Book Evaluations

SLM 504 Young adult literature

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2019

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| ***Damsel*** by Elana Arnold |
| **Genre**: YA, Fantasy**Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Dragons Fiction, Princes Fiction, Fantasy and Magic**Awards:**Michael L. Printz Honor, 2019Booklist starred, 08/01/18School Library Journal starred, 06/01/18**Similar Titles:***Shadow of the Fox* by Julie Kagawa*The Dragons of Darkness* by Anthony Michaelis*Tess of the Road* by Rachel Hartman and Jenna Lettice*Eon: Dragoneye Reborn* by Allison Goodman | **Summary:**In the land of Harding, Prince Emory must slay a dragon and rescue a damsel in a time-honored tradition in order to become the King. Ama, the damsel, has no memory of her life before her rescue from the dragon’s lair. What follows is a dark fairy-tale of what happens after Ama's "saving" from the dragon's lair. Prince Emory is not all he seems, and Ama has a feeling that her missing memories may be the key to her survival. Ama must find a way to find her voice and to fight back in an abusive relationship. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategies:** Compare *Damsel* to a fairytale from your youth. What similar components are present? How is *Damsel* different? **AASL I.A.2. Learners display curiosity and initiative by recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.**As a group, discuss the character of the Queen Mother. Why does she make the choices she does? What is her motivation? Is she a protagonist or antagonist and why? **AASL II.C.1. Learners exhibit empathy with and tolerance for diverse ideas by engaging in informed conversation and active debate. 2. Contributing to discussions in which multiple view points on a topic are expressed.** |
| **Evaluation - Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**Arnold twists the fairytales of old into a dark and uncomfortable exploration of emotional, mental, and physical abuse. The plot arc builds slowly and consistently, leaving the reader in a constant state of unease for Ama. Themes such as rape, dominance, manipulation, and feminism are explored. Teens will empathize with Ama’s confusion and instinct to be submissive in the face of her abuse, as well as cheer on Ama’s decision to finally stand up to her oppressor. Some younger teens may miss Arnold’s subtle condemnation of Emory’s personality and actions, although will embrace the length and ease of reading level. Ultimately, this story urges anyone facing abuse to stand up and fight back. |
| **Personal Reactions:****Best Quality –** This story makes the reader uncomfortable in the best way. The reader knows Emory is a horrible person, and feverishly hopes for Ama’s safety and strength to stand up to him.**Worst Quality –** The sensitive subjects of sexual predators, abuse, and oppression may be a bit much for sheltered or immature teens. Some graphic language.**Verdict –** I’ve always loved fantasy and fairytales, so this dark take on one was intriguing. Most particularly, I can see girls really relating to Ama and her confusion/feelings for Emory. On the surface, he is her savior (and he never stops reminding her of that fact). She wants to please him which contributes to her submission in the first half of the book. But we also can see all the warning signs that Emory exhibits - control, dominance, sexually predatory, and cruel. I think most teen girls will recognize situations in their own lives where they have felt as Ama does or have experienced pressure from a boy to just give in to his wants. This book will inspire other girls to stand up and fight back. |

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| ***Red Queen*** by Victoria Aveyard |
| **Genre**: Fantasy**Grade Level:** 9-12**Subtopics**: Supernatural, Magic, Blood, Royalty, Revolution, Dystopian Society**Awards:**YALSA Fantasy Award List 2016, Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers**Similar Titles:***Matched* by Allison Condie*The Selection* by Kiera Cass*Frogkisser!* By Garth Nix*The Wicked King* by Kathleen Jennings | **Summary:**Set in the dystopian future, there are two types of blood in the world: Silver and Red. The Silvers possess not only all the wealth and luxury, but supernatural powers. The Reds are servants, starving and struggling to survive under the Silver boot. Red blooded Mare Barrow knows that she’s about to be conscripted for war, when she is given the opportunity to serve in the King’s castle. When a freak accident reveals that Mare possesses her own supernatural power to control lightning, Mare is manipulated into masquerading as a Silver princess, an engagement to the younger prince, and training to contain her power. Meanwhile, Mare finds herself torn between the two princes. What follows is nothing short of a revolution as Mare attempts to save not just her life, but that of all Reds. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Reflect: What assumptions and misconceptions do the Silvers have about Reds or Reds about Silvers? **AASL V.A.2. Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by reflecting and questioning assumptions and possible misconceptions). Create a chart of all Silver royal houses and the abilities each possesses (AASL IV.B.4. Learners gather information appropriate to the task by organizing information by priority, topic, or other systematic scheme**. |
| **Evaluation - Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**An appealing mix of elements from *The Hunger Games*, TV’s “The Bachelor,” and supernatural tales, *Red Queen* takes the reader on a gripping journey. Mare Barrow is both relatable and admirable in her navigation of an unfair society. Magical elements create interest without overshadowing Mare’s personal discoveries of being more than her blood color. Teens will see parallels to racial and social discrimination in today’s world. This is of particular appeal to females over males with the cover art, title, and subject matter. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** This book is absolutely action packed and gripping. The character development is superb and plot twists are jaw-dropping. The ending leaves the reader eager for the second installment.**Worst Quality:** It has a slightly slow beginning with a great deal of necessary backstory and groundwork being laid by Aveyard. A few scenes seem like place-holders between actions.**Verdict:**As a lover of *The Hunger Games* and *The Selection,* I was eager to read this. Mare Barrow shares personality traits with heroines from both aforementioned titles, as so the plot lines. The breath of fresh air in this novel is the introduction of supernatural abilities and how the Silvers (and Mare) wield them. The revolution that Mare triggers, as well as her doomed romance, will suck teens in to the entire series.  |

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| ***Bird*** by Angela Johnson |
| **Genre**: Realistic Fiction**Grade Level:** 5-9**Subtopics:** Runaways, Step-fathers, Interpersonal Relations, Blended families**Awards:**Margaret A. Edwards award, 2018ALA Notable Children's Books, 2005Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) starred, 02/01/05Kirkus Reviews starred, 07/15/04**Similar Titles:***Gem & Dixie* by Sara Zarr*Mosquitoland* by David Arnold*American Girls: A Novel* by Alison Umminger*The Museum of Intangible Things* by Wendy Wunder | **Summary:**Thirteen year old Bird adores her step-father Cecil so when he leaves her and her mother, she’s devastated. Determined to bring Cecil home, Bird travels from Cleveland to Alabama. As Bird tries to work up the courage to confront Cecil, she benefits from the friendship of Ethan, a young boy that recently had a heart transplant. Intertwined is the story of Jay, a teen that lost his younger brother to a brain aneurism and whose heart Ethan received. Each teen struggles with envy, guilt, fear, and identity as they alternatively try to find their happiness.  |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Using Canva or Piktochart, generate a story web showing the connections between Bird, Ethan, and Jay’s stories. Include their problem, motivations, steps taken to solve the problem, and resolutions. **AASL I.B.3. Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes generating products that illustrate learning, AASL III.B.1. Learners participate in personal, social, and intellectual networks by using a variety of communication tools and resources.** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**As many children have experienced a parental divorce, many teens will relate to Bird and her struggle to accept losing not just her birth father, but also her step-father. The concept of running away is dealt with through slightly rose-colored glasses as Bird is aided first by Ethan and later by Mrs. Pritchard. Students will enjoy reading sub-stories told from Bird, Ethan, and Jay’s points of view alternatingly by chapter. Ultimately, this is an easy, quick read for middle school/early high school students with many opportunities for classroom discussions. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** Despite their predicaments, Johnson is able to imbue her characters with a realistic sense of internal struggle, lending to their relatability.**Worst Quality:** Cecil’s story never really feels resolved, as Bird decides not to confront him. We get a great deal of anticipation for an event that doesn’t occur.**Verdict:**This is a lovely story for a student’s first experience with YA literature. The characters that Johnson creates are struggling with problems that many teens will relate to. I loved the subtlety in which each character’s stories overlapped. It was easy to identify each’s voice as the chapters swing between story-lines. I think students will be split in their response to Bird’s choices at the end of the book, which will make for lively discussions/debates. Ultimately, this is both a great group text or read-aloud for middle school. |

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| ***Lifel1k3*** by Jay Kristoff |
| **Genre**: Science Fiction**Grade Level:** 9-12**Subtopics**: Robots, Androids, Steampunk, Revolution**Awards:**VOYA Perfect 10, 2018Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) starred, 08/01/18**Similar Titles:***I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov*Dotmeme* by Mike Lancaster*Rabbit and Robot* by Andrew Smith*Defy the Stars* by Claudia Gray | **Summary:**In the future, robots are commonplace, although held firmly under the boot of humans as slaves. At her ninth battle, teen Eve discovers she can destroy electronics with her mind, putting her in immediate danger. Eve, her best friend Lemon Fresh, her sickly grandfather Silas, and robotic sidekick Cricket are now targets. To make matters worse, Eve discovers an inhumanly beautiful Lifelike "boy" named Ezekiel in the wreckage of a crash and rescues him. Soon, everyone is after Eve, from The Brotherhood to gangs, rogue androids to cyborg bounty hunters. To make matters worse - Eve is starting to remember a long-suppressed past that somehow involves Zeke, other Lifelikes, and a great deal of pain and misery.  |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Students participate in a group discussion centered on the 3 laws of robots and the Lifelike androids. Are the 3 laws sound? Are there loopholes? Are the Lifelikes bound by the rules or should they have different rules? Why? **AASL III.A. Learners identify collaborative opportunities by 1. Demonstrating their desire to broaden and deepen understandings.2. Developing new understandings through engagement in a learning group.** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**This book will get the wheels turning for students in regards to how they view their technology and robotics. The steampunk/”Mad Max” edge will interest the students, as will the mysterious flashbacks Eve experiences. Two sexual experiences are explored, without great detail, but with connotations that some may find uncomfortable. Students will think they know the ending, but will be completely blindsided in the final few pages. I recommend a little background knowledge on Asimov and the 3 laws prior to reading if using for a group or book circle. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** The action doesn’t seem to stop in this book, which keeps the pacing high despite the length. Kristoff was very thorough in his descriptions, which lend to the reader’s ability to place him or herself in the middle of the story.**Worst Quality:** Some of the slang used can be wearing, although it may not bother the teens in a way it can with adults.**Verdict:** Growing up watching “Star Trek: The Next Generation,” my thoughts on androids were entirely colored by Data from the show, which both helped and hindered me in the reading of this story. I liked the way Kristoff chose to mesh together the futuristic components with a “Mad Max” quality. I thought it a very successful storyline with plenty of action, comraderies, and a bit of romance. In the end, the twist was one that I never saw coming, and neither will students. It left me anxious for the sequel, anticipated for release in June of this year. Overall, this is a great addition to any library. |

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| ***Warcross*** by Marie Lu |
| **Genre**: Science Fiction**Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Gaming, Computers, Virtual Reality Hacking, Futuristic Fiction, Dark Web**Awards:**Publishers Weekly Best Books, 2017Kirkus Best Books, 2017YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, 2017YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Readers, 2017**Starred Reviews** from Kirkus, Publishers Weekly, and School Library Journal**Similar Titles:***Wildcard* by Marie Lu*For the Win* by Corey Doctorow*Otherworld* by Kirsten Miller*Ender’s Game* by Orson Scott Card | **Summary:**Emika Chen has grown up with her share of hardships. As an orphan, she works as a cyber bounty-hunter in effort to pay her bills. The upcoming Warcross games are the perfect opportunity for her to grab a few power-ups to sell…until Emika glitches herself into the opening game. Suddenly the billionaire Hideo Tanaka flies Emika to Tokyo to compete as a wildcard in the games, and to hire her bounty-hunting skills to uncover a cyber-terrorist named Zero. Emika uses all her hacking, gaming, and dark web skills to try to hunt down the threats to the Warcross games while trying to resist falling for Hideo. But as Emika gets closer to uncovering the truth, the game turns deadly.  |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**In a group discussion setting, have students explore the question: How realistic is the idea of the Neurolink and Tanaka’s virtual reality gaming scenario? Is it achievable? Do you think the world is headed in this direction? Should we have boundaries in place for virtual gaming? (**AASL IV.A** Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by **2**.Reflecting and questioning assumptions and possible misconceptions. **AASL II.C.** Learners exhibit empathy with and tolerance for diverse ideas by **1**. Engaging in informed conversation and active debate.) |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**The subject matter of computers, gaming, hacking, and virtual reality are of high interest to teens currently, making this novel extremely alluring and current. Emika has a great mix of strength, confidence, self-doubt, and independence that all students will admire. The underlying questions that Lu poses about the ethicality of the Neurolink and the ability to influence a person’s behavior through virtual reality will be a heady discussion point for students. The jaw-dropping twist in the end will also cause students to question all of their conclusions. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** This is a highly relevant and popular subject matter and draws direct inspiration from Minecraft and World of Warcraft. Boys and girls alike will be drawn to it.**Worst Quality:** Some of Lu’s writing is so subtle in its message that teens may miss the underlying questions of ethics and morals with virtual reality and the Neurolink.**Verdict:**As a non-gamer, but a person that loved reading *Ender’s Game*, I decided to give Warcross a shot…and couldn’t have been more thrilled I did. Lu makes the concepts of the Neuro-link and virtual gaming easy for the reader to understand. The more subtle questions of legality, virtual reality, hacking, and the dark web are masterfully presented without bias. I loved the romance between Emika and Hideo, as will all teen girls. Lastly, the jaw-dropping conclusion left me with a story-line hangover for several days. This book and its sequel *Wildcard* will be nearly impossible to keep on the shelf! |

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| ***Thirteen Reasons Why*** by Jay Asher. Razorbill, 2007 |
| **Genre**: Contemporary Realistic Fiction\*Most **CHALLENGED book 2017**\***Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Bullying, High School, Interpersonal Relations, Grief & Loss, Suicide**Reviews/Awards:****Booklist**, 09/01/07**Horn Book Magazine**, 04/01/08**Kirkus Reviews starred**, 09/01/07**Publishers Weekly**, 10/08/07**School Library Journal**, 11/01/07**Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA)**, 02/01/08**Wilson's Junior High School**, 11/01/08**Wilson's Senior High School**, 01/01/09**Wilson's Senior High School**, 10/01/11**Similar Titles:***Paper Covers Rock* by Jenny Hubbard*The Liar Society* by Lisa & Laura Roecker*Hold Still* by Nina LaCour*The Astonishing Color of After* by Emily X. R. Pan | **Summary:**When high school student Clay receives a mysterious package of audio cassette-tapes in the mail, he’s baffled. They turn out to be the last words spoken by Hannah Baker, a girl from school that Clay had a huge crush on and has just committed suicide. In the tapes, Hannah details how the 13 different people she names and their actions contributed to her ultimate suicide. Clay listens to the tapes, reliving Hannah's experiences. He discovers just how many secrets, betrayals, and lies led to Hannah's death, and his role in her final days. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Working as a group of 3-4, create a character web with each of the thirteen people that Hannah names in her tapes, drawing connections between them. How are they all inter-connected, and how does one relationship affect another? Present your findings to the class. (**IV.D. Learners select and organize information for a variety of audiences by: 2. Integrating and depicting in a****conceptual knowledge network their understanding gained from resources. 3. Openly communicating curation processes for others to use, interpret, and validate.)** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**This book explores the hyper-sensitive topics of suicide, depression, bullying, emotional abuse, and rape. Although some may want to focus only on Hannah’s problems and inevitable suicide, care should be taken to promote Clay’s reactions to the realizations he gains from Hannah’s tapes. Literary elements include an overlap of Hannah’s voice (in italics) and Clay’s (plain text) throughout the story. This story is best used in conjunction with frequent and open discussions of the themes and character reactions. Additional support may be made by guidance counselors in aiding students that are feeling similar to Hannah, and want to reach out for help. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** This is raw, emotional, uncomfortable, and unfortunately – REAL. So many students deal with the problems that Hannah encounters, and the hope is that in reading this book, they choose to seek help instead of taking Hannah’s path.**Worst Quality:** Such sensitive topics may be too difficult for some younger or less mature students to understand and synthesize. The additional impact of the “13 Reasons Why” Netflix series has sensationalized and dramatized the story beyond the textual components.**Verdict:**An uncomfortable, but I feel necessary read, this book should be handled with sensitivity, open-communication, and frequent discussion. Many of Hannah’s accusations and experiences will horrify teens, but are also all-too-real in today’s society. Clay is the foil for our emotions and reactions, and should be the focus in helping teens understand how to read the signs of a person struggling/begging silently for help. It will also help teens to understand how important it is to speak out, to be understanding, and compassionate for fellow students.  |

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| ***The Chocolate War*** by Robert Cormier. Pantheon Books, 1974. |
| **Genre**: Realistic Fiction\***CHALLENGED/BANNED**\***Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Bullying, Boarding School, Peer Pressure, Coming of Age, Classics**Awards/Reviews:****ALA Notable Children's Books**, 1995**Book Links**, 07/01/06**Booklist**, 08/01/97**Margaret A. Edwards Award**, 1991**School Library Journal****Wilson's Junior High School**, 11/01/05**Wilson's Senior High School**, 11/01/02**Similar Titles:***Leverage* by Joshua C. Cohen*Winger* by Andrew Smith*Beyond the Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier*Out of the Shadows* by Jason Wallace | **Summary:**Set at a Catholic Boarding School for Boys, *The Chocolate War* follows the experiences of Jerry, Goober, Asher, and a student group called The Vigil. The Vigil is a secret group of upper-classmen that run the school, create “assignments” for underclassmen to carry out, and generally bully everyone in the school. Jerry, a freshman want-to-be quarterback, is the first person to defy The Vigil when he refuses to sell chocolates for the school fundraiser, despite a direct order from The Vigil. What follows are multiple forms of bullying, harassment, hate, and violence. This book is one of the most challenged book in the last few decades. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**In a large group discussion, select two characters (Jerry, Goober, Brother Leon, Asher) to compare. What motivates each one’s choices? Are all traits of these characters positive, negative, or a mix of both? How would you have handled these actions and choices differently from each characters’ perspective? **(III.D.** **Learners actively participate with others in learning situations by: 1. Actively contribute to group discussions. III.C. Learners demonstrate empathy and equity in knowledge building within the global learning community by: 1. Seeking interactions with a range of learners. 2. Demonstrating interest in other perspectives during learning activities.)** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**Much in the tradition of *Lord of the Flies, Catcher in the Rye*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the book aims to display the most negative aspects of bullying and group mob-mentality. The language, at times, can be explicit, and should be approached with care and sensitivity. A large range of characters may make story-mapping essential to aid in comprehension. Students will identify with traits and aspects of each character. Many will have strong reactions to the characters’ choices, both positive and negative, leading to spirited discussions. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** As uncomfortable as the topics of bullying, assault, and peer pressure are, they are essential to student understandings in how these behaviors can spiral to the worst depths.**Worst Quality:** The ending is not positive, which may leave many students feeling unfulfilled and let-down.**Verdict:** The reactions students will have to this book will be as strong and varied as those of the characters. Many will dislike the main characters (Asher, Brother Leon) and may even have a hard time identifying with Jerry’s choices. The question of peer pressure will be a heavy one for all students to discuss. Ultimately, this classic is a pivotal piece of examining and synthesizing the negative aspects of human behavior and mob-mentality. As stated above, this is best used with heavy group discussion to allow students to react to the characters and express the feelings the text will inspire.  |
| ***A Gentleman’s Guide to Vice and Virtue*** by Mackenzi Lee. Katherine Tegen Books, 2017. |
| **Genre**: Humor/Historical Fiction**Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Europe, Best Friends, Child Abuse, LGBT Relationships, Siblings, Action/Adventure**Reviews/Awards:****Booklist starred**, 04/15/17**Kirkus Reviews starred**, 03/15/17**Publishers Weekly starred**, 04/24/17**School Library Journal starred**, 03/01/17**Stonewall Honor Book**, 2018**Shelf Awareness Best Books** 2017**Publishers Weekly Best Children's Books** 2017**Booklist Top Ten Romance Fiction for Youth** 2017**Kirkus Best Books** 2017**Booklist Editor's Choice: Books for Youth** 2017**Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior High Core Collection,** 2017**Similar Titles:***Our Own Private Universe* by Robin Talley*The Lady’s Guide to Petticoats and Piracy* by Mackenzi Lee*The Great American Whatever* by Tim Federle*13 Little Blue Envelopes* by Maureen Johnson | **Summary:**It’s the 1700’s and young Henry “Monty” Monague, the son of a peer of the realm in England, is about to embark on his “Grand Tour” of Europe with his best friend Percy and younger sister Felicity. The problem? Percy has a huge crush on his best friend! Throw in a disastrous encounter with a French Duke, an attack by highwaymen, a cryptic box, kidnapping by pirates, and a sinking island in Venice and Monty’s life couldn’t get any more complicated. Monty, Percy, and Felicity will deal with issues of race, class, sexual identity, and gender roles in this humor-filled adventure.  |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Delve deeper into the society and conventions of Monty’s world – what conventions was he expected to follow? How did he defy conventions? Compare the conventions and expectations of a 17th century gentleman with that of 18 year olds today. How are they different? Are there any similarities?**(II.A.** **Learners contribute a balanced perspective when participating in a learning community by: 2. Adopting a discerning stance toward points of view and opinions expressed in information resources and learning products. 3. Describing their understanding of cultural relevancy and placement within the global learning community.)** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**The humor in this book is one of its most delightful literary aspects, as are the twists and turns of the trio’s adventure. Monty’s character will make teens both laugh and cringe at the same time with his questionable choices. It does not become apparent until a third of the way through the book that Percy is half African. The LGBTQ factor may make some students uncomfortable, and should be delicately addressed prior to reading. For the students open to reading about a love story different from the norm, this book will delight at every turn. Other topics addressed include child abuse (Monty’s father), slavery, differences in classes, and gender roles. All lend themselves to open and interesting dialogue with students. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** The humor employed by Lee and the friendship/love between Monty and Percy are the two most enjoyable aspects of this book. Felicity is a breath of fresh air with her no-nonsense approach to the trio’s pitfalls.**Worst Quality:** The mystery that surrounds the “cure-all” that Monty, Percy, and Felicity end up pursuing is slightly on the unbelievable side, even for the 1700’s. Some students may scoff at this feature.**Verdict:**I picked this book up primarily for the humorous aspect and because I love Regency romances. This YA twist includes a bisexual main character that seems unable to help getting himself into scrape after scrape. Ultimately, you feel for Monty and Percy as you learn more about their backgrounds and the the struggles/inequalities they have dealt with the time period in which they are living. It is an excellent book that any teen struggling with sexual identity will embrace. Even for straight teens, I think they will understand and draw parallels with Percy and Monty’s relationship, affirming that love really is all-encompassing, no matter who it is you love.  |
| ***Midwinterblood*** by Marcus Sedwick. Roaring Brook, 2013. |
| **Genre**: Mystery**Grade Level:** 7-12**Subtopics**: Love, Thriller, Reincarnation, Islands, Vikings, Horror**Reviews/Awards:****Booklist starred**, 12/01/12**Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books starred**, 02/01/13**Horn Book Magazine**, 03/01/13**Kirkus Reviews starred**, 12/15/12**Library Media Connection**, 10/01/13**Michael L. Printz Award**, 2014**New York Times**, 02/10/13**Publishers Weekly starred**, 12/17/12**Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior High Core Collection****Similar Titles:***Forever Again* by Victoria Laurie*Only a Breath Apart* by Katie McGarry*The Eternal Ones* by Kirsten Miller*Rebel of the Sands* by Alwyn Hamilton | **Summary:**Eric Seven, a reporter, is flying to Blessed Island to research a rumor that the people of the island do not age. When he lands, he meets Merle, and is instantly drawn to her familiarity. From there, Eric discovers that the people of the island have a dark secret. What follows is a journey back through time over the lives of 7 people: Eric, an archaeologist, a WWII pilot, a painter, a ghost, a Viking, and a King. Each tale revolves around the mystery of Blessed Island, a mysterious fire, and a love that withstands seven lifetimes. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Sort students into seven groups and assign each group a “story.” Students are to make a poster detailing that story’s characters, problem, solution, and connections to other characters within the book. Present to the class and web the seven posters to present the “big picture.” **(V.C.** **Learners engage with the learning****community by:** **1. Expressing curiosity about a topic of personal interest or curricular relevance. 2. Co-constructing innovative means of investigation. 3. Collaboratively identifying innovative solutions to a challenge or problem. I.C.** **E Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with****others in a cycle that includes: 4. Sharing products with an authentic audience.)** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**The draw of both the love story between Merle and Eric and the mystery that surrounds their lives on the island will be an irresistible one for students. Structurally, the stories move backwards in time from most recent back to pre-Viking era. This may create some confusion for teens, and story-mapping will be useful. Students will identify with different characters at different times throughout the story, allowing them to try and link their reactions between the characters’ lifetimes. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** The way that Sedgwick masterfully weaves a story from present to past is both alluring and addict**ing**. The prose is expressive, colorful, andfull of emotion.**Worst Quality:** The sacrifice found at the end of the first story, and again in the final two chapters, is both chilling and reminiscent of Aztec sacrifices. Some students more sensitive in nature may want to give up reading after the first chaper.**Verdict:**Sedgwick beautifully explores the question of how far someone will go for love. We know fairly early in the book that Eric and Merle are reincarnating over and over, that they are soul-mates of a sort, but we don’t know why. Each story brings the reader closer and closer to the truth, drawing many storylines and characters together to create a lasting picture in the end. For students that enjoy a good mystery and/or romance, this book will be an alluring read. The length is such that struggling readers will not be put off, but will benefit from the structure of story-mapping/keeping track of the characters throughout the story. This is a wonderful book for a book-talk! |

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| ***Dear Martin*** by Nic Stone. Crown Books, 2017 |
| **Genre**: Contemporary Realistic Fiction**Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: African Americans, Police Brutality, Racism, Prejudice, Racial Profiling, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**Reviews/Awards:****Booklist starred**, 08/01/17**Horn Book Guide**, 04/01/18**Horn Book Magazine**, 11/01/17**Kirkus Reviews**, 08/15/17**New York Times**, 11/12/17**Publishers Weekly**, 07/31/17**School Library Journal**, 09/01/17**William C. Morris YA Debut Nominees**, 2018**Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior High Core Collection****Similar Titles:***All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds*Swing* by Kwame Alexander*Black Boy/White School* by Brian F. Walker*March: Book Three* by by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin | **Summary:**Justyce McAllister has grown up in the hood in Atlanta, Georgia, but he doesn’t present himself as a thug. He attends a prep school on a full scholarship, is on the debate team, smashed his SATs, and just received a full-scholarship to an Ivy League school. But, all of Justyce’s perceptions of how the world sees him come crashing down when he is roughly arrested by a white cop while trying to keep his drunk ex-girlfriend from driving. Justyce, struggling to understand the prejudice and racism that still exist today turns to the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr. for answers. Through his letters to Martin, Justyce allows us to experience the difficulties of being treated differently due to skin color rather than by character. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Have students compare Justyce’s life and experiences with their own. What struggles and misconceptions does Justyce deal with that reflect struggles in your life? What choices would you have made differently than Justyce? **(II.A.** **Learners contribute a balanced perspective when participating in learning community by: 2. Adopting a discerning stance toward points of view and opinions expressed in information resources and learning products. 3. Describing their understanding of cultural relevancy and placemen** **within the global learning community.)** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**Nic Stone finds a way through Justyce to ask all the hard and uncomfortable questions about racism, prejudice, racial profiling, and police brutality in a way that teens can embrace. The letters to Martin are clear and ring loudly with Justyce’s voice, allowing the reader to see everything he’s thinking and feeling, but not expressing. As students’ get a peek inside the complexities of Justyce’s world, their empathy for Justyce’s situation will be running high. A wonderful book for raw and emotional group discussions, this book will be an essential read for all teens. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** Nic Stone’s prose is emphatically clear and emotionally-charged. Every new thought Justyce has or inequality he experiences rocks the reader to the core.**Worst Quality:** The subject of white police brutality and profiling against African American boys is a charged one. Care should be taken in discussions to encourage empathy.**Verdict:**This book changed my life. I can never look at the world the same way again, and I’m grateful to Nic Stone for that. I have always known that racial inequality was present, but I don’t think I ever really understood what it felt like to be in Justyce’s situation. Stone created a platform for all the hard questions to be asked, and the reader can’t help but ask themselves how they would feel in that situation as well. This book, in the tradition of Jason Reynolds and Kwame Alexander, will become one of the essential reads understanding the challenges and inequalities that come with being a person of color. |
| ***The Hazel Wood*** by Melissa Albert. Flatiron Books, 2017. |
| **Genre**: Fantasy/Fairy Tales**Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Magic, Family, Fractured Fairy Tales, Imaginary Places**Reviews/Awards:**Booklist starred, 11/15/17Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books starred, 01/01/18Horn Book Guide, 11/01/18Horn Book Magazine, 03/01/18Kirkus Reviews starred, 10/15/17New York Times, 03/11/18Publishers Weekly starred, 11/13/17School Library Journal starred, 10/01/17Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) starred, 12/01/17“Most Highly Recommended” Wilson’s Senior Core Collection**Similar Titles:***Tiger Lily* by Jodi Lynn Anderson*Blood Red, Snow White* by Marcus Sedgwick*A Curse So Dark and Lonely* by Brigid Kemmerer*Witch Born* by Nicholas Bowling | **Summary:**Alice has grown up never know her famous grandmother Althea Prosperine, nor her grandmother’s famous book “Tales of the Hinterland” – a collection of dark fairy tales. Instead, Alice and her mother had been on the move most of their lives until settling down in NYC with Alice’s wealthy new step-father. Everything goes sideways when Alice comes home from school to find her mother missing, and evidence pointing to the fairy tale world of The Hinterland. Suddenly, Alice is finding herself stuck between magic and nightmare. With her friend Ellery, Alice races against time and the forces that want to stop her to find her grandmother’s estate, The Hinterland, and the truth of her own existence while attempting to save her mother.  |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Compare and contrast The Hinterland with other fairytale worlds. Examples include Wonderland or Oz. What characteristics of fairytales does this book share with other fairytales? As a group, create a Venn diagram comparing *The Hazel Wood* with other fairytales.**AASL V.A.2. Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by reflecting and questioning assumptions and possible misconceptions. III.B.2 Learners participate in personal, social, and intellectual networks by establishing connections with other learners to build on their own prior knowledge and create new knowledge.** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**This novel employs a dark twist on traditional fairytales while keeping true to the elements of fantasy. The horror/nightmarish aspects will stand out to teens as unique and different from the average fairy tale at a time when many are starting to question the implication that there are happy endings in real life. In particular, girls will be drawn to the aspect of these feminist-forward fairytales and the main character of Alice. Alice presents as resourceful, intelligent, and impulsive, which are identifiable characteristics. In short, this novel will draw many students in with the mystery, chilling prose, and unique plays on magic. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** Albert’s writing style is easy to read yet invokes clear imagery and imagination. Alice’s character is strong and independent minded.**Worst Quality:** The darkness of certain aspects of The Hinterland may not appeal to all students. Language used in the book can be graphic at times.**Verdict:** I can safely say that this is a well written book that will appeal to many teens. I personally liked the character of Ellery and his purpose of explaining the fairytales from the book to Alice (who has not read them and has no knowledge). There were twists in the plot that I personally didn’t like, but feel teens will meet with more positivity. For the students that love a good twist on a fairytale, this book not only promises to deliver, but does so with great affect. Unique in its plot and premise, many students will become devoted fans and will want to pick up the sequel *The Night Country* due this year.  |
| ***Sawkill Girls*** by Claire Legrand. Katherine Tegen Books, 2018. |
| **Genre**: Horror/Thriller**Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Fantasy, Magic, Friendship, LGBT Relationships, Monsters, Missing Persons**Reviews/Awards:**Booklist starred, 06/01/15Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books starred, 10/01/18Kirkus Reviews, 08/01/18Publishers Weekly starred, 09/03/18School Library Journal starred, 08/01/18Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior High Core Collection**Similar Titles:***A Skinful of Shadows* by Frances Hardinge*Passenger* by Andrew Smith*White Crow*  by Marcus Sedgwick*Through the Woods* by Emily Carroll | **Summary:**When Marion arrives at Sawkill Rock with her mother and sister after the death of their father, it looks like a perfect island. In reality, girls have been disappearing on the island for decades, resulting in local ghost stories about The Collector. The local sheriff’s daughter, Zoey had her best friend disappear after befriending Val, and is haunted by the drive to find out who or what is responsible. Val, along with her mother, hides and protects a horrible secret about The Collector. Marion, Zoey, and Val will find their paths converge in this chilling and harrowing mystery. Can the ultimate evil be defeated? |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Using Canva, create a personality profile for one of the main characters: Marion, Val, or Zoey. Think about what personality qualities drive her to make the choices she makes. How does her personality develop or change throughout the story? **AASL IV.B.4 Learners gather information appropriate to the task by** **organizing information by priority, topic, or other systematic scheme.**  |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**This novel is a text-book horror/thriller mixed with mystery and fantasy elements. The three main characters present the ideal opportunity to compare and contrast character traits, as well as analysis of the choices each character makes. This book will undoubtedly appeal to fans of the genre, but will also appeal to the LGBTQ culture with the sexual relationship introduced between Marion and Val. Additional implications of chauvinistic attitudes can be contrasted with the feminist tendencies of the main characters. This book will be a hot conversational topic. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** Gripping and action-driven, this book alternates between first person narratives by each main character. This gives the reader wonderful insight into each’s thoughts, feelings, and perspective at every point throughout the story.**Worst Quality:** Some students may not be comfortable reading the more graphic descriptions of sexual encounters.**Verdict:** This novel represents the best of its genre while implementing elements of magic and mystery. Legrand’s writing wonderfully descriptive and chilling throughout the novel. The characters are superbly developed and leave the reader free to make his or her own judgements on the actions and guilt of each character. In particular, the question of Val’s redemption will be a hot topic of conversation. Ultimately, this novel is greatly appealing and will be an asset in any classroom library.  |
| ***Circe: A Novel*** by Madeline Miller. Little, Brown and Co., 2018. |
| **Genre**: Historical Fiction/Greek Myths**Grade Level:** 10+**Subtopics**: Fantasy Fiction, Gods and Goddesses, Witches, Magic, Paranormal, Action/Adventure**Reviews/Awards:**Alex Award, 2019Booklist, 02/15/18Kirkus Reviews starred, 02/01/18Library Journal starred, 02/15/18New York Times, 06/03/18Publishers Weekly, 05/07/18Publishers Weekly starred, 02/05/18School Library Journal starred, 03/01/18Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior *High Core Collection***Similar Titles:***Strange the Dreamer* by Laini Taylor*Shadow Behind the Stars* by Rebecca Hahn*Ichiro* by Ryan Inzana*Hermes: Tales of the Trickster* by George O’Connor | **Summary:**In the world of Greek Mythology, Circe is the daughter of the Titan, Helios. From the time she is born, Circe is different from all the Gods and Goddesses that surround her; she's not mean, blood-thirsty, or conniving. She's curious, has a gentle streak, and desperately wants to be adored. When Circe and her siblings discover that they are talented in the ways of witchcraft. Zeus finds Circe threatening, and banishes her to the mortal world on an island. Circe is content to "hone her craft" of witchcraft, but finds her tranquility assaulted by numerous mortals. Through Circe, we meet pirates, sailors, the Minotaur, Daedalus, Icarus, and Odysseus. Circe must find her place as a goddess in a mortal world. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Have students complete one of the following:Construct a timeline of Circe’s experiences throughout the book.Create an illustration of Circe based on the clues given in the book.Compare Circe to another Goddess. What traits do all Gods/Goddesses share and in what ways is Circe different?**AASL I.B.3 Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes generating products that illustrate learning.** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**Greek Myths are a topic taught in conjunction with the Maryland Common Core Reading Standards in grades 9-10. This wonderful take on the Greek Myth of Circe allows readers to see the myth from a new perspective. Commonly portrayed as a vindictive witch that turned men into swine, Miller imbues Circe with a sensitivity, kindness, and curiosity that students will enjoy. This novel can be compared/contrasted with previously taught myths for literary elements central to mythological stories. Students will appreciate the fast-paced action in the story as well. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** Never lagging in description or action, this novel presents the reader with a new perspective on a myth that has previously had little attention. Miller’s prose is well paced, elegant, and insightful.**Worst Quality:** At first glance, the width of the novel may turn off reluctant readers, as may the reading level. Some reviews have this listed as a YA book, others as adult.**Verdict:**As a fan of Greek Mythology, I was thrilled to read this book and was not disappointed. Miller has won praise for *Son of Achilles* and her ability to put a new spin on age-less stories. Miller’s Circe is a character that will inspire sympathy and understanding but the action of the story will appeal to boys and girls equally. Overall, this book is a delightful addition to Greek Myth units in any classroom’s instruction. |
| ***Glitter*** by Aprilynne Pike. Random House, 2016. |
| **Genre**: Action/Adventure**Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Versailles, Court & Courtiers, Drug Dealers, Science Fiction, 18th Century France**Reviews/Awards:**Booklist, 08/01/16Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books starred, 09/01/16Horn Book Guide, 10/01/17Kirkus Reviews, 08/01/16Publishers Weekly starred, 08/22/16School Library Journal, 10/01/16Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior High Core Collection**Similar Titles:***Shatter (Glitter 2)* by Aprilynne Pike*Courting Darkness* by Robin LeFevers*The Cruel Prince* by Holly Black*The Princess of Cortova* by Diane Stanley*The Selection* by Kiera Cass | **Summary:**Two hundred years in the future, the world is trudging ahead as usual…except in the Sonoman-Versailles court of King Justin, the owner of Sonoma corporation. Within the walls of the palace, everyone lives the Baroque lifestyle of 18th century France. Danica moved into the palace in her teens, and after she witnesses the young king commit a horrible murder, her mother blackmails him into an engagement with Dani. Desperate to escape the marriage, and the palace, Dani turns to a new highly addictive and highly potent drug called Glitter. With the aid of drug dealers from outside the palace, she reluctantly turns to distributing the drug to the court through cosmetics, desperate to earn enough money to buy her way out.  |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**In small groups, have students discuss Dani’s decision to sell Glitter. What moral and ethical problems did it create? Did she have other options? What else could she have done to extricate herself from the situation she was in? **III.A. Learners identify collaborative opportunities by 1. Demonstrating their desire to broaden and deepen understandings. 2. Developing new understandings through engagement in a learning group. 3. Deciding to solve problems informed by group interaction.** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**This novel employs elements of Baroque history in a modern world, allowing for a star contrast between the lifestyle within the palace walls and beyond them. Discussions on addiction should be addressed, as well as the ethics of what Dani decides to do/how she feels about it. In addition, the concept of Saber’s slavery makes for interesting discussion points. Teens will be drawn to the contrast between a historical setting and futuristic elements in the story. The action of the story is constantly fueled by the knowledge that Dani is danger at all times. Students will likely request the sequel *Shatter* after reading this book, as it ends in a cliffhanger. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** The strategic mix of Baroque culture and futuristic elements is immensely appealing and drives interest. The moral and ethical choices of the characters will leave the reader questioning his or her own standards. **Worst Quality:** The concept of addiction and Dani’s role as a drug dealer is a difficult one for some students, as it may hit a little too close to home. In addition, there is a feeling that although what Dani is doing is wrong, it’s justified.**Verdict:**This story is a one that lovers of Kiera Cass’s Selection series will enjoy. The pageantry and sparkle of the Baroque world will appeal to female teens especially. The action and danger hum at a constant frequency, leaving the reader as wary and on edge as Danica herself. In short, this twist on dystopian society is highly appealing. |
| ***Scythe*** by Neal Shusterman. Simon & Schuster, 2017. |
| **Genre**: Science Fiction**Grade Level:** 8+**Subtopics**: Action/Adventure, Death, Murder, Mystery**Reviews/Awards:**Booklist starred, 10/01/16Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books starred, 10/01/16Horn Book Guide, 04/01/17Kirkus Reviews starred, 08/15/16Michael L. Printz Honor, 2017Publishers Weekly starred, 10/03/16School Library Journal starred, 10/01/16Teacher Librarian, 06/01/17Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) starred, 02/01/17Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior High Core Collection**Similar Titles:***Thunderhead* by Neal Shusterman*The Alex Crow: A Novel* by Andrew Smith*Numbers* by Rachel Ward*The Both Die at the End* by Adam Silvera | **Summary:**In the future, humans have conquered mortality. In an effort to maintain population growth at a sustainable level, Scythes are a revered order of assassins trained in the art of killing and charged with "gleaning" a person's life. Each Scythe has his or her own way of selecting targets, but the honorable ones are attempting to recreate the random circumstances by which humans used to die in the past. Less honorable Scythes are conducting mass gleanings and deriving enjoyment from these killings. Citra and Rowan are two teens selected by Scythe Faraday as his apprentices, a job neither is eager to embrace. When they are pitted against each other for the job, they must fight to determine who will become a scythe, and who will be gleaned. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**In a large group discussion, compare Citra’s and Rowan’s separate roads to becoming a Scythe apprentice. Would you be capable of making the same decisions they make? What would you have done differently in either of their positions? **AASL II.C.1 Learners exhibit empathy with and tolerance for diverse ideas by engaging in informed conversation and active debate.****2. Contributing to discussions in which multiple viewpoints on a topic are expressed.** |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**The concept of death is a heavy one in this book, and that weight and severity is felt throughout the book in a riveting way. The themes of death, gleaning, and the attitudes of the Scythes toward their job present wonderful discussion opportunities. The experiences of Citra and Rowan are ideal for compare and contrast. Teens will find the premise of Shusterman’s futuristic society a fascinating one and will be drawn to the concept of “The Thunderhead” – the artificial intelligence that runs the planet. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** A wholly unique and interesting take on futuristic society and the concept of death, this book opens the doors for many discussions on morals, ethics, and death.**Worst Quality:** The mass gleanings conducted by Scythe Goddard and his counterparts and the descriptions of that violence may be a bit much for sensitive and younger students.**Verdict:**As dark as the premise was for this book, I was drawn to it for its uniqueness. Shusterman is a deservedly praised author with many award-winning books, and this series will be no exception. The concepts he presents are intricate and complicated in their morality. Citra and Rowan present characters that are equally appealing to boys and girls. Lastly, the drive to read the sequels will be high, so it is suggested that they be purchased upon release. |
| ***Shout*** by Laurie Halse Anderson. Penguin Group, 2019. |
| **Genre**: Poetry/Biography**Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Poetry, Rape, Sexual Harassment, Violence, Women**Reviews/Awards:**Booklist starred, 01/01/19Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books starred, 03/01/19Horn Book Magazine starred, 03/01/19Kirkus Reviews starred, 01/15/19New York Times, 03/03/19Publishers Weekly starred, 11/05/18School Library Journal starred, 03/01/19Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) starred, 12/01/18Most Highly Recommended – Wilson’sSenior High Core Collection**Similar Titles:***Speak* by Laurie Anderson*What Does Consent Really Mean?* by Joseph Wilkins ill., et al.*The Music of What Happens* by Bill Konigsberg | **Summary:**Laurie Anderson, who is perhaps best known for her book Speak, continues to speak out about her experiences. Raped at 13 by a boy she trusted, Anderson took years to recover, find her voice, and have her first book published. She details her experiences speaking to millions of teens. At times raw and uncensored, at others introspective, Anderson’s poetry delivers the message that we all need to speak up, defend ourselves, and stand united against the stereotype that women do not have a voice. Anderson shows that we can be empowered by our negative experiences and change the world for others. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Using poetry examples from a famous poet you’ve studied in class (Whitman, Keats, Browning, etc), compare Anderson’s style and literary elements. What forms of poetry does she use? What elements are the same between both poets? What are the differences? How do Anderson’s elements contribute to overall understanding?**AASL V.A. Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by:** 1. Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes. **I.D. Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by**: 1. Continually seeking knowledge. 2. Engaging in sustained inquiry. |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**Poetry can be a subject that many teens approach with fear and trepidation. Anderson’s poetry, however, is never too pompous, flowery, or complicated. Instead, she is raw and blunt with her retelling of negative experiences in her life. Poems, although told in chronological order, can be used as stand-alone examples of literary element examples. Students will appreciate how candidly she relates her downward spiral after the rape, and her slow climb back up. Teen girls will identify with many of Anderson’s experiences and feel a sense of empowerment in Anderson’s refusal to be silenced or held down.  |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** Powerfully raw and realistic, Anderson doesn’t hold back anything in describing her experiences, recovery process, and development as a writer and women’s advocate.**Worst Quality:** May be too raw/real for some students, although real-to-life. Language does border on crude at times.**Verdict:**Even students that profess to not understand or enjoy poetry will identify with Anderson’s writing. Her very real approach to relating her father’s PTSD and experiences, her rape, the mistakes she made while trying to recover her identity, and her fight to become an author and advocate will enlighten and empower students. Females especially will relate to Anderson’s stories of sexual pressure and abuse. This book is best used with intense and thorough discussion of Anderson’s point of view, emotions, and the literary elements she uses to convey them. |
| ***Brave*** by Svetlana Chmakova. First Second, 2017. |
| **Genre**: Graphic Novel**Grade Level:** 6+**Subtopics**: Middle School, Friendship, Bullying, Clubs, Popularity**Reviews/Awards:**School Library Connection starred, 11/01/17School Library Journal Top 10 Graphic Novels (2017)Good Reads, 2017YALSA Great Graphic Novels for Teens: Top Ten (2018)Core Collection, Wilson’s Senior High Core Collection**Similar Titles:***Awkaward* by Svetlana Chmakova*Crush* by Svetlana Chmakova*Mango Delight* by Frank Morrison*New Kid* by Jerry Kraft | **Summary:**Jensen Graham is the first to admit that middle school is a little rough. He tends to get in trouble for daydreaming (on the upside, he has a perfect Zombie Apocalypse plan), is really struggling in math, and he's desperate to get his article on the danger of sunspots (really, people need to be prepared for this catastrophe) into the school newspaper. His favorite thing is art club! But everything gets harder when he can't seem to find a partner for projects, his art club leaves him out of projects, and two boys are really picking on him. What follows is Jensen's journey through making friends, defeating math, and standing up to bullying. Jensen shows us that one person can change everything. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Using a comic creation app or website, create an additional scene for Jensen. You may have him working with friends on a project, discussing friendship, or working through a problem. Be sure to stay true to Jensen’s character and the lessons he learned through the course of the book. Be sure to correctly cite Chmakova’s work and intellectual property.**VI.B. Learners use valid information and reasoned conclusions to make ethical decisions in the creation of knowledge by:** 1. Ethically using and reproducing others’ work. 2. Acknowledging authorship and demonstrating respect for the intellectual property of others. 3. Including elements in personal-knowledge products that allow others to credit content appropriately. |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**Graphic novels have become increasingly appealing to teens in the last few decades, and are ideal for drawing in the reluctant reader. The illustrations in this book are on point, funny, and heart-warming. Jensen’s voice is clear and students will immediately identify with his struggles and motivations in middle school. The topics of bullying and friendship are covered in depth, and will make students more aware of their own contributions to friendship. Teens will love the Berrybrook series, as well as the main characters. This novel is a welcome addition to all middle and high school grades. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** Chmakova’s artwork, as well as Jensen’s character are absolutely delightful. The core messages on bullying, friendship, and acceptance are delivered in a way that students will embrace.**Worst Quality:** There isn’t much about this novel not to like. Only students that do not enjoy graphic novels will be reluctant to pick this book up.**Verdict:**This, to me, is the epitome of a fantastic graphic novel! Chmakova finds the perfect way to deliver a thoughtful dialogue and lesson on what friendship truly is, how to fit in when you don’t feel you belong anywhere, and how to start changing the world around you. Jensen is so adorably awkward and inspiring that it’s hard not to love him immediately. The reader will find him/herself rooting for Jensen the entire way. The ending gives one a giddy, positive, feel-good optimism that teens can change the atmosphere of bullying. \*High demand backstory and sequel. |
| ***The Family Romanov*** by Candace Fleming, Schwartz & Wade, 2014. |
| **Genre**: Nonfiction/Biography**Grade Level:** 9+**Subtopics**: Nicholas II, Imperial Russia, Military Coup, Revolution, Murder, Assassination**Reviews/Awards:**Booklist starred, 06/01/14Horn Book Guide starred, 04/01/15Horn Book Magazine starred, 07/01/14Kirkus Reviews starred, 06/01/14Publishers Weekly starred, 04/28/14Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Honor, 2015School Library Journal starred, 06/01/14Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA) starred, 08/01/14YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults-Nominees, 2015Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior High Core Collection**Similar Titles:***Anastasia and Her Sisters* by Carolyn Meyer*The Romanov’s: The Final* Chapter by Robert K. Massie*Tsarina* by Nelle J. Patrick | **Summary:**There are few people that have not heard how the Russian royal family, the Romanovs, were murdered during the Russian Revolution in the early 1900's. This books explores the lives of Tsar Nicholas and his family, as well as exploring the plight of the peasant class in Russia. The events that led to the revolution are presented in part with stories and letters about peasants and the working class citizens' plight. As World War I unfolds, Tsar Nicholas's reign becomes more tenuous as communism rises putting his family on the path to a brutal and heartbreaking end. Also included are two sections of photographs, letters, and excerpts from peasant writings. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Using this book and a fiction book featuring the Romanovs, write an essay detailing the misconceptions/invented facts about the Romanovs. How and why have these misconceptions developed? How can the misconceptions be corrected?**AASL V.A. Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by:** 1. Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes. 2. Reflecting and questioning assumptions and possible misconceptions. 3. Engaging in inquiry-based processes for personal growth. |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**Many people have been fascinated by the Romanov family over the last century. Students may be familiar with the rumors of youngest daughter Anastasia escaping the carnage that her family befell, but may not know the entire story of how the family perished. Employing the writings of peasants, politicos, and writers from the era, Fleming presents the entire case for the fall of Nicholas II and Tsarist Russia. Students will be drawn to the inevitability of the Romanov’s fate, but also an inside look at how a powerful monarchy and country descended into chaos and revolution. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** The narrative style of writing coupled with letters, excerpts, and photographs contribute to making this story easier to comprehend and follow than many other nonfiction books about the Russian Revolution.**Worst Quality:** The details of the Romanovs’ executions may be too graphic for younger students, despite the recommended age level.**Verdict:** Fleming excels in her ability to make history interesting and easy to follow. The details of the plight of the Russian peasants are firmly established and expounded, clearly leading to the revolution and fall of the Romanovs. The pictures are exceptionally compelling and will suitably engage the interest of younger readers. Overall, this version of the history of the Romanov family and the Russian Revolution is far superior to most history textbooks found in the classroom. |
| ***Unbroken: 13 Stories Starring Disabled Teens.*** Nijkamp, Marieke, ed., Straus & Giroux, 2018. |
| **Genre**: Short Stories - Fiction**Grade Level:** 8+**Subtopics**: People with Disabilities, Friendship, LGBT, Love, Struggle**Reviews/Awards:**Booklist starred, 09/01/18Kirkus Reviews starred, 08/01/18Publishers Weekly starred, 10/22/18School Library Journal, 09/01/18Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA), 10/01/18Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior Core Collection**Similar Titles:***Owning It: Stories About Teens with Disabilities* by Donald R. Gallo*Eat the Sky, Drink the Ocean* by Kirsty Murray et al*Flying Lessons and Other Stories* by Ellen Oh*Summer Days and Summer Nights: 12 Love Stories* by Stephanie Perkins | **Summary:**Written by disabled authors and edited by Marie Nijkamp, this collection of thirteen fiction short stories stars disabled characters. The plots and settings vary from an eerie enchanted carnival, to a faraway planet, to a middle eastern caravan, and more. Diversity can be found in each story, addressing characters of varying races, genders, orientation, and preference. In each, the characters prove that they are not defined by their disabilities. Instead, their strength of mind and heart is the focus of each short story. This is a worthy addition to any library. |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Select the story that “spoke” to you the most. Create a character sketch for the main character. Using the text as a guide, outline the character’s features, personality, like/dislikes, strengths/weaknesses, motivation, and disability. Utilize canva or similar web 2.0 tools to create your sketch.**AASL IV.A. Learners act on an information need by: 3.** Making critical choices about information sources to use. **VI.D. Learners engage with information to extend personal learning by:** 1. Personalizing their use of information and information technologies |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**One of the greatest appeals of short stories is that they are short! Averaging 30-40 pages, each of the stories found in the collection can reasonably be managed in a single-read sitting. The variety of characters, settings, themes, and plot lines contributes to the inherent draw of the book. Not all character’s disabilities are named, but students will find that the focus of the story is not on the disability, but on the character’s drive to overcome any and all obstacles. The diversity of the characters will be an additional draw to teens. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** A wonderful variety of characters, backgrounds, themes, and plots with a special highlight on physical, mental, and emotional disabilities combine to make an exceptional collection of literature.**Worst Quality:** Some students may find some stories far more appealing than others. Reading multiple stories during the same sitting can be a little jolting from one story to the next.**Verdict:**This collection of stories is heart-warming and empowering to read. Each author, through their own experience, is able to send the message that a disability doesn’t mean a person isn’t able—instead that other abilities and strengths make a person strong. The variety of themes, including LGBT, diversity of gender, religion, orientation, and preference are woven masterfully with tales of adventure, love, fantasy, and suspense. This book truly has a story for everyone. |
| ***Spinning*** by Tillie Walden. First Second, 2017. |
| **Genre**: Biography/Graphic Novel**Grade Level:** 8+**Subtopics**: Figure Skating, Synchro-Skating, LGBT, Relationships, Harassment, Bullying, Lesbians**Reviews/Awards:**Booklist starred, 07/01/17Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, 10/01/17Horn Book Guide, 04/01/18Horn Book Magazine, 11/01/17Kirkus Reviews starred, 08/01/17New York Times, 12/03/17Publishers Weekly starred, 07/17/17School Library Journal, 09/01/17Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA), 08/01/17Most Highly Recommended, Wilson’s Senior Core Collection**Similar Titles:***Skim* by Jillian Tamaki & Mariko Tamaki*Lost Soul Be At Peace* by Maggie Thrash*Kiss Number 8* by Colleen Venable*Pulp* by Robin Talley | **Summary:**This autobiographic graphic novel explores ice-skater Tillie Walden’s experiences from early middle school through high school. Tillie has been skating since she was five, and is comfortable with her life in NJ. When Tillie’s parents decide to move the family to Texas, Tillie’s world becomes unstable. Suddenly making friends is difficult, skating has more pressure, and she’s coming to the realization she’s gay. Tillie tries to navigate her growing discomfort with the skating world, the biases that come with it, and owning her identity,  |
| **Reading Promotion Strategy:**Create a timeline of Walden’s experiences from years 11-18. Only highlight events that contributed to her final decision to leave skating and to attend an art school instead of college. Why were those events the most important ones? How did they impact her final decisions?**AASL I.B. Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes:** 1. Using evidence to investigate questions. 2. Devising and implementing a plan to fill knowledge gaps. 3. Generating products that illustrate learning. |
| **Evaluation – Appeal to Teens/Literary Elements:**Figure skating is a sport that most teens are familiar with, although unfamiliar with the nuances of the behind-the-scenes atmosphere of that world. Teens will appreciate that Walden provides descriptions for figure skating moves and the challenges of learning/performing them. Additionally, teens will identify with Walden’s struggle to find friends and in declaring her sexual preferences. The graphic nature of this novel is welcoming for reluctant readers. Text is uncomplicated, however does contained a few curse words. |
| **Personal Reaction:****Best Quality:** The graphics are appealing. Walden does a wonderful job of describing events and emotions with words and images.**Worst Quality:** At times, the scene shifts somewhat joltingly without warning. Student may be jarred by this sudden shift, although it is purposeful by Walden.**Verdict:**I had a personal connection to this text because I figure skated through and beyond college. Many of the tests that Walden mentioned, I’ve either taken or witnessed. As a person familiar with the atmosphere that Walden describes, I was impressed with her story. Walden truly holds no punches while describing her interactions with coaches, skating peers, and friends. Her realization of her sexual preferences and her subsequent first relationship are presented with thoughtfulness. She reflects her emotions and unease through her graphics and depictions. Walden truly takes a chance by letting the reader in, and the majority of teenagers will applaud her strength and bravery in doing so. |

**Recommended Additional Middle/High School Titles:**

1. *Endling: The Last* by Katherine Applegate. HarperCollins, 2018. **4 starred reviews, BES Nominee 2019**
2. *Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster* by Jonathan Auxier. Amulet Books, 2018. **6 starred reviews, BES Nominee 2019**
3. *24 Hours in Nowhere* by Dusti Bowling. Sterling Children, 2018. **2 starred reviews, BES Nominee 2019**
4. *The Truth as Told By Mason Buttle* by Leslie Connor. HarperCollins, 2018. **3 starred review, Schneider Family Book Award, BES Nominee 2019**
5. *Blended* by Sharon Draper. Antheneum, 2018. **2 starred reviews**
6. *The Third Mushroom* by Jennifer Holm. Random House, 2018. **5 positive reviews**
7. *The Splintered Light* by Ginger Johnson. Bloomsbury, 2018. **2 positive reviews**
8. *The Season of Styx Malone* by Kekla Magoon. Wendy Lamb Books, 2018. **Coretta Scott King Author Honor, 4 starred reviews, BES Nominee 2019**
9. *Tight* by Torrey Maldonado. Nancy Paulson Books, 2018. **1 starred review, 5 positive reviews**
10. *The Miscalculations of Lightning Girl* by Stacy McNaulty. Random House, 2018. **3 starred reviews, BES Nominee 2019**
11. *Bob* by Wendy Mass & R. Stead. Feilwel and Friends, 2018. **3 starred reviews, BES Nominee 2019**
12. *Inkling* by Kenneth Oppel. Alfred A. Knopf, 2018. **5 positive reviews, BES Nominee 2019**
13. *Click’d* by Tamara Ireland Stone. Disney Book Group, 2017. **3 positive reviews, BES Nominee 2019**
14. *Forget Me Not* by Ellie Terry. Feiwel and Friends, 2017. **1 starred review, 5 positive reviews, BES Nominee 2019**
15. *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang. Arthur A. Levine, 2018. **3 starred reviews, 6 positive reviews, BES Nominee 2019**

**Reading Instructional Strategies**

**Strategy: SSQ – Stop, Summarize, Question**

1. **Grades** 6-8
2. **AASL Standards Framework for Learners:**
	1. **I.A. Learners display curiosity and initiative by**: 1. Formulating questions about a personal interest or a curricular topic. 2. Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.
3. **Description:** When using this strategy, students are encouraged to be aware of their reading in real-time. This strategy can be used in small groups or with pairs of students and directly relates to Bookworms Interactive Reading, which is taught in grades K-6. During active reading time, when a student comes to an impactful event, realization, break point in the story, or end of the chapter, the student stops reading. The student will then summarize the action or event/realization to his or her partner/group. Lastly, each student poses a question about the event/action/realization for the group to discuss.
4. **Creating Meaning From Text:** This strategy ensures that the student will create or derive meaning from the text because it encourages close reading, analysis, and connection with the text. In the act of summarizing, the student is demonstrating synthesis and understanding of the text. In questioning, the student is developing further analysis of the text and encouraging personal connections. Further discussion with a partner or group will allow for reactions to others’ summaries and questions, increasing synthesis of the text.
5. **Teacher and LMS Roles:** This strategy can be used with any form of text and is also good for classroom use, small groups, and book clubs. When used in the classroom, the role of the LMS is as an advisor to the classroom teacher. The LMS can suggest literature and texts appropriate to student groups by reading level, subject, or theme. The teacher’s role is that of model, mediator, or guide, and should quietly observe the conversations/questions, only interrupting to model or ask qualifying or clarifying questions to guide the process (when used with media-run book clubs, the LMS will take both roles). When introducing this strategy for the first time, or for groups that need a higher amount of structure, the teacher/LMS can brainstorm and prepare example questions to guide the SSQ learning process.
6. **Assessment:** The formative assessment for this strategy is informal observation while sitting in with a student group (See appendix A). Students should demonstrate the level of their understanding with the quality of their summaries. In addition, the questions the students put forth (and the subsequent answers to each other’s questions) help to demonstrate synthesis and extension of the text. With practice and experience using the strategy, students should show growth in these areas.

**Reading Instructional Strategies**

**Strategy: “Aha!” Moment Tweets**

1. **Grades: 9-12**
2. **AASL Standards Framework for Learners:**
	1. **IV.A. Learners follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information by:** 1. Responsibly applying information, technology, and media to learning. 2. Understanding the ethical use of information, technology, and media. 3. Evaluating information for accuracy, validity, social and cultural context, and appropriateness for need.
	2. **I.B**. Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes: 3. Generating products that illustrate learning.
	3. **IV.C. Learners exchange information resources within and beyond their learning community by:** 1. Accessing and evaluating collaboratively constructed information sites. 2. Contributing to collaboratively constructed information sites by ethically using and reproducing others’ work.
3. **Description:** Students will detail their “aha” moments while reading by composing “Tweets” for a group “Classroom Close Reading Twitter Account” for each text. While reading, students will be aware of their reactions, inferences, and realizations in relation to the text. Each “tweet” will be composed with less than 280 characters and should be succinct in meaning. A minimum of one tweet should be submitted per chapter per student using the “Tweet Sheet” as a guide (see Appendix B). There is no limit to the number of “tweets” a student can create, as long as each is clear and valid in its relationship to the reading. Students struggling with ideas will benefit from discussion with peers prior to writing a “tweet.” “Tweets” can therefore be collaboratively created by a small group, partners, or large group during and after discussion.
4. **Creating Meaning From Text:** Students are demonstrating their synthesis, analysis, and reactions to the text with each tweet. Because the number of characters is limited, students must also strive to be concise in their expression of each “aha” moment.For struggling readers, it is recommended that each close reading section be followed by a small/large group discussion to jump-start the critical thinking process. Discussion can help stimulate a reader’s interaction with the text and meaning.
5. **Teacher and LMS Roles:** The classroom teacher and LMS will collaboratively create and maintain/monitor the “Twitter” account for the group.
	1. The classroom teacher will guide small/large group discussions occurring in the classroom, while the LMS will guide those occurring in the media center.
	2. All tweets will be approved by the classroom teacher and/or LMS prior to posting.
	3. Student access to the account will be monitored by both classroom teacher and LMS, and may only be accessed using school owned/approved devices.
6. **Assessment:** Formative assessment of student learning can be conducted through observation of student discussions and composed “tweets.” These are not intended to be graded, but to instead show student synthesis and reactions to the text.

**Appendix A**

**Formative Assessment – SSQ Group**

**Directions: While observing student SSQ discussion, keep tally marks for each student’s summary details, questions asked, and questions answered using the key guide. An example is provided.**

**Key: X – incorrect/unrelated I – adequate/related + - exceptional/insightful**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Student Name** | **Summary Details** | **Questions Asked** | **Questions Answered** |
| **Jodi Boyko** | **I I I X + + I** | **I I +** | **+ I X I I** |
| **Amy Ide** | **X I I +**  | **I I I I** | **I + I I** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Formative Assessment – SSQ Individual**

**Directions: While observing student SSQ discussion, note the student’s responses. (An example is provided.)**

**Name: \_\_\_\_Jodi Boyko\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_6/5/19\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Book Discussion:\_\_\_\_\_Glitter by Aprilynne Pike\_\_\_\_\_ Chapter: \_\_\_\_\_7\_\_\_**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Needs Help** | **Adequate** | **Exceptional** |
| **Student summarizes the main idea of the text** |  | Correctly expressed the main idea of the passage. |  |
| **Student provides details to support the summary of the text.** |  |  | Gave multiple details to support text. Additional insight on details given. |
| **Student poses questions directly related to the text.** | First question unrelated to the summary or details. | Asked two questions directly related to the main idea. |  |
| **Student’s response to questions related to the text.** |  | Responded to one of peer’s questions correctly. | Responded to peer’s question with inference. |

**Appendix B**

**TWEET SHEET!**

**Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Book Title:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Author:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\*Your Tweet must contain less than 280 characters and should contain an “Aha!” moment you experienced while reading a chapter of the text. Please remember to write legibly and proofread prior to submitting your tweet!**

**When composing your tweet, consider the following components for inspiration:**

* **“W” questions: Who, What, When, Where, Why (and How)**
* **A realization you had about a character, plot development, or details in the text**
* **A prediction you have based on actions in the chapter**
* **Points made by others during discussion that jump-started or changed your thinking**
* **Inferences you’ve made during the reading that others may not have caught**

**Tweet: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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