderstands the imaginative act of reading.

According to the pilot study conducted by Machet, Olen and Chamberlain of the reading habits of South African adolescents, young people (between age eleven and sixteen) are not interested in finding images of themselves in the books they read (2001). The nationality, skin colour and gender of the characters are not important to them. Factors that are important to them in fiction are those that "reflect contemporaneity", which requires the characters to live at the same time, be the same age and have the same interests (2001:128). This requires an analytical insight into contemporary society, as Van Wyk explained in his report, but it does not require politically correct representations of gender or colour. This does not suggest that stories should deal soberly with contemporaneity, for heavy-handedness is something which the judges themselves reject. More than other genres, realistic books need to remain playful. They need to reveal the constructedness of reality and enable the reader to "play" with the elements that compose it. For in representing reality in any other way, the authors and producers suggest the status quo is concrete, overwhelming and unchanging, not something that can be changed or re-invented and not something that encourages human agency.

Chapter Four: The Primary Texts

In this section I will discuss the YAA novels read by the twelve students I interviewed. The novels were all either winners or runners-up in the YAA competition. The books qualified, according to a set of criteria, to become part of a literary genre that is as determined by political intention as it is by literary merit. The authors were successful because they recognised the competition's criteria and satisfied them. Most of the authors are involved in media or education. Ludman and Rosenthal are journalists on the *Weekly Mail and Guardian* and Janet Smith is a journalist on the *Star*. Mangena is a mathematician and politician. Beake, Bregin, Slingsby and Hofmeyr are or were all teachers. Ntsele is a producer of educational radio programmes.

Of these authors, Beake, Smith, Bregin, Hofmeyr and Case have all won or have been published under YAA more than once. Hofmeyr and Beake have also been judges on the competition. The journalists have written a number of review and comment articles for the *Weekly Mail and Guardian* on South African teenage literature. So there is a significant overlap across the levels of textual production that indicates consensus on the question of the function and nature of literature for young readers.

The discussion proceeds book by book. Each book is first summarised and then critiqued. I conclude with a general discussion of the literature reviewed. In my critique I ask a variety of questions of the text.

- What is determined as relevant to South African teenagers by these books?
- How are the characters and experiences represented?
- What is the stylistic quality of the book?
- Who is addressed in the novel through the device of the model reader?

Where there is evidence outside the novel itself of the author's intention in writing the book, the discussion of the novel is longer.

4.1 A Twin World by Masibudi Mangena

1996 Runner Up

Summary

In this story, the plot is preoccupied with black racial and national identity and revolves around a crisis of identity and cultural roots. This is provoked through a confrontation of the central characters by Kahinda, a Ugandan Rastafarian. The two central characters are Ntsizi and his girlfriend Khomotso. Ntsizi reacts positively to the challenge to his social identity, but his girlfriend Khomotso reacts negatively. It role-plays cultural tensions within the black community between adopting a Western religion and cultural practice or returning to one's African roots. The story shows the negotiation and ultimate compromise both make for each other's sake. This story is not adventurous and has a slow-moving plot. It is taken up mostly with dialogue that shows the negotiation of all these cultural differences.

Critique

The prose is often clichéd, stilted and unnatural. The Rastafarian is described as a "magnificent specimen of a man" (25), greetings are described as "exchanging some pleasantries", the female character "turn[s] on her charms" (17). The awkward turn of phrase that the author often slips into breaks the narrative flow. Here is an example:

> She watched open-mouthed as her sister, standing on the same spot, facing her rope-haired partner, moved her arms and legs gracefully while Kahinda did all the hard work around her (29).

This style of writing breaks the narrative flow with awkward phrases like "did all the hard work". References to sexuality or physical intimacy are referred to in veiled, antiquated ways:

> The women looked up at their husbands. The manner of entry and the expressions on the faces of the two fellows told the girls what mischief was on their minds (122).

Mangena describes the couple kissing as a "naughty bundle" (70). Representation of gender is inarguably sexist. Most of the dialogue in the novel is made between the two male characters who each represent the cultural alternatives that they face. Ntsizi is shown to be the rational one, learning about the Rasta culture and opening himself to change, while Khomotso rejects him irrationally because he is strange. The plot favours biased, traditional stereotypes of male and female. Kahinda, whose Rasta

alternative is clearly represented as being the approved one, describes his fiancée, without irony, as "my queen". In this scene the author introduces the reader to the twin sisters:

> The identical Mpho and Khomotso were so beautiful one could be forgiven for believing they were designed to decorate the world rather than to perform the mundane functions humanity is condemned to. (11)

The author's representation of sexuality reveals an unawareness of the exposure of most teenagers and children to explicit representations of sex in other media.

The story retains rather traditionalist attitudes towards certain issues, like gender representation, yet it is a gospel of its ideology, and intends to provoke the reader to a new kind of social consciousness. The challenge to worldview and consciousness that the characters undergo is intended by the author to provoke the reader to a similar challenge to self-awareness. Consequently, there is a large amount of information packed into the text about Rastafarian beliefs and culture, African history and contemporary society, reggae music (there are extensive quotes from reggae lyrics) and even Rastafarian diet and clothes. The dedication reads:

> To all those young people who appreciate the danger of all habit forming substances, legal or illegal, and those who are prepared, without prejudice, to listen to another point of view.

One cannot confidently call this realism; it is more of a modern moral fable, ending in the happy and beautiful double marriage of the twin sisters. This book is preoccupied with black cultural identity; the author's political intention is overriding.

This book has been informed by the political motive of multiculturalism to the extent that the ideology has determined the plot, characters and conclusion of the story. In the story one couple represent a new African identity; the other, one compromised by Western imperialism. The story ends with the compromise of both couples to the other; each gives up practices that offend the other. The message is clear, it is important to develop a uniquely African identity, but cross-cultural tolerance is equally important. Here is the author's comment on *A Twin World*. It shows how the plot and character construction were determined by the moral and social issues he was addressing, as well as the perceived relevance to its readership:

> I have lived in South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe in the last fifteen years. And in all these countries I was struck by the damage alcohol, tobacco and marijuana were causing, especially among the youth.... I always wanted to do something about this but did not know how. After meeting some Rastafarians from Jamaica, I found I could use the differences in attitudes between

> Rastafarians and others to address these issues through a story. The result was *A Twin World*. I also sought, through this story, to demonstrate the link between the building of strong characters in individuals and consciousness of cultural values. The book is not a moral crusade, but a story that throws up issues for debate by young adults (MML 1996).

The model reader is clearly a black teenager faced with the temptation to substance abuse. It offers its solutions through a moral integrity (strong character) formed from a sense of cultural identity.

4.2 Wake Up Singing by Jane Rosenthal

1990 Winner

Summary

South African artists, both black and white, can change the attitude of the whites. (Baumann in Jenkins 1993:28)

This quote from another South African teenage novel reflects the intention of Rosenthal's book, *Wake up Singing*. It is the story of sixteen year old Nick, a white South African who confronts the injustices of apartheid in the context of the school riots of 1985. He befriends black teenagers his own age who, unlike him, fight to be at school and have an education. Nick defies his cadet teacher, his parents and even suffers persecution from his friends for objecting to the blind obedience that he is demanded to show to the unjust system. A love story is wound into this awakening-to-consciousness story. It is through his relationship with the defiant Em and her brother that his eyes are opened. The story does not resolve the issues it brings up; there is a hurried and almost irrelevant reconciliation between Nick and Mel, the friend who turned against him. Nothing is said of his relationship with his parents, which had deteriorated to the point where he moved out of the house by the end of the book.

Critique

The style is unadorned, very simple and appropriately blended with slang in the dialogue and narration. The slang is that of a white English speaking South African, littered with Afrikaans, references to the army and white South African culture, for example, reference is made to the English Afrikaaner conflict, velskoens and boerkultuur (p.26), tie-dyed clothes and going "bossies" (p.23). The slang is used to

effectively set up the social and cultural context of the story, which is white South African during the apartheid era.

Its appeal to the teenage reader through romance and action mars the reality of what Nick is faced with in the story. All cares for injustice are overshadowed by Nick's confrontations with girlfriend, friends and family. In the adventure of Nick's life, Nick plays the white hero to the black victim. He is allowed to show outrage at the injustice of apartheid so that our sympathies go out to the beneficent white with a social conscience, while sympathy for the black characters is minimised. Sympathy for black people is communicated to the reader through dialogue between the white characters.

The role of black people during apartheid is cast in terms of the "struggle", hiding from danger, being caught and protesting in the street while the policemen take photographs. The danger of a book like this is that its representation of apartheid is romanticised into an adventure book story for its young readers. The black characters, Zach in particular, are characters of remarkable moral insight who are founts of mature wisdom, espousing values of peace and forgiveness. They have healthy, caring friendships with those white people who will befriend them. This is dangerously unrealistic, as it lacks insight into or even denies the negative psychological and emotional consequences of racism and oppression. The unspoken white fear of black vengeance ("swaartgevaaar") is swiftly silenced.

Van Vuuren and Jenkins claim this novel provides a "deliberately slanted portrayal" by the author whose ideological intentions anticipate the new South Africa (Jenkins 1993: 136-7) but I would argue that the book is about Nick and the whites' experience of apartheid. There are many more confrontations between Nick and his schoolteachers, friends and family, than interactions with black people. Sympathetic insight is directed towards Nick's white friends:

> Oh please, Em. Poor Celia. Her father gives her a heck of a hard time. She says he's got this assault rifle. Talks all the time about terrorists and so on. She hears nothing else at home (91).

As a result, the story ends happily with reconciliation with his friends and a confrontation with his father and teachers. The ending sees Zach, Nick's black friend, still in detention and the black friends whom he had sheltered gone. Their intrusion into his world is safely distanced as he relaxes on the rugby field with his friends.

As much as the previous book was written for a black audience, this one is written for a white model reader, one who is racist. The author addresses the reader's racism in a way that attempts to anticipate healthy relationships with black people but which in fact sustains the patronising paternalistic relationship between white and black people. The intention to anticipate a new reality in the text shapes plot, but style and characterisation succeed only in reinforcing the author's unexamined prejudices.

4.3 One Bounce Andrew Ntsele, Janet Smith

1997 Winner

Summary

Hale and Kop were friends who grew up together during the Apartheid years in Soweto. Both Hale and Kop's fathers, with whom the happiest childhood memories are associated, are victims of apartheid. Both their fathers die in mysterious circumstances, and the story shows how each copes with his grief in different ways. Kop, the intelligent, gifted, one turns to crime and gangsterism to overcome his past and present, while Hale is an "AboFuture", who has chosen the way of education. He throws himself into his studies, and buries himself in dreams of the past. The story shows the deprivation of life in gangster-ruled townships, the misery of the parents and the exploitation of young girls. It ends with the tragic murder of the gangster friend.

Critique

The narrative is peppered with Tsotsitaal (blend of Xhosa, Afrikaans and Sotho). The effect on the realism is to make it more immediate and involve the reader in the reality of the story. Many of the Tsotsitaal words convey a texture of experience that would have been difficult to convey in its complexity and originality without Tsotsitaal. Many of the words are ironic, for example, the black girl or boy who places his or her faith for advancement in education is called an "AboFuture". The use of the English "future" is reminiscent of "teacher speak" about the great benefits of education, particularly about learning to speak English:

> I like guys like Kop, not aboFuture who think education is the key to a bright tomorrow. Money is the key. Money is the key (p.27).

This device of realism enables a much greater sympathy and awareness of the quality of experience of the characters in the story. Its model reader is broader than the previous two books; it provides a glossary to the slang. All the other books with the exception of *Travellers*, the historical novel and the *Song of Be*, about the KhoiSan, use slang but do not provide a glossary. The author thus assumes that the readers will know the slang, even though it is most often in another language, Afrikaans. The very provision of a glossary indicates that the readership may not belong to the culture of the characters in the novel. We recall Bakhtin's assertion that the use of social languages in the novel is an indicator of its realism and its democratic heteroglossia (1994). However, he also made the point that social languages, of which any slang or jargon are examples, are ideologically translated by the author and set in an hierarchical relationship with the other social languages which compose its heteroglossia, including the narrative voice. The failure to provide any kind of glossary in other YAA books which use Afrikaans slang limits reader access to the story and clearly defines a model reader. This is a failure on the part of the YAA competition whose intention was to produce books for readers of a broad relevance to South African teenagers. The provision of a glossary in *One Bounce* levels out the hierarchy set up between the social languages in the story. It invites access into a world of experience inaccessible to most readers, while maintaining the intimacy of that personal experience through the use of untranslated slang in the text.

The book has its share of clichés and crass metaphors; for example, "there was pap to feed the nation" (p.24). However from the lyrical passages, the maturity of the narrative voice, in the way it deals with the inner conflicts and emotions of its characters, I would argue that the model reader is a South African teenager of any colour, aged twelve and over. It involves the reader's imagination throughout the book in its lyricism, use of metaphors and variation in narrative styles and voices. The story raises the reader's awareness of the effects of apartheid on teenagers today, who only lived through the end of that era. This is why the book is so effective, for it locates the violence and the desperation of black teenagers living in the townships in the personal historical experience of apartheid. Because personal experience rather than adventure is the focus of the story, it is more realistic and more evocative for a wider-ranging and maturer audience.

This is one of the most successful books in the series and does not appear to be didactic at all. The book is not concerned with teaching lessons. It tells a story and in

the construction of the characters, their histories and relationships the reader is made to sympathise with the character's lives. A sense of desperation, grief and tragedy is conveyed through the story. There is also a strong narrative presence in the story, and much of the meaning, the characters and events are pre-digested for the reader. Van Wyk critiqued this story as not supplying a historical and "New South African" political context whereas Cooper described the book as a highly political novel. I tend to agree with Cooper. The strength of the book lies in its strong construction of character and relationship through which it consequently creates reader empathy while being both exciting and original.

Unlike other YAA books *One Bounce* does not present skin colour as a problem that needs to be overcome for the sake of cross-cultural acceptance. It deals in detail with the character's experiences as black people within their own community. The story indicates that education is the only "way out" of the township and that crime does not pay. The ending and the representation of Hale's integrity and desire to succeed through education suggest that education is the solution. *One Bounce* appears to teach the reader a lesson. However, this lesson is not the focus of the story and does not dwarf the story in any way. The story is not interested in cultivating pride in colour, culture or nationality, nor even in determining the characters by their history and social status. It shows their humanity beyond this, their agency, their desires and dreams. Consequently, I would judge it to be the most successful of the YAA novels in terms of its realism, its compassion for its characters and its representation of their human struggle.

4.4 Blue Train to the Moon by Dianne Hofmeyr

1993, Winner

Summary

Like the popular adolescent novels, *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Diary of Adrian Mole*, this story makes use of the diary form to record the narrative. This is the story of how Sylvie Steytler copes with the challenges that face her. These include her mother and grandmother and the family situation. Her response to her father's desertion of the family is to seek solace in her friends. Her friend Sandra however is a rootless, lost soul who leads her astray. She finds herself at a party where she gets drunk and sleeps with a stranger. The boy develops an affection for her and pursues her until they become involved in a relationship only to discover, to the dismay of

both, that he, Mario, has AIDS. The book takes the reader through their relationship and her emotions as she fears her infection by the virus as well. The story closes with her reconciliation with her mother after she finds her diary and reads it.

Critique

The style is naive and complements the diary form. The naïve style of writing consists of repetition for effect, exclamatory remarks in capital letters and visual expression, for example, "I'm confused. Confused. CONFUSED!" The narrative also uses similes that would appeal to teenage experience, for example, "It dragged on like a sentence without any commas or full stops" (1993:3). Use of short sentences and adjectives expressing extreme states are also used to express the emotional roller coaster of adolescence.

The ending is unlikely; one assumes most teenagers would view the mother's reading and writing in the diary as a violation of privacy. The relationship between Mario and Sylvie also lacks credibility. Mario is the man who slept with her while she was high, endangering her with AIDS in a moment of vulnerability while she was a virgin. The same character turns out to be a gentleman, who loves her for who she is, though he does not know her. This turn of events seems very unlikely at the level of character development in the story. We get no perspective into the mind or heart of Mario, hence his turnabout is contrived purely for romantic appeal.

Though the narration is amusing at times, the unfolding of events is not believable. The relevance of the story lies in the involvement of the AIDS issue. The two main characters are white and there is no mention of colour, nor people of colour in the story. In a discussion of *Blue Train to the Moon*, Hofmeyr claims that her novel is not primarily intended to bring about social change. She does intend to politicise and expose her readers to 'sensitive issues', but this priority takes a second place to writing an enjoyable story and constructing her characters plausibly:

> A book should expose teenagers to sensitive issues but I don't believe it's the prerogative of the author to take sides or be intrusive. *Blue Train to the Moon* is not a book on AIDS. It's a story about textures of relationships. About a girl questioning society and the rules that are imposed on her and at the same time dealing with changes in her emotional as well as intellectual powers (Mitchell and Smith, 1997: 11).

Later in the interview, she imagines the use of her book in classroom discussion. Hofmeyr is therefore fully aware of the didacticism and relevance of the book. She

cannot claim to be neutral on issues that she is representing, for she is inevitably representing this issue from a particular stance. Moreover the representation of AIDS, drug abuse and sexual promiscuity all infer a moral standard of behaviour. This is evident from the plot and the development of character. Many strong lessons are clearly communicated to the audience in this way. There is a system of punishment and reward set up in the book whereby the author shows a clear connection between the dysfunctional family, drinking, taking drugs, sexual activity, misery and, ultimately, death through AIDS. In the story, the rewards of love are received through communication and reconciliation with parents, long term romantic relationships that do not involve drugs, drink, parties, religion, family acceptance and trips to the zoo. Hofmeyr is therefore not merely exposing sensitive issues but clearly guiding the reader to morally acceptable behaviour offering love as a reward or suffering and death as a punishment.

4.5 Joe Cassidy and the Red Hot Cha Cha by Janet Smith

1994, Runner Up

Summary

Diane returns from England where she grew up in exile from South Africa during the apartheid era. She returns after the transformation but not untouched by the pains of apartheid. Her father had been killed by a letter bomb in England and she returns in a state of grief. The story shows her experience in South Africa, her adjustment to school, her fledgling romance and the loneliness of her grief. She meets a boy, Joe Cassidy, at school and they are attracted to each other. Both are shy and stricken by the effects of apartheid, though in different ways. They discover by the end that their destinies are bound in tragedy as well as romance when Joe reveals to her that his father worked for the Special Branch of the government as an explosive expert. His speciality was letter bombs. They proceed together in a healing process that leads them to let go of the burden of the past and step with renewed strength into the future.

Critique

This novel is marred by cliché; the reader gains little insight into the personalities of the main characters and the texture of their experiences. Here, for example, is a moment when Diane, the returned exile, remembers her father. The use of clichéd

images excludes the reader from sympathy with the character even though sympathy is what the author intends to elicit:

> She looked into the face of the father who had played in the winter snow in his white dressing gown. Run in the autumn rain to buy English muffins from the pub. Picked fruit in the summer. Listened to Mozart in the spring.
> His mouth was gentle and his eyes were warm (Smith 23).

This example is one of many and illustrates the means by which the reader is excluded from identifying with any of the characters' experiences. The scene of psychological breakthrough is full of sobbing and vulnerability, yet merely to describe tears and sadness does not enable the reader to feel with the character.

The construction of both characters is whitewashed. Their emotional maturity, sadness and goodness seem unrealistic, for they show no negative qualities, nor exhibit any negative outcomes of their individual tragedies. Such sweetness differs from the kind of characters teenage realism is more familiar with in the American and British novels; there is none of the spunk, rebellion or energy that often defines characters, and even the entire genre. This story has no action; the denouement is cathartic, the psychological breakthrough of both main characters. This ending, though tragic, seems to be entirely unrealistic, that Dianne should meet and fall in love with the son of the man who may have killed her father is too great a coincidence. If this were the case, more could have been made of the tragic element. As it is, it seems both ridiculous and not believable.

The reader is constructed within the story as someone who can identify with and share in the traumas of the two main characters. This book is one of the few deliberately about the way young readers from cultures on either side of the fence set up by apartheid deal with its painful consequences. The relevance of the book lies in the open confession and healing of the wounds of the victims of apartheid. It is also about the importance of reconciliation between the races as a part of this healing.

4.6 Love, David by Dianne Case

1986, Winner

Summary

Of all the YAA books published in the last fifteen years, *Love, David* must be the most successful and well known. It has been prescribed for schools countrywide and has won subsequent awards after its publication. It is the story of a family living on

the Cape Flats in absolute poverty. It deals with the harsh living conditions, the lovelessness of the children's lives. David is the eldest of the children, and the only stepchild. His stepfather abuses him, and eventually he rebels and leaves home to live and work with his new gang family in a shebeen. The police catch up with him for the crime of petty theft and he is sent to live in a boy's home. The family is given a council house and things begin to look up. The story blends the difficulties of life with the tenderness that is shared between the children, the fun they have playing games and the joy of finding a little dog which they adopt together.

Critique

This is what Case said of *Love, David,* in the introduction to the American edition:

> This book was written with love for my land and my people, with the hope that it will in some way contribute toward reconciliation of the people of this country who for the past forty years, under the apartheid laws have lived in racially classified groups, totally isolated from one another. The book is an attempt to share a culture with those who do not know about it (Rosenthal 1992b).

This quote illustrates the author's intention, to have an active part in the peace and reconciliation process following apartheid. It also shows that the intended reader is white, because apartheid was engineered by white people, and it is between them and the other races of this country that reconciliation has first been sought. This book has been prescribed for schools across the country. However, it falls into the same condescending trap of preaching to its audience. From the mouth of the young come philosophical insights into life that jar against our knowledge of the character, in terms of character development and the points in that development where these 'insights' occur. Here is such an insight, early into the novel, that doesn't ring true:

> One day I was thinking about my future when I realised that we all had choices. We could decide, in our own lives the path each of us should follow. These choices made us the person we would be. Although Mamsie's choices were all good, to the benefit of others, they were bad for her own life. … This sense of awakening made me ecstatic. I was in control of my life and the person I wanted to be (1986: 12).

These preachy moments rob the narrative of spontaneity and credibility. The narrative style is not always natural, reading at times in the voice of a sensitive ten-year-old, and at times peppered with phrases that indicate greater maturity as in the above quotation. At times the English is simple and dipped in words and phrases from the

Kaapse dialect, but at other times the English is sophisticated. I refer here to phrases like: "occupants of the house", "life pattern", "I have many grouses about winter weather", "like lightning he darted forward". I do not criticise the phrases themselves but find expression in this ten-year-old's narrative does not consistently construct a character that has believably grown up in a squatter camp, who has had very little education and spends much of her time begging, playing and selling plants on the side of the road.

The author intends to introduce the readers to a culture they have been isolated from. This is important for Case, who emphasises that "today's children should understand" each other and their past (Rosenthal 1992b). The model reader is not from the culture described in the story. There is no slang, only a few words that would be familiar to any South African reader, like "mielies" (1986: 28), "bra" and "laaitie" (1986:40), which can also be easily understood from the context. The dominating narrative voice tells rather than depicts the story in a sophisticated English which shows that the author intends to introduce the reader to the culture. The narrative is less heteroglossic and democratic than *One Bounce* and maintains a firm control over its content. Readers from a Cape Coloured culture would therefore read it in an estranged way, viewing themselves objectified without the sense of community that the use of slang conveys in a narrative that translates "coloured-ness" to a specifically non-white audience. Because the story is addressed to an audience outside the culture, own culture readers are led through the text to view themselves through an "other's" point of view This is equally applicable to the construction of character. The characters do not deal with emotions or deep conflicts; the realism consequently remains at the surface level of the struggles of a family suffering in apartheid-induced poverty and violent crime.

4.7 Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park by M. Cassiem D'Arcy

1989, Runner up

Summary

Two friends, Tolly and Gamat, grow up in Hanover Park, a township on the Cape Flats. They get caught up in a detective type adventure when they find a dead pigeon and discover a crime syndicate operating from the house of a pigeon racer, who has been taken captive by his gangster son-in-law. Tolly and Gamat are captured by the drug peddlers but manage to escape. Ultimately, it is through the help of the

community which bands together, that drug trafficking is destroyed and Tolly's life saved. The books ends with Tolly and his friends on a horse drawn carriage in a parade celebrating his heroic victory with the community.

Critique

The style of the narrative is patchy, sounding at times more like a history textbook than an adventure story:

> Hanover Park, a monument to racial bigotry named after the once bustling street that formed the main artery of District Six in central Cape Town.
>
> District six was a densely populated area with a diversity of ethnic groups living in racial harmony until the area was proclaimed by the government of the day to be for the exclusive occupation of the white population group … (p.9).

The style is stiff, uninteresting and unsuitable to fiction for readers aged ten and over. The author also uses stereotypes of the coloured community to convey a sense of joviality:

> The hawkers of Cape Town are more practised at sleight of hand than a magician. In less than the twinkling of an eye they can slip rotten fruit from the back of the pile into the paper-bags and the contented customers would be none the wiser (p.9).

There is the storytelling Muslim who holds his audience captive. There is also a nagging wife and a henpecked husband. The story is a simple adventure story; it does not attempt to be realistic, but situates itself in physical and historical reality, which provides a backdrop to the story. It is written for a much younger audience than the rest of the series. There is very little character development, the book is full of jovial old men and spunky young boys. The women are negatively stereotyped, old-womanish, either henpeckers or plump purveyors of delicious tarts and cakes. The 'power of community' ethic that the book preaches glosses over the reality of life in the townships.

Based on the fact that it provides an unnecessary amount of history about the Coloured people of Cape Town in a didactic style, one could argue that this book is not aimed at readers from its own culture, but at a white audience. Moreover, many of the characters are stereotyped, the people in the story being represented as colourful,

cheerful and resilient. This story challenges judges and publishers who think that, in publishing books by authors from different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, they are breaking the exclusively white perspective on other cultures. Here is a story by a Coloured person who exoticises and stereotypes his own culture for his non-Coloured audience. Even the representation of District Six as a community of people living in harmony is unrealistic and depends on nostalgic myth.

It is difficult to say what relevance the story is meant to have, for the story's relevance appears to lie in the defence, through the story's adventure, of the resilience and potential heroism of Coloured people in the township. Hence the story ends with the community's self-actualisation and victory over gangsterism. Such relevance would be more effective to an own culture model reader, yet the author clearly presents the story to a white audience and stereotypes all its characters. This, combined with a reliance on nostalgia and myth, mars the author's exhortation to community.

4.8 The Kayaboeties by Elana Bregin

1989, Winner

Summary

The Kayaboeties tells of a group of white friends who decide to enter a songwriting competition in the hopes of winning the prizemoney. The story is narrated by Charlie, a little girl who hangs around with her brother's friends during the holidays. They soon discover that they don't all have what it takes and desperately need help. One of the boys brings a "friend", the son of his domestic, to the group because he is a talented pennywhistler and musician. This stirs up all the racial hatred and cultural prejudice in the group and the story follows all the tensions and conflicts that arise, not only in the group but in individuals as well.

Critique

Maskew Miller Longman described *Kayaboeties* as a novel suitable for reading in "the more enlightened schools" in its press release (1989). It claimed that this novel, along with *A Cageful of Butterflies* and *The Day of the Kugel* gave the reader an insight into its country in history and at present. This is their comment in the press release for the winner and runners-up of 1989:

> Although they aren't moralistic or didactic, we feel that readers can learn something new about South Africa and perhaps about themselves from these novels (1989).

There is a very particular concept of the role literature plays in the lives of teenage readers, which is that it helps you "to understand yourself" and also the country. Yet the process of understanding oneself through a novel is taken very literally in this realistic and locally relevant literature.

The story shows parents teaching racial prejudice. Like the friend in *Wake Up Singing,* Chris's racist friend Pecker, is reared by trigger-happy, angry and abusive parents, who bully him in the same way they bully their domestics. The book shows how cruel children can be, and how Pecker's extreme racism is but one form of it. Because white racism is the focus, very little of the black boy, Sam's experience or perspective is given. This is a deliberate omission by the author who shows through the observations of Charlie, the narrator, how Sam's dignity and feelings are violated through denying him a voice to speak. Charlie observes his actions and reactions and from them guesses how he must be feeling. Bregin effectively shows how distanced the races are from each other. She also shows that communication is the means by which that distance can be bridged.

The target audience is appealed to through use of colloquial English, childish turns of phrase and slang. The style is effective in the first person narration and constructs the character of Charlie very well. It is also maintained consistently throughout the story. The narrative style is similar to Judy Blume's. One example of this is the upfront unpretentious way in which teen sexuality is dealt with. Blume deals with masturbation in a number of her books. Bregin deals similarly with the subject:

> I'm not supposed to know what a Pecker is. But I do! What the others had not cottoned on to though was that the name was a double joke. See, Pecker had this habit; he was always fiddling with himself, with – you know – "it". (2)

Bregin here deals with the female response to male sexuality. Femininity and feminine sexuality are not addressed in the story though the narrator is the only girl among the group of boys. Rather, Bregin uses the minority position of someone considered socially inferior as a vantagepoint for observing the black male character who is also a socially inferior minority in the story. In the same way that Sam is asked to cross into white South African culture, Charlie is made to cross gender. Just as we

gain no real insight into Sam, but only see the way the white children treat him, we do not see beyond Charlie's defiant tomboy act into a feminine sexuality or femininity.

The author's intention in writing the story, like Mangena's, is taken from the press release and is unashamedly didactic. It shows the author's intention to educate the reader about social attitudes and perceptions that are immoral. This intention is the overwhelming focus of the story and the most significant aspect of the book for the publishers who describe it as "non-preachy, subtle but nonetheless effective" (1989). Here are Bregin's words:

> I have always been bothered by teenage racial attitudes – that smug, unthinking bigotry found in white teenagers. They've been so conditioned into these racial stereotypes and never have any social contact with blacks .... The dilemma for me has been how to make them look at themselves – how to make them see how ugly and senseless the kind of racial slurs they express are. The most effective way to do this is through humour (MML 1989).

This quote shows how the implied reader of the YAA competition winners determined intention, which in turn determined style, plot and character construction. Even her intention not to threaten the reader, who from this quote is clearly a white racist teenager, is evident in the unbalanced ratio of an all white group of friends to one cowering black child, who is the son of a harried domestic worker.

4.9 The Day of the Kugel by Barbara Ludman

1989, Runner Up

Summary

The Day of the Kugel is set in Johannesburg in the late 1970s and deals with a young American girl who comes to live in South Africa. From this vantagepoint, she observes and is exposed to the cruelty of apartheid. The story is simultaneously about her own maturation, as she comes to terms with parental rejection, and about the evils of apartheid. She develops a relationship with a black man and takes part in the anti-apartheid student protests of 1976. Her experiences all take place in the white liberal, "Kugel" society, where different layers of subtle racism and the insincerity of liberalism are exposed. The story ends with her discovery that her cousin is a real activist who drives political refugees over the border into Zimbabwe.

Critique

The style of this book is appropriate for the teenage realism genre. It is simple, casual, unadorned with equal parts of dialogue and narrative. There is very little slang, but this is because the characters are mainly upper middle class teenagers and budding intellectuals. The MML Press release of 1989 describes this book as an "important book for all South African teenagers to read" because it teaches the reader things about history that one is not likely to find in a history book (MML 1989). The implied readers are clearly white teenagers, who have not been exposed to "the living conditions of those who serve us that we take so for granted" (MML 1989). The narrator and central character of the story is a white American girl, who dips her feet very safely into a morass that "those who serve" had to endure for lifetimes. Apartheid is something she views as an outsider, yet the reality of what it was like for its real victims is excluded from the reader, whose perspective is taken from Michelle, the outsider. The character of Beauty is to the story's credit, however. She is initially resentful in a passive aggressive manner – deliberately slow and lazy; she refuses to speak English or to speak to Michelle at all. The story does show some form of resistance through Beauty of black people to white people, as opposed to the grateful, hopeful and long-suffering black characters in *Wake Up Singing*. However, in her character depiction she is not someone who is endeared to the reader or who plays much of a role. Joe, the friendly and intelligent black man, plays a much greater role and his magnanimity is favoured in the narrative.

The political sensitivity of MML has shifted as South Africa itself has undergone a transformation. However, this only casts this competition and the book into a questionable light, for by its political message it has clearly outworn its value or appeal. There is nothing in this book beside this moralising intention to recommend it, because it is an intention that determines plot, characters and ending. This book shows very clearly how a politicising didactic intention towards an implied readership produces stories that have very limited relevance and a truncated shelf life.

My criticism of this book, like *Wake Up Singing*, is that in anticipation of reader interests, the author compromises a realistic or honest representation of apartheid South Africa in 1976. This anticipation of reader interest is assumed from American and British teenage realism which deals typically with parental rejection and ineptitude. For the sake of conforming to conventions of such literature, apartheid

is cast as "the struggle", a romantic, noble fight in which moral conviction heroically urges her, and her white friends, to take up arms. The white person is the hero philanthropically saving the black man's day. *Day of the Kugel* is about different ways in which white people can and should respond to apartheid.

In its favour the book deals tongue-in-cheek with the pseudo-liberalism of many white people, from the black baby loving kugel, to the relationship between the domestic servant and her liberal employers. It tries to convey some of the seriousness of what it meant to be part of the apartheid 'struggle' and of the cost involved.

4.10 The Song of Be by Lesley Beake

1991, Runner Up

Summary

The Song of Be is the story of a Bushman girl who tries to commit suicide[1]. The story begins on the last day of her life. She punctures her leg with a poison arrow and waits to die. As she waits for the poison to take effect she reviews her life. The book is about the bushmen, their society, their unjust treatment, the tragedy of racism for both black and white and the double oppression of being a bushman woman. Be's grandfather is the long suffering worker of sixty years who returns to work at a farm that had kidnapped him from his tribe and practically enslaved him since he was a young boy. The story shows the strange paternalism between farmer and worker; it shows how Be's mother becomes the sexual slave of the farmer. The tragedy extends to show the effect of paternalism on the white farmer and his mad and lonely wife. It describes how Be's education distances her from her mother. Finally, it deals with the elections in Namibia when the Bushmen first got the vote and the tragic consequences of this social upheaval for the farmer, Be, her mother and grandfather. She wants to commit suicide because of the oppression and lovelessness of her life.

Critique

Lesley Beake is one of the most successful writers to come out of the YAA series and, not surprisingly, she is one of the more sensitive authors. She engages her imagination actively to place herself in the situation of people who are oppressed, whether by

[1] Beake refers to Be and her people as "Bushmen" throughout the story. She explains that Bushmen prefer to be called by that name (1991).

society or physical disability as in *Traveller*, discussed below. The book lapses however, into preachiness and sentimentality:

> In a time of change it is easy to criticize: you may complain that their dogs are too thin, or that their children's faces are too dirty; you may wish they still lived the way it is told in the old books; or you can watch, and listen, and find people who still know how to be happy.
> And you can envy them. (4)

The book makes effective use of colonialist texts in the story. The newspaper article reinforces stereotypes of Bushmen and shows how Be responds personally. She responds to the anthropological treatise on bushmen and the newspaper article with a sense of violation and shock. The dubious benefit of receiving an education is expressed through her turmoil, not only at the loss of her culture but at the way her people are treated and written about. Beake portrays all the characters with the same pathos and empathy as she does Be. The story does not primarily intend to appeal to most teenagers' lived reality, although the age of the central protagonist, her romantic interest, troubled mind and difficult relationship with her mother clearly illustrate the implied readership. The author enables the reader to identify with Be in order to make a socio-political statement. The story is meant to open the eyes of the reader to the social and cultural devastation of the Bushmen. This kind of realism prescribes that the issue dealt with should be relevant because the reader is able to identify with the character. It therefore has a politicising intention, which speaks to the reader about the moral importance of such issues.

4.11 Travellers by Lesley Beake

1989, Runner Up

Summary

Traff Hammersburg makes a journey of discovery both physically and spiritually in his trip to Simonstown with a blind man named James Holman. *Travellers* makes use of a typical device of historical novels and points to the real existence of James Holman, a blind man whose intrepid travels round the world by ship in the 19th century has been recorded in journals he kept. He is, in Beake's words, "a brave man" (118). In the story Traff acts as his guide on his adventurous trip to Cape Point. This marks a turning point in the boy Traff's life, a rite of passage for him, where he comes to terms with his past and resolves to pursue his dreams and confront his fears. The story shows the unjust treatment of the servant Nonsie, who raised Traff, and of her

unfair dismissal. It also shows the difficulties of being a woman in those days and the struggles to succeed as a man. There is also a romantic interest in Traff's life, but this is not developed in the story.

Critique

In 1990 Beake was the runner up for the YAA competition with a book called *A Cageful of Butterflies*. It's the true story of Mponyane, a deaf boy, told from his perspective. Beake's favourite subject matter is the championing of the disadvantaged minority. She proselytises as much as she tells adventures to enthral her reader. The model reader is far broader because it is not addressing an issue of colour or recent history. The issue is relevant to the democratic ideal of protecting the minority and allowing the authentic voices of that minority to speak.

Travellers is no exception to this tendency. The story is littered with didacticisms and preachy diversions. Here is an example of the ungainly and apologetic preaching that punctuates the narrative:

> He was thinking about the difference – the very slight difference – between wanting to share with Traff the things he had learned, and appearing to be a boring lecturer. "I always think," he began again hesitantly, "that a day when you have not done something worthwhile is a day wasted." Traff did not answer. "And I also think that a day that is wasted is a day that you will never have again."
>
> Traff nodded slowly.
>
> "I see" (69).

Were it not for these, the story would be enjoyable. As a reader I found it unlikely that his mother was a prostitute, who found respectability by marrying a wealthy man who had no idea of her past. It seemed sentimental and insincere for the mother to realise, as she looked into the face of her son, whom she had emotionally abused, that he was the son of her first real lover. She had after all been a prostitute. This preserves a sense of sanctity in Traff's conception; that he was born out of real love. This is dishonest and conceals the reality the story had begun to reveal, that many children born to prostitutes are neglected, unwanted mishaps.

4.12 Conclusion

4.12.1 The Novels

These books perfectly abide by the criteria set out by Cooper. Her intent was to produce books that fitted her political intention and hence the books that were chosen were those that shared that political and pedagogical value. Even those books that were not selected by Cooper operate according to these judgement criteria because her politics suit the kind of books MML wanted to produce for the prescription market. The YAA competition therefore clearly illustrates the continuum that exists between production texts, the "political economy of publishing" and the kind of primary texts that end up being prescribed, taught and read (Taxel 1997).

The kind of text that gets prescribed, those that always win the competition, are realist stories. The reason for this is that realism as a genre has a moral and cultural value to a democratic society. According to Watt, realistic representation claims for itself a transparency that refuses propagandistic manipulations or any claim to universal truth (1974). Realism is about truth, and truth, materially provable and reliable, is an ideal of democracy, in which the individual is free to make and perceive reality as it really is. Yet we know that language is symbolic and cannot be transparent; moreover the narrative form is preoccupied with meaning not observable truth. Realism is a moral value more than a representational possibility.

Because realism has a democratic value, it is incompatible with deliberately fictional genres like romance and adventure. Each time that the moral value of realism is married to a romance or adventure, the value attached to realism is automatically compromised. I would argue that in much fictional literature, historical, adventurous or romantic, realism is used as a rhetorical device to persuade the reader of the desirability of the reality being represented. This is clearly the case of those older novels dealing with interracial relationships, which Jenkins described as anticipatory in its representation of a reality that historically did not exist (1993).

All the YAA books understand their socio-political purpose and their democratic value. They all make political statements, which they communicate in several ways. They weave their political message into the plot of the story as in *A Twin World*. They use character development to instruct the reader; for example, Nick in *Wake Up Singing*, the group of white children in *Kayaboeties*, Michelle in *Day of the Kugel*, Traff in *Travellers*, Be in *Song of Be;* all develop through the story into

socially and morally conscious beings. Moral lessons are articulated through the voices of the characters, the narrators and in the dedications, Forewords and Afterwords of the books. Each book teaches the lessons of democracy. They are interested in defending the minority, freeing the oppressed, establishing equality and cross-cultural tolerance.

However, in their attempts to appeal to a teenage audience they sugarcoat their messages with what they believe their readership likes to read — adventure, romance and rite of passage stories. This anticipation of readership causes the authors to sacrifice realistic treatment of their subject to the mould of an adventure, a romance, or a rite of passage story. For example, the issue of apartheid is subsumed under the theme of rite of passage in *Wake Up Singing*. So when Nick's rite of passage is undergone, the issue seems to be resolved, when all that has happened is that he has been reconciled with his friends. Nick's black friends are moved off the scene.

Many of the books choose tragic and painful issues but then fail to deal honestly with them, for the sake of a happy ending. Hollindale points out that the ending in realist novels makes a strong ideological statement (1992). Realist novels for teenagers often choose to end happily at the cost of coherence with the rest of the story; the novel ends up reaffirming the very values that it had put on trial in the story (Hollindale 1992:38). *Wake Up Singing* and *Kayaboeties* both end with the black characters being moved to another town or simply out of sight. The white protagonists, whose values had been shaken up by their arrival, are once more safely ensconced with their white friends with whom they have resolved all their conflicts. The happiness of interracial harmony is postponed to "one fine day" but, for the moment, all is right with the world, while conflicts are resolved for the central white protagonists. *Blue Train to the Moon* is another example of a story whose realism is sacrificed to romance.

One of the primary means that political and moral lessons are communicated is through eliciting sympathy for characters in the story. The moral lessons generally centre on the evils of apartheid and the good of interracial tolerance and acceptance. Racism is therefore an important subject in these stories. Yet I would argue that certain books reinforce paternalistic racist attitudes to black people through negative evocations of sympathy. I base this assertion on the critique of Totemeyer on racism in "South African Children's and Youth literature" (1988a). Totemeyer's approach to literature provides a useful means of identifying racism in the text, although her

understanding of literature is superficial and politicised. According to Totemeyer, eliciting sympathy for black people under apartheid is condescending and paternalistic. In some YAA stories, the issue of racism is either glossed over or solved through sympathy. These sympathetic reactions are often achieved through providing over-easy solutions for complex problems. She calls this the 'harmonisation syndrome' (1988a: 175). In this context, sympathy is paternalistic; only the 'haves' can afford alms and only the 'have nots' need to receive it and are obliged to them in their gratitude.

Black people are at the receiving end in *Day of the Kugel, Wake Up Singing* and *Kayaboeties*. They need saving and are saved by people who have chosen to save them out of their moral conscience. Black people have none of this freedom of choice, nothing of the black people's experiences of apartheid nor of their choices of actions are portrayed. *Kayaboeties* is aware of this, but uses the fact that we have no insight into Sam's perspective to make a point. Totemeyer does not reject the evocation of sympathy, which she argues is the power of the novel for social change, but distinguishes between sympathy for well-rounded characters with both weaknesses and strengths, and sympathy for idealised characters. The latter is a negative evocation of sympathy that reinforces racism (1988b: 81).

I disagree with Totemeyer in her assertion that it is more important to be able to identify with positive and powerful representations of black people than feel sympathy for the weak, passive, dominated black. This attitude does not emphasise emotional realism; it urges a particular representation of black people that will inculcate ethnic pride to the black reader and inform the racist reader of the dignity of black people. Rochmann, a South African critic of multicultural children's literature argues:

> There are PC watchdogs eager to strip from the library shelves anything that presents a group as less than perfect. The ethnic character must always be strong, dignified, courageous, loving, sensitive, and wise (1993:431).

She claims that it is not realistic to represent black people in a way that has been prescribed as Totemeyer does, nor is it honest (Rochmann 1993). Totemeyer suggests that authors should portray black people in a manner that the reader can "identify with his feelings and strivings as a human being" (Totemeyer 1988b: 81), but this should

not be confined to representing black people as strong or admirable as Totemeyer suggests.

The representation of black people in those novels that have black characters is a good example of what Hollindale calls the tranquilising of emotional complexities which results from the pressure to educate readers in political and moral truths on the surface level of the story (Hollindale 1992). It indicates ideological conflicts in the novel between the intent to reveal the injustice of apartheid and the author's own unexamined prejudices which express themselves passively in the literary organisation of the text. Books like *Kayaboeties, Wake Up Singing* and *Day of the Kugel* are accused of implying a "submission theology" in their representation of black characters who are saved by white do-gooders. Their salvation from the agents of their oppression seems to communicate that they should submit to white people who will save them out of their moral conscience (Taxel 1997).

These comments feed into a critique of the suggestion by MML that YAA books could be read as adjuncts to the history curriculum to make the era more alive to the student and provide perspectives that they "won't see in a textbook" (MML 1989). It is precisely in this context of teaching history that the didactic function is fully activated through its "realism". For these fictionalisations of history clearly frame a political and moral stance towards contemporary South African history. Their value lies in providing the reader with aetiological perspectives on the present (Van Vuuren 1994). In an article in the *Weekly Mail and Guardian*, Chubb explains: "literature enables young people to learn about their history by engaging their emotions and feelings as well as their intellect" (Chubb 1992). In doing so, readers will see that the present is the result of the past. According to Chubb, this enables readers to recognise that they are agents not subjects of history (Chubb 1992). In colouring history with narrative and engaging the readers' emotions and sympathies, authors do something more than teach history, which, after all, teaches the student to be critical; they provide the reader with a moral and emotive stance towards past events and the present results of that past.

Given the apparent desirability of this form of learning about history, one has to look at representations of colour and South African history in these books. From the exoticisation of coloured people in *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park* to the paternalistic and imbalanced representations of black people in *Kayaboeties, Wake Up Singing* and *Day of the Kugel* these books fail to deliver a representation of history

that fundamentally challenges deeply entrenched notions of racial inequality. Neither, in the area of gender representation, do the books communicate positive images of women. All the female characters in *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park, A Twin World, Wake Up Singing* and *Blue Train to the Moon* are either stereotyped or represented as in need of being saved by men. *Kayaboeties*, narrated by a female, is not much better, for Charlie's tomboy-ness is never problematised. Hence though it is clear that these books serve a moral didactic purpose, the morality they seem to suggest is fraught with contradiction. On one hand they seem to suggest multiculturalist values by encouraging authors from their own cultures to produce local stories, but, on the other, many of the stories, nine of which are authored by women, represent colour and gender with unexamined prejudice.

To conclude, two critiques may be made of the didacticism of these novels. Firstly, the stories' realism is compromised by the attempt to appeal to the teenage audience. Secondly some of the socio-political lessons are ambiguous and conflicting. Preachiness never appeals in a book, yet many of these stories, with their democratic appeal of relevance and realism, end up being propagandistic and condescendingly manipulative. In this next section, I discuss the construction of the reader in the YAA novels.

4.12.2 The Reader

In all fiction, including realism, the reader is distanced from the events in the story by the fact that the stories are not directly concerned with their immediate reality. This distance is created in the text. An example of this would be "Once upon a time", the way many fairy tales begin. Romantic, fantastic and adventurous novels may challenge or affirm social values and conventions, but their critiques are implied. In realism, the subject matter of the novel is reality; the more immediate that reality, the more relevant and explicit its comments on society are.

Realism attempts to close the distance created by fiction, to show the relevance to real life of the story being told. *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park* begins, "Hansel and Gretel don't live in Hanover Park, Tolly" (1989:1). These opening sentences explicitly signpost the new direction towards realism and close the distance between reader and story. Realism is explicitly marked in the text because, unless it was, the relevance of the story may not be recognised by the young reader. Heale

explained in his interview that realism was a genre that needs to be taught. It requires a different way of reading and a different set of expectations from the reader. This is particularly true, as realism like the YAA novels wants to do more than indicate the realism of the story; it wants to influence and align the reader's sense of reality to that suggested in the text. In order for this to happen, readers need to recognise authorial intention; their interpretation needs to correspond with the implied version of the story.

Making the "correct" reading of a book is tenuous, particularly given the youth of the reader. The realist books reviewed here are all what Eco would call closed texts and what Hunt calls a monological text, instead of "dialogical" or "polyphonic" (Hunt 1991:81). The more open the text is and the more dialogic it is, the greater the reader's licence to create meaning in the story, "to fill in the images and the feelings" (Hunt 1991:83). The more closed the text the greater the prevalence of didactic intrusions into the text. One of the devices of control that is most often used in literature for teenagers is the cliché (Hunt 1995). The YAA stories are formulaic. All the books make use of cliché, stereotypes and typical scenes. Use of cliché and stereotype pack the story with preconceptions and validate the meaning of those preconceptions. They reduce the creative activity of interpretation.

YAA creates an explicit model reader in the text. It has a perception of its readership and meets those perceptions with intention. Hunt claims that the model reader in children's stories is so explicitly constructed that one should speak about the "prescribed" rather than the model reader (Hunt 1995:82). The more explicit the model reader the greater the pressure on the reader to either conform to the profile of that reader, as Hunt pointed out, or to read the text aberrantly and reject the model reader (Hunt 1995). As I pointed out in my individual discussions of the books, each clearly prescribes its reader. Its message is seldom directly addressed to the entire demographic spectrum of the teenage readership because a number of them deal with colour or specific cultural issues. Those that do not may have a wider demographic appeal, but they are all clearly addressed to teenagers, through simplicity of language, use of slang and colloquialisms, the age of characters and the use of the "coming of age" theme.

Perhaps the most significant means by which the reader is prescribed is through the oversaturation of meaning in the production and primary texts. The YAA books were written, judged and published to be prescribed and to accompany the

school curriculum. The books are advertised and reviewed in a way that recognises the function it is intended to have. Garson of the *Weekly Mail and Guardian* described the YAA novels as PC, and the YAA publicity clearly identified the educational value and political correctness of the YAA novels (Garson 1994, Educator's Link 1996). The media recognised the function of the YAA novels. The fact that the books will be taught and the way student's responses are shaped by this teaching experience is discussed in the next chapter on the students' responses.

One way the YAA novels construct their model readership is through what Hofmeyr called their "strong sense of place" (1995 Judges' Report). Watt explains that realism uses temporal and spatial description to illustrate the individuality of the characters and the uniqueness of their experience (Watt 1974). The individual's life irradiates with meaning, a meaning that is imposed upon the landscape and bodies of the protagonists. The reverse takes place in the realism of the YAA novels. In the YAA novels, the South African natural and social landscape is the focus not only of the production texts but the primary texts as well. The personalities of the characters are so affected and determined by this landscape that one could argue that, in the YAA novels, external reality interprets the meaning of the individual's experience rather than vice versa.

The model reader of YAA novels thus has a limited identity, place defines the person, not person the place. YAA novels do not recognise the individuality of the characters as much as they do their citizenship. They prescribe a sense of nationhood through the model reader. This sense of nationhood is one that is built on a communal experience of the trauma of apartheid and a common agreement that it was wrong.

Mitchell and Smith claim that novels like the YAA winners are vehicles for 'social change-in-action'. In the act of reading these novel they argue, social change is brought about through the politicisation of the reader (Mitchell and Smith 1988:9). Politicisation of readers does not involve encouraging criticism or self-reflection; it refers to gearing the reader to change in a particular way, part of which is an orientation of identity according to citizenship rather than individuality. Being a South African teenager determines your experiences, your relationships and the choices you make. This is a propagandistic notion that illustrates precisely how closed and prescriptive the YAA texts are.

4.12.3 The Authors

In March 2001, a symposium called *Creating One Voice* was held in Cape Town. It aimed at creating a South African children's literature network of teachers, librarians, booksellers, educators, NGO workers, government officials and media people to promote the study of children's literature. Creating a network will undoubtedly consolidate and reinforce particular perspectives on literature. It was agreed at the symposium that the reason we should promote the study of children's literature is that

> Those who have power and influence are asked to recognise that a love of reading will open doors for children, and will turn South Africa as a nation around (Higgs 2001, E-mail).

Consensus among these authorities on children's literature is that reading has a socio-political function, a function of reformation and "true freedom" (Higgs 2001, E-mail). This same consensus is shared by the writers of the YAA novels, who form part of a network not only of authors but also of the body of authorities producing, reviewing, studying and teaching the literature.

Lesley Beake makes this comment:

> Children are sick of being moaned at, preached at and whinged at.... They want real stories for a change. They want fun and adventure. They want fantasy and puzzle stories and a bit of fun poked at the authorities for a change (Beake in Dodd: 1992).

The three books that she has published through YAA are all politicising; they do not poke fun at the authorities at all. *Travellers* is preachy to say the least. In a *Cageful of Butterflies,* Beake applies the same treatment to a deaf mute, in *Strollers* she campaigns for the plight of street people and, in the *Song of Be*, Beake introduces the reader to the plight of the Bushmen. All her books contain preachy asides and commentary on the situations narrated.

The subversiveness native to American and British teenage realism is appropriated by YAA authors like Beake and Hofmeyr owing to our peculiar political situation. These authors have legitimised the genre and turned it into an instrument for establishing a new social order. A revolution in belief and attitudes has become necessary over the past fifteen years, since it became apparent that transformation was inevitable and necessary. The novels play an instrumental role in ushering in the new political and social dispensation, one sympathetic to the plights of the oppressed

minorities, by tapping into subversive elements in the genre. Subversion in the novels is directed towards racism and bigotry and the new social order it points to, is multiculturalism.

No critics or experts in the field ever address the issue of the point at which literature becomes propaganda. Neither Van Vuuren nor Mitchell and Smith discuss this, and, in fact, seem to accept the social value of such literature. Jenkins does not answer or propose the question either. At the "Towards Understanding Conference" of 1992, Rosenthal reports that the question was "either made fun of or skated over" (Rosenthal 1992a). Yet these same authors, judges, and critics are aware that readers will not read books that condescend to them or that appear to be propagandistic. Readers read for enjoyment as numerous surveys testify. A study conducted in 1982 of 459 students in Dublin and Connecticut showed that the three most popular reasons for reading were for enjoyment, excitement and interest. The fourth reason was for utilitarian purposes, reading for school or parent approval, or because it would be helpful for later careers (Greaney and Neuman 1983). This last reason does not indicate that readers read to learn or gain new perspective, but that they are merely toeing the line, purchasing cultural capital for economic benefit or authorial approval. To confirm the applicability of these statistics to South Africa:

> J Hurst-Nicholson conducted a survey in 1997 in Kwa-Zulu Natal with the Children's Book Forum, of four schools, std 4-6 on their response to South African children's fiction. The question behind the survey was, "Do children still read for pleasure?" This was his comment: "One thing was quickly clear: children are not keen on 'political' stories and they feel that stories about cross-cultural relationships have been overdone (Heale 1997).

Machet also conducted a survey; her results showed that children who read realist books that intend to bring about social change are in fact not affected by the texts, but respond to the text with negotiated readings; they read the text in a way that affirms their own beliefs (Machet 1992). In effect the YAA novels preach to the converted and affirm the beliefs of the unconverted. Literature that attempts to challenge the belief system of the reader has no such effect. Only those who already share the beliefs espoused in a novel will recognise and agree with those values (Machet 1992).

Even amongst authors, judges, and authorities on children's literature, there is an aversion to books that intend primarily to educate. Heale claims that South Africa needs to produce local literature. If it does not, he says, "they will continue to regard

books as something coming from abroad, things attached to their education, things filled with foreign fantasies" (Dodd, 1992). Yet, this research clearly shows that South African books are represented and written for educational purposes. Heale, like Beake, can recognise the unattractiveness of such books, while at the same producing and judging books for educational purposes.

The belief that fiction can fulfil educational purposes is standard. Indeed, the social revolution that has taken place in South Africa has occurred through the virtual experiences of literature, film, advertising and the media. Even today, television is used to educate South Africans about issues of morality. Both *YizoYizo* and *Soul City* are popular current South African soap operas that inform and educate the South African public about the reality of crime and AIDS in this country. This inscription of values by the media is a very conscious piece of social engineering. Mitchell and Smith cite a series of interviews with Young Adult writers in South Africa. In what they describe as an open-ended question to what themes should be addressed in future novels for teenagers, authors responded in this way:

> Several... mentioned issues of security – and the ways in which the threat of daily violence constructs the life of the young urban reader in South Africa. Others mentioned the absence of literature of the townships that speaks to the experiences of black, non-suburban youth. Still other writers noted the ways in which certain themes – particularly as informed by particular social and geographic knowledge, at present are "beyond the imagination" of contemporary writers ... there is little that has been written about the experiences of youth within the Central Business District of Johannesburg. Similarly, several writers referred to the absence of a gay consciousness within contemporary young adult literature in South Africa .... There remains a paucity of literature created by and for black youth (Mitchell and Smith 1998:14-15).

Implicit in their statement is that only the authentic voice of a community can tell its story; such experiences are "beyond the imagination" of authors. This value stems from the democratic belief that every authentic voice has a contribution to provide that is of equal value. Hence they consciously create a multi-voiced literary environment. There is a problem with this perspective, as Rochmann, explains:

> Then there are those who watch for authenticity: how dare a white man write about blacks? ... .The chilling effect of this is a kind of censorship and a reinforcement of apartheid (Rochmann 1993:17).

If the only people allowed to write about experience are the authentic voices, then we shouldn't have teenage realism, because "just about all children's literature describes childhood as represented by adults" (Taxel 1977:435).

The above quote clearly shows that the authors favour specific topics and a specific ideological stance from South African social-change-in-action literature. They require stories that are concerned with rewriting history and reclaiming cultural space and identity for all people groups and sectors of the community — multiculturalist realism. Very often, this close definition of literature leads to the stereotyping of individuals and relationships we have seen in the YAA books.

The demand for authenticity denies that we are able to cross social boundaries with our imagination; it implies that we are unable to empathise – which is the imaginative ability to place oneself in another's shoes, in the shoes of the Other. As the author Schacochis (a white male) says,

> I would argue that the only way I could possibly establish empathy with a black female, the only way I could possibly begin to understand her, is to try, in good faith, to imagine my way into her life. I don't think there's a more powerful and positive act in the world than this. From this act comes honesty and, one would hope, equality (Schacochis 1995:15).

Bawden resists the pressure to maintain a surface political correctness, she claims that it is the emotional landscape of the virtual experience that the reader responds to (1980). Realism employs the imagination to create a web of intention, feeling and meaning behind the actions and dialogues of the characters. Bawden emphasises that children have both negative and positive emotions which need to be represented realistically, not didactically, or as if negative emotions were diseases: "Children are comforted when they find their own feelings formulated and expressed in a story, particularly when some of these feelings are slightly shameful to admit to" (Bawden 1980:30). Fiction functions best at a "deep imaginative and emotional level" (31). As an example she refers to a girl who had written to her to say that she had identified with the blind character in her book, *The Witch's Daughter*, because she was, "cut off, like me" (31). She later discovered that the girl was black, and was attending a white school far from home: "It was not a response you could have expected or catered for" (31).

I support Bawden's stance. The capacity of the imagination to cross physical, historical and cultural boundaries is its great strength. This means that the author and

teacher do not need to exert as much interpretive control as Mitchell and Smith suggest. The narrative does not need to be restricted in content to what is relevant or real to the reader. The intention in limiting the YAA to books set in and relevant to South Africa was to provide the South African reader with a set of experiences that would validate and affirm his or her nationality, culture and identity in response to the Westernisation of the reader through a predominant exposure to European and American books. Yet according to authors like Bawden, Hollindale and Hunt, readers do not read for this reason or respond positively to books written for that purpose.

Prescribing books because they are relevant and local teaches reading for content and is concerned with creating reality through the text. However reading is not an experience solely caught up with constructing identity or mirroring our culturally diverse reality. Each culture, each sexual identity even, is expected to have stories specifically for it. The cultural practice of reading suggested and created by Mitchell and Smith limits reading matter not only to realism, but realism set locally, that is about the reader's own reality. Yet this limits the reader's reading experience, which could be endlessly diverse.

I conclude with the findings of Machet, Olen and Chamberlain (2001). The findings of the survey of 877 eleven to sixteen year olds in UNISA's broader survey of young people's reading indicate that during this age of adolescence, readers become less interested in adventurous stories and develop a greater interest in character. Machet, Olen and Chamberlain explain that adolescents look for books that will show people acting out of the complexity of intentions, emotions and their own cultural and experiential perspective (2001:130). This supports Bawden's defence of emotional realism and protest against reading for content. It also supports what Applebee and Greene claim is taking place in the intellectual and emotional life of the adolescent, that is, the development of formal operational thought (Greene 1978a, Applebee 1978).

A major finding of this survey is that adolescents read to find out about sensitive social issues like sexuality, drug and alcohol abuse. This age group answered positively that reading helped them to understand their bodies and to solve personal problems (2001:134). Readers agreed that reading encourages them to think about characters, behaviour, circumstances, actions and consequences in ways which can help them prepare for decisions in their own lives. This confirms Bruner and others discussed in the literary review that we use the narrative mode of thinking in order to

determine and evaluate meaning. Machet, Olen and Chamberlain suggest that reading should be viewed by society as a means of shaping the adolescent's attitudes (2001:135).

While these findings underscore the initiative that MML has taken with the YAA competition, I recall the additional findings of this research that teenagers do not read to find images of themselves and rarely notice or regard the setting of the story, or the sex and colour of characters. Readers enjoy reading about characters who are described in ways that they identify themselves by. Therefore if colour, gender or nationality do not inform their identity very strongly or if such an issue is not expressed in an identifiable, personalised or relevant way, readers not only fail to respond but resist these books, which come across as political and heavy.

As Hurst Nicholson revealed in his survey, South African teenage readers resent what they call political stories (Heale 1997). One is therefore led to question whether MML's motives can have any positive effect on the teenage readership in South Africa. In the next chapter, I discuss the responses of target audience readers to the YAA novels.

Chapter Five: The Reader's Text: Responses to YAA Novels

In this section I will discuss the response readers made to the YAA texts. I interviewed eleven students between the ages of thirteen and fourteen. Of these students, four were girls and seven were boys. The students and their schools are:

Rashaad	Wynberg Secondary School	**Richard**	Westerford High School
		Hylton	Westerford High School
Insaaf	Wynberg Secondary School	**Shannon**	Westerford High School
		Nicky	Westerford High School
Dean	Westerford High School	**Marco**	St. Joseph's College
David	Westerford High School	**Lyle**	St. Joseph's College

Westerford and St. Joseph's are fairly prestigious schools in affluent areas in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town; while Wynberg Secondary is less affluent with mainly black and coloured children, with a larger number of Muslim children. At Westerford and St. Joseph's, YAA and Sanlam Tafelberg prizewinners have been prescribed in Grades Seven, Eight and Nine variously.

Interviews conducted with individual readers were richer in content. The group interviews yielded less about their response to the YAA. One reason for this is that the two group interviews were groups of boys who are friends at school. The group dynamics among these friends in both instances were not always productive to any serious disclosure. Hence the sections discussing the responses of Insaaf, Rashaad, Nicky, Alex and Shannon are longer and more detailed than the sections discussing group interviews with pupils from Westerford and St. Joseph's.

My analysis asks these questions of the children interviewed:

- Do the readers perceive the intended relevance of the stories and how do they respond to it?
- As far as they can see, does the book teach them a lesson?
- How do readers respond to the representation of the experiences of the characters? How do they perceive the books?
- How do they respond to this genre and style?

These questions correspond to the questions I asked during the interview in a simpler form. During the interviews I tried to elicit the readers' responses to the text

directly and indirectly. I asked readers to select a favourite scene from the story and to summarise its plot. I did this in order find out whether they understood the story; which aspect or part of the story left an emotional impact on the reader, whether they merely remembered scenes for their dramatic or humorous quality? These findings examine the way emotions, morality and the imagination interconnect through what is remembered as significant, and investigates whether readers "learn lessons" from such texts.

My questions about personal relevance of story to the reader as teenager are motivated by the explicit intention of the YAA to write books that appealed to the lived experience of teenagers in South Africa today. Hence it is a measuring of intention against reader reception of the text. How do teenagers respond to the writing of the South African teenage identity and experience into the text?

I interviewed the readers about their perception of genre and their reasons for reading. This entire series of questions was asked to establish what their culture of reading was and was influenced by Sarland's reader response study of British adolescents (1991). I also tried to ascertain what the nature of their reading experience was, for example, "what is your favourite book?", "recall a scene from the book", "what do you enjoy about books like these?" These questions were also informed by Sarland's interview questions (1991). I asked a number of questions about their perception of the author and South African literature to ascertain the extent of their awareness or interest in the production texts. Questions about the book covers and the blurbs were asked for the same reason.

A number of questions were influenced by Bridget Fowler's reader response study of Scottish women's reading habits (1991). These questions were asked in order to understand their cultural evaluation of the reading act and the nature of the reading experience. Fowler's study was also specifically concerned with readers' responses to realism (1991). Examples of questions indebted to Fowler's interviews and questionnaires are "Do you prefer to read about an imaginary world or how things really are?"; "Are you interested in the critical ideas of the author?" Other questions were influenced by studies on adolescent reading preferences; for example, "Do you read adventure/ pony stories/ ballet stories?" (Carlsen 1967) All my questions were simplified for my audience and adapted for my purposes.

The questions that I ask in my analysis of the interviews, listed above, are concerned with the primary focus of this dissertation — the way the text is culturally

produced and the cultural role played by realism to determine social values and ideology. They correlate with the questions I asked of the primary text in the previous chapter.

5.1 The Readers' Responses to YAA

5.1.1 Insaaf and Rashaad (Wynberg Secondary School)

Insaaf chose *The Song of Be* by Lesley Beake (Runner Up 1991). While many of the YAA stories are intended to appeal to the lived reality of teenagers, this book does not. Insaaf's response, notwithstanding, is to identify with certain characters and read her own morals and values into the story. Insaaf missed the author's politicising intention. She developed no empathy for the Bushmen or a new awareness of the evils of bigotry. Her reaction to the Bushmen was one of criticism — that they should adapt to the times and not be so isolated. Insaaf also misunderstood crucial parts of the plot. She didn't realise that the narrator used the device of the flashback to show how Be is reflecting on her life as she is waiting to die. She thought that throughout the story Be was "walking around" with poison in her body. In addition, though she claimed to have read the story twice she didn't realise that there was a love interest (Khu) in Be's life and that Khu's love for her drew her out of her hopelessness. Rather, Insaaf recognised what she already knew: the idea that depressed people just sit around and let the world pass them by. When I asked her if she had learnt a lesson from this story her response was:

> C Can you, yah, and did you learn anything from the book?
> I Uhm, don't try to kill yourself when you're depressed (252-253).

She had a friend who had also attempted suicide and she recognised this in Be:

> I She doesn't feel for school anymore she's just gonna sit there and do nothing (212, speaking of her friend)
> I A sad girl sitting there, just looking at the world passing her by (186, speaking of Be).

When asked about whether she would share the book with anyone, she chose this friend:

> I I, I, I think so and I think she will like this book 'cos it's a very sad book and maybe I think it will give her inspiration, because she did try to kill herself (213).

Her reading is what Eco would call an aberrant reading of the story and Fiske a negotiated reading (Eco 1979, Fiske 1987). The story affirmed her beliefs and spoke about her experiences. This confirms Machet's study of the moral education of teenagers through literature (Machet 1992). She spoke about the need for courage, love and group intimacy – trusting and protecting one another in the circle of friends – all lessons that she related to her life and her emotional needs. This bespeaks an important lesson for authors of juvenile literature, explained by Hollindale:

> A similar result is produced by much over-confident surface didacticism in modern children's books, as it is by much persuasive rationality in classroom discussion. Where the ideology is explicit, it does not matter how morally unanswerable the substance is if it speaks only to those who are persuaded already, leaving others with their own divergent ideology intensified by resentful bemusement (Hollindale 1992:35).

Insaaf realised that the book was meant to be relevant to her and that books can be therapeutic as a result of their relevance. Her awareness of the purpose of realism led her to read the story in a self-referential way, bringing the story into her sphere of relevance. She therefore pre-empted the book's entreaties to political and social sensitivity to the Bushmen, entreating herself through the book. She appreciated the story and admired Be's character because she believed that Be had qualities that she needed or valued. She commented that the simplicity of the language, use of slang and the subject matter communicated the appeal to her age group. As a result, Insaaf did not find the book challenging. It was written in her estimation for readers in Grade Seven, "because when they get questions I think they'll be able to answer it" (282). Stories like these require understanding, maturity and intelligence. By her statements on these subjects it is clear that the content of the story deals with issues of life, morality, suffering and hurt; the proper response being understanding. Her usual book fare is comparably transgressive and immoral. They are much thicker pulp romances, which glorify sexually transgressive lifestyles. Because the books are not written for her, she finds them challenging, " we have to use our brains really, to concentrate more" (79).

Rashaad read *Wake Up Singing,* by Jane Rosenthal. He gave an unelicited summary of the story's plot in terms of its social significance. He discussed the dynamics of unresolved tension, memory and love in the relationships of the characters with each other and their circumstances. In the interview he showed an understanding of how the narrative form is the vehicle of a virtual experience, and how form and experience work together. He didn't abstract moral lessons from the story but showed sensitivity to the social structures and relationships.

Rashaad enjoyed *Wake Up Singing.* In fact, he claimed to prefer reading realist books set in South Africa:

> R Because, we need to read about things that is happening and happened around us, and we can always get back to things that happen or happened in America (87).

Rashaad recognised and complied with the licence the book took to deal with political and moral issues by acknowledging their relevance to his life, and to the lives of South African readers. He recognised the moral implication of the story, which was explicit — the evil of apartheid. This indicates that in Rashaad's perception, one of the cultural roles of literature is to communicate stories that are relevant to our immediate and local reality (87). He also believed that this role is more valuable than the pleasure of reading science fiction or adventure. He claimed to enjoy adventure and science fiction most in the interview but would not speak about it. Instead he discussed the importance of literature about our country. This was his comment on the book:

> R It's quite an interesting book, its about a boy, sixteen years old, Neil Mackenzie he's going through his stage of adolescence now, at the moment, he's at a school, a white school and he meets a girl named Em and she introduces him to two black children, Zach and something, and through, hi! Through them he learns different, how can I say? Through, uh, different types, how can I say? A world, other than what he's learning in (1).

Having recognised all these things he complied with the story's intention, its message and its claim to realism with this concurring judgement:

> C What do you think about the ending?

> R It's quite sad because now, he's living now away from his parents. His mother was, not all against it, his mother used to encourage him but his father wasn't so, so, I think his father is wrong because we are all people, colour has got nothing to do with it (4-5).

Rashaad understood enough about the story's relevance to South Africa and its political-moral entreaty to him as a South African teenager, to swear allegiance to its message, style and content. He was not critical of the novel's overbearing whiteness in the way I was.

Though Rashaad had insight into the characters he did not identify with them. He claimed to enjoy reading the story because of its general "relevance" to South Africa (87). He was distanced from the characters, the time and the events. This is evident from the judgement he makes of them (5). His judgement reflects the contemporary consensus of the evil of racism. The distance is sufficient to remove the awareness of the identity of the implied reader in the novel, who I established in chapter three to be a white teenager brought up in a racist environment.

During the course of the interview it became clear, however, that Rashaad was trying to give the "right" answers. He believes that reading is something that has helped and improved him (60). He associates books with education, intelligence and cultural capital. His responses to my questions about the book were carefully thought out. He did not know the answer to the question, "Why is it called *Wake Up Singing*?". Instead of admitting he did not know, he made up a strange and improbable answer (9-15). When I asked whether he discussed these books with his friends, he responded by saying that he only spoke to them to ask if I had contacted them. At the same time he only spoke about his personal life in terms that would reflect positively on himself. This led me to conclude that he was responding to me as someone in educational authority and trying to win my approval. Nevertheless, he could have responded by giving an Aesopic moral to the story, which was what another student did in his discussion of a school setwork, but he did not. From this I conclude that, although he felt a need to win my approval, his responses still revealed the nature of the experience he had in reading. They certainly reveal the idea that, for Rashaad, reading is associated with education and intelligence.

5.1.2 Shannon, Hylton, Richard, Dean, David and Nicky (Westerford)

Shannon read *Blue Train to the Moon*. She responded favourably to the diary form. She claimed that it was "weird first" but then became "nice". It was not the kind of book she would normally read, but in the end she thought it was good because it was relevant to her life (283). She complained, however, that the book was repetitive and predictable. She did not enjoy the book but found it relevant – she too has troublesome relationships with her mother and her sister. Notice that it is she who brings up the issue of relevance:

C What do you mean it was weird in the beginning, how was it weird?
G Hum it was just, I don't know it wasn't the type of book I would have gotten out in the beginning, and then I figured out it was quite a nice end because it was relevant to my life in a way
C How so?
G Because it's got like [?] I can't remember if she's got a sister
C Yes, she's got a sister
G Yes she does have a sister
C She's an awful sister
G Yah and in a way it deals with the fighting with your Mom, and how you should actually cherish it because you don't always have all that time with them, and also to buy a bigger house and not all live together
C Okay so you can identify with that
G Yah (282-291).

Because of this, her favourite section in the book was the moment when the main character reconciles with her mother. This was clearly a moment of social catharsis – it impressed her because she identified it with her own relationship difficulties with her mother. Yet the issues of relevance that the novel brought up were far more than this, which is really an issue of secondary relevance. The book deals with drug abuse, promiscuity, divorce and AIDS. She did not discuss these at all except to distance herself from them. This proves Machet's finding that most readers produce negotiated readings that serve only to reinforce their own worldview (1992). It also confirms Machet, Olen and Chamberlain's findings that teenagers read stories that are relevant to their personal and social issues (2001).

Shannon recognises through her discussion that the book she was reading was intended to be relevant, which was a quality seemingly independent of the book's

enjoyment value. Despite this, her personal identification was quite superficial. She claimed, "I am not like her at all" (line 307). She did not associate herself with the two characters' transgressive lifestyle. This may be explained by her own religious convictions. She objected to the apparent hypocrisy of the male character:

> G Hum, it was weird in a way because he was like a druggie guy, who slept around and stuff and yet he was a catholic, which was weird, so catholic to the extent that they did bring offerings and like, and that was weird because then you didn't really know if he was because he really did believe in that, which was weird because then you don't know which one he was, because I don't think that really religious people go like sleeping around and stuff (309).

It is inevitable that certain people will not identify personally with the story and the characters, but in rejecting the character, Shannon showed that she was aware that *Blue Train to the Moon* had a claim of relevance to her life and society. She interacted with the reality in the story. This is evident in her judgement of the male character's religious ambivalence. Like Insaaf therefore, she entered into a dialogue with the text; she judged the character's realism and the story's believability, according to her own experience of reality. She recognised that the explicitly constructed implied reader in the text was constructed to encourage her to personalise the story and internalise the lessons learnt from that character's life experiences. Shannon judged the book according to those criteria and not according to reading pleasure, suspense or excitement.

David read *One Bounce*. In my first interview with David and his friends, he described *One Bounce* as "exciting true life". This is not teenage realism, but closer to adventure. His emphasis on "exciting" in the conversation indicated this. Later David clarified "true life" as "true life adventure" (173). *One Bounce* was "true life adventure" to him because it was describing a reality that, however local, was totally foreign to him. David read the book differently because he was not a model reader and he enjoyed the book because it dealt with "gangsters", an exciting aspect of reality:

> C True Life, what's True Life?
> D True Life, Real life, like this book
> C So you like this book?
> D I like this yah, it's about like gangsters and stuff

C Oh okay, gangsters?
D What?
C I don't know I haven't read it, so when you say you like True Life you mean things like that's quite sort of on the edge like gangsters and stuff, so.
D Exciting True Life (Interview One: 124-131)

Unfortunately, this shows that David's empathy for the characters cannot have been great. To regard gangsters as exciting is to exoticise them and to fail to realistically understand what their lives must be like. The book constructs the characters in a sympathetic way, hence I argue the failure is on David's part.

His reading pleasure was not unlike that of Insaaf when she read the morally transgressive story about "whores" (Insaaf interview: 23); for this story deals with transgressive and criminal aspects of society. *One Bounce* has very few authority figures, and none play a major role in this story of peers. As a result the story did not come across as heavily didactic or over-emphasise the socio-political context. The reader enjoyed the thrill of the story and produced a negotiated reading. His reading neglected aspects of the story that indicated not merely realism but the tragedy in this real life story. He was aware of the political significance of the story, but not persuaded by it. This is evident from the non-political way in which he discusses the book. He evaluates the book in terms of its ability to entertain and interest him. Historical and political relevance does not trigger anything in him.

From his experience, David recognises that realism can be informative. He states in the second interview that realist literature is interesting because one learns about the way things are or were amongst a particular community (Interview Two: 30). On his prompting, I asked:

C What did you learn?
Da How they lived
H Yah
C Oh okay, how they lived, is it different to us?
Da The customs, the customs how everyone went to church every Sunday
H The accents
Da Accents
H Accents and everything
Da And the way children are brought up, children are brought up, you should be seen and not heard, that's how
H And the way that uhm, London had effected the kids, because in the book it shows how they had actually stolen stuff from

> this one store, and it shows you that their mothers and fathers had probably taught them to actually steal. (33-42)

David enjoys the genre because he learns through what he and his friends identifiably describe as virtual experience. David wants to be excited. He didn't enjoy the reflective passages of the story and found the beginning boring: "It didn't really keep me in, but I still read it" (Interview Two: 56). He only enjoyed the action in the story (Interview two: 71). David is a demanding reader who is less influenced in his reading by the cultural capital realism offers. He makes no associations of reading with intelligence and judges a book by its ability to interest him. He is therefore less aware of the didactic value of novels than Rashaad, Insaaf and the readers from St. Joseph's College (below). Nevertheless, if the story is interesting, realistic and evocative, David enjoys the education he receives through the virtual experience.

Richard read *A Twin World*, by Masibudi Mangena. Richard began by complimenting the book on the fact that it was interesting and taught him a lot about the Rasta culture that he was not aware of. He went on to say, however, that the book was boring, it had "no exciting parts". He couldn't actually remember any particular scene from the story. The plot he gave of the story was sufficiently thorough, however.

Like David and all the male readers I interviewed, Richard enjoys reading adventure and fantasy. This book disappointed all his usual expectations about the kind of experience one can expect from a book, hence his boredom. It was not the kind of book he would choose to read, and the only reason he read it was because I asked him to. Richard's response that the book taught him a lot about Rasta culture and that it was interesting is apposite, considering that the author intended this very thing by including that amount of cultural information. It was, however, at the cost of plot, suspense and reader enjoyment. Richard explained through his retelling how the story deals with settling and recognising difference:

> R At the end of the book, he smokes dagga and he gives up smoking dagga and Ntsizi, one of the main characters who first takes it in the book. He gives up drinking. He didn't really have a serious problem but Kahinda wants him to give up drinking, he doesn't like drinking and he wants, Ntsizi wants Kahinda to give up dagga smoking (91).

Richard found the subject interesting, but when asked to remember a scene, he responds:

R No, uhm there was no real good part in this book most of it was quite boring but it was interesting to like learn
C So this book was boring?
R Yah
C But it was interesting to learn?
R Yah, its like, it was interesting but boring, like the way it was described (168-172).

The cultural information was interesting but the way the story was told was boring. Richard recognises the educational "worthiness" of such a story, but the book fails to have an impact, precisely because of the lengths it goes to to be worthy.

Hylton began by saying the book he had read was well written but then proceeded also to complain that it was predictable and poorly characterised. He read *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park* by M. Cassiem D'Arcy (YAA runner up 1989). Hylton's response to the story is negative and unenthusiastic. Early in the conversation he began a discussion about *Goodnight Mr. Tom*. It is the story of a child evacuee to the English countryside who has been abused terribly by his mother. His response to this book made interesting comparison to his response to *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park*. He said that he learnt quite a lot from *Goodnight Mr. Tom*. Here is an excerpt from that discussion; it shows that all four boys interviewed enjoy learning about people's lives from realism:

Da Realistic books, like this one?
C Uhm
Da They're also quite nice, quite interesting
R It teaches you uhm about different places, especially if it's like, your own country
C Oh yes?
R You can learn a bit
H It teaches you about what actually happened there
R Like how people lived (Interview Two: 18-25)

Line 42, quoted earlier, elaborates further. This story brought him to a moral awareness of what he is not, and what his own upbringing taught him. It provoked Hylton to examine the values and identity learnt during childhood through this encounter with a different reality – a reality nevertheless connected to his, because of his interest in World War Two. *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park* had the same potential to

provoke self-reflection, because it also represented a different but associate reality. Hylton was not affected in this way:

> C What about *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park*?
> H Uhm, it was a very well written book
> C Well
> H - Well written book, but it was a bit predictable, okay, uhm, I found that they didn't explain the characters well enough. The way Gamat and Tolly actually find the judge or whatever it was, it's interesting but it was also very short I normally read 300 page books (Interview with Two: 105-108).

This response contained nothing of the enthusiasm with which he and his friends spoke about *Goodnight Mr. Tom*, nor about the fantasy, humour and adventure they later discussed. When asked to remember a scene from the story, Hylton recalled a moment of significance in the plot of the story. Though this story is an adventure set in a real place and dealing with real issues, it did not succeed. Hylton complained that characters were not well developed and the plot was predictable. The fact that the story is more suitable for a younger reader than the YAA series is aimed at could also explain this response.

Hylton recognised the intention to realism in the story. Like David and Richard, he agreed that the author lived in the area, had experienced the story or had been alive when this story possibly took place. This shows a recognition by these readers that authentic accounts of experiences in townships, which were the setting of the books read by all three boys, are read-worthy, because they were stories written by people from different, previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Their recognition indicates that in David, Richard and Hylton's eyes, the story was making a particular appeal to the model reader. The model reader belonged to the dominant culture, or the culture responsible for disadvantaging the community of people described in the story. They were being appealed to in an attempt to bring about a change of attitude, not unlike the anticipatory intentions of Rosenthal and Bregin in their YAA novels (Jenkins 1993). The realism appears to be more socially relevant through its apparent authenticity. Yet neither Hylton, nor David and Richard expressed any empathy, nor seemed to have gained any insight into the lives of the people represented in the story.

Dean read *Travellers,* by Lesley Beake. He complained that the story was slow and it had no pace. Nevertheless he did mention that there were parts of the story that were "great". These were when the two main characters where travelling, there was more action. He complained that the rest of the book was about family life and very boring. "Boring" for him didn't mean that the story had no action, but that there was no resolution of conflict:

> D Yah when they were on, like sleeping in the cave, but some, most of it, like forty percent of the book was about family life and how the, about their family which I thought was quite boring.
> C Do you think that stories about families could be interesting?
> D It could .... If, if, if it tells you like you see how different families can get along with each other. It can sometimes be interesting.
> C So how was this boring?
> D It was just like they didn't like get on with each other, I didn't, personally I just thought it was just boring, that's all (63-69).

Dean rejected the pessimism of the perceived lack of resolution. The story did end with resolution however, Dean did not completely understand the ending. However his reaction of boredom can not only be attributed to the lack of resolution, following this comment: "it was just boring, that's all". He did not enjoy the parts of the book dealing with Traff's dysfunctional family. The reason for this could be that the dysfunctional family is not only a heavy subject but a clichéd one that is not dealt with in a convincing or interesting way in *Travellers.*

The book left such a poor impression on Dean that he later told me he would not choose this book, with its off-putting grey cover, if he had known what the story was about. Nothing he said seemed to indicate that the book's didacticism made any impression on him, nor did Dean identify with any of the central or secondary characters. The scene he remembered from *Travellers* is a humorous one, which comes as no surprise as his favourite author is Paul Jennings, a humorous writer. He happily talked about stories from Paul Jennings, and in fact had to be stopped from telling us all the stories he had read.

Nicky read *Love, David,* by Dianne Case, which she described as a sad book. Nicky was interviewed at her home; her sister Alex also contributed to the conversation. Alex (A) her sister had read a few YAA books as well. I have not

discussed her separately because she did not comment on the books at any length. Nicky's insight into the story is acute and her empathy with the characters and situations deeply felt. When asked to remember a scene from the story she chose a moment of tragedy and painful pathos – when the father was kicking the three legged dog:

C Hmm, now, to get to the books can you remember a scene for me from the story that stands out for you
N Hum in Love, David when the father is killing the dog and the, whole the aggressiveness
A The poor dog can't do anything the poor dog's only got three legs poor dog is unhappy
N The whole the whole, how each person is living under oppression, and how the oppression reflects on everybody else, you know the father was so oppressed so he wasn't treated very fairly, so in a cycle he treated very unfairly, it's the moving thing, where's its just a dog, a dog gets all that and how David wants to protect the dog and it's something he loves so much, just because I suppose it's always there, and it doesn't change, that was like a moving scene, I don't know (402-405).

Nicky experiences reading as instrumental in learning about the nature of humanity and the world. Hence her reading was what Fiske would call a dominant reading. Van Vuuren explained that the pitfall of South African teenage realism is that the moral message only reaches those who already agree on its message. Nicky is the converted reader in Van Vuuren's description of realism's "preaching to the converted". She recognised the political intent of the author and became emotionally involved in the story whose moral and political stand she already agrees with. Such a story illustrated and articulated the value of her own set of ideological beliefs, hence the strong sympathy. Later she distanced herself from apartheid South Africa by explaining that she was brought up in Bophuthatswana. She explained her political standpoint thereby aligning herself with the ideology of *Love, David:*

N Obviously we came like very near the end of Apartheid but and then you moved to Cape Town and we moved when I was at the end of standard three, and it was such a, I really, we moved into a class where there was one black boy and everybody else was White or Indian or Coloured, and everything, but one black boy, and I just felt myself like automatically drawn to talk to that boy and I really got on with him, why, because I didn't understand why he was the only one and I

A She got very comfortable with him
N Yah, it's amazing how different things are you know, you can remove yourself from it but never completely (419-422).

Not only does she align herself with this ideology but she credits herself with it; suggesting that she is partially cleansed of a guilt that she feels white people collectively share. Her alignment with the current ideological standpoint in South Africa supports Gerrig's claim that fiction will only have a real world effect if it taps into pre-existing beliefs, real world events and causal possibilities (Gerrig 1993:231). Here that real world effect is the gesture of sympathy she offers throughout the interview to the characters in *Love, David* and the other books that she hears about during the interview.

5.1.3 Marco and Lyle (Marist Brothers)

Marco read *Joe Cassidy and the Red Hot Cha Cha*. He complained that the book started off slowly and only became exciting at the very end:

M It was okay, the Red Hot Cha Cha, it starts off dragging and stuff like that, about how bad the Apartheid era was and stuff like that, and the struggle and then when it comes to the secret, his secret revealed to her about the father's killed the one, it becomes more exciting, so it was good, yes (247).

Later he says, "it was all right"; it was about "how Dianne goes through her life" (line 346). These comments are lukewarm and diffident. Marco regarded as boring those aspects of the story that provided the historical and socio-political context. In other parts of the interview Marco made comments about realist novels, particularly those set in South Africa that explain his reading of *Joe Cassidy and the Red Hot Cha Cha.* He complained that "local" is boring. He discusses *Joe Cassidy and the Red Hot Cha Cha* in terms that show that the book is not exciting or new, and that it deals with issues that are oversaturated and treated in a hackneyed way. These issues become interesting for Marco only when they are personalised and shown to be integral to the character's emotions and identity: when Joe Cassidy reveals that his father was involved in the South African Secret Police. Here is an excerpt from a discussion on realism:

C What about stories about suburban life?

Simon That's so boring, so local, I want something out of the ordinary[1]
M Local is lekker!
C You want something out of the ordinary? What does that mean?
Simon Yeah
M It must be different
C So it can't be here?
M Yah
Simon We know this place already
L Cos' we've been here already
M Like I said everything must be different to what you expect. (172-182).

Though they agree that they want to read both real and the imaginary stories, there is a distinct emphasis throughout the interview that what they read must be "different from here" (220), and that they want new experiences (289). Hence they do not reject realism so much as a treatment of realism that lacks a sense of the new, that contains no discovery for the reader of the extraordinary or the unknown. They describe realism as being stern and serious (36). Teenage realism differs from books for younger readers in the way that it calls the reader to understand, to feel sympathy instead of "make jokes" (85, 285). Like Insaaf and Rashaad, Marco and Lyle both associate reading for teenagers with a capacity for understanding, i.e. intelligence and sympathy (54-55). Though they rate themselves highly for being readers they also reject books like these for being heavy, stern and serious and from their complaints, don't seem to enjoy them. They complain that their setwork, which is a teenage realist novel by a YAA author, is depressing with a "junk" ending (143). Later Marco claims that if he even hears the word "AIDS" in a novel he is put off because of the heavy-handed, oversaturated way in which it is presented (334).

The way in which reality is represented doesn't give a new or hopeful perspective on reality. Clearly, it is not merely the representation of reality that is the problem for these readers but reality itself. Marco likes reading stories that come from "anywhere else" in the world (334), as long as it is not from here. This ties in with other comments Marco and Lyle make about their reasons for reading. They enjoy fantasy and science fiction because it helps them to think and to come away from all the wrong and damage of our world (206-209). It seems therefore that these readers need to read books that enable them to establish a distance between themselves and

[1] Simon is a reader with whom I did not complete my interview. As a result I do not discuss him in this dissertation, though I have included his remarks during the group interview.

their own reality in order to be able to think about it better. This need to abstract themselves is symptomatic of the formal operational thought that is beginning to develop, which involves separating oneself from reality and imagining life in a different way.

Lyle read *The Kayaboeties*. When I asked him what the book was about, he immediately gave the moral lesson of the book. The novel's apparent was to teach a moral lesson; hence: "This is about team work and how they got rid of their barriers " (252). Later, when I asked Lyle to tell me what happened in the story, he summarised the story in some detail. In this summary, Lyle placed the text in the context of the apartheid era, even his use of the clichéd phrase "apartheid era" indicated familiarity with its treatment as a subject (307). Lyle enjoyed the book because music was able to bring them together and overcome socio-political barriers. Lyle himself is a musician. He enjoyed the story because it dealt with the possibilities for the impact of music on people. Hence the story was not merely enjoyed for its plot but because it valorised something that was valuable to him, music.

Lyle's reading of the story was very close to the implied meaning. Here is an excerpt from the story that illustrates how Lyle's reading of the story recognised all the indicators of the local social relevance of this story:

> So they chased after him, Pecker wanted, Pecker had to run away because his mother was fetching him (?), and so they started to realise, how can I say, their same interests (?), so they started to be friends and they started to play right, teach other and so on. At the end they didn't actually win the contest, they came fourth and so they say they're going to try again next year. But the happy part is that Sam is a poor black but at the end one of the judges gave him a bursary to a music school in Johannesburg and they gave him travel allowance, money to come back afterwards after every term to visit his mother and his parents. I liked it because music brought all of them together as I said about their barriers (307).

Lyle seems to recognise that this book intended to instruct the morality of the reader by giving the moral lesson of the book. This summary shows that he understood the story's message that people from different cultures and ethnicities can overcome socially constructed barriers. It was significant to Lyle that music was the medium of this discovery and friendship, though the book focuses less on the ability of music than on the dynamic of the relationships between the various characters. However

because this is a lesson close to Lyle's heart, this is the lesson he sees. Unlike Insaaf whose reading aberrantly confirms her own beliefs, Lyle's reading is triggered by the meaning implicated through the story. The way he spoke about the book clearly indicates that he also recognises its relevance to him as a post-apartheid South African. He recognises that this is part of what the story is about. One may also argue that his response also recognises what he thought I expected to hear. Identifying moral lessons is the way one is taught to read literature.

These two boys showed a deep interest in morality and reality, an interest stoked and fed by reading. Hence it is strange that the kind of claims that teenage realism makes on the reader — inducing a social and moral consciousness — is something they resist quite strongly. In the following chapter I discuss these findings in greater detail.

Chapter Six: A discussion of the Readers' Responses

> The dangerous fantasy is always superficially realistic. The real victim of wishful reverie does not batten on *The Odyssey*, *The Tempest* or *The Worm Ourobouros*: he (or she) prefers stories about millionaires, irresistible beauties, posh hotels ... things that really might happen. For, as I say, there are two kinds of longing, the one is an askesis, a spiritual disease and the other is a disease (Lewis 1969:466).

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of the previous chapter particularly concerning the readers' responses to the realism and the relevance of the YAA novels. I also look at what and how the readers learnt from reading YAA novels.

6.1 The production of the reader in the YAA novels

6.1.1 Relevance

In many ways the readers' responses were not surprising. They confirm Hurst-Nicholson's findings that readers of this age dislike political stories (Heale 1997). Librarians and teachers are expected to actively encourage the reformation of South African society (Van Vuuren 1994:147). These political books are the instruments that bring about the change within a culture of reading that expects such books to bring about change in beliefs and society. But this cultural expectation and reading practice is not uniformly believed and participated in. Production texts produced by the publishing company and the judges, particularly Brenda Cooper, affirm this cultural practice. But if teachers and librarians do it only half-heartedly, believing within themselves that it is a politically dutiful act to read books like YAA, as those I interviewed did, then this cultural practice is not successfully carried out. Teachers and librarians create and sustain the education conferred cultural practice of reading more than covers and blurbs can or do. Their attitudes and beliefs are powerful production texts, for example, Alex Glenday, the student interviewed from Westerford complained about the way reading was gendered by her teacher in a "sexist" way who described it as a peculiarly female practice (Interview with Alex and Nicky Glenday, line 250). Many of the students made mention of the influential role their teachers had played in their development as readers by introducing them to reading, recommending books and as above, even constructing the identity of the reader for their class. The teachers and librarians interviewed I interviewed admitted that they paid only lip service to the expectation that they, with the books, would

bring about social change. The rejection of the "political stories" by South African readers indicates that the cultural practice of reading practised by the producers of the texts is not shared by its marketed readers, who nevertheless see the implied intention of the text and respond either with dutiful acknowledgement or rejection. Heale's comments foreshadowed reader response because he disapproved of the socio-political educational agenda of the YAA books. Like the teachers and librarians he conformed to these expectations as a judge, but himself disapproved of it, claiming cynically "Forget about if the kids enjoy them!" (Heale, 2000).

Not all Machet, Olen and Chamberlain's findings were confirmed however. All the readers enjoy adventure for example, though they fall in the middle of the age of the sample group. They enjoy realistic representations of characters', though not all the readers found this pleasure in the YAA books they read, and some complained about the poor characterisation. The importance of characterisation to the readers is expressed through the way they summarised the story. Lyle, Rashaad and Nicky threaded the themes through their retelling of the plot and interpreted the characters behaviour by their feelings, needs and experiences. The readers discussed their reasons for reading in some detail and none of them mentioned that they read to find out about sensitive issues like sexuality, drug and alcohol abuse. Their reactions to these events in the stories was blasé, it either bored or annoyed them. These readers are overexposed through media to the high levels of crime in South Africa. They are also overexposed to the moralising slant with which these issues are represented

Rashaad, Shannon, Richard, Marco, Lyle and Nicky all responded to the fact that they were being directly addressed in the novel. All these readers made comments about how they recognised that the stories were appealing directly to them as teenagers and South Africans, even using the word "relevant". Their recognition of intention was also a recognition of how they were meant to respond to the story – hence these readers made mention of the political and moral messages behind the story. Though they recognised that they were model readers and responded to being hailed as such; their response was not enthusiastic, many found the stories interesting, relevant but boring. By this I interpret that the stories did not engage their imagination and emotions. The stories may have dealt with relevant issues, but many lacked what Bawden calls 'emotional realism' (Bawden 1980). Evidence of this is the frequent complaint that the stories were predictable. The moral and political relevance led to the students offhandedly acknowledging the stories' worthiness, but their insights into

the books indicate that the kind of responses that the YAA stories elicited were dutiful, politically correct. The YAA stories had little or no real impact on the readers.

The only students who claimed to enjoy the books did so because they associated reading with self-amelioration, or found it expedient to associate themselves with the moral and political values expressed in the story. Nicky was one example who was emotionally much more involved in the story than the other readers. Her reason for this was because of personal feelings of guilt about apartheid, information that she volunteered in her discussion of *Love, David*. Rashaad also approved of *Wake Up Singing*, saying that people should read about South African issues. Rashaad recognised the way the story he read built a sense of national identity and agreed with it. For him reading is educational – it is something which teaches moral and political identity. His family does not read and his friends make fun of him for reading. He takes pride in the fact that he reads and remembers being encouraged to read by his teacher because he had a speech defect.

6.1.2 An Education by Reading

In this section I discuss the reader's response to the cultural practice of reading as an instrument to educate about society, history and culture.

Many of the readers' responses indicate their awareness of the role literature is meant to play in their education. The frequent comparisons between YAA novels and school setworks are evidence of this though the occasion of their reading the books may have led them to assume this. Yet Insaaf discusses the story in terms of its accessibility for comprehension to Grade Sevens (Interview with Insaaf: 283). The readers quickly recognised the way the text was modelling an identity, which they were required to align themselves to. This recognition was enabled through the didacticism of the stories. The stories' messages are quickly recognised because they reinforce versions of the "past" and the "present" that are told extra-textually in history and the media.

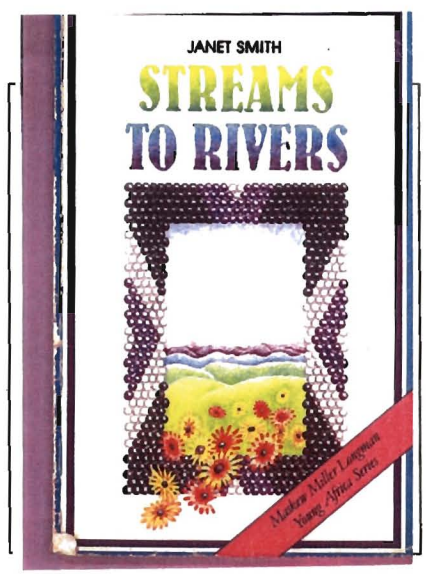
One example of this is the way they quickly picked up the moral overtones in the representation of racism and apartheid. When I asked Nicky "If you were asked to write a book like this, what kind of book ... just judging from the kind of books that they are, what kind of books would you write?" Their response to this was to write a romance, about "moral issues in relationships" (Interview with Nicky: 340) and

N You know, God or whatever, how do you relate with your friends and God how do you talk about them, talk with lots of friends whatever, or whatever, or vice versa, relational issues yah, moral issues as well (345).

She recognised therefore the moral theme of the books, though no book ever mentions God. Nicky explains what the other Westerford students also see that these books are either about apartheid and racial injustice or its consequences. The YAA books are different ways of looking at the effects of the past in South African society today. In this statement, Nicky is responding to the question, "Would you be surprised if a librarian showed you this book?"

N I wouldn't be surprised because we cover apartheid a lot, in high school at Westerford especially, I mean I've got the syllabus from now until Matric, history and the amount of times we cover apartheid, even though they're little pink books, I'm pretty sure I've seen books like this before [sc. YAA books] and I'm pretty sure we've got them in the library and I'm sure they've got them because they're such a lot you know in an apartheid context (Interview with Nicky: 295).

It is Nicky who refers to apartheid; *Love, David* itself makes no mention of apartheid at all. The subject matter of a poor Coloured family living on the Cape Flats within the context of South Africa is enough to link the story to the grand-er narratives about our apartheid past.



In her opinion, the YAA books fit in with the curriculum. As fictions that attempt to recreate the reality of lives that were and are marginalised by apartheid, they fulfil a corollary function to the history syllabus by recreating the history imaginatively. YAA turns the history taught at schools into a virtual experience. In so doing, there is a danger of reifying the version of history that is taught and making that version authoritative and actual. It is clear that these YAA novels are meant to complement the curriculum. The latest YAA offering, *Stronger than the Storm* (2000), even comes with a teacher's guide.

This approach to teenage realism is not unique to YAA. A quote from an advertisement for Lodestar Books in *Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)*, the American distributor of *Love, David* and other South African teenage realist novels shares MML's marketing strategy:

> For young people swept up in the struggle for independence, conflict and change have touched every corner of their lives. Behind the headlines ...beyond the history books... their dramatic stories have been waiting to be told. Here are five of the best – recreated for today's YAs [sc. Young Adults] in fiction that resounds with the clear ring of truth. Because long before they wrote the stories, these authors lived them (Mitchell and Smith, 1996).

The intention is to produce fiction that has the "clear ring of truth". This comment shows not only that the publishers use authorial authenticity as a recommendation for the fiction, but also assume because of that, that the story will have "the clear ring of truth". On one level they seem to be encouraging recognition of difference and individuality, but their comments assert a profound confidence in the "Truth" of experience, and in the stability and reliability of that truth. The publisher's intention is recognised by Nicky, Hylton, Dean, Richard and David when they claim that the authors are people who have experienced the stories they have written about. The fact that they are aware of the importance of authenticity implies that even if books did not ostensibly emphasise difference in the primary text, production texts have already informed the reader of the social relevance of authorial authenticity. The texts are an exercise in identity politics. But this meant that readers did not identify with the characters or experiences on an imaginative or emotional level. They were already conscious of the intention behind the stories, this took away from the suspense of the novel and made it predictable.

Marco and his friends agree that the books they read were becoming more "adultish". This comment is made during a discussion of why he read less these days than he used to. By "adultish" he meant that books were demanding a new kind of response; they were demanding that readers "understand" suffering and oppression, rather than laugh at it. They made this point a few times during the interview (Interview with St. Joseph's: 67-69, 84-85). The reference to maturity was in response to their statement that their friends are too immature to enjoy the YAA books:

> C So do you have to be mature to read these books, does it take a sort of level of maturity?

M Yah to understand and stuff like that
C Understand what exactly?
M Understand
L - The concepts
M Yah, the concepts, that if a person goes through hardships and stuff like that you have to understand, don't laugh at the person (280-285).

From this statement we see that teenage books elicit a new kind of response from the teenager, a response of sympathy and understanding for the suffering of humanity. Therefore they imply an emerging identity in the teenager, one that is situated in an orientation of understanding and sympathy towards weakness and suffering in society. They also see that understanding and empathy are part of their education, a kind of education learned uniquely through reading. I showed in the third chapter how MML appeal to the prescription market by emphasising black characters and anti-bias material. Their appeal to this market is clearly geared to encourage the hope amongst educators for just such a socially responsible response as Marco and Lyle have made. Understanding and identification is precisely the implied response anticipated by the prescription market. Judging from the market strategy of the publishing company, the cultural practice of reading South African teenage realism taught at schools is one that elicits a response of understanding, recognising authenticity and valuing difference. In this way a national identity is built that is founded on recovery from the past and multiculturalist values.

Though the readers recognise they are called upon to react in this way, their response isn't always "understanding". As we see throughout the interview with Marco and Lyle, they reject the message of the book because the issues of relevance that the stories deal with are oversaturated through their repetition in the fictional and non-fictional South African narratives. Other readers implicitly reject the pre-occupation of these stories with reality, morality and obedience to the authoritative perspective on these issues in the fictional text. The reading matter they enjoy most are, compared to YAA, comparatively transgressive. The humour of Paul Jennings, the flouting of natural and social laws in fantasy and science fiction and the sexually explicit romances all transgress the moral, social and natural laws that define realistic representation. The rejection of reality is an important constituent in the reader's pleasure of the text. Conversely, the discipline and control of reader response exerted

through the YAA text is an important constituent in the reader's displeasure of the text.

6.2 The readers speak about their favourite experiences of reading

These findings confirm Fowler's study of reader responses to realism and romance. Her readership was made up of Scottish women from various educational and economic backgrounds. An eighteen-year-old in Fowler's study rejected realism because it was bleak and boring. Her comment, like Marco's and Lyle's, was that she knew about it already (Fowler 1991:167). Romance stories gave her the opportunity to transcend the class structure. Romance also gave Insaaf the opportunity to transcend reality. The stories she enjoyed were rags-to-riches stories that begin with a unremarkable reality that is transformed cinderella-like into a fantastic reality.

It may appear to educated readers, for whom realism is the only literary genre that destabilises the fantasies of capitalism, patriarchy and ideological control; that romance lulls the reader into participating in the fantastical narratives that mystify and sanctify ideology. Most educated, middle to upper middle class readers believe that realism reveals the underlying truth about people and society (Fowler 1991:144). Among my readers, only those who had been educated to recognise this function in realism could. The others read the realistic stories as poor adventure stories or poorly written romances. I refer to David, Richard, Dean, Insaaf and Hylton. None of them recognised the messages that were being communicated through the story. They recognised that it was interesting while managing to be boring at the same time. They also recognised the relevance of the issues dealt with through the story. This amounts to lip service however, because merely remarking on the apparent relevance of the story requires the ability to recognise what has socially been pre-determined as relevant outside the YAA text. None of the readers were able to comment on the stories message. Their favourite scenes were climaxes in the plot. They made no comment in the interviews to indicate understanding of the thematic resonance, to borrow Cooper's terminology. Insaaf misunderstood the story, and Dean, Hylton, Richard and David read on the level of plot suspense without perceiving the thematic drama in the plot.

The dichotomy between art and entertainment that appears to divide realism from the non realist genres is invalid. Readers who read non-realist stories do not do it

merely to be entertained and those who read realism do not do it to be educated so much as to gain access to a higher culture and so transcend society in that way (Fowler 1991). The readers I interviewed learned something from fantasy and science fiction that was expressed in a way that was relevant to the way they think about reality. Their reading pleasure and education through the text is not inferior to what may be yielded from a realist text. Conversely one may question the intention of the marketing strategy of the publishers for the books to accompany the history curriculum. The historically contextualised stories reviewed in the study are paternalistic and represent history in a problematic way. In marketing stories as truth because of authenticity of authorial experience, these fictions engage the reader's emotions and imagination in our immediate reality in a way that reinforces a version of history and reality. Reality becomes mediated and mythified through the text. In so doing, realism for teenagers fulfils a function that the purely entertaining genres are accused of; the YAA novels lull the reader into accepting the status quo and engage the reader in the fantastic narratives that rationalise and justify the status quo. The use of realism and the concept of relevance are narrative devices that persuade the reader of the stories' believability.

All eleven of my readers enjoyed reading fantasy and science fiction most. They enjoy these genres because they enable them to "come away" from the real world and enter imaginatively into a perfect world where all the problems of this world have been resolved:

M Like if you read, okay, like you take an alien world right? You take now, there's littering there's poverty, there's all that stuff here. But now with them it's perfect everything is perfect
L Yah they've worked it out already
M Yah it's different they've thought of a way. Like they don't need money and stuff like that
C What books are these that you're talking about?
M Science fiction
C Okay, so in other words, in science fiction, there's a perfect world
M It's cool yes
C And so you read it because it's the perfect world?
M It's different, different from here (212-220).

These comments clearly illustrate their awareness of the real life relevance of such fiction to their lives. In fact this is the reason that they read science fiction; it offers

alternative possibilities and speaks to the reader about the possibility of a different reality, one in which the issues that clearly burden their own reality are solved. This may sound as if they want to escape the real world, but then these readers elaborate. The question about escape comes out of a conversation about why they read and whether they read for distraction. Their answer is negative: when they want to be distracted from the world around them they play computer games:

> C You play computers when you want to escape? So, when you read a book it's for a different reason?
> L Yah but fantasy books help us to think
> M Yah to come away
> L Yah, because there's a whole world
> M To come away from littering and stuff like that
> L To a whole world where there's good, but there's a little bad to contradict it, so it's equally balanced (205-210).

From this statement it seems that these readers enjoy science fiction because it helps them to "think". In the theory discussed in Chapter One about the intellectual maturing of the teenager, I discussed the importance of the imagination to formal operational thought – the abstract thinking that teenagers begin to make as they mature. Crucial to formal operational thought is the ability to distance oneself from the tangible and the real in order to begin to think of what might be and of what is possible. With this in mind, it is very interesting to see the comment Marco makes that fantasy and science fiction — a world of moral absolutes concerned with the future, utopia and the triumph of good over evil — helps him to think. They express a need to "come away" from their situation in order to view it more clearly. Fantasy seems to enable formal operational thought. For Marco, "everything comes down to science fiction" (119). They believe that science fiction and fantasy are in fact pre-occupied with reality, particularly those issues of reality that are relevant and pressing:

> L Some fiction is based on people's experience that's changed say to science fiction, different races become species. So I think that some books like Terry Prachett go over the edge (102).

Hence this escape, this coming away enables them to think about reality, even about those issues that YAA deal with. The comment that Lyle makes above is that Terry Prachett makes too explicit the connection to reality, he "goes over the edge". Lyle complains that he doesn't like books where he can see through what the author is doing:

> L And fiction that goes over the edge with their how can I say now, say their characters are make believe but sometimes you comprehend what they are, I can't quite say now, I can't say it properly (99).

Crucial therefore to the way science fiction and fantasy deals with reality is the veil of illusion that keeps what they call the "top layer" of reality at a distance (292). When the reader is reminded of the tangible and real in the story, the imagination is interrupted. This response recalls Gerrig's theory that the further removed from reality the fiction is, the more elaborate the imaginative construction of the reality being created. This is what the reader enjoys as he or she reads; they want to reconstruct their virtual experience at as great a distance from reality as they can. The imagination is more active in such books. This explains and confirms Gerrig's theory about the cognitive importance of the metaphor readers often use to describe reading – that of being absorbed and transported (Gerrig 1993).

Insaaf and the Westerford readers made comments about their experience of reading that validate Gerrig's hypothesis. He argues that crucial to the imaginative activity of reading is the experience of being absorbed in the book to the extent that the reader forgets him or herself. For Insaaf reading enjoyment is determined by how absorbed she is in the text and the extent to which the author is able to draw her into the story. She calls it: "putting yourself in the story" (Interview with Insaaf: 167). She wants to feel that she is one of the characters or rather like the director of a film. She plays with stories by imagining herself in the situations narrated and enjoys the gaps in the novel that allow her to do just this. For example, Insaaf preferred the fact that the author did not explicitly explain why Be wanted to commit suicide. Insaaf enjoyed the way these gaps allowed her imagination to identify patterns that were not immediately apparent. Insaaf therefore enjoys the writerly text (Barthes 1975). This was clear from her reading of *Song of Be*, which was aberrant. The actual reading indicated the personal way in which she became involved with the text; she identified with the character and really wrote her own story.

Shannon placed value on putting herself in another person's perspective and empathising with characters and situations. She even did this with the author; one of the benefits of reading many books by the same author, she said, was that it enabled her "to relate to the person, the author, because then you can tell what their life is

like" (Interview One with Westerford: 229). Shannon's view of literature is that certain books, like the one she read for me, intend to appeal directly to the reader's experience. This will not necessarily make the book enjoyable. Shannon's criterion for a good book is one that captivates and absorbs her, which *Blue Train to the Moon* clearly didn't – it was predictable. Predictability forecloses reader absorption.

Hylton, Dean, David and Richard prefer action, adventure and excitement whether in war, the future, the present, the past or another world completely. Like all the students I interviewed, they value their imagination highly and judge the literary worth of a book by the extent to which it is able to absorb the reader. Here is an excerpt from their conversation about this experience. It was the part of the interview they enjoyed most and it led into a discussion of favourite scenes from Harry Potter. The quote is extensive because I have included each boy's response to show the commonality of the experience:

De	I felt like it was like a movie I was watching and you could, you were like the audience and you were just watching and you could see what was happening in the background.
C	A bit like David?
De	Yah.
C	But you weren't taking part?
De	No you weren't taking part you were just watching, as the audience, almost like an invisible person standing.
H	Uhm yah, like him I feel like I am a ghost, just watching them, but any book I actually read, that's how I feel
C	Any book?
H	Yah, like Harry Potter I was watching them and having a conversation, I felt like I was Harry, I was like, and when it says he looked up at the roof,
R	- I look up
H	It feels like I look up
C	And do you ever lose yourself in a book when you aren't actually
All	hmm, yah
C	You know what I mean?
Da	You're reading but you don't actually know where you are.
H	Yah definitely.
Da	Yah.
H	Its like an out of body experience.
C	And are there certain books where that happens with more than other books?

H Depends on the story.
De Yah.
C What kind of story does it work for you?
H Harry Potter, I read it like three hours.
C Harry Potter ?
R In three hours!
H It was very exciting.
[garbled]
De I read a book, *Lost in Antarctica*, it's like you just, you didn't even know which page you were on, you just keep on turning and turning, it's like one minute you're on fifty, the page fifty and the next minute you're just, on eighty, the page eighty.
Da Yah yah.
De And it feels like it's just two minutes that have gone by.
Da yah.
C Is that like the best feeling?
De Yah, and you wonder, you couldn't have read so much!
Da You're so into the book (271- 320).

Fantasy and science fiction embody formal operational thought because they hold the world at a distance and through the art of illusion enable the reader to think about reality in a way that enables understanding. Crucial to this is absorption in the text, which engages the reader in an act that distracts from self. Part of the pleasure of the story is that it draws the reader towards this self-unconsciousness. This virtue of reading is what Jarrell calls the virtue of escape (Jarell 1977). What Jarrell and my readers seem to be suggesting, in their comments about the value of reading fantasy, science fiction and adventure, is that it enables them to break from their reality and identity. This experience is constructive because it enables them to see themselves and the world abstractly. This may explain their rejection of the burdensome realism of the YAA books, whose focus is on identity and social issues.

Nicky and Alex also enjoy fantasy, which they describe throughout the interview as a creative genre of fiction. Their favourite books are Harry Potter and the Narnia series – what they both call "complete fantasy". Nicky and Alex also explain that, however wildly "other" the world of fantasy is to the world we know, it gives us perspective on reality (Interview with Nicky: 34). Historical fiction has a similar benefit; it helps them to understand an era, event or people through experience. Fantasy for them is another way of reading about reality, not a true story but based on truth or inspired by real events. A good example is the Narnia series, which is commonly interpreted as being a Christian allegory. The pleasure they derive in reading fiction is from "going to new places, discovering new things". They want to

read things that will trigger their imaginations because it's new, different and creative; this is the reason they enjoy fantasy, "because you can just let your imagination go wild, we're both kind of creative so ..." (Interview with Nicky: 112).

As I discussed in Chapter One, this "thinking" about reality is tied up with the construction of the moral identity of the teenager. Hence, good always overcomes evil in these stories. The possible solutions imagined through the virtual experience of fantasy are always posited on the ultimate overcoming of evil by good. The freeing up of the imagination to posit the possible future shows how preoccupied the imaginations of these teenage readers are with morality and with the solution of the social issues that they are being faced with as emerging adults. These findings confirm Fowler's finding that romantic genres often enable the less educated reader to transcend their reality in a way that realism cannot (Fowler 1991). Only educated readers participate in the cultural practice of reading realism to penetrate beyond reality. These findings also throw a new light onto the reading experience of fantasy, making a little clearer the process whereby fantasy enables the reader to think very deeply about real life and relevant issues.

6.3 So does this mean YAA should start awarding fantasy?

> Sophisticated readers are accepting the fact that an improbable and unmanageable world is going to produce an improbable and hypothetical art. At this point realism is perhaps the least adequate means of understanding or portraying the incredible realities of our existence.
>
> Ursula Le Guin 1977:169

Does this mean that realism has no place and that YAA should begin to focus on fantasy? MML award books are obliged by the political economy of publishing to publish works that will be prescribed. Perhaps fantasy will never be awarded simply because its effects are impossible to measure. Books like the YAA winners, which deal directly with tangible events, are close to bibliotherapy in the immediacy and obviousness of their application. Yet it needs to be recognised that literature cannot be taken as though it were a pill against racism, sexism or any form of bigotry. Human beings are not instruments and neither is literature. The responses vary from aberrant to model form amongst my readers. This is evidence of the fact that reader response cannot be determined and that moreover, production texts, in media, the history

curriculum and the English one, oversaturate the issues. This in turn stirs resistance up in readers.

There was no shortage of submissions of fantasy and science fiction to the YAA competition; they simply did not win. I would argue that it is important for readers to read both fantasy and realism. Though the readers from St. Joseph's complain about realistic literature in this excerpt:

> M It was okay all the books we read so far, people die
> L The world's depressing, everybody dies, and the end is.
> M - That's bad
> L And the end is like junk (137-143),

Marco and Lyle go on to conclude that sometimes books need to show that things don't always work like that:

> C Do you like, do you like happy endings?
> L Yah, any ending you can comprehend, like they lived happily ever after
> M But sometimes, the bad guy must win at least once
> L Yah
> C Once or twice. But why? Why must he win?
> L Because it's a good balance (144-149).

Later when asked if they prefer to read about imaginary worlds or about how things really are, they admit that the world is "very harsh" and say they want to read about imaginary worlds; but then, they qualify their statement and claim they want both, because "Everything comes down to reality" (Interview with St. Joseph's College: 192).

Nicky enjoys realism because it enables her to identify with people and situations (30). She likes reading about other people's experiences, "to see things from their perspective" (126). Hence, they enjoy being able to empathise with the other in culture, space and time, to experience the world through their eyes. Being able to identify with the characters enables you to become more absorbed in the story:

> N Yah exactly, its like if you can, if you're looking at something from somebody's perspective you can identify with it so much more and you feel so much more in the story and you can understand everything much better (129)

Nicky describes this kind of reading as a learning experience. It is a kind of learning that is gleaned from another's subjective perspective.

I have few success stories with the readers of the YAA novels. Those who empathised as they were reading did so because they knew how to read the novel and also because the issues dealt with were already important to them. It is difficult to assess if anyone learned to empathise through their encounter with the other in the story, but the widespread indifference to the YAA novels must communicate that many did not find the stories memorable. Though David enjoyed *One Bounce*, he only expressed interest in the story because it had action, excitement and gangsters. I would argue, though, that this expressed reaction does not preclude a possible new sensitivity in reality to the subject of the novel. It is difficult to prove because he expressed little of this sensitivity. I would agree with Heale, that to elicit a response that has learnt something about life, the response needs to be prompted and even taught by a teacher (Heale interview 2000).

These boys from St. Joseph's don't think they can learn anything from realist texts, especially not in the academic sense. As far as they are concerned, they know all there is to know about "this place" already. Other readers did think that one could learn from realism. Nicky, David, Richard and Rashaad enjoy realism because it exposes them to unknown people, cultures and experiences. There is the excitement of learning something new. Though Insaaf's reading was aberrant, she took assurance from her reading of *Song of Be*. She hoped that it would show her friend that she is not alone and that people do get depressed.

Reading realism as a means of accessing reality at a deeper level of intention and meaning is something that all the readers enjoy, as one can judge from their discussion of other books they have read. The cultural practice of reading conferred through the YAA text and the production texts does not encourage this. It encourages a surface realism, one that deals with issues of contemporary South Africa. While there may be place for such literature, I would go on to argue based on the evidence of the story's didacticism, the role pre-selection the competition plays, the role of the judges and even that of the press releases and advertisements; that this is a realism concerned with controlling reader response. It wants to determine attitudes and discipline the reader through either the promise of love/success or the threat of death. Readers respond by rejecting the stories out of a sense not only of oversaturation but also of being limited in their identity by locality; spatially, temporally and culturally. Such realism does not enable the reader to pass from "dull captivity within a merely

present reality – a reality that is heterogeneous in itself and meaningless to the individual — towards clear self recognition" (Lukács 1971:80).

6.4 Overwhelmed by the ordinariness of reality

It is telling that the response of the students to stories that have a local setting are met with boredom, indifference and open resistance. Students did not want to be reminded of their sphere of existence; they wanted to be removed from it. In her article "Wide Awakeness and the Moral Life" Maxine Greene discusses the importance of what she calls "wide-awakeness" (1978b). Wide awakeness is the ability to be self-critical; aware of the choices of one's actions and the consequences that these choices lead to. In order to have this uniquely moral awareness, readers need to have a sense of their own agency in their lives, a sense that they can change situations that they object to. The ability to see alternatives to the status quo is made possible through the imagination. She quotes Sartre when she explains this:

> it is only when we are able to conceive "of another state of affairs in which things would be better for everybody" that we acknowledge the harshness of our lived situation and find them in some way unendurable (Greene 1978b:75).

From such reasoning we can begin to understand the resistance students showed to the realism of YAA. When readers read realistic stories the majority react as Marco and Lyle did with a feeling of being trapped into a negative or hopeless situation where "everybody dies in the end" (1978b:141). Greene complains that because of the magnitude of the social machinery that moves the individual along different levels of production — the global media, the national education plan, the sheer size of the population — the individual becomes oblivious of it. We do not recognise the constructedness of reality but accept it as natural, the status quo. We develop a tendency "to perceive our everyday reality as a given — objectively defined, impervious to change" (1978b).

Wide-awakeness is a consciousness of our freedom as humans to change our situations through conscious effort and moral decision. It is pre-occupied with concrete, real life experience – and yet the development of wide awakeness is through imagining alternatives and playing with the boundaries of reality. It's about looking at life, reality and the status quo critically, reflectively and imaginatively. The opposite

of morality she claims is "indifference, a lack of care and an absence of concern" (Greene 1978b: 43). This is the very reaction that dominated the students' responses.

Given that students were bored by the slow moving plot, poor characterisation, predictability and slow beginnings, I would like to argue that boredom was also a response to the sense of powerlessness that realism often foists on the reader. I agree with Greene when she argues that the only way to escape the feeling of being dominated and powerless is to be able to make sense of what is happening and recognise one's agency and autonomy. YAA books intended to empower readers in this way, I am sure. Masibudi Mangena, the author of *A Twin World*, made this comment in his press release: "The book is not a moral crusade, but a story that throws up issues for debate by young adults." His objective did not differ greatly from Greene's, who says that education should not endeavour to "tell them what to do – but help them attain some kind of clarity about how to choose, how to decide what to do." (1978b:48). But where did he fail?

Greene speaks about the feeling of being overwhelmed by the ordinary. In the day to day, suburban life of my readers, individuals are conventional rather than exceptional. The ordinary is not seen as a stage whereupon many of the dilemmas faced are indeed moral and require moral solutions. Life exchanges its epic quality for comfort and security. Greene argues that the failure of education lies in not making students aware of their own agency and of the need for them to be moral agents of reality.

It comes as no surprise that, combined with indifference towards realism, there is an excessive fondness for adventure. Even David, who claimed to enjoy "true life" most, in fact only enjoyed true life when it was an adventure. The value of realism is that it encourages the teenage reader to examine his or her own life experiences. It encourages the reader to look within and evaluate his or her influences and the consequences of his or her choices. *Goodnight Mr. Tom* had precisely that effect on Hylton, who, on reading about the way children were reared in war-torn England, was prompted to think about the way he was reared and its positive and negative effects. Such books provoke the kind of thinking teenagers are in fact engaged upon during this time of adolescence

Realism should aim to deal with more than topical or contemporary issues. Rather because the power of realism is empathy and relevance, it should aim for an emotional realism. Characters need to be represented as agents of their reality:

thinking, feeling, complex beings. They need to show their choices having consequences, without fitting this into a punishment/reward scheme.

The problem with YAA novels is that they are less concerned with showing the constructedness of reality than in constructing an approach to reality and, hence, constructing that reality as well. They are much more concerned with leading the reader to make a particular response to the issues discussed than leading the reader to an awareness of his or her autonomy and moral agency.

The failure of the YAA novels is this. The didacticism that was meant to appeal to the implied reader has compromised the potential of realism to reveal its own constructedness, to elicit empathy from the reader for the other, and to bring the reader to an awareness of his or her autonomy and freedom. It has contributed to the sleepiness rather than the wide-awakeness of the reader. Ultimately it is the authors of the YAA novels that have failed to empathise with real teenagers and real teenage needs.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Conclusions

In South Africa, the practice of reading has been culturally defined by its unique cultural and historical context. This practice of reading is articulated most clearly in the education of culture through English literature to young readers at school. Reading has been invested with value for the potential to bring about social change, and is expected by the close network of specialists, producers and reviewers to play a role in this country's political, social and cultural revolution. This supports Bourdieu's claim that the intellectual elite is enshrined in the academic institution and that cultural capital is invested in the culture transmitted through education (Bourdieu 1991). Through the case study of this competition we see how academics like Cooper, Jenkins, Machet and Smith reinforce their beliefs of culture through judging the competition, critiquing YAA texts, and educating secondary level teachers about the cultural practice of reading. It is in this way that values and meaning flow from authority to subject.

The expectation by this network of authority on children's literature is that South African literature that conforms to their criteria, can liberate the reader. In YAA we do not see such liberation because of a failure to recognise the necessity of inscribing a freedom of interpretation in the text; and a failure to value the active involvement of the imagination in reading. Instead, they narrowly limit the concept of reality and real possibility. They reinforce the status quo on one hand by employing realism in the service of romance and adventure. On the other hand they prescribe the development of reality along a particular path towards an end and so shut out the possibilities of what reality may become.

Connected to this criticism is a second finding that raises a concern. That is, that earlier YAA books, so constrained by the concept of relevance to South Africa, produce books that are not able to outlive the cultural moment in which they were authored. This is evidence of the fact that we cannot be determined by our culture. The producers of the YAA texts are aware that culture is transient and attempt

through the novels to shepherd reality towards a particular direction. The direction they intend is evidence of their ideological agenda which is typically democratic and muticulturalist. Yet it is these very books that preach a cultural agenda through the novel that have outworn their usefulness. Books that are ostensibly relevant are printed by MML because of the political economy of publishing for a prescription market. Stories must indicate reality on its surface, the bibliotherapeutic effect is direct, because it deals directly with reality. Fantasy does not, and its effects are not able to be measured. Yet the ebullient sustained success of books written over one hundred years ago challenges the YAA competition. How is it that authors like C.S. Lewis, Stevenson and MacDonald continue to captivate readers of our era and culture, like so many myths and fairy stories?

Readers are less interested in being told what they are or should be, than in the many things that they and society can be. The readers' responses indicate that the oversaturation of intention in the production as well as in the primary texts through the direct address to the readers as model readers, causes the readers to reject the text. They recognise the instrumental role that the novels were meant to play in circulating those democratic and multiculturalist values. The readers responded with a sense of obligation, they recognised the relevance and worthiness of the subject matter but ultimately rejected the stories. The storylines were familiar to the readers; they were predictable and unoriginal hence many readers complained that they were boring. The stories were too local, too ordinary. This does not indicate that readers do not want to read about what happens around them. It indicates that the realism offered no new insight, nor emotional realism. To complain about a story being predictable is to say that there is nothing new, challenging or creative about the reading experience.

Yet researchers like Applebee and Machet have established that teenagers of that age and beyond read in order to understand intention and meaning. This reinforces Bruner's definition of narrative as a primary mode of finding meaning and Lukacs' definition of the inner form of the novel as preoccupied with meaning and self knowledge. They read with an interest in morality and values and the desire for self knowledge. In Lukacs' words, the inner form of the novel seeks to penetrate beyond reality. Yet the YAA books' entire project is to recreate surface realities to address those realities for the reader. Through this they argue the reader will be affirmed; what is made relevant in the text becomes relevant to the reader's reality, and what is made relevant is the here and now, South Africa in transformation.

Because of this, the YAA novels fail to absorb the reader. They do not seem to have succeeded in leading the reader toward self recognition, the recognition of emotion and moral value, or the recognition of meaning and intention. Inherent in the concept of relevance is the attempt to prescribe relevance to the reader. It is an attempt to show the relevance of issues that until now has not been recognised as story worthy. Hence the very attempt to be relevant is fraught with propogandistic intentions which readers quickly recognise.

It is clear that if these books are to have the effect they intend to, they need to be taught as Heale suggested in the Interview (Heale interview 2000). Those readers who had been taught books from or like the YAA series at school were able without solicitation to identify the moral of the story. Insaaf and Rashaad were not taught to read South African teenage realism. Insaaf's reading was aberrant and Rashaad read the story holistically as a virtual experience and did not abstract a moral from the story, although he did recognise the moral value of the story. This may be explained in that his exposure to English Literature has been in the context of self improvement.

The authors failed to empathise with their audience. It was an important part of Insaaf's reading experience to see that the author had empathy for her own characters. In the YAA novels the characters were meant to be realistic representations of teenagers. Yet my critique of the books shows very clearly the unrealistic way in which many of the characters were represented. Improbable events took place, predictable events took place, characters were stereotyped or moralised and domesticated representations. The readers themselves complained about poor characterisation. In a number of novels the representation of black people was paternalistic and the representation of women as wives, girlfriends or tomboys unproblematised.

All the readers I interviewed enjoy reading fantasy and science fiction. Nicky and Alex enjoy stories that are "complete fantasy". Marco and Lyle demand the extraordinary. They are aware of the relevance of fantasy to reality, for them "everything comes down to reality" and see fantasy as a means of playing with reality, and of imagining alternative possibilities. This is something which adolescents do at that age. The value of fantasy to these readers therefore comes as no surprise. It shows that fantasy which enables the readers to imaginatively recreate reality and so explore on a fundamental level the way it is constructed, is more effective even with dominant readers. Their enjoyment of fantasy expressed itself through the enthusiasm

with which they all spoke of their favourite fantasy novels. They also showed a sensitivity to how fantasy worked on an imaginative level with questions relevant to their lives and their identities. Their imagination is interested in moral values and beliefs, at that age, they could read any genre with the same desire to understand meaning and intention. Yet they are more interested in being able to understand themselves and the world through re-imagining it than in being informed through stories that correspond outwardly to their own realities. Readers had no objection to realism as a genre but to the dishonesty of stories that give meaning rather than engage the reader to imaginatively negotiate meaning.

This dissertation shows that literature that teaches its lessons on a superficial level fail. It also shows that the oversaturation of meaning in the production and primary texts produces oppositional and aberrant readings. The dominant readers were readers who for different reasons had invested cultural capital in this particular practice of reading.

7.3 Recommendations

Further study of teacher's attitudes to literature would benefit a better understanding of the reader's responses. That teachers and librarians find YAA novels a drudgery that the reader dutifully gets dragged through may explain why readers respond so similarly. Teachers are transmitters of culture, and certain statements made by readers about their own teachers negative or positive attitude to literature shows how influential they are.

This study also suggests a closer study of the reading experience of fantasy by reader response. All the readers enjoyed the genre and understood very well the way in which it related to reality. Fantasy seems to play as important a role for these readers as fairy tales do for younger readers.

This study documents the reader's response to the education approved cultural practice of reading and therefore provides some evidence for its lack of success. This cultural practice is an engineered one, not really participated in by all readers, teachers and librarians. The actual practice is one that views reading as an instrument of education with specific moral and political outcomes. I suggest that better ways of teaching morals is through educating the reader for freedom (Greene 1978a). It suggests a cultural practice of reading more committed to engaging the reader in the text imaginatively. Readers read fantasy because it enables them to play with the

boundaries of reality and to test moral boundaries. Realism that works on an emotional and imaginative level has this same value as we saw with Hylton's, David's, Richard's and Dean's response to *Goodnight Mr. Tom*. For in such stories, the reader writes the story, and participates in making rather than receiving meaning.

Further study could be aimed at the role parents, librarians and peers play in framing reading. What are the production texts they create around reading that shape the reader's response?

A comparative study of the publishing companies in South Africa, and a closer analysis of their relationship with other institutions in this country may also more clearly show how the political economy of publishing in South Africa is driven.

This research challenges the YAA and deserves therefore to be reviewed by MML. The books are not succeeding or having the intended effect on the reader. One prominent response was that the books were too short for the age group – which was the target age group. Readers of that age are reading books that are more complex, longer and more sophisticated than the YAA stories. Second language readers do not have the same problem, unsurprisingly. More attention needs to be placed by the judges and publishers on the plot, characterization and style of the narratives for these also received sharp criticism from the readers. MML need to review the competition if they intend to have an effect on their readership. Concepts of realism and relevance need to be problematised and explored in the way that they have been here.

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Interview with Insaaf from Wynberg Secondary School

I Insaaf **C** Catherine **T** Teacher

1. C okay 4th October, we must talk quickly, before my battery runs out!
2. I okay
3. C okay, Insaaf, hello?
4. Teacher I was just wondering who was in the library
5. C yah I'm just doing an interview with Insaaf
6. T okay
7. C okay let me have a look at this book, how long does it take you to get through books like this? *Treasures of the Heart*, it's quite long it's about 450 pages?
8. I about uhm, a week
9. C really? So you spend all your time reading?
10. I yes
11. C do you?
12. I I like reading
13. C how long have you been reading for? When sort of, do you read more these days than you did when you were younger? or have you always read a lot
14. I yes, lately I've been reading a lot, I don't know why
15. C because you have more time I suppose? Hey
16. I yah
17. C yah ,and you prefer books like this
18. I hmm
19. C so tell me about this book, what's in the book
20. I I only started today and uhm
21. C hang on a second, come inside
22. Stranger [?]
23. I I only started today and so far it's mainly about whores
24. C whores? Prostitutes?
25. I it's a house where, that a woman owns and she has girls working for her, to give men, to satisfy the men that come in there, it doesn't have any wives, whatever
26. C oh okay, and what do you think about that?
27. I it's disgusting
28. C is it, then why are you reading it? [laughs] hey? If you think it's disgusting then why are you reading it?
29. I because at the end of the story it's quite interesting
30. C oh, how do you know?
31. I because I read the back of the book first
32. C [laughs] and this kind of book where did you, do you buy it or do you go to the library or something?
33. I no my sister bought it, I don't know where she, somewhere in town I think
34. C so do you share books with your sister
35. I yup
36. C how old is she
37. I she's twenty seven
38. C oh really, and you read the same kind of books, okay and does she also read a lot since she was young
39. I yes
40. C okay, uhm so is it mainly with your sister that you share books, do you also share books with other friends, other girlfriends
41. I no
42. C no, do your friends read?
43. I some of them do
44. C some of them do, and do you ever speak about books

45. I no
46. C no? okay, uhm does, so I was gonna say does reading play a role in your friendship?
47. I no
48. C so that's something you do alone, away from your friends?
49. I yes
50. C unless your sister, do you talk, do you talk with your sister about books?
51. I yes sometimes
52. C so what kind of things do you talk about,
53. I like uhm for instance what does she understand about the book and she asks me questions and
54. C and what was the last book you read like this?
55. I uhm, Daniel, Danielle Steele
56. C hmm?
57. I I can't get to the name I think it was "Diamonds" something
58. C okay, "Diamonds" what's it about? I don't know
59. I It's about a wedding ring that uhm this woman she, I watched the movie also, this woman she was married to this guy and he gave her a ring with a diamond in, but then her best friend came in and they split and he took the ring, and so the ring traveled around
60. C and so the story follows the ring where it goes?
61. I yes, and uhm at the end then they, the mob, they're like looking for the ring I don't know what value the diamond has and then the kill the guy, the owner of the ring but they can't get the woman who has the ring on, something like that
62. C uhm, uh so there's like a love story behind the diamond?
63. I yes
64. C oh okay, and do, does the couple get together in the end
65. I yes, no but but the man dies and she remarries
66. C uhm what kind of, if you think about your friends now and also your sister a little bit, what kind of books do your friends read
67. I magazines
68. C like teenage magazines, yah and do you ever use the internet?
69. I no
70. C and your friends?
71. I no
72. C uhm, are there any books that you wouldn't share with your sister? So okay your sister would give you books like this and if you found a book like this you would give it with your sister, but are there any kinds of books that you wouldn't give to her?
73. I yah, these books
74. C [laughs] I was waiting for that! Why not
75. I it's more for us, on our level
76. C who's us?
77. I at school still
78. C okay, what makes you think so
79. I because it's like, how can I say, it lets us understand more and with these books it has to, we have to use our brains really, to concentrate more
80. C this books? Okay. So these books make you think more than these books do? okay, why because the language is more difficult?
81. I and these books, about the language it's more our language
82. C and those books, what do you mean by our language, give me an example
83. I it uhm, depends on the writer, it uses the language we use, like slang and that, and then these books on the other hand more mature words and that man
84. C and so those books you learn a lot more words from books like this, *Treasures of the Heart*, uhm so you find these books more challenging from a language perspective and from a story perspective,
85. I yes
86. C yes, okay so who encouraged you to read from when you were young?
87. I Miss Abels
88. C oh really? And how long has she been
89. teaching you?
90. I two years now
91. C two years? And what kind of books does she give you?
92. I Books like uhm, *To Sir with Love*

93. C oh yah?
94. I and we did *Romeo and Juliet*
95. C so what do you think of *To Sir with Love*?
96. I It's interesting because of the, it's almost like it was the history of Apartheid that time, something like that where the people was racist and then they not, it's a nice book
97. C you enjoyed it?
98. I yes
99. C Do you prefer books like *To Sir With Love* to books like this kind of book, which kind of books do you prefer
100. I More these books
101. C why?
102. I it's more interesting
103. C okay, uhm, so can you give me a few titles of your favourite books, can you think back now to the past two years of you favourite books
104. I I liked Romeo and Juliet
105. C oh, from Shakespeare, do you tell me why, tell me about the story
106. I uhm it's very uhm Romeo fights to be with Juliet and both of them die in the end, it's very romantic, sweet, uhm, sometimes I just imagine myself and I just wish a guy would be like that over me, that's why I like it
107. C you have to look hard, so try and think to that story now and remember a scene from the book that stands out for you, are there any scenes in the book that are really, that stand out for you
108. I I can't now think back
109. C can't think back, okay, uhm are there any kinds of books that you do not enjoy?
110. I uhm
111. C say for example, do you enjoy horror, horror stories
112. I no
113. C like Stephen King? no? and so you enjoy romance, you enjoy adventure?
114. I yes
115. C like what adventure can you think of any books that you enjoyed, that were adventure stories?
116. I uhm, uhm, uhm it's *A Sunny Day* or something like that, where this uhm it's a girl where she gets a pony for her birthday and then uhm, I don't know where this pony takes her, she goes to a forest somewhere and they go on this adventure, with her friend and the pony and he leads her on all kinds of ways and shows them different things in the forest and then they come, and their parents think they're missing and all that and they come back home safe and all this, something like that
117. C okay and books, adventure books like Treasure Hunt and that kind of thing do you like it?
118. I yes
119. C not so much? [laughs]
120. I not so much
121. C uhm ballet stories, did you enjoy that?
122. I -no
123. C you do ballet
124. I dance
125. C you do dance, but you don't enjoy dance stories?
126. I no, it's boring, it's enough that I do it still
127. C okay, and historical novels? So like, books about history
128. I yes
129. C you like that, so like can you think of any books that you have read that are like that?
130. I no not really
131. C okay, uh, fantasy books?
132. I yes
133. C you know what fantasy is, you know when you go into a different world, dwarves and owls and fairies and fairies
134. I yes
135. C yah, magazines, what magazines do you read?
136. I the You
137. C You magazine? Any magazines for teenagers?
138. I no
139. C no, do you like reading books about like suburban life, do you know what I mean, like books about everyday life, like realistic books

140.I yes, it sounds
141.C can you think of any books that you have read like that
142.I no
143.C or do you like the idea? [laughs] okay, uhm listen to these questions and say yes or no, do you prefer stories about imaginary worlds or do you prefer to read books about how things really are?
144.I imaginary
145.C imaginary, tell me why
146.I because I also have an imagination and I
147.like it
148.C to use it? Okay but uhm don't you can also read about the way things are?
149.I yes
150.C do you enjoy that
151.I yes
152.C but not as much
153.I uhm
154.C uhm I'm going to give you a list of things and you must just say yes or no, yes or no. Do you read for distraction? In other words do you read to be distracted from everything around you do you know what I mean?
155.I no
156.C no, to escape ever? No? Do you read because you're interested uhm in the person's experience in the book? Experiences
157.I no
158.C okay do you read because you like to get to the end?
159.I no
160.C do you like happy endings?
161.I yes
162.C have you ever read a book that has a sad ending?
163.I no
164.C no, okay do you read because you are interested in the ideas of the writer?
165.I yes
166.C really? So tell me, that book, "Diamonds" which you read by Danielle Steele, what ideas did she have that were interesting
167.I she's uhm how can I say, she makes things seem very real and she's intelligent what
168.[?] she seems, she talks almost as if she's in the, putting herself in the story
169.C and do you like to have that feeling of being inside the story
170.I yes it makes me more interested in the book
171.C okay so in a sense that's one of the reasons you read so that you can be inside the
172.I -yes
173.C story, like you're watching the story, yes, no?
174.I like I'm one of the characters in the book
175.C but you're not doing anything?
176.I no!
177.C but you, so do you imagine yourself to be one of the characters in the book?
178.I not actually the character, it's like directing a film, like I'm directing a film, I'm just standing there watching the movements and everything
179.C okay, okay and do you ever think of what you would do if you were one of the characters
180.I no
181.C no, and do you ever imagine if you were in that kind of situation
182.I yes I did do that already
183.C okay now lets talk about this book *Song of Be*, okay have you ever read books like this before?
184.I no
185.C uhm if you can guess from looking at the cover, looking at this cover without talking about what's inside what is the book about?
186.I a sad girl sitting there, just looking at the world passing her by
187.C uhm okay what do you think is going to happen to her just from looking at the picture
188.I no, I don't know
189.C she's going to become sadder!
190.I looking at the cover I don't know
191.C do you ever try to guess from the cover of the book what is going to happen or what it's about?

192.I not really
193.C do you ever judge a book by looking at the cover,
194.I no
195.C no? so when you go to a library or a bookshop how do you judge a book or how do you know you want to read it?
196.I by reading the back of the book
197.C the back? Okay so tell me about the back what does the back say?
198.I here she says she just killed herself and she like meant it to be quick, she used an arrow and there was poison on and then she just pressed it on her leg she meant to press it on her heart in her head I mean, no, what happens she pressed it on her leg and then uhm she was sitting under a thorn tree waiting for her life to be over and for the poison to work through her and just pass out
199.C and so if you were to read the back of the book, would you want to read the book
200.I yes
201.C say you were in a shop or something would you be interested?
202.I yes
203.C uhm 'cos it's not like this kind of book hey, I mean lets look at the back? "First impressions, lasting love" and here is "I just killed myself" [laughs] it's very different uhm, so you wouldn't share this book with your sister would you share this book with any of your friends?
204.I yes, they would like it
205.C what would they like
206.I I have a friend she doesn't go to school anymore, she just sits at home
207.C are you serious
208.I yes
209.C how old is she?
210.I she's sixteen
211.C [draws breath sharply] why doesn't she go to school?
212.I she doesn't feel for school anymore she's just gonna sit there and do nothing
213.C she's depressed?
214.I I, I, I think so and I think she will like this book 'cos it's a very sad book and maybe I think it will give her inspiration, because she did try to kill herself
215.C yah she sounds very depressed, uhm, okay that's interesting so you would give this book to her? [nods her head] Uhm how often do you read South African novels? South African stories?
216.I not often
217.C not often and is it important to you where the story takes place would you like to read books about, that take place in America or Australia or wherever?
218.I no it doesn't matter where it takes place
219.C even if it's in South Africa it doesn't make a difference?
220.I no it doesn't make a difference
221.C uhm how did you find this book?
222.I sad, interesting
223.C -sad -interesting, what else? How does it end?
224.I uhm she uhm she sits under a thorn tree and her parents is coming, her mother, I think is coming because she is ill, and I don't know what they do to her but eventually she is still alive
225.C so she doesn't die, it's a happy ending
226.I she has a lot of courage because while she is sitting, she is reflecting on her life in the past and I think she goes with her mother after sitting there she goes with her mother to her grandfather to go work there and then I don't know what happens and then she comes back to there where she was, and then her parents her mother discovers what's happening and she doesn't die
227.C so what do you think happens to her after, say the story goes on after it's finished, obviously you haven't read it but just think what do you think happens to her in the future?
228.I I don't know
229.C just imagine, use your imagination
230.I she meets someone and gets married
231.C and she gets a diamond ring, okay so did you enjoy or did you not enjoy it?
232.I I enjoyed it
233.C even though it was sad, interesting
234.I because I read it about twice
235.C did you? Why?
236.I I had nothing else to do

237.C okay! It's a short book so it's okay, okay now think about, think about just try and remember a scene from the book for me
238.I I think it's chapter two where she goes to her grandpa where she really uhm, where this two Boers, a man and a lady, they're a couple, and then his wife is, he's outside with the people that work for him and the grandpa also works for him and then the wife is inside and then apparent- her mother and she helps the lady inside the house and the, they get to sleep they get a place to sleep they get food to eat and then she really doesn't feel that they think less of them because of their skin of their colour, that part of it I like
239.C what do you like about it?
240.I that they're not racist
241.C oh okay, and is there lost of racism in the book?
242.I no
243.C okay, now tell me about the character, Be, what's her name Be? Is that how you say it
244.I yes
245.C is she the kind of person you can identify with?
246.I uhm, I don't quite understand
247.C in other words, uhm, you know in this kind of book you feel like you're inside the story, is that how you feel about this story?
248.I yes
249.C yah? and the main character Be, do you think that you could be like her in some ways? In other words that she could be real?
250.I yes
251.C yah? she's not like, you can believe that it's a true story?
252.I yes
253.C can you, yah, and did you learn anything from the book
254.I uhm, don't try to kill yourself when you depressed
255.C yah anything else?
256.I uhm, that you have to have courage, and
257.C what do you mean she had courage, how did she show courage?
258.I she didn't show that she wanted to, that she was busy killing herself, she just went on, she like went to her grandfather and they didn't even know that she had poison inside her body
259.C oh okay, why did she to her grandfather after she had poisoned herself
260.I she had to go with her mother because her grandfather was sick and she had to help out
261.C oh I see, and all the time she was actually dying?
262.I yes
263.C and that shows courage? [nods] okay
264.I like if a person has AIDS also, if you know and don't show, you just work on and
265.C you persevere you don't let it get you down?
266.I yes
267.
268.C okay so that's important, okay let me see if there is anything else? Do you have any brothers?
269.I yes
270.C and do they also read?
271.I I only have one brother
272.C does he also read?
273.I no he doesn't live with us
274.C okay so its your sister, your mother
275.I no, only the newspaper
276.C okay I think I've asked you everything that I've wanted to, but would you want to read more books like this?
277.I yes
278.C yes? Okay, what age person would enjoy this book?
279.I from standard five
280.C why do you say standard five?
281.I uhm it's more their level,
282.C you're in Grade nine, and you say for Grade Sevens, why do you say its there level?
283.I uhm, like when they get questions I think they'll be able to answer it, they uh are supposed to be in Grade 7, supposed to be mature already enough to understand
284.C understand?
285.I the concept of a book

286.C so its just being old enough to be able to understand what's happening in a book
287.I it depends on your brains how slow and how fast you are
288.C and what age is too old to read this book do you think?
289.I not too old, about
290.C I mean what age say if someone is 17, would they be too old to read this book
291.I no, not too old
292.C okay so what age?
293.I nineteen I think
294.C -nineteen, eighteen
295.I from seventeen up
296.C upwards, onwards you mean from seventeen down you should read the book, what's in the book that makes it for young people
297.I uhm
298.C so you said the language earlier on
299.I yah and uhm, it's how can I say, it's about a girl, it's more like when you finish your it depends on the phases you go through, your age, now at the age of seventeen you end, not actually end your teenage phase, this is more for teenagers
300.C okay so its about teenage issues, why does she want to kill herself?
301.I she's depressed I suppose
302.C but nothing happens to her or anything?
303.I no, they don't say, while I was reading they didn't
304.C - so just wanted to kill herself for no reason
305.I uhm
306.C and what do you think about that is it a good or a bad thing, do you think people should have reasons to kill themselves? Or what?
307.I they should have reasons, good reasons why they want to kill themselves
308.C okay and the book does not have that do you feel that it's missing from the book? Or is it okay that they don't tell the reason
309.I I think it's okay that they don't tell the reason because it's more interesting you use your imagination more wondering what is going through her head and why she is doing it
310.C so if you try to imagine why she wants to kill herself what do you think is the reason,
311.I maybe it's because seeing as they don't say anything about the father maybe it's because the death of the father, or because she's the only child, she's lonely, something like that
312.C that's a bad reason to kill yourself, okay I think I've asked everything I think so, I can't think of anything, yah, and did you learn anything new about cultures from the book
313.I no, just that uhm
314.C she's a bushman hey
315.I they,
316.C is she a bushman in the book
317.I no, she's some kind of funny name [?] whatever
318.C oh okay
319.I that is I just know that they're mainly for themselves and they just communicated with their type of people and that is not good
320.C why not?
321.I because they live in a world of their own, they live, they make things with their hands and today people make things with machines and computers and write in books and things like
322.C they're too isolated, and do you ever read books to find out about new cultures and to learn new things
323.I not really
324.C no, thank you very much, why did those guys go home?

Interview with Rashaad, Wynberg Secondary School

R: Rashaad **C:** Catherine

1. R it's quite an interesting book, its about a boy, sixteen years old, Neil Mackenzie he's going through his stage of adolescence now, at the moment, he's at a school, a white school and he meets a girl named Em and she introduces him to two black children, Zach and something, and through, hi! through them he learns different, how can I say? through, uh, different types, how can I say? a world, other than what he's learning in. With this he, how do you say, he gets in contact with his father, his schoolmaster and his school mates, I think it's Bossies, his cadet leader. Uhm there's also the girl, that, she said that he is unpatriotic because of the sweater that he had on that said "troops from the townships" if I can remember, and then they said, they thought it was, how can I say, it wasn't them, they're whites they're not worried about the blacks and also she said they're learning to defend their country by marching and shooting but this that he had the sweater that he had on, was not, how can I say, encouraging that, and also with this, the [police is after a couple of boys in the SRC's I don't know if they are leaders at schools in the townships, and his parents take them in, but with that his father is actually against it, though he allowed it he was actually against it and that worsened the trouble between him and his father because he already dropped out of his cadets and his father didn't like it, associating with black people, made his father even more cross. In the end he moves to live with Em.
2. C Oh Really, Okay. Did you enjoy the book?
3. R Yes
4. C What do you think about the ending?
5. R It's quite sad because now, he's living now away from his parents. His mother was, not all against it, his mother used to encourage him but his father wasn't so, so, I think his father is wrong because we are all people colour has got nothing to do with it.
6. C Okay, what does the title mean what is the title all about?
7. R [pause]
8. C This is not a test hey, just tell me what you think?
9. R Almost like, he's living in a dream land of whites and he has to wake up, and notice there are others also around him from different cultures, blacks
10. C and "singing"
11. R [pause]
12. C Is he interested in music or something?
13. R No
14. C Is it about being happy what is it about?
15. R It's about his father wanting him to stand up for the country and go to march and shoot, go actually, his father wanted him to go against the people of the townships
16. C to shoot and kill them?
17. R yah
18. C what do you think about the cover?
19. R Cover
20. C uhm
21. R this is him?
22. C Who
23. R Neil Mackenzie, It's about him, riding the bike every morning to school him learning about the cadets, this looks like him and Em, and this is the people of the township by which he spent a couple of days at the church.
24. C and what about the character of Neil, did you like him, did you believe him?
25. R yah
26. C do you think a story like this could happen?
27. R yah,
28. C its set in the Apartheid years hey?
29. R Yah
30. C How often do you read? Do you enjoy reading?
31. R Yah, I take a book a week
32. C A book a week? And what kind of books do you enjoy reading?
33. R Mostly adventure,
34. C Adventure? Like what ....example?
35. R Say island, people trapped on islands making way to get out. Now and then I'll take another book of a different kind mostly of the future, future things that are going to happen
36. C Oh, okay like what science fiction for example? tell me like one book
37. R uh, I've read also a book similar to this
38. C uh?

39. R I can't come to the title now, it about a boy, you see, in Grade Nine, at a school and he's at a school called Lakeland, and his parents are all old fashioned type of people, they buy old fashioned type of clothes, knitting and things like that, so he lives, at that school they notice everything that's wrong like your shoes, pants, everything that's wrong with him, and now he, he, how can I say, he learns to there's also children that bosses him around, two boys that criticise him and what he wears, he learns to stand up for himself and criticise back, he wanted, to let them criticise him less he bought a dagga seed from them and planted it , and he thought that if he planted it and let it grow then he could prove to them that he's got, he knows what it is and how the thing works, they will criticise him less and forget that his parents are old fashioned and how ..
40. C So what happened, did he get caught?
41. R His mother found it, but he couldn't plant it in his yard because his mother's forever busy in the yard and the front garden.

42. Interrupted

43. C we're talking about Lakeland High and this guy at the school, he gets bullied around and he grows a canna - a dagga plant
44. R And his mother's always interested in going back to the place where she prow, grew up. uhm, this is to say the White road. She said it was, at night when the sun set it was so pink, during the day it was as white as pearls. In front was the ocean. They decided to go, because the mother's forever talking about it, and also the dog they they've got. The mother thinks more of the dog because the mother spoils the dog. If the dog sits on the chair, leave him, and bites him, leave him. And the dog is the one who actually found the tree.
45. C Tree
46. R Tree. Tree
47. C Oh, right, of course
48. R The the mother found it afterwards and the mother asked him about it, and he said he doesn't know perhaps somebody planted it there and couldn't find a place. His mother wanted to take it to a police station, his father actually wanted to take it to a police station, the mother said no, it's precious. So, so they took the trip to the White road, to find that the White road was no longer there, it was there but not as she explained anymore, it was more like tar now. Tar, with white lines. But the ocean was still there and the sunset still leaving the colours as she explained.
49. C Do you enjoy reading books like that?
50. R yah
51. C It's like quite realistic hey? It's quite familiar, do you enjoy it, what do you prefer? Adventure stories, science fiction or this kind of story
52. R Mostly this
53. C You prefer this to adventure?
54. R Yah!
55. C [Laughs] What else have you read so far, what are you reading at the moment?
56. R I'm reading, uhm, I was prepared to go to Wynberg Library to get another book, uh what book was I reading?" The battle of the Red Wall" but I didn't get a chance to read it. I had it, so I was busy for a couple of days and I didn't get it on the weekend.
57. C How long have you been reading books?
58. R Since Standard Five, I started
59. C And what made you start?
60. R What made me start. In Standard three, standard four, they used to ask me to read, and I read, and they told me I read well and they ask me if I read a lot and I said no. They said I must start reading because it can improve me also, improve my speech because that time I wasn't able to talk. The words never came out properly, they encouraged me
61. C Did it help your speech?
62. R Yeh
63. C That's interesting, and now what are you now, Grade Nine? Standard Seven
64. R Yah
65. C So that's about three years and you read a lot well that's nice. So you go to the library tomorrow. Do you ever share books that you read with friends? No?
66. Do you ever talk about reading to a friend of certain books?
67. R Not always
68. C Not always, sometimes?
69. R Now and then, a boy ask me if I got another book, and I say yes and they say, "you're a bookworm"
70. C What do you mean they ask you, are they asking you for a book or are they asking you to read a book
71. R If I have got another book because

72. C - for them?
73. R No, for me, because they always see me at the library
74. C Oh okay, no, do you have friends at the library?
75. R yah! they come sometimes
76. C and do you ever talk to books, about books with them?
77. R talk to books?
78. C Talk about books with them?
79. R No?
80. C Do you ever give books to people and say I think you will enjoy this?
81. R My mom
82. C Your mother? Is she a reader?
83. R Yah, I took a book out "To love a man", I was going to read it, I just read the back part and then my Mom said she wanted to read it because the title sounded nice.
84. C Oh yah, [laughs] Think of the book you read last, no, let's think of your favourite book over the past like year or so that you really enjoyed?
85. R The book that we're busy with in the English, that book I enjoyed most it about a guy, he's an African American, he's dark coloured, he's an American, and he was in the army salvation army and defended army and the people, how can I say when he was in his uniform the people were always glad to see him. But when he moved to England to look for a better job, he was highly qualified but still they didn't want to take him because he's black. The they gave him all kinds of excuses, no you're overqualified, you won't fit because others are working longer and you're too clever it's always the same thing but the main reason was always because he's black. And as far as I read, he couldn't find a proper job that he wanted that he was.

End of Side One

86. C Just say what you were saying about you prefer to read realistic books set in South Africa?
87. R Because, we need to about things that is happening and happened around us, and we can always get back to things that happen or happened in America.
88. C Wherever? Okay, so the local is more important?
89. R Yah
90. C um, and then what was I going to ask you? So people like Marvin and Thomas and Insaaf, aren't they your friends?
91. R yah
92. C they are, because they like read books, so you never sort of share books with them, No? and so have you discussed these books with them that I've given them
93. R No the only thing that I asked them is did Catherine get in contact with you because I was hardly at home.
94. C Yah
95. R Just at night that I'm there, during the day then my parents work and they don't want to give me the key, then I sit there by my grandparents when I come back from Moslem school
96. C So you take a lot of time to read ...

Interview One with Westerford High School

C: Catherine **D**: David **R**:Richard **G**: Shannon

2 C 4th August 2000, thanks for meeting with me, I hope this doesn't take long, I also interviewed St. Joseph's and that took about one and a half hours so I'm going to have to come back at some stage and talk especially about your book. But what I would first like to talk about is the fact that you are readers, you are readers. You are readers hey? You do read a lot don't you?
3 D A little bit
4 G yes
5 C A little bit? Are you all friends
6 R Uhm …
7 C Not really?
8 G we know each other
9 C you don't really hang out together?
10 G no
11 D we do, they do
12 C Okay well I'm going to have to talk to you, how long have you been friends?
13 D from this year
14 C oh, because you're in Standard Six hey, Grade Eight. Do you, is one of the things that you have in common the fact that you both read?
15 R no
16 D no
17 C so reading doesn't play a part in your friendship at all?
18 G They just play hockey together
19 C hey, no? and do you ever give each other books?
20 D no
21 C and talk about books?
22 D no
23 C no? is there a reason?
24 D no
25 C so you guys play hockey together right? Are you guys on teams?
26 D -yah, -no
27 R no
28 C if you think about previous friendships you have like even if you were at Junior School and tell me if there are any books that you have shared with friends
29 R yes
30 C yah
31 G when I get out a book I'll just read it and I'll carry on, I'll read a whole book in a day
32 C but you never ever say to a friend here's a book
33 G - unless there's like
34 C -this is a really cool book,
35 G yah I do sometimes say that but is normally books that I take out the library, I don't normally buy books because I only read them once
36 C oh okay, and you, no, never?
37 R maybe sometimes, I used to, sometimes
38 C okay
39 R those Goosebumps
40 D oh Goosebumps, yah definitely
41 R - Harry Potter, those Hardy Boys
42 D Goosebumps when like, we were in Junior School, we used to always
43 C so you used to read it together in a sense
44 D yah, there was a lot of swopping
45 C a lot of swopping?
46 D lots
47 C okay, so those kind of books, like Goosebumps. Are there any books that you wouldn't when you were that age, like last year, two years ago.

48 D two years ago
49 C are there any books that you wouldn't have given your friends
50 D no
51 C okay, what kind of books do you, okay, I'm not talking about you now. What kind of books do your friends enjoy?
52 R no idea
53 D love books
54 G yah
55 D they all
56 G most of my friends will go straight to the romance section, I think, also, some of them, my one friend likes big books, but I don't know, people don't choose on the thickness of the book, they just choose a nice book, normally if its got a pretty cover they take it as well
57 if they've heard of the book maybe as well,
58 C what kind of books do your friends enjoy, just for example, do they like science fiction, do they read fantasy, Tolkien, do they still read Goosebumps?
59 All no!
60 C do you still read Goosebumps?
61 Laughter
62 G I don't think most of my friends goes for thrillers and stuff, some of them maybe, I think one of them likes mystery. I think, I'm not sure, and the other one likes magazines
63 C so do a lot of your friends not read?
64 R yes
65 G I don't, I don't know, if they read or not
66 C and you're saying yes and you're saying definitely
67 definitely not
68 C they definitely don't read?
69 R I can say that
70 D they don't read unless they have to read, like if the teacher tells them to read then they have to read
71 R okay they do read but they don't read like uhm, these kind of books, like, like, fiction books. My one friend he reads, what's it called those funny books, those sort of computer books. A plus, plus and that sort of thing. How boring! But I suppose it pays off eventually
72 C I suppose it does, uhm, so what do you mean you can see, you can see they don't read? What do you mean?
73 R uh, I don' t know, I just know that they don' t read
74 C okay so what about you guys, do you read like, for how long have you been reading?
75 G I don't know I just read!
76 C But I mean, since you were a child, since you were like
77 G Yah I think so, I had some favourite books that I would get out every time I went to the library
78 C the same books?
79 G yah
80 C like what?
81 G the book? There was one about this horse and the, this like, peasant guy goes through this horses ear and comes out a rich person. I don't know why, but I got it out every time
82 C and you?
83 D uhm, since standard three
84 C since standard three?
85 D no standard one sorry grade three
86 C grade three? And what kind, all kinds I suppose, what about, what is your name? Richard?
87 R yah, about standard one or two, reading those Hardy Boys,
88 C and do you read more or less than those days?
89 R Less
90 C less, why?
91 R no time, so much time for schoolwork and homework
92 G last year and the year before, there was this series of books that read its like I'd get out three books at a time and there were twenty four books
93 C what was the series

94 G it was Cedar River Day Dreams (?), it was a Christian book, so I actually do read a bit
95 C what are your favourite, hang on a second I'm skipping ahead, who encouraged you to read? Friends, family, school?
96 D Teachers? And my Mom
97 G I don't know, it's just a thing that comes naturally
98 C and you Richard?
99 R uhm my father
100 C is your father a reader?
101 R no
102 G we have a reading time at night
103 D my mom reads like these weird books, totally weird ones
104 C like what
105 D I don't know, I don't know what they're about, it's like weird, she gets it from the nuns and stuff
106 C is she a Christian?
107 D She's a Catholic
108 C that's the same, I was going to ask you who encouraged you, your father?
109 R yah
110 C but he's not a reader, he just said read?
111 R he does sort of, then he didn't read that much, but now he reads much more for some reason, and all Christian books as well, that sort of thing
112 G yah my Mom too, and my Dad
113 R he gets it from my uncle, he collects like, sort of, Christian books
114 D what about your grandfather?
115 C uhm what kind of books do you enjoy, at the moment what kind of books do you enjoy reading?
116 G romance
117 D true life, true life
118 C what's your answer
119 R I don't know, just any old book that's excitable
120 C excitable or exciting?
121 R exciting I mean
122 C Romance? What kind of romance, do you mean this kind of thing or do you mean Mills and Boons or Sweet Valley, or Sweet, sweet, Sweet Dreams?
123 G Sometimes, like if, if, like I just read two Sweet Valleys and it was a like a carry on so I wanted to, but mainly books like Sweet Dreams. I'll go straight and see if they've got a little Romance sign on the side
124 C True Life, what's True Life
125 D True Life, Real life like this book
126 C so you like this book,
127 D I like this yah, it's about like gangsters and stuff
128 C Oh okay, gangsters?
129 D what?
130 C I don't know I haven't read it, so when you say you True Life you mean things like that 's quite sort of on the edge like gangsters and stuff, so.
131 D exciting True Life
132 C you don't want to read about … what about like suburban true life?
133 D no
134 G I don't know, it seems more real if its like American, no this seems more real if it's South African, it seems more made up when its American so sometimes that's nicer
135 C oh I see okay what are your favourite books. Not now, at the moment what is your favourite book of all time
136 D I don't have one
137 C well just think of a book that you really enjoy
138 G that Cedar River one
139 C The Cedar River one, what was, remember uhm, can you remember any scenes from that book?
140 G uhm, there was like, it's more like moral things like, this one boy was, like one girl, got pregnant, like when she was still in school, and stuff like that, so she goes through like

crises and they help each other out, and once, the grandpa dies and stuff like that so its just like makes you think. Those weren't love story ones they were just well written I think

141 C okay but can you remember any scenes from that

142 G there's this once, when this one girl she's like homeless and she comes to the school and then uhm and then the main girl, Lexi she finds her in the bathroom and she's brushing her teeth at school, and they like, Lexi, the main girl was really sweet and that, and that's when they started welcoming her in and trying to like break the barrier because she was very icy to the other girls, that's the one I remember

143 C oh, okay, uhm, Richard?

144 R I don't remember the name of the book but uhm, a few, from those like adventure books that

145 C you mean like Willard Price?

146 D yes that's the one

147 R yes that's it

148 C Cannibal Adventure, Southsea

149 D I read like five of those

150 R I read most of those, they're quite good

151 D and the cannibal one

152 R I can't remember the other book

153 C Can't remember, well remember a scene for me out of one of those books, one scene

154 D I don't remember, I just remember that I enjoyed them

155 R no

156 C not even vaguely, like an image or an atmosphere?

157 R ummhmm

158 C no!?

159 R this guys in the jungle

160 C in the jungle?

161 R one of them, I think

162 D the cannibal one

163 C the cannibal was also in the jungle

164 R Amazon Adventure

165 C it was in the place, that place, what's it called?

166 D there's one about that lion

167 C New Guinea, Papua New Guinea

168 D yah?1

169 C one about that lion what's that Safari Adventure

170 G that was it, and my Dad was reading it to my brother and I remember when it was in the cage and it like ripped off his leg or something like that, and it was outside as well, I probably changed it, but any way.

171 C can you remember a scene what are your favourite books also Willard Price books?

172 D adventures, I like true life adventures

173 C okay but give me a title

174 D oh, title uhm

175 C or an author

176 D I never look at the authors

177 C really?

178 D no, I just read the book

179 C can you remember any scenes from the books?

180 D no

181 C but you like adventure?

182 D yah

183 C okay, that's good enough. Are there any kinds of books that you don't enjoy

184 G Sci-fi

185 C you don't like science fiction? Why not?

186 G I am not a very sci-fi person, I'm like, I mainly, if I watch a movie it's like comedy and stuff, I don't really go for the alien things, I don't know, and I don't like, I don't like horrors and thrillers and stuff, I'm a calm person

187 uhm

188 C you don't like romance?

189 D no, that's what I don't like

190 R sometimes its boring, sometimes its boring
191 D yah, it's boring
192 C but you have read them then?
193 R yah
194 D I've read one
195 R very boring
196 C okay
197 D it goes so slow, they're talking about this one guy, I hate it
198 C and what about science fiction?
199 D I like aliens
200 R I like it
201 C you don't mind it, and fantasy, like Tolkien ?
202 D I read this one, I read this nice one, it's like, "An Alien stole my homework" and stuff like that, it's a nice alien book
203 G I used to read Goosebumps

204 Break Richard and David go home

205 C uhm, what are you reading now?
206 G uhm at the moment, my sister has been begging me to read Harry Potter, and I was trying to convince her that it wasn't like it wasn't for me, so I started reading, I think I read like half of the first chapter, so hat's what I am reading at the moment, and I'm trying to get one of the Sweet Valley ones called "Earthquake", but it's not in at the moment
207 C are you enjoying Harry Potter?
208 G I haven't read far enough to really get in the depth with it, also, like, at the moment I could stop it now and it really wouldn't make a difference
209 C oh, okay, do you have, do you have different reading tastes to your friends?
210 G uhm, I think I read far more than them I won't like get a book out of the library for like, a week time, you know, just for the sake of reading cos I'm normally quite busy, actually I'm not, I just, I don't know, but in the holidays I'll like five books, like this one, I read on the first day. If I start a book I normally just read the whole day, I'll lie on my bed and I'll just read, read, read. He reads, like when he was five he was reading Willard Price
211 C really?
212 G yah
213 C How old is he now
214 G he's seventeen
215 C is he still a big reader?
216 G yah, he reads books that are like this thick in a week at least, I mean at most
217 C Okay we've spoken about horror you don't like, romance, you do, what about adventure, do you like that?
218 G it depends, it's not like I don't really like, I just don't go for them
219 C oh okay, and pony stories
220 G pony stories? Don't go for pony stories
221 C every time I say pony stories, people react. Ballet stories?
222 G uhm I haven't really read, I did ballet for eleven years. I don't know, I just don't go straight for it , like if I go to a, like my mom recently got five books for me, and I straight away went through them to find the romance, also the cover makes a big difference to me, and also, yah
223 C what difference?
224 G I don't know, when I'm reading I'll always refer to the cover and I'll see, you see this one was a bit weird, because I kept on referring and then I read the page and it said thanks to these models, they are not really the people in the book, so then I couldn't like get it out of my head that they were not, I don't know, I just, they were two normal people yah
225 C what about historical novels? What about those?
226 G like what
227 C novels about historical people, events and lives and stuff
228 G probably, I probably read
229 C the Vikings, whatever
230 G no, I don't know, I don't only go for romance, I read comedies as well, drama I go for drama as well

231 C okay, uh, magazines?
232 G Like what type?
233 C I don't know?
234 G oh, uhm, I don't know I just like magazines that have stuff that are up to date, like I would normally flip through them and if I say my favourite actor I'll read the whole thing about that
235 C uhm do you prefer stories about imaginary worlds or do you prefer to read books about how things really are?
236 G half-half, I don't mind which book I read, as long as it is written well, like if you give me a thriller book –
237 C - what do you mean written well?
238 G if it like makes me feel like I'm actually there, and I don't know if it makes me enjoy it, like it could be a thriller and it could be a comedy and I might enjoy the thriller more, it's just if it captivates me, sort of
239 C yah, so let me go through a list of things and you must just say yes or no okay? Do you read for distraction, in other words, do you read because it's nice, do you read for distraction?
240 G in a way, I just like to read
241 C okay, do you read because you're interested in a record of loved experience?
242 G no
243 C no, do you read for pleasure in an imagined world? Pleasure to imagine things?
244 G I suppose yah,
245 C do you read because you like to get to the end?
246 G I always read the first page, the last page first, I don't like suspense, so I'll go straight and find out who goes with who so I don't have to worry, cause then, I won't go I no, he doesn't go
247 C do you ever read because you are interested in the ideas of the writer
248 G no I don't really know the writers, cause they're normally all different selections
249 C uhm that's true, okay, we're going to talk about Blue Train to the Moon now, have you ever read books like this before, say for example of this series, The Young Africa Series
250 G no I haven't read African books yet
251 C African? You haven't?
252 G No, I'm not, I don't know, no, I haven't, not really
253 C Have you ever read books written especially for teenagers
254 G Yah
255 C obviously you have, but I mean realistic books like true life books?
256 G I suppose those Cedar River Daly books were quite like, they were stuff that really happened
257 C yah
258 G like it wasn't anything that was farfetched that like, you don't think would happen
259 C but those were set in America
260 G yah, but they could like happen here, in a way
261 C okay, so you haven't read African books yet, what was your reason you're not sure?
262 G for reading the books?
263 C for not reading South African books
264 G I don't know I just, I don't know, they're not often in the, I don't check like. Are they American? I'll get it, they're not really in the libraries that much, I just go and find a book that looks nice I don't know, a book that sounds nice and that
265 C if it was in the library would you choose that book?
266 G I don't know, my mom normally gets my books for me, she sort of knows my taste
267 C does she? Is she likely to get a book like that?
268 G I might, I'm not sure but I might
269 C and what about those other books that you saw here, one was a twin world, the other was about, are those the kind of books that you look at and say I want to read it
270 G I don't ever feel like that " I want to read it", I just, I don't know I just get books, I don't know, I find out if I like them in the book and then I recommend them to other people or not, so I don't really look, I even sometimes get buy books I can see if it's nice or not, so it doesn't. This is, I like books like this because it was written in a diary form, so it was easy-ish, not easy-ish, it was easier to follow, not like written and stuff

271 C when you looked at the cover when I gave you the book what did you guess it was about?
272 G a girl and a boy,
273 C romance, kind of thing
274 G uhm well it could have been the dad and the daughter because he looked quite old
275 C okay, how did you find the diary form
276 G uhm it was weird at first but then it was quite good, cos, I'm just trying to remember the novel I read it so long ago, uh, it was, happened, like the same things happened over and over but overall it was quite well written
277 C why do you say things happened over and over again?
278 G well like, it was almost as though it was repeating itself, like you already know it's, could happen, except not like that, well it is sort of, I don't know its hard to explain like you sort of know, you're not really in suspense, sometimes, like one part he had AIDS and you wouldn't really have expected him to have got AIDS and stuff
279 C okay so you do like there to be some suspense
280 G yah, but I like to see, I always will read the back page so I can know what's going on, so I can know, yah
281 C what do you mean it was weird in the beginning, how was it weird
282 G uhm it was just, I don't know it wasn't the type of book I would have gotten out in the beginning, and then I figured out it was quite a nice end because it was relevant to my life in a way
283 C How so?
284 G Because it's got like [?] I can't remember if she's got a sister
285 C yes, she's got a sister
286 G yes she does have a sister
287 C she's an awful sister
288 G yah and in a way it deals with the fighting with your Mom, and how you should actually cherish it because you don't always have all that time with them, and also to buy a bigger house and not all live together
289 C okay so you can identify with that
290 G yah
291 C okay can you tell the story back to me
292 G okay, well she goes to a party with her friend Sandra, I can't remember and then she experiments with drugs and stuff and then she gets high and sleeps with this guy Mario and she doesn't like, when she wakes up in the morning she's like all hazy and she's so upset that she did that and she gave him his number, her number as well when she was high. So he like calls her and she really doesn't want any thing to do with him because she didn't know what she was doing and he turns out to be really nice and stuff, and she's at an art school, she's like very artistic and stuff and he comes to pick her up after school, and she thinks "I don't really want to go with him", and she finds that she can really talk with him easily, she can talk about her problems, about her Mom, about her Gran and everything like that and uhm later on, we find out that he has AIDS, and then, he's a Catholic, and they have this angel thing and they light candles, and that's interesting as well, because I didn't know that, and then she also might have Aids, but then she doesn't, so and also the Mom finds her diary and writes in there somewhere. So, its, yah and she fights with her Mom and stuff a lot, and her friend Sandra wants to go to Cape Town because it's set in Durban, or Johannesburg and then she won't go because she actually finds that she really likes Mario and sot here's a change from being, so, because he was like, he used to experiment with drugs a lot and things like that so he changes to be a really nice guy
293 C okay, okay what are the best parts of the book for you?
294 G uhm I like the part where the Mom wrote the letter
295 C describe that scene for me
296 G well she's being writing, she's written, she hides this diary behind the stove which isn't a really good place to hide it and she notices in the two weeks before the mom writes the letter, that her mom is being nicer to her and more understanding, whenever Sylvie says something okay, because she's quite rude to her, to her Gran then the mom will back up the Gran and she's become more understanding and stuff and then she reads the letter and she's saying that I didn't you had these problems and stuff like that, so like, and so, yah that's basically it, and she explains that she didn't know and she could have come talk to her and things like that, uhm

297 C uhm do you ever think about the author of a book

298 G I can sort of like, it's sort of nice to know because then when you read it, if you read a few of them and they're all similar, the you can sort of relate to the person, the author because then you can tell what their life is like

299 C what kind of, if you were to imagine the author what she look like

300 G look like

301 C not look like, be like

302 G she'd be, I don't know, married, I don' t know, she could be anything I don't know if she would be the kind of person who would write a science fiction thriller, laid back and very suburban, so

303 C But you enjoyed it anyway, even though it was suburban?

304 G yah, it was quite nice

305 C anything else, did you find the characters, that you could identify with the characters?

306 G no, I'm not like her at all, in a way, because I fight with my mom and my sister, so that, but I'm not a person who gets high on drugs and stuff like that

307 C and what about Mario, could you in a sense believe, find him believable, that someone like him could exist?

308 G uhm , it was weird in a way because he was like a druggie guy, who slept around and stuff and yet he was a catholic, which was weird, so catholic to the extent that they did bring offerings and like, and that was weird because then you didn't really know if he was because he really did believe in that, which was weird because then you don't know which one he was, because I don't think that really religious people go like sleeping around and stuff

309 C okay, thanks a lot for everything

End of Interview

Interview Two with Westerford High School

Ca Catherine **Da** David **De** Dean
Ri Richard **Hy** Hylton

1. Ca It better work or I'll be really upset
2. Da I enjoy books that are like mystery that's like detective like Hardy Boys
3. Ca Do you still , so do you read the Hardy Boys
4. Da Yah I read like one or two
5. Ca and what about Ian Fleming books, like James Bond books, spy books
6. Ri oh yes, I watch the movie
7. Ca yah the books are just as bad
8. De Paul Jennings I like
9. Da yah, Paul Jennings
10. Ca Is that like proper detective, proper spy books?
11. De its like fun
12. Ri fun, yah, comedy
13. De comedy
14. Ca oh okay, funny spy books
15. De Paul Jennings, I read like two of them
16. Ri its the kind of movie you'd rather watch than read the book.
17. Ca oh okay, and what about realistic books?
18. Da realistic books, like this one?
19. Ca uhm
20. Da they're also quite nice, quiet interesting
21. Ri It teaches you uhm about different places, especially if its like, your own country
22. Ca oh yes?
23. Ri you can learn a bit
24. Hy it teaches you about what actually happened there
25. Ri like how people lived
26. De yah we had a class reader, we read uhm, like a book that was a class reader, we read, what was it called that book we read?
27. Da *Goodnight Mr Tom*
28. De yah *Goodnight Mr Tom*
29. Ca Won't you put that in the middle
30. Da Yah we read *Goodnight Mr Tom*, and I think we, I really did learn quite how things like long ago in the world war
31. Hy World War 2
32. Da World war 2
33. Ca what did you learn
34. Da how they lived
35. Hy yah
36. Ca oh okay, how they lived, is it different to us?
37. Da the customs, the customs how everyone went to church every Sunday
38. Hy the accents
39. Da accents
40. Hy accents and everything
41. Da and the way children are brought up, children are brought up, you should be seen and not heard, that's how
42. Hy and the way that uhm, London had effected the kids, because in the book it shows how they had actually stolen stuff from this one store, and it shows you that their mothers and fathers had probably taught them to actually steal
43. Ca although that book was written in the eighties hey, its not like it was written in 1947, so its interesting that you should think that
44. Da yah
45. Ca uhm, okay so books about South Africa, these books how did you actually find them
46. Da yah, interesting... this one was a bit too short
47. Ca too short?
48. Da it was only 70 pages!
49. Ca Yah, I know it is a bit short, it's meant to be short, to hold your attention
50. Da yah
51. Ca the writers think that your age group read short books
52. Da yah, and the beginning wasn't that nice

53. Ca oh okay, why?
54. Da because he kept on writing a letter, like a letter to his Dad who had already died
55. Ca uhm
56. Da it didn't really keep me in, but I still read it
57. De the book I read I thought was a little bit slow it took quite a while for the story to get going to actually get to the great parts that I enjoyed
58. Ca so what parts did you enjoy?
59. De I enjoyed the parts where they are like travelling or
60. Ca what was it called?
61. De *Traveller, The Traveller*
62. Ca *The Traveller* oh okay, so you enjoyed the parts when they are like travelling, why?
63. De yah when they were on, like sleeping in the cave, but some, most of it like forty percent of the book was about family life and how the about their family which I thought was quite boring
64. Ca do you think that stories about families could be interesting?
65. De it could
66. Ri it can
67. De if, if, if it tells you like you see how different families can get along with each other. It can sometimes be interesting
68. Ca so how was this boring?
69. De it was just like they didn't like get on with each other, I didn't, personally I just thought it was just boring, that's all
70. Ca so you did *Traveller* and you did *One Bounce* and you said the beginning you didn't like but the rest of it you did like?
71. Da yah, there was more action, more things started to happen
72. Ca so things started to happen, what about the ending?
73. Da the ending was nice, uhm, uh what's his name? Kop, died and the other guy's name again, this other guy, he yah, he was like, he wasn't involved but he had a friend who was involved and so he started a new life, it was nice
74. Ca and the characters did you find the characters were people you could identify with and understand?
75. Da yah
76. Ca do you think that people like that could exist
77. Da yes
78. Ca oh okay, cool, uhm what about *The Twin World*
79. Ri its interesting to learn about like town, town uhm, townships and you know, those government houses
80. Ca council houses
81. Ri yah but its like those matchbox houses, how small they were actually and how many people have to live in them and like Rastafarians, I never really knew much about them and uhm
82. Ca what do you know now?
83. Ri like lifestyle and how they live, about their like, their faith
84. Ca oh their faith
85. Ri Yah, Jah Jah or whatever
86. Ca is Jah Jah their god, I'm sorry I haven't read this book
87. Ri Its I don't really understand that part but its sort of like their god
88. Cs so you learnt about the way they lived
89. Ri and also about friendship, they, he, that Rastafarian, Kahinda,
90. Ca Kahinda
91. Ri at the end of the book, he smokes dagga and he gives up smoking dagga and Ntsizi, one of the main characters who first talks it in the book. He gives up drinking. He didn't really have a serious problem but Kahinda wants him to give up drinking, he doesn't like drinking and he wants, Ntsizi wants Kahinda to give up dagga smoking
92. Ca okay, so did it have adventure in it?
93. Ri uhm in parts it was quite boring
94. Ca was it, did you read it because you had to read it?
95. Ri well I got, yah sort of
96. Ca would you choose this book if you went to a library?
97. Ri no
98. Ca really? even after having read it
99. Ri maybe
100. Ca and what about you would you choose the book?
101. Da yah I would
102. De I don't think I would have
103. Ca really?
104. De I don't, it just it was it was it took quite awhile for it to start and get exciting, it was, it was quite short, it was only a hundred and what fifteen pages
105. Ca what about *Tolly, Hero of Hanover Park*?
106. Hy uhm, it was a very well written book

107.Ca Well
108.Hy well written book, but it was a bit predictable, okay, uhm, I found that they didn't explain the characters well enough. The way Gamat and Tolly actually find the judge or whatever it was, its interesting but it was also very short I normally read 300 page books
109.Ca oh okay, anything else, so you obviously wouldn't choose that book
110.Hy no, I might! if its what I feel like reading
111.Ca and did it make you interested in places like Hanover Park?
112.Hy yah, uhm I believe one of the girls in our class lives in Hanover Park
113.Ca yah so it wasn't successful, uhm have you ever read books like this besides the books that I've just given you now? Did you ever read a book like *Love, David*
114.Da David?
115.Ca *Love, David*
116.Da no, I've read a book called David
117.Ri why because it's named after you?
118.Da no, because we did it as a class reader
119.De Oh, *I am David*
120.Ca that's *I am David*
121.Da Oh, *I am David*
122.Ca No
123.Hy uhm I've read for a class reader thing, something about a German kid in WW2 he was a Jew, he was a Jew, I did that like in Grade 6, I don't remember much, but he gets killed in the end
124.Ca oh okay
125.Hy a bomb blasts next him, he flies and hits his head on a rock
126.Ca oh great! What happens in the end, he just dies? that's it
127.Hy he just dies
128.Ca gosh
129.Hy one of his friends, one of his friends father was, was, was a Nazi and that, this father pressure his son not to go with
130.Ca do you enjoy reading books about WW2
131.De Yah, it depends what its like on, if its on the family, not the family if its on like
132.Da friends
133.De yah if its on the fighting
134.Ca oh if its on the action
135.Ri yah the action parts
136.Ca so stories like that you don't enjoy
137.Hy yah, no I like them, I like them it depends on the uhm, what, uhm what actually happens in the book because one book could have set in Marseilles where there's no fighting and another book you could have in uh, Tubruk where they actually fought three times, won three battles. There's a difference between those things
138.Ca Oh okay so you prefer to read about action and fighting and the whole army side of it, the military side. Although you did enjoy Goodnight Mr Tom, did you all enjoy that?
139.All yes
140.Ca cos that's not really about fighting, although he does die
141.De yah, we watched the video afterwards that was quite different, to see what the difference were between video and the book
142.Hy we reviewed it
143.De yah we reviewed it
144.Ca okay so what about books like Anne Frank, did you enjoy that
145.Da never heard of her
146.Ca never heard of Anne Frank?
147.Hy I have
148.De her diaries
149.Ca Okay, because she also dies in the end, I'm just thinking do you like endings that are not quite as grim as that, so do you mind endings that are quite sad
150.De I like happy endings
151.Ca do you prefer happy endings?
152.Hy yes
153.Ca if you do that's fine
154.Hy its more, positive
155.De I don't mind sad endings but I prefer happy endings
156.Ca did all these books I gave you do they have happy endings or sad endings?
157.Hy happy
158.Da sad and happy
159.Ri happy
160.De happy and sad

161. Ca lets go back to the books now, what I would like you to do, is just try and remember one scene your favourite scene hopefully, and revisualise it and describe it
162. Hy The time when they found, Tolly and Gamat, they found the watchdog of the house they wanted to get into had been knocked over by a car and they were so happy that they packed their bags and went into the house
163. De I remember that in my book there was this blind man named James Holman and he was in a pub with drunk people and he didn't realise they were drunk for quite a while until, it took him quite a while to realise that they were drunk. He was like communicating with them and he didn't know what they were talking about or anything
164. Ca and so it was quite funny
165. De it was quite amusing
166. Da in my one they're going to the funeral of a gangster and then after the funeral they had a, they shot guns up into the air and then Hale heard one of Kop's friends crying behind her, crying behind him, and looked back and there Kop lay dead on the ground, someone had shot him, and then Hale fell to the ground and started to cry because he was his best friend from childhood.
167. [pause laughter] can't you remember?
168. Ri no, uhm there was no real good part in this book most of it was quite boring but it was interesting to like learn

309.Hy Harry Potter, I read it like three hours
310.Ca Harry Potter
311.Ri in three hours!
312.Hy it was very exciting
313.[garbled]
314.De I read a book, *Lost in Antarctica*, its like you just, you didn't even know which page you were one you just keep on turning and turning, it's lie one minute you're on fifty, the page fifty and the next minute you're just, on eighty, the page eighty
315.Da yah yah
316.De and it feels like it's just two minutes that have gone by
317.Da yah
318.Ca is that like the best feeling?
319.De yah, and you wonder, you couldn't have read so much
320.Da you're so into the book
321.Hy it happens, it also happens with computer games, my cousin, my cousin borrowed a computer game from me. She gets, sits down, and plays, for her, its just a little bit and then her father tells her to go to bed and she says "Oh no man its only five past five", and her father says, "no its nine o' clock at night" , all the time on the computer, and she started five o'clock and she didn't do, achieve things she could do
322.Ca so now is that escape or is it something else, do you think it's a form of escape? What do you think it is?
323.Hy yah
324.Ca or is it the opposite, like being completely absorbed in something
325.Hy yah I think it's more like being absorbed
326.Da yah
327.Hy you can't get enough of it you have to keep doing it all the time
328.Ca let's just go back to the question about your favourite books, tell me about Harry Potter
329.Da I only started reading the first one so,
330.Ca that's fine
331.Da I read like half of the second one and now I'm reading the first one
332.Ca I read the books in the bookshops
333.[laughter]
334.Ri I read the second one, then the first one, then the third one
335.Hy I read in order, one, two and three
336.De I haven't read one Harry Potter
337.Hy I'm reading the second one again, I'm reading the second again after I finish –
338.Cs - is it popular in your class?
339.Ri uhm, not really, yes, sort of
340.Da some people
341.[some names of classmates who've read Harry Potter, garbled]
342.Ca okay so not everyone, are there any people who read those books who haven't read before?
343.Da yeah, I think so, Rob, Rob doesn't read
344.Ri Robert does read
345.De Rebecca, she finished that Harry Potter, the latest one,
346.Ri in a week
347.De I think it's like 800 pages
348.Ri - 630 pages
349.De - in three days
350.Ri yah 633
351.Ca yah that's possible
352.De she just read, she just read
353.Ca - if you do nothing
354.Da she would stand at school and just read
355.Ca so remember, all of you, all three of you who chose read Harry Potter, try and remember a scene that for you was one of your favourites.
356.Da my favourite was when they were in a flying car and they were flying, and they were flying to a castle and they back into a live tree
357.Ri - moving tree
358.Da and the tree comes for you and stuff like that, and that's when I felt whoah!
359.Hy when uhm, in he Goblet of Fire, when uhm Harry's name pops out of the globet, though he didn't like, he's like so surprised … there's only supposed to be three, that's why it's called the Tri-visit tournament, but there's four
360.Ca okay
361.Ri is that the first part or is that the fourth book, the fourth book okay. In the fourth book when they started,uhm they electing where you go, like which house
362.Ca oh yes I remember that
363.Ri the hat which you put on your head, I like that part

364.Hy [???]
365.Ri yah
366.Ca I like the part in the first one where the cloak, he puts on his cloak and he sneaks out of the house and he goes to the mirror, he goes to the mirror
367.Hy oh the mirror of Esel [?]
368.Ca whatever and he sees his family
369.Da the first book
370.Ca the first one
371.Hy and one sees himself as Head Boy and the Captain of the [?] team and he has the championship cup in his hand
372.Ri on this one internet site it shows you what's gonna happen, she's gonna write like eight books and in the last book, there's a preview, she's like said what she's planned for the books and in one of the books Harry and Herm, Herm
373.Da Hermione
374.Ri get married
375.Ca oh really
376.Ri and like, they're really like, close. How do you know?
377.Da in the last one?
378.Ri not that I know of
379.Da well that's what I heard
380.Ca do you find Harry Potter books a bit scary, do you find in places that it's a bit weird
381.Ri adventurous
382.Da it's weird but nice, its funny
383.Ri I like that game they play,. That's the best, I like reading about that
384.Ca qui-, qui
385.Da qui-
386.Hy quiddish
387.[garbled discussion about Harry Potter]
388.Ca so you don't find the books

Interview with Alex and Nicky Glenday from Westerford High School

C: Cathy **N**: Nicky **A**: Alex

1. C okay my first question, well firstly thank you for reading the books, my first question is do you read, and as a habit
2. A - yes!
3. C and how long do you read?
4. A yes, you can ask y mother, she nearly, she can't get me away from the books
5. N yah we both like reading a lot but she reads excessively, she reads a lot
6. C [laughs] and for how long, ever since, before school already?
7. N well my mom always used to read to us every night when we were small and so we just love reading and stories and stuff, and so we, yah, before school and stuff
8. C oh and so you could read before school or did you listen to the stories?
9. N well no, you listened to the stories and then at school I started reading and now it's just become one of those nice things
10. C the next question is who encouraged you to read obviously it's your mom,
11. N yeah
12. C okay, do friends encourage you, well I mean not encourage you but do you, do your friends also read
13. A yah I've got, my friends, my friends quite a few of my friends are readers like me they read a lot I think I got quite a lot of my ideas from reading from them
14. C is it
15. N mostly sort of swops books and them and stuff
16. C okay what kind of books do you swop?
17. N Judy Blume ones
18. A yah, sometimes, I don't really, I don't really kind of read the same kind of books as they do because I prefer sort of fantasy and creative, more
19. N sometimes they sometimes they say stuff , they say "oh this is a really good book" and you read it
20. A yah we sort of swop books but I don't really enjoy the books they read as I do, well some of the books, some of them read books called Animorphs
21. C Animorphs?
22. A yah and its all about these children who morph into animals and stuff, I don't know, I don't really like them, they're a bit too, I don't like computery books ones that are like digital
23. C oh science fiction books
24. A yah
25. C okay, well that almost answers the next question but maybe you can expand on it, the next question is what kind of books do you enjoy?
26. A I love Harry Potter!
27. C [laughs]
28. N complete fantasy, uhm, I don't know also uhm, moving books, ones that are based on non fiction stuff but have a fiction element, you know I don't know
29. C say for example?
30. N things like, I don't know, I quite often find myself, I learn something at school say about the second world war or something and I read a book and I'll be able to understand it a lot better, and I don't know, I love, I mean, I quite, I like things that uhm represent reality I love things I can identify with very well
31. C uhum, so if fantasy like that?
32. N it depends, it depends we love the Narnia books for instance
33. A yah!
34. N and I mean although we read them when we were much younger, we're still occasionally, we've got all the tapes as well, we'll still listen to it, I mean uhm they are complete fantasy but they also, they touch back to things that you know about, I mean the Harry Potter books as well, they, they sort of she's brilliant because she makes it just like everyday life but it's completely different at the same time
35. A its completely different
36. N yah, I like also things like Anne Frank or something like that I like some balance,

37. C find a balance between quite realistic books and then fantasy which is another way, in a sense
38. A - or complete like fantasy but it is has something to do with something that really happened, so it's not a true story but it's based on a true time
39. C almost like inspired by those events
40. A yah, yah
41. C okay, are there any kind of books that you do not enjoy
42. N we, I don't know I don't read
43. A Goosebumps, oh gosh!
44. N I have never read, things like Goosebumps have never appealed to me, or I don't like those
45. A - it's stupid really!
46. N romance books I have never touched those in my life
47. A like Sweet Valley or something
48. C okay let me go through a list of stuff and you can just say yes no yes no
49. N yah
50. C horror?

51. End of Side One
52. C I hope it was recording the whole time, I've lost such important, okay never mind we can go back at the end, we can just
53. A okay
54. C where was I? Oh titles, you said Enid Blyton you like adventure
55. A well she's okay but I'm trying to think of all the books I've ever read, uhm Watership down
56. C watership down
57. A yes I know but it is an adventure and I really enjoyed it
58. N oh man what adventure stories have we read we always read adventure stories
59. C you guys haven't read the ones that are typically for boys like cannibal adventure
60. A Hardy Boys
61. C Hardy Boys and that whole series of adventures, Cannibal Adventure, Pacific Adventure, Southsea Adventure, Amazon Adventure
62. N I've read, I, we read a whole series of adventure books but they were all Enid Blyton weren't they?
63. A what about your all ones about the boats
64. N oh I used to read those ones those sailing ones
65. A I'll go fetch one, what's their name, what's their name?
66. N He writes swallowdale or something
67. C swallowdale
68. A swallowdale
69. N those things that the storyline, the storyline is always the same, so you read the books and eventually they just get boring, but uhm
70. C -formulaic
71. N oh come on
72. C It's okay you don't have to remember, but you can say what you enjoy about the books
73. N suspense I suppose
74. A yah
75. N the imagination if anything, the cleverness of it, the wittiness
76. A I don't know why, I just like books its very hard to say why
77. N and uhm not knowing what to expect next or whatever, uhm, I don't know the whole going to new places, discovering new things I suppose it's the same kind of elements in the detective story
78. C uhm okay, what about pony stories?
79. A no thank you
80. N no, we've never been into horses
81. C ballet stories?
82. A uhm not really no, I mean, I'm a ballerina, and I enjoy doing ballet, and I don't know
83. N - I've never danced in my life, so
84. A there's one called Ballet Shoes, that one, and I tried to read that, but it wasn't well I sort of got half way and felt it wasn't really working, actually there are,
85. N - maybe it was just a boring book
86. C yah

87. A come to think of it I've just thought that there have been quite a few ballet stories I have read now suddenly, oh yah what about that one called
88. C there's the Sadler's Wells series, have you ever read that?
89. A there's this women who really wants to dance but she's in a wheelchair so she can't, she wants this girl she's adopted to dance for her and this girl doesn't want to dance and her teacher's horrible
90. C what about historical novels?
91. N yah, well I like history so
92. A the road of the unicorn and stuff like that
93. C the what of the unicorn
94. A the road (?)
95. N it's a book about the time of Caxton, and its, its sort of based on little facts which has created this whole fictional story about their not being enough paper and they have to smuggle it in and it's a whole fictional story about an historical thing and that's what we like, we like, uhm, historical fictional novels that like, they're also, they're adventurous but they're also historical, they touch on historical things
96. C uhm and then you said fantasy do you have any, have you read *Lord of the Rings*? And *The Hobbit* that kind of thing?
97. N we've read *The Hobbit*,
98. C what kind of fantasy books, just tell me again why you read fantasy?
99. N it's the whole aspect of the imagination, it's the creativity bit, it's the weird and wonderful
100. A it's the imagination -yah definitely like all the things that are different and they sort of capture and you think about things that aren't really there but, but they're just so interesting you want to read about them
101. N yah things that trigger your own imagination that you can elaborate on
102. A yah definitely
103. C magazines
104. N well we've never really had magazines in the house, sometimes if I come across a magazine I'll read it
105. A no
106. C not even ones for teenagers?
107. N no, well, no, not really, some my friends have got some and then I'll read them and enjoy it, but I don't go and get them
108. C well I suppose, cowboy stories?
109. A no, not really, let me think, no
110. C what about stories that are tend to be set in the suburbs and that tend to be quite realistic
111. A yah, yah
112. C I don't know, we're kind of weird because we like stuff that you can identify with, especially like I said, if you've learnt something history whatever, then you have a much better understanding of the story, but also on the other extreme the stuff that just is out of this world like complete fantasy, that you can just let your imagination go wild, we're both kind of creative so
113. C okay, let's just talk, or let me ask you this question first, do you prefer stories about imaginary worlds or do you like to read books about how things really are, I suppose you've answered this.
114. N yah
115. C do you read for uhm, the word is distraction, but do you often read to get out of this sort of real situation
116. A yes I always do that, I don't do my homework so I just read a book instead, which is much more interesting,
117. N uhm yes and no, I don't do it to shut off uhm, I do it for enjoyment, Alex yah, she'll go sit in her bed and she'll just read the whole day
118. A no I love reading for enjoyment
119. N - she never gets anything done
120. A if I ever have a [?] I'll take a book with me so I can read, but I don't, I also, if I really don't want to do something I'll just plant myself somewhere and start reading
121. N Alex is the kind of person who reading interferes with her homework and getting projects done and stuff like that
122. A I never have enough time, I love reading
123. C do you ever read books because you are interested in the experiences of other people?
124. N yah,
125. A yah to see how to see

126.N - to see things from their perspective
127.A to see what it is really like for other people or whatever
128.C like someone living in World War Two or someone
129.N yah exactly, its like if you can, if you're looking at something from somebody's perspective you can identify with it so much more and you feel so much more in the story and you can understand everything much better
130.A yah
131.N we like that
132.C uhm, do you ever read because you are interested in the ideas of the writer
133.A uhm
134.N sometimes
135.C if it's a specific writer?
136.A yah I do read specific writers, like Roald Dahl, I definitely, if I see a book by Roald Dahl which I haven't read yet, which I, I don't think there are any, I'll probably read it, well children's book that is
137.C yah
138.A I read, I'll probably definitely read
139.N sometimes, I mean I like kind of, people's philosophies or whatever seeing things from their perspective
140.A If I've really really enjoyed a book by someone I'll look, I'll look for
141.C you'll look for it okay, uhm, does reading play a role in the friendships that you have or is reading sort of separate from your friendships?
142.N separate I guess, I know its' something else, my friends will maybe read the same books and we may chat about it but sometimes I read things like at home and I kind of use the things I've learnt from books or whatever. No it's a completely different thing its more for personal enjoyment or something I can just do
143.A what do you mean, like something I do with my friends?
144.C uhm, is it something you have in common with your friends, something you have in common, for example I interviewed boys from St. Joseph's, they said they don't have reading in common they have sports in common, you know what I mean? Things you have in common with friends
145.A well
146.C is it something that is quite apart from your friends
147.A well, well, we often like take out books together you know, we'll look around and maybe we'll exchange books at break, we'll sit around with books
148.N all your friends read
149.C yah so it sounds like its much more, like it's a part of your friendship
150.A yah
151.C it's something you do together, okay, uhm, so can you think of any books that you have shared with friends like titles
152.A Pigs Might Fly
153.N it was Harry Potter because my grandparents came out, they live in England, the whole of my mom's side of the family lives in England and
154.A we got given them early on
155.C oh nice!
156.N yah, they came out and we got them and we had never heard of the and nobody had ever heard of them here you know and we read them and we said "Wow these are really good" and we showed them to out friends and they said "Yah, yah they don't know what they're talking about" kind of thing, and two years down the line they're all reading it you know
157.A we tried to explain how nice it was, tried to get them to borrow it, and its like no I'm reading another book, this is much more interesting, and then it comes here and everyone is wild about it and they read it
158.C and it's fashion all of a sudden
159.N yah we seem to come into contact with things before they come here, I don't know
160.C uh are there any kind of, are there any books that you would not share with your friends?
161.A uhm I can't really think of any
162.N I don't know
163.C books that you don't enjoy I suppose
164.N yah, and also I sometimes, I have different mindset to my friends or I am interested in different things, I probably won't even mention those things

165.C - yah I'm interested - yah I'm interested in a lot of the time I read old fashioned books and then my friends and stuff don't enjoy all those things
166.N yah because my Mom, I mean our bookcase upstairs in my room is just full of books from her childhood as well, yah they started reading those to us and so we have gotten interest in the whole historical aspect which our friends couldn't really care less about
167.C interesting, okay let's talk about these books here, have you ever read books like this before? Which books maybe from the same series or the same kind of books?
168.A I have, I actually just before this we had a South African literature project where we had to um, choose a book by an essay, author and there was, and the story had to be set in South Africa as well and we had to choose one of these and we had to write down all the South African words and all sorts of things and talk about the characters and talk about why we enjoyed the story and we had this whole, yes so I did read and then I started reading a few more books after that
169.N yah, and I suppose it's the whole context thing as well like, uhm we do enjoy books that fit into some kind of era or is something very significant and um the relationships and how people kind of lives during this time
170.A I'm trying to think whether the one book I read was actually in this series though cos' it might have been, it could easily have been
171.N I don't think so it was later, it was like around the 1994 elections
172.C hello,
173.A what's wrong?
174.C it stopped for a second, uhm, if you look at the cover, just if you can guess from looking at the cover what kind of books are these about? What are these books about?
175.N uhm my one, Love David, is sad, yah you can just tell,
176.A -the people look upset you know and they're not looking at each other
177.N you can just tell, from the moment I saw the cover, you know that somewhere there is a letter. It's right at the end but I mean, it's, it's the whole it's almost a play on words, love David for who he is, and from David kind of, he's away
178.A -nobody's looking -nobody's looking at him not even the dog and they're not even looking at you so you think kind of it must be kind of sad, but to other sort of more happy books, not happy but sort of
179.N - that looks kind of, you know sort of spunkier whatever
180.A it looks happier because they're all looking at the camera, or not the camera, I don't know, they're looking at you instead of looking at different directions and trying to avoid everything
181.C and did you identify the characters with the people on the cover?
182.A yes I did, I did
183.C does one imagine them?
184.N yah, we all imagine, I mean subconsciously I sort of
185.A yah you sort of like read the book and after a while you go, you read the description or something and you look at the front and you go "oh it must be that person" and you carry on reading
186.C and this one, did anyone read it?
187.N Alex read all of them I didn't
188.C did you read all of them?
189.A yah
190.C oh brilliant, so tell me about this cover
191.A well, it's very, it looks sort of
192.N - I don't like that cover
193.C you don't?
194.N no
195.C why?
196.N I don't know I just don't like those kind of covers
197.C sort of like, a collage?
198.N yah I mean sometimes collages are okay, but the thing that strikes me there is that's kind of a, one of those soft drawing things you know, and I don't know
199.A - well the cover sort of suits the story, not exactly, well , sort of, well I don't know if you look at the kind of cover, well I don't know I read this one last, I look at it

200.N sometimes this whole thing, don't judge a book by its cover, but sometimes you just see covers and you think, that kind of book, it just doesn't appeal to me which is very unfair but that's what I do

201.A -yah, I just looked at it, well you can't really say anything about this except that it looks like you can obviously see that this whole story is about this girl and you can kind of see that those are the people in it, but it doesn't, nothing really stands out except the girl so everything else is I don't know

202.A that's quite nice, I like that cover

203.N yah

204.C do you think?

205.A I don't know why, it just

206.C what kind of book is it?

207.A well

208.C without having read it, what kind of book is it?

209.A uhm

210.N uhm

211.A you must say because I have read it

212.C you can speak

213.N uhm, okay well, in a way when I saw this, to me, plays on a fashion designers kind of drawing

214.C it does, yah

215.N and the kugel and the whole clothes issue, but then, so you think, "The Day of the Kugel" so it's talking about something in the past or whatever, it wasn't in the past probably when the wrote it, I don't know when they wrote it, but I mean, and then around it, which doesn't seem to have anything to do with it all you see this person protesting and then it's a complete contrast

216.A like what has this got to do with us, you know

217.N and you can see, here's this somebody's who's into clothes you know and is a sort of kugel and everything and then you've got these people protesting all around so it's a contrast, like the cover

218.C hmm, how do you judge books by the cover or?

219.A uh, I usually, well I don't know I have often found that I see a really boring cover and I think "Oh, gosh I really don't want to read this" and then but, it's a class reading book and I have to read it and then I find it's actually a really good story and that I should stop judging

220.N Alex is a lot more adventurous I usually just read classics or I think

221.A books you know about already

222.C books that are sort of in a sense you know that it's good already

223.A yah yah

224.N uhm sometimes I'll think "ooouhh nasty cover" and that sort of thing but I'll always read the back when I'm interested in looking for a book

225.A yah, I'll look at the back and then, and then sometimes, see, I just sort of like flick through and see what kind of like, if you read like one page in the middle and you'll see what kind of book it is, sort of, like how it's written and the kind of people in it or whatever

226.N My English teacher in Standard Five always used to say to us, you have to go read a book now and you are not allowed to say you don't like the book unless you've read at least three chapters, you know, you have to get into it kind of thing. Yah I usually end up reading books that I know are good or whatever but sometimes I'll be adventurous and then I, I know I've just learnt that sometimes they'll start off slow, you've just got to get into it

227.C especially the classics

228.N Yah, it gets easier when you're older

229.C okay what else was I going to ask you, would you share books like this with your friends, like these with your friends

230.A yah, yah I would, I would, well I'm not sure this one I seemed to understand it very well, but I didn't, I understood it well, I understood exactly what was happening, but it moved very slowly and sort of

231.N -yah I mean when

232.A this one was a nice but it just seemed to have a typical story line, it was actually it was actually, it was, it was an interesting book to see what happened and then at the end, uhm that she found out all these things that she didn't expect at all, but uhm I definitely found this one was my favourite

233.C Kayaboeties?

234.A yah, Kayaboeties I think I don't know why

235.C Well this book was a winner and these books weren't winners
236.A oh yah
237.C interesting
238.A and this one was also a winner I read this one first and I really enjoyed that, these were my two favourite and these weren't. This book I really, really enjoyed this book I don't know why, it's probably because the girl was the same sort of age as me so I could sort of understood her
239.C uhm, uhm
240.A better than …
241.C yah, how often do you read South African novels?
242.A uhm I don't know, I don't really know, I don't really
243.N not often enough
244.A yah, I don't, I think I read more sort of, sort of books that are
245.N if you think about it most of the books you've read are probably British
246.A yah
247.C yah, no! absolutely, uhm, let's before I do that let me ask you another question, how often do teachers recommend the books you read? [pause ?] so do you have a good relationship with your teacher or does she just recommend the books to the class? Kind of thing
248.N uhm
249.A uh, my teachers don't really talk about books that much, well she'll tell us about which reader she, or she'll ask, asks us which reader do you think she should put in for next year because we have done the same readers for ages now, in that the same standard, and so she asks us and we kind of tell her. She doesn't really recommend books to us at all, not personally or at the school
250.N yah, my teacher, she'll recommend books to the whole class but she also knows that most of them, she's kind of sometimes very sexist, she'll say the boys, teenage boys are not interested in reading or anything and she'll recommend books to the whole class but because she knows I enjoy English and I am near the top of the class she'll also recommend books to me and she'll say, "Oh you'll probably like this" or whatever, uhm, also quite often I have found in the past that I will read books and then you know I'll find I'll come across it in class and they'll make you read it, uhm, or I'll read books in class and Alex will read it so that you know just out of the blue she'll find that, I don't know because we read kind of classical books or whatever they always seem to pop up at school
251.C uhm, how often these are going to be repetitive questions, how often do librarians recommend the books you read?
252.A I didn't hear what you said?
253.C how often do librarians recommend the books you read?
254.A I don't understand
255.N like Mrs Ryan, she'll often recommend the books you read, right?
256.A yah right, oh, I suppose so
257.N she's often talking about books, you talk to her about books don't you?
258.A I do, she's our library, library person, teacher and if I've really enjoyed a book I'll, when I hand it in, I'll tell her, I'll tell her you know this is a really brilliant book I've really enjoyed it have you read it and I'll ask her and she, uhm, will tell yes or no and she'll agree with me or she won't agree with me, whatever, and she, I suppose when you asked me about the teachers, the teachers recommending books to me, well I suppose my library teacher does but my class teacher doesn't
259.C hmm, and do you ever go to the sort of public libraries?
260.A we used to
261.N we've got a phobia about them because we're not organised enough to get them back on time so
262.[general noise]
263.C uhm, next one how often do your friends recommend books to you, I suppose we've gone over this
264.N uhm, quite often
265.C and you do read them?
266.A yah
267.N yah
268.C but you don't enjoy them?
269.A I don't always enjoy them but I usually read them unless I've already read a book similar to that and I know what it's going to be like and I don't want to read it

270.C hmm, do books sometimes recommend books? Say for example, uhm, you know at the back of the book there's always lists of books similar to that one, do you ever go to those
271.A - yah, yah ,yah
272.C and textbooks as well, sometimes English textbooks will have a whole list of books that you should read
273.N yah
274.C that are really good or enjoyable, do you ever use those lists?
275.A uhm I have never used a textbook list, I have seen the list at the back but if I've read all the list and one day I'm walking along and I really enjoyed the book and one day I'm walking along, I won't go and look for it personally but if I just suddenly saw it I could read it
276.N yah, I don't think that I could ever consciously at least seen the books at the back of the book and gone and read them, but I've often seen the books at the back of the back and known I've read them already, you know, uhm, also when you're just reading alone say you're reading a book in a series and it will obviously it will read the one automatically and then I do read them, so it's basically if I like the context of the book, the story and everything then I'll go and look at the others
277.C hmm, would you be surprised, ha ha, would you be surprised if a friend showed this book to you in other words, is this the kind of book your friends would give to you?
278.A Well I think I wouldn't be surprised I've seen quite a few people reading Love David before
279.C oh really okay
280.A but I don't, I've never really heard of any others, so I would be, I think I would be quite surprised
281.N yah I would think the same thing, I'd be surprised if my friends showed me some of these, but I suppose this one seems most likely, I don't know it's sort of like, I don't know older almost
282.C it is one of the older books
283.A I see, when we did our literature project I saw one of the people had done this book
284.C oh okay, would you be surprised if a teacher showed this book to you
285.A yes
286.N uhm, no, my mom taught English at Camps Bay Primary for two years she said that a previous teacher had shown, had this, ordered it
287.A -no, no, uuhh, not David, Love David, but the same thing as one of the adventure
288.N - yah at, you know, going into Standard Eight next year, because I'm a year young for my standard, I wouldn't be surprised if my teacher did show some of these books but this one I've heard that teachers, have and they know and they like kind of thing, so, I haven't heard of the others
289.C there's about twenty books, twenty five books in this series
290.N really
291.C uhmm, lots of them, I've got most of them, would you be surprised of a librarian showed this book to you? I suppose it has to do with your reading age
292.A I'd be surprised if she showed me this one because it's, I think it's, I understood it very well but I don't think it's really geared for my age, so
293.C Oh, is it too old or too young
294.A well, I think too old because, I mean I understood it but I didn't find it as interesting as someone older would because it moves in a
295.N I wouldn't be surprised because we cover Apartheid a lot, in high school at Westerford especially, I mean I've got the syllabus from now until Matric, history and the amount of times we cover Apartheid, even though they're little pink books, I'm pretty sure I've seen books like this before and I'm pretty sure we've got them in the library and I'm sure they've got them because they're such a lot you know in an Apartheid context
296.C okay, uhm, if you were to go into a bookshop what kind of book do you think an assistant would show you?
297.A I don't really ask the assistant so I wouldn't know
298.C really?
299.A I usually go, unless I go and look for myself, and if I came looking for a particular book, say Oh I'm looking for "Tom's Midnight Garden" I go and I say where is it, if I can't find it myself, and then they show me, but I don't ask them for books, I just usually go myself because sometimes I'll go and buy it myself and I really won't enjoy it, it's not my kind of book
300.N I don't know, I
301.C Do you guys buy books often

302.N not often, but yes
303.A we do buy books, if I get like some money, a present of money, I'll often go and spend it at the bookshop
304.N yah, uhm my reading tastes are so different to my most people of my age that I don't bother asking, if they do suggest something it's probably nothing like what I want because I don't know, I just found I read so many different things to my friends I mean sometimes you'll get something that will touch on that's the same but I mean a lot of people my age read completely different stories
305.C what kind of books do your friends enjoy?
306.N my particular friends one of them, one of them read a lot but she reads like huge books which she finds somewhere at home or something and quite often they're not the kind of thing I like reading, uhm, she's read a couple of books now about the cavemen who've been trekking across the plains of America
307.C Clan of the Cave Bear
308.N yes that's exactly the book, and I mean the kind of things that happen in the book don't really appeal to me and uhm,
309.A well I've read, well, well, most of my friends read, well there's one of my friends who reads exactly the same kind of things as me and she gives me those kinds of books for my birthday or something and it's easy to swop books with her, but I'm very protective over books so I sometimes sort of like get a bit scared about lending to someone who's going to completely ruin my book, my sister knows, I just don't want to lend any of my books
310.N you have to hold it the right way and everything
311.A and then most of my friends read, most of my close friends read sort of, I don't know, I suppose the same friends read books like *Watership Down* and *Wuthering Heights*, they just read all sorts of things
312.C okay so like a wide variety, which of the four that I've mentioned, so friends, teacher, librarian and bookshop assistant, which would be most likely to recommend this books
313.A librarian, or my teacher, no my teacher librarian, my, my
314.C teacher lib, your library teacher
315.A yah my library teacher thank you
316.N uhm, I like looking around the libraries but I don't like taking the books out because I'm never going to get them back uhm
317.C do you guys ever go to secondhand bookshops
318.A uhm,uhm I love I love, I, uhm
319.C you can find lots of classics there
320.A I haven't I haven't
321.N yah
322.C cheap books
323.A I want to go and buy them because you can get really good books in really good condition, two Rand or something and in other places you can get them for fifty Rand
324.N at primary school, at Cake and Candy which is like the little Civvies day where they have, uhm, they sell all sorts of things [?] and quite often they'll bring in a whole bunch of books and she can just get books for two bucks and then she just goes and buys and that's quite fun
325.A but some of those books, I mean, no wonder they're being thrown out because they look
326.C tatty
327.A yah they look, well not really tatty, but they look like boring, uninteresting cheap books you know
328.C okay, now, how often do you read books about your own culture?
329.N quite often
330.C would you describe that kind of culture for me?
331.A culture?
332.C culture, say for example like your country and your religion and your family, people like you
333.N yah, uhm a mixture
334.C I suppose England
335.N a mixture of a whole bunch of English heritage things and then a whole bunch of South African stuff, uh, uh books with people who are sort of the same age or whatever set in different times, so, uhm, yah I read a lot about culture, religion, values yah
336.C okay, if you were asked to write a book for teenagers what would you write about, that's quite a big question, when I say a book for teenagers I mean a book like this, this is a competition that is set out I think every year, not this year and not last year but every year so if you were to write a

book like this what kind of book, okay just think in a few seconds, just judging from the kind of books that they are, what kind of books would you write

337.A probably, yah, a romance story, I don't know
338.C romance?
339.N morals [?]
340.A I don't
341.N moral issues in relationships because
342.A yah peer pressure and that kind of thing
343.N yah, a lot about relationships with other people or even with things like
344.A -friends
345.N you know, God or whatever, how do you relate with your friends and God how do you sort of uhm talk about them, talk with lots of friends whatever, or whatever, or vice verse, relational issues yah, moral issues as well
346.C okay, in these books you aren't actually allowed to mention God
347.N sorry?
348.C you aren't actually allowed to mention God in these books, uhm, what kind of people should write books for teenagers?
349.A like teenagers
350.C what kind of people should write books for teenagers?
351.A teenagers should write books for teenagers
352.C do you think so
353.N sometimes, also people who've experienced, who've been through it all
354.A people who have experienced a very sort of strong sort of teenage life
355.N but they have to be pretty close to it, they can't be going on seventy five and then talking about teenage life back way when
356.C in the good old days, so tell me about the authors what kind of people do you think they are, if you imagine them what do they look like?
357.A well I think they've probably been through these experiences themselves
358.C are they teenagers?
359.A no
360.N no, they're talking about teenage life when
361.A I don't think they're teenagers
362.N no they're not teenagers, I don't think
363.A well, just now they are, I'm trying to think now
364.N no I think they're thinking about teenage issues and teenage life in a very difficult time here, which in a way is very different, it's different writing about teenage life when there was a time of conflict because that doesn't become boring because that's an issues, it's about relationships in an issue, in a conflict and uhm it doesn't really matter how old you are because that's not, hopefully it's never gonna happen again, so, it's still, it's like a learning process,
365.C uhm are there any kind of people that you would recommend not to write books for teenagers?
366.A seventy five year old men
367.N you can be a seventy five year old man of you're writing about
368.A - a seventy five year old teenage
369.N teenage life during the first world war or whatever I mean
370.C yes but if you were to write a book for teenagers for their time to be relevant to them now
371.A definitely teenagers now
372.N no not necessarily teenagers,
373.A - or the teachers
374.C teachers, so my question is who shouldn't write the books, if someone says look at this competition and I'll write a book, what kind of person would you say, "well I don't think you should write a book"
375.A somebody who has nothing to do with teenagers and has no connection with teenagers at all
376.N yah somebody who involves themselves in teenagers, uhm who really isn't in touch with what happens in teenage life today, the kind of things that are available the kind of things that are happening, yah, somebody who was a teenager a while back, has completely detached from it, who thinks they can just sit back and do it, because times are changing faster and faster and faster, all the new things that are being developed, you have to be pretty close to the teenage kind of life, so it's not really an age issue it's whether you are involved in teenagers
377.C what do you think about the language in these novels
378.N it's important, I don't know to have kind of slang or whatever

379.A I think, I would prefer something that's more realistic, and in teenage stuff it is more realistic to have teenage slang
380.N yah, there's realistic slang for any group, it just takes you back to that time much more effectively because you, you sort of, you know, know slang came from the things that are happening around there, it's much more, much more effective because it talks about what's happening
381.C do they have glossaries in the back or in the front, do you guys ever look at glossaries
382.N -I don't know
383.A -I never checked

384.C here's a picture of the author
385.N yah
386.A well, not exactly
387.C what had you expected?
388.A well I don't know I didn't expect, well I suppose so because she would have lived in
389.C yah, that's what she looked in those days, are there pictures of the authors inside
390.A yah
391.C Dianne Case, is that what you imagined?
392.A that one over there
393.N well I saw it while I was reading it and it didn't affect me at all because all she was doing was writing about teenage life when she was close to it, she wasn't a teenager but, she was closer to it, and uhm, by the sound of things she had children, she was a bookkeeper, she had a lot of contact with teenagers
394.C are there any attitudes or characters or expressions in this book that you consider old fashioned or irrelevant?
395.A no
396.N no
397.C no? okay how important are things like religion and you beliefs and values to the kind of things that you read?
398.A well I'm not going to go and read something that, I never
399.N - quite important
400.A yah, quite important, it depends because sometimes , some things are very deep and the kind of things you don't want to get into, and then when you read those it sort of, start thinking about those kinds of things, you start thinking about those kind of things and you don't want to think about them, but I can easily read a book and it doesn't conflict me in any way and I just ignore it you know, it's just a whole lot of
401.N we kind of, we don't have anything, we like to be exposed to everything, it's kind of important to know stuff but uhm, we also just, always we have to be careful we have to know where our kind of boundaries are and we often when we're reading stuff, we're able to pick up, I just read something and I pick up no, no that's not the kind of thing I like, and it doesn't stop me reading it and I read it and it can be a brilliant book but I just know these particular things I don't agree with, you just have to know what you believe
402.C hmm, now, to get to the books can you remember a scene for me from the story that stands out for you
403.N uhm in *Love, David* when the father is killing the dog and the, whole the aggressiveness
404.A the poor dog can't do anything the poor dog's only got three legs poor dog is unhappy
405.N the whole the whole, how each person is living under oppression, and how the oppression reflects on everybody else, you know the father was so oppressed so he wasn't treated very fairly, so in a cycle he treated very unfairly, it's the moving thing, where's its just a dog, a dog gets all that and how David wants to protect the dog and it's something he loves so much, just because I suppose it's always there, and it doesn't change, that was like a moving scene, I don't know
406.A I thought it was, I found it very sad in this one where the boy was treating Samuel, they were all white children but Samuel was a black boy and they all treat him very, very harshly, well not all of them, uhm, I think two of them, I don't if it was a boy called Richard and he treated Samuel very badly and I just found that very sad, but in the end they made friends so that's fine
407.C and the other scenes can you remember scenes from the other books?
408.A this one, a man was blow up with a letter in his hand, that was scary, this one, uhm, she's cutting potatoes to make chips I don't know, I don't know there wasn't
409.N I think it's the whole, it's the whole thing, uhm, it's the, its you know, it was even worse when you didn't support what was going on but you couldn't help it if you were black you became

oppressed and if you were white you became superior, it didn't matter if you didn't agree with it or whatever, it was the sick thing that you actually were reaping the benefits no matter what, just because of your skin colour and it's the whole thing about how in a time like that and an issue like that there's, you can do something to a certain extent but to a certain extent, the whole thing you'll always be affected by it and you will always uhm, it reflects off you, and the whole if you're oppressed you usually oppress, "blown up with a letter in his hand" there was this whole secrecy thing, fighting it, you know, you could remove yourself from it, but you could never remove yourself completely it was always there, we grow up in Bop, so, we grew up in Bophuthatswana, it's very different

410.C that's strange I don't know anyone who grew up in Bophuthatswana

411.N yah, yah, it was so strange because we were there you know, the whole school was black and when we came to Cape Town

412.C mixed?

413.N yah it was mixed but a lot, most of the people were black and

414.A there were like three white children in the whole class

415.N no, there were than that, there were more than that,

416.A six, look at your class photograph, there were six, seven, eight

417.N it was mixed class and we all had a very healthy relationship and it was you know

418.A and you get here

419.N obviously we came like very near the end of Apartheid but and then you moved to Cape Town and we moved when I was at the end of standard three, and it was such a I really we moved into a class where there was one black boy and everybody else was White or Indian or Coloured, and everything, but one black boy, and I just felt myself like automatically drawn to talk to that boy and I really got on with him, why, because I didn't understand why he was the only one and I

420.A she got very comfortable with him

421.N yah, it's amazing how different things are you know, you can remove yourself from it but never completely

422.A it was very strange to come to a foreign place

423.N it got things in reverse

424.A the complete opposite

425.C shoo, so you guys enjoyed these books?

426.A yah

427.N yah

428.C thanks a lot

429.A okay thank you for letting us read some more books

Interview One with St. Joseph's College

L: Lyle **M**: Marco **S**:Simon **C**:Catherine **A**: All

1. C Are you all friends
2. A Yes
3. C How long have you been friends
4. A for a year
5. C Since Junior School? since High School?
6. A yah
7. C Do you have reading in common?
8. L Not really
9. S We play soccer together
10. C Oh you play soccer together okay, and does reading play any role in your friendship?
11. S No
12. C and do you ever talk about books
13. S no, not this kind of books
14. C not this kind of books
15. M soccer books, magazines
16. C oh well that's good enough, uhm, are there any kind of books that you would share with your friends?
17. S Goosebumps
18. C Goosebumps? How much *Goosebumps* do you read?
19. S I read it a couple of times when I go to the library and sometimes I get them
20. C okay, what are those books?
21. S Horror stories
22. C Are they funny or are they scary?
23. M Yah sometimes funny
24. L - funny scary
25. M -funny scary romance
26. S -suspense
27. C Okay so that's Goosebumps, and what about books by Stephen King?
28. S We like watching the movies, the movies always come out
29. C although the books are often quite different hey? Okay, so you share things like *Goosebumps*
30. M yah
31. C are there any books that you wouldn't share?
32. S Anne Frank
33. A &C Laughs
34. M old books
35. C Like what
36. M like you know, not funny books, stern serious books
37. L Like you know that dra-a-a-ag out the
38. M like lo-o-o-ong
39. C but would you read those books yourselves
40. L No
41. C so you wouldn't give them to your friends and you wouldn't read it yourselves?
42. L they can't read the same kind of books you read?
43. C Yah so you don't find there are some books that you read that you wouldn't give to others?
44. S You will find that they don't have the same kind of taste as you, like I like soccer books and everybody knows that
45. L and I like adventure books, like William Smith
46. C Oh like Cannibal Adventure?
47. L yah, Wilbur Smith
48. C Willard Price that's Willard Price
49. L Like Riverguard and Seventh Throng
50. M What?
51. C Okay, and you wouldn't, would you give those to your friends to read?
52. L No those books are too old for them
53. C whoa!

54. S Yah, they don't have the capacity to
55. M -understand
56. S because you [?]
57. C so do you read as a habit? Do you like to read, you guys?
58. M If it's a good book
59. S -mostly magazines
60. C mostly magazines and when you were younger?
61. L we used to read Tintin (?)
62. M I used to read a lot
63. L When I was younger my father taught me to read at a young age, he used to read to me a book a bedtime book, and then the next day I will pick up the book and recite the whole book out
64. C Really?
65. L and know when to turn the page, its from then already.
66. C and so you used to read a lot, what did you used to read then, I mean how are things different from now? What's different
67. M Books are becoming more how can I say, adultish
68. C Okay
69. M Like people now are understanding more than whenever
70. C so is the reason that you read less now than you did before because the books are becoming more adultish?
71. M Now it's just sport and everything, now it's schoolwork, no more time
72. C uhhum, and who encouraged you to read from a young age
73. M parents
74. L parents
75. M television
76. S television?
77. C television taught you to read?
78. M that edu-stuff man tell you, "read a book everyday!"
79. C and friends?
80. L No
81. S No
82. C is it not cool to read?
83. L No, definitely not
84. M people, people don't understand
85. L they make jokes or something
86. M yah!
87. C okay, and horror books
88. L like Mad
89. C you don't read romance books do you
90. L we read teen books
91. C team?
92. A teen books
93. C teen books, like teen romance?
94. S like Dawsons Creek, but I watch that on TV
95. C So are there any other kind of books, you said stern books already, but are there any other kind of books you don't enjoy? Personally, No? Okay so you said you don't like romance
96. M okay we don't like romance or those teen books we don't like
97. L&S yes
98. [M Dawson's Creek? No man, that's puppy love!]
99. L and fiction that goes over the edge with their how can I say now, say their characters are make believe but sometimes you comprehend what they are, I can't quite say now, I can't say it properly
100. C what do you mean, characters that go over the edge, what does that mean? Because they're not realistic?
101. L some fiction is based on people's experience that's changed say to science fiction, different races become species. So I think that some books like Terry Prachett go over the edge
102. C and you, the two of you do you also
103. M I don't like that teen books and that love, puppy stuff
104. C that teen romance?
105. M no that's out of the question, no that's bad
106. C but horror you do like

107.M yah that's cool, stuff that makes you, stuff that makes you like turn the page like they read
108.L - suspense
109.M yah suspense
110.C And so, like detective novels have you ever read that?
111.??????
112.C And adventure novels as well do you read those?
113.M yah that's cool like when your imagination takes you off to far off places and stuff like that, like we in South Africa now, you read a book set in America about America, about India
114.C And what about fantasy books? Do you read those
115.M yah those are cool
116.S like the care bears
117.M Care bears? Stop it now! Now what, dragons and stuff like that, folklore?
118.C do you like folklore
119.M folklore, for me everything comes down to science fiction
120.C science fiction? And do you like things like Tolkien I know that's not really science fiction, like *The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings?* No? Okay. So what are you guys reading at the moment
121.L Afrikaans books
122.C No, not for school, what are you guys reading for yourselves?
123.S Soccer magazines
124.M Now its just non-fiction books
125.C What are your English Setworks
126.S We finished Flood Sunday
127.M -We finished Flood Sunday
128.C And what was that about?
129.M Its about a guy named Ralph right? Its about the Floods of
130.C Laingsburg Floods
131.M Yah its about that, and Ralph, its about him. Its about bullies, and they bully him around and stuff like that, he, and in the end, it's ironic because he saves people who beat him up and stuff like that. It just about the flood and stuff like that and he saves,
132.L People contradict themselves, he says that chickens start to swim right, he was, they were, like
133.M you can't underestimate the power of something
134.C of what?
135.M of something, of like, a force, in a, in a situation
136.C oh, what do you think about that
137.M it was okay all the books we read so far, people die
138.S yah, every people
139.L every people?
140.M everybody
141.L the world's depressing, everybody dies, and the end is.
142.M - that's bad
143.L and the end is like junk
144.C do you like, do you like happy endings
145.L yah, any ending you can comprehend, like they lived happily ever after
146.M but sometimes, the bad guy must win at least once
147.L yah
148.C once or twice. But why? Why must he win?
149.L because it's a good balance
150.M it's a change you know, yah, eh, good guys win all the time, because look, okay, take superman now, of course you're gonna read the book and now, uh, okay, he's gonna save the day right, and on TV I watch Scooby Doo, and there, it's the same thing, and Wile E. Coyote and that that road runner guy, you know what's gonna happen, the guy's gonna get hurt, so it.
151.C There's no point in watching that
152.M yah, it must change a bit
153.C oh, no that's good

154.-Break-

155.C Do you enjoy historical novels?
156.L I read Riverguard, it's about Egypt, Ancient Egypt about a Pharaoh that died, and they find his tomb, like a relic hunter like Indiana Jones who goes to find stuff like that. Adventure

157.C It's like an historical adventure?
158.L Yah.
159.C Now did you read that by yourself?
160.L yes
161.C no one told you to read it?
162.S And Asterix we read, Asterix and Obelix
163.C do you enjoy Asterix, okay, so fantasy I asked you, magazines, so you say read soccer magazines are there any other kinds of magazines you read?
164.S Cosmopolitan
165.L Men's Health
166.C You read Cosmopolitan?
167.S My sister buys it every month so I just read it.
168.L Men's Health
169.M I'm surprised. I read computer magazines mostly
170.C Do you read cowboy stories?
171.A [shake heads]
172.C What about stories about suburban life?
173.S that's so boring, so local, I want something out of the ordinary
174.M local is lekker!
175.C you want something out of the ordinary? What does that mean?
176.S yeah
177.M it must be different
178.C so it can't be here?
179.M yah
180.S we know this place already
181.L cos' we've been here already
182.M like I said everything must be different to what you expect.
183.C I suppose so, but maybe books about local areas can give you a new way of looking at it? Maybe you don't know everything about this place you know what I mean?
184.S [?????]
185.C do you prefer stories about imaginary worlds?
186.L yah
187.C -or do you prefer to read books about how things really are?
188.S imaginary
189.S the world's too harsh, there's too much racism and littering and stuff like that
190.M we want the perfect world so,
191.L imagine it
192.M it has to come down to reality, so both, both
193.C you want both? And you
194.L [nods head]
195.C and you both?
196.[interchange too garbled]
197.C uhm do you read, for, I'm just going to give you a list of things and you must just say yes or no. do you read for distraction, do you read because you like to be distracted from like what's around you?
198.M Sometimes yes, if you're feeling depressed you get down a good book or something
199.C You say no?
200.L No, I play my keyboard?
201.C You play your keyboard?
202.M music and books
203.C because most people, a lot of people say you read to escape from the world, this is what I'm asking?
204.S I play computers
205.C You play computers when you want to escape? So, when you read a book it's for a different reason?
206.L yah but fantasy books help us to think
207.M yah to come away
208.L yah, because there's a whole world
209.M to come away from littering and stuff like that

210.L to a whole world where there's good, but there's a little bad to contradict it, so it's equally balanced
211.C But that's not escape is it? Does it help you to think more clearly what is it?
212.M Like if you read, okay, like you take an alien world right? You take now, there's littering there's poverty, there's all that stuff there. But now with them its perfect everything is perfect
213.L Yah they've worked out already
214.M yah it's different they've thought of a way. Like they don't need money and stuff like that
215.C What books are these that you're talking about?
216.M Science fiction
217.C okay, so in other words, in science fiction, there's a perfect world
218.M it's cool yes
219.C and so you read it because it's the perfect world?
220.M it's different, different from here
221.C Do you read because you're interested in reading about experiences that people have? Like almost like biographies sometimes. Do you like to read biographies? To read about real people's experiences
222.S Only if the person has adventures, like Indiana Jones
223.C but he never lived
224.S Or Tom Sawyer
225.C Tom Sawyer?
226.S Yah they say it was based on Mark Twain's experience
227.C Oh like Davy Crocket
228.S Yah, like Davy Crocket
229.C Okay so people who had exciting lives
230.M Yah, impressive
231.C not Anne Frank, uhm okay so we spoke about, okay you like to read about imagined worlds and because you like adventure you like to get to the end you like happy endings, you already said that, now do you ever read because you interested in the writers ideas?
232.S No
233.C For example, you told me about the book about the Flood, "Flood Sunday", and you gave me, in a sense you gave me what the lesson was, you said that you know don't underestimate the power of people and all sorts of things, so is that one of the reasons that, is that one of the reasons that you read to get a lesson, to know what their ideas about life and the world are?
234.L we just read a book by Peter Slingsby, and Flood Sunday is also by Peter Slingsby right? Most of the children, they're schoolbooks
235.M what you said its more down to small children, because I've got this series of books, right? It's got like the hare and the tortoise and all of this stuff, and right at the bottom of every story see
236.L -moral
237.M -there's a moral. Like the two obstinate goats they both wanted to cross the bridge and stuff like that, so they both fell, into the river. So, no I don't read that stuff, no.
238.C okay, uhm, we can talk about the books you read, you did *Kayaboeties*, you did *Tomas* and what did you do?
239.M Red Hot Cha Cha
240.C okay, have you ever read books like that before
241.S No
242.M No
243.L I read before books like that at school
244.C and because these books are for young readers, teenagers. So did you enjoy these books?
245.A yes
246.C and did you enjoy schoolbooks like Flood Sunday, you enjoyed that right?
247.M it was okay, the Red Hot Cha Cha it starts off dragging and stuff like that, about how bad the Apartheid era was and stuff like that, and the struggle and then when it comes to the secret, his secret revealed to her about the father's killed the one, it becomes more exciting, so it was good, yes
248.C From looking at the cover, just looking at the cover of the books, what were these books about, would you say, I mean what kind of books are they what do the covers say to you?
249.M I had pictures on my book, a whole lot of pictures of far off places like London and of Joe Cassidy and stuff like that, and you can see the boat
250.R And here's a chest here, with pirates
251.C So it's like, adventurous

252.L This is about team work and how they got rid of their barriers
253.C So that's what the cover says to you?
254.L No! the book and the cover
255.C The book and the cover together? Okay
256.M I underestimated the cover
257.C You underestimated it? Why?
258.M I didn't know it was about like that you know I thought it was more like a detective and something goes wrong and something like that
259.C From the cover
260.M Yah like a girl she goes and solves a mystery and things like that, or goes and solves a problem
261.C Uhm, would share any of these books with your friends?
262.M I don't think they'll like it, no
263.C Why not?
264.M They are too …
265.L immature
266.C Immature?
267.L That's exactly it yes
268.M seriously yes
269.C Now what does that mean?
270.M They don't read
271.C They don't read?
272.L They just watch TV and play games the whole day
273.C okay so if they were to read this they would n't like it
274.M Of course they wouldn't like it
275.C So do you have to be mature to read these books?
276.M yah
277.L I think Gareth may like it
278.S -Gareth might
279.M - yah Gareth because he just follows other guy
280.C So do you have to be mature to read these books does it take a sort of level of maturity
281.M yah to understand and stuff like that
282.C understand what exactly?
283.M understand
284.L - the concepts
285.M yah, the concepts, that if a person goes through hardships and stuff like that you have to understand, don't laugh at the person
286.C Oh okay, I see. uhm do you read South African novels very often
287.A no
288.C No? No? No? okay, uhm, no why not? Does it make a difference where the book comes from?
289.L yes, we want new experiences
290.M yah, with us because we know everything about this world
291.C are you sure?
292.L yah we know the top layer
293.S - yah, the top layer
294.C So does it make a difference where books come from, so where do you, what place do you like to read books
295.S Europe
296.C Europe?
297.M Anywhere else
298.C Anywhere else? Okay, so when you read a book do you think, in a sense you're aware where the book comes from, do you think, okay this book is from America do you think that or this book is from Europe
299.L yah
300.C yes or no?
301.L I think the way
302.S they're more appealing and stuff
303.L yah! The way they see things
304.M comprehend
305.L the way they speak, like in America, there spelling and things

306.C Okay so tell me, let's just go around like this and tell the story, tell me the story of what happens in the book

307.L Okay there are four characters, Charmaine, Allen, Chris and Pecker, there's an article in the newspaper that says there is a singing talent music contest. So, Allen being the musician he starts with the words and plays it out for them and they choose their instruments. Two of them can't actually play properly so they look around for someone so they pick Sam, but he's black. The whole book is centered in the Apartheid era. Sam isn't liked by one of the characters, Peck, his mother is racist and it's rubbed off on him. So, he didn't want to be taught by Sam. All the others were getting better and better except for him, he was bringing everybody down. So, Sam was staying in Peck's mother's quarters, servants quarters, so his father found out so he beat up Sam and Pecker because they didn't listen. So they chased after him, Pecker wanted, Pecker had to run away because his mother was fetching him (?), and sot hey started to realise, how can I say, their same interests (?), so they started to be friends and they started to play right, teach other and so on. At the end they didn't actually win the contest, they came fourth and so they say they're going to try again next year. But the happy part is that Sam is a poor black but at the end one of the judges gave him a bursary to a music school in Johannesburg and they gave him travel allowance, money to come back afterwards after every term to visit his mother and his parents. I liked it because music brought all of them together as I said about their barriers.

308.C And you liked that? Are you a musician?

309.L Oh Okay

Interview Two with St Joseph's College

L: Lyle M: Marco S:Simon C:Catherine A: All

1 October 2000

310.C lets start, have you ever read books like this before?
311.M no not really
312.C never, you never read?
313.M like this?
314.C well books from the same series have you ever seen that series before have you ever read a book "Love, David"?
315.M "Love, David" never heard of it
316.S I am David we read
317.C Have you ever read Kayaboeties?
318.M Lyle had that book
319.S Yes Lyle had that book
320.C Lyle had that book? Okay Have you ever read books from the Sanlam Award Prixe?
321.M Sanlam?
322.C It's just books written by South Africans for teenagers
323.M Oh I read an Afrikaans book that won that award recently. It won the 1992 award. It's about Sky Johannes Bezuidenhout his friend Anton is a painter and he wants to become a professional painter and he waits Sky, this Anton, paints him naked all the time but they're not gay okay. But Anton, he has AIDS and they asked him how he got AIDS and he took drugs earlier on and most of his friends died of drugs and so he quit. So in the end is supposed to be, Anton is a ballet dancer right, he's supposed to do this big thing on the phoenix and he
324.C the phoenix?
325.M The phoenix, like the bird
326.C Oh I thought you mean like a stage
327.M okay so Hannes was painting and all this nonsense but he dies before he has to do it. It's not very interesting though, there's no action and stuff like that
328.C There's no action?
329.S They sound gay to me
330.M They just have, its about his life, that he goes through his life, he goes to school and all that nonsense stuff like that
331.C and you didn't find that interesting, no? What about other Afrikaans books, do you ever enjoy Afrikaans books?
332.S&M no
333.C and things like reading about AIDS and stuff?
334.M I don't like that, no when I hear the word AIDS, huhuh, I don't want to hear about that
335.C Why not?
336.M they make such a big deal of it, and I just don't know
337.C uhm, we spoke about the cover of the book hey, I don't know if I asked you but would you share this book with any of your friends?
338.M yes I would, okay Lyle maybe, people who would understand these kinds of books
339.C people who would understand, oh and what kind of people are those
340.M not immature they mustn't be immature they must be, like, good for their age, okay. If you're fourteen you must have a reading age of fourteen, and stuff like that
341.C Oh okay so you're talking about reading age, how often do you read, I think I've already asked you this but how often do you read South African novels
342.M hardly ever
343.C yes we have spoken about it. So, tell me about this novel, how did you find it?
344.M it was alright, it also
345.C what did you enjoy about it
346.M how Dianne goes through her life and stuff like that and all the secrets that come out of her life
347.C can you remember a scene from the story that stands out for you?
348.M when Joe Cassidy tells uhm,
349.C can you describe the scene for me

350.M okay, they're at a party she's turning fifteen, she was like going on and on and on and on (? _____) and then at the end, she says good bye to everyone and she says goodbye to Joe Cassidy and at that moment, they kiss. Then, he
351.S Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid
352.C Whose Butch Cassidy
353.S and the Sundance Kid
354.C oh okay
355.M then he walks away then he comes back and tells her the secret about her father, his father
356.C and what's that secret?
357.M that his father was a, a, a murder, he was an assassin, he made letter bombs and stuff like that that's how , that's how her father died, Dianne's father died, because he was like this big guy in politics
358.C and do you think a story like this is true, or could be true
359.M it could be true
360.C okay, uhm, what are the best, except for that scene what are the best parts of the book
361.M when they're in class, when they read and then they, like she takes the role of some political woman and Joe Cassidy, and then everyone says, "Joe for President", "Joe for President" because he's like, their favourite. And then they go back on scenes from the past, from the political,
362.C Oh okay
363.M they re-enact yah
364.C uhm, do you ever think about the author when you read the book? No? What if you were to imagine the person who wrote this book, what would you imagine she looks like? Not, not looks like, what do you imagine she is like
365.M okay most probably a kind, happy person, highly emotional, yah very emotional. About, about twenty five or twenty six going into her thirties, or maybe very, very old woman looking back on her past
366.C say she were to walk in here now is there anything you'd say to her?
367.M I really don't know
368.C okay thank you, next one, actually I've forgotten your name
369.S Simon
370.C Simon, you read Tomas hey?
371.S Thomas
372.C oh, Thomas, okay, uhm I'm going to ask you the same questions so its going to be quite boring for you, have you ever read books like this before, say from the same series or just South African books written for teenagers? No? Okay I'm going to ask you this as well have you read books that come from say Australia or America or Britain that are like this but are set in other places, like set in America or set in England, books that are set in real situations
373.S Not like mine, mine is about a slave boy, it's about slaves
374.M it could be true you know!
375.S books that are based on real events, books that are about the second world war or books about what its like to be a teenager in America
376.S I only watch that on TV
377.M We only read a bit of, what's that, the dirty dozen, but I only read a part of that
378.C I'm talking about like realistic books, books for mature readers … you don't read books for mature readers? Ha ha
379.M okay we do but its not like this its not about real events and people
380.S Anne Frank
381.M What's it? Anne Frank
382.S I am David that's about the war
383.C okay what did you think of that book, that's kind of realistic hey?
384.S I read it at my old school I read it
385.M I was thinking now! Where did you find it
386.C what school
387.S I was at St. Anthony's
388.C Oh in Heathfield, okay, anyway go on
389.S about my book?
390.C about I am David
391.S oh, like he just wants to escape, he's lived in a concentration camp all his life and he just wants to find a way to escape
392.M that's just like my book

393.S what?
394.M it's called Survivor, a guy [?] he landed in a concentration camp and they tortured him and all that stuff and then one day he decides to leave so he digs a hole under the fence and he like runs away
395.C oh it's a similar kind of book
396.M and then he finds this plane crash and on the plane crash was this bio-chemical warfare and he gets a disease, and for weeks and weeks and weeks he has this disease and he like, he just goes to sleep and he wakes up and he's happy and everything but when he goes back to his hometown he finds out that most of his family is not surviving anymore
397.S what
398.M he slept, he had a disease and stuff like that, he fights bears and everything and kills squirrels, he's rude!
399.C so tell me what you think of the book and what do you think of I am David, is there a book that stands out in your memory?
400.S it was very realistic actually
401.M yah it was realistic
402.S with the bombs and all that that was
403.happening up at the time
404.M and its got action in my book
405.C yah, so when even if a book is realistic
406.It must have action
407.M it mustn't be boring and soppy, puppy love
408.S I don't mind that
409.C you don't mind it? Okay, uhm, I'm going to ask you a question that I probably have already asked you, what book stands out for you in your memory, a book that really had an effect on you, don't say soccer magazines
410.S I was thinking of Asterix actually
411.C what really struck you? You know made a scene come alive, or make a story or a place come alive. Have you ever read books like that where, No? No?
412.M the way you're talking, you've made me all confused now
413.C but do you know what I mean
414.M no, sorry
415.S like in the story?
416.C yah in a sense, have you ever read a book that has had an effect on the way you see things?
417.M like Moby Dick and he's trying to catch the whale and that's almost like his goal is trying to get, like that?
418.C no
419.(all laugh)
420.C have you ever read a book that's had such an effect on you that its made you change the way you see things? And people?
421.M oh no! no!
422.C or affected the way you understand them?
423.S you can figure those things out for yourself
424.C figure things out, what does that mean, sorry, what do you mean?
425.S it doesn't come from books
426.C it doesn't come from books?
427.S you can work it out for yourself
428.C okay, lets go back to Tomas,
429.S Tomas is about a slave boy, one morning he finds a ship on the beach with sailors all around, its like a ship wreck, and the he sees them and from behind the guy takes him and throws him open, he takes him towards them. He doesn't understand what they say because they're foreign, I don't know, the book don't say where they come from. But Tomas can speak to one of them, and so they take him with them. They first ask him, which way to the Cape and he says its west, and they say lets go east, because they don't want to believe him, so they go there, and at night, he escapes and he gets away and on the way back they burn down their cottage and they just go on the way to the cape. He has his mother with him and his grandfather and his sisters and brothers. After the shipwreck, after the sailors had left, they found a slave laying on the shore, and the see him lying there and they help him get back to health again and then they help, and then he helps them build the cottage again. He also saw the sailors bury a treasure and he finds that very intriguing and then he goes across the lake to fetch his friend Marie and he asks her to help him dig up the

treasure because the soldiers will be around soon to get it, anyway, she leaves and he decides to get it himself, and while he is there, the sailor that they helped threatens to kill him, and he's about to kill him and then the soldiers came. They shot at him and then the threaten him and uhm, he couldn't lift up the treasures, its much too heavy and then the soldiers took the treasures with them to the Cape and he went to identify them. He said they were mutants. Then the governor helped him, like he gave them a boat cause there were other sailors. The guy helped him, Captain Dynand, he was really good friends with him, like he wasn't racist like any other guys because at that time everybody hated slaves, but people [?____] because he was travelling with the Captain, right as one of his friends but nobody wanted to believe him and so he just came back to the house it was very exciting

430.C you liked it? Gosh that's the whole story! I've got nothing else to ask you

End of Interview