Chapter One

Introduction to Young Adults and Their Literature

Classic Young Adult Titles & Young Adult Book and Author Awards

Classic titles for young adults (YAs) are those that have remained in print for at least 20 years (well beyond the age of a young adult) and are also titles that appeal to young adults today, ages 12 through 18. Young adult classics may be well written and have great style. They may be disturbing and have meaningful themes. Whatever the specifics, classic titles touch young adult readers, generation after generation. Some early classics were written for adults but read by YAs. This is not a comprehensive list but a selective one. Each title’s genre or sub-genre is provided in parentheses.

A Sampling of Classics for Young Adults, Published 1812–1994

*Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann Weis (1812) (adventure/survival)
*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley (1818) (science fiction)
*Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott (1868) (realistic fiction)
*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne (1870) (science fiction)
*Journey to the Center of the Earth* by Jules Verne (1874) (science fiction)
*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain (1876) (adventure)
*The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* by Howard Pyle (1883) (adventure)
*Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1883) (adventure)
*The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells (1895) (science fiction)
*Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897) (horror)
*War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells (1898) (science fiction)
*The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* by J. R. R. Tolkien (1938) (fantasy)
*Out of the Silent Planet* by C. S. Lewis (1938) (science fiction)
*Seventeenth Summer* by Maureen Daly (1942) (realistic fiction)
*Johnny Tremain* by Esther Forbes (1943) (historical fiction)

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A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith (1943) (realistic fiction)
Foundation Trilogy by Isaac Asimov (1942-1950) (science fiction)
The Martian Chronicles by Ray Bradbury (1950) (science fiction)
Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger (1951) (realistic fiction)
Lord of the Flies by William Golding (1951) (realistic fiction)
Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl (1953) (autobiography)
Born Free: A Lioness in Two Worlds by Joy Adamson (1960) (informational)
Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O’Dell (1960) (historical fiction)
Stranger in a Strange Land by Robert Heinlein (1960) (science fiction)
To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee (1960) (historical fiction)
The Ship Who Sang by Anne McCaffrey (1961) (science fiction)
A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L’Engle (1962) (science fiction)
Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck (1965) (realistic fiction)
The Chosen by Chaim Potok (1967) (realistic fiction)
The Outsiders by S. E. Hinton (1967) (realistic fiction)
The White Mountains by John Christopher (1967) (science fiction)
2001: A Space Odyssey by Arthur C. Clarke (1968) (science fiction)
The Pigman by Paul Zindel (1968) (realistic fiction)
The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula LeGuin (1969) (science fiction)
Sounder by William Armstrong (1969) (realistic fiction)
I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou (1970) (autobiography)
Go Ask Alice by Anonymous (1971) (realistic fiction)
Dove by Robin L. Graham (1972) (autobiography)
The Dark Is Rising by Susan Cooper (1973) (fantasy)
A Day No Pigs Would Die by Robert Newton Peck (1973) (realistic fiction)
If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever? by M. E. Kerr (1973) (realistic fiction)
The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier (1974) (realistic fiction)
Forever by Judy Blume (1975) (realistic fiction)
Z for Zacariah by Robert C. O'Brien (1975) (science fiction)
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor (1976) (historical fiction)
Dragonsong by Anne McCaffrey (1976) (fantasy)
Ender’s Game by Orson Scott Card (1977) (science fiction)
One Fat Summer by Robert Lipsyte (1977) (realistic fiction)
Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty and the Beast by Robin McKinley (1978) (fantasy)
Killing Mr. Griffin by Lois Duncan (1978) (mystery)
After the First Death by Robert Cormier (1979) (realistic fiction)
The Last Mission by Harry Mazer (1979) (realistic fiction)
Jacob Have I Loved by Katherine Paterson (1980) (realistic fiction)
Keeper of the Isis Light by Monica Hughes (1980) (science fiction)
Unbuilding by David Macaulay (1980) (informational)
Let the Circle Be Unbroken by Mildred D. Taylor (1981) (historical fiction)
Annie on My Mind by Nancy Garden (1982) (realistic fiction)
The Blue Sword by Robin McKinley (1982) (fantasy)
Class Dismissed! High School Poems by Mel Glenn (1982) (poetry)
Space Station Seventh Grade by Jerry Spinelli (1982) (humor)
Poetspeak: In Their work, About Their Work by Paul Janeczko, ed. (1983) (poetry)
Running Loose by Chris Crutcher (1983) (realistic fiction)
The Moves Make the Man by Bruce Brooks (1984) (realistic fiction)
Remembering the Good Times by Richard Peck (1985) (realistic fiction)
The Ruby in the Smoke by Philip Pullman (1985) (mystery) (sequels)
Izzy, Willy-Nilly by Cynthia Voigt (1986) (realistic fiction)
The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13 ¾ by Sue Townsend (1986) (realistic fiction)
Permanent Connections by Sue Ellen Bridgers (1987) (realistic fiction)
Eva by Peter Dickenson (1988) (science fiction)
Fallen Angels by Walter Dean Myers (1988) (historical fiction)
Gentlehands by M. E. Kerr (1990) (realistic fiction)
The Silver Kiss by Annette Curtis Klause (1992) (fantasy)
The Giver by Lois Lowry (1993) (science fiction)
It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health by Robie Harris (1994) (informational book)

Awards & Lists Honoring Young Adult Books and Authors

The awards listed below can easily be found through a quick online search. Most are sponsored by divisions of the American Library Association (ALA), and some awards are a mix of both children’s and young adult titles. The awards listed are some of the major awards in children’s and young adult literature. There are also many State awards and other specialty awards sponsored by organizations other than ALA.

Alex Awards (ALA)
Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults (ALA)
American Indian Youth Services Literature Award (ALA)
Americas Book Award for Children’s and Young Adult Literature (Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)
Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature (Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association)
Best Fiction for Young Adults (formerly Best Books for Young Adults) (ALA)
Coretta Scott King Award (ALA)
Great Graphic Novels (ALA)
John Newbery Medal (ALA)
Margaret A. Edwards Award (ALA)
Michael L. Printz Award (ALA)
Mildred L. Batchelder Award (ALA)
Odyssey Award (ALA)
Orbis Pictus Award (National Council for Teachers of English)
Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults (ALA)
Pura Belpre Award (ALA)
Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers (ALA)
Robert F. Sibert Medal (ALA)
Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction (established by Scott O’Dell)
The Schneider Family Book Awards (ALA)
Stonewall Children’s and Young Adult Literature Award (ALA)
The Sydney Taylor Book Award for Teen Readers (Association of Jewish Libraries)
Tomas Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award (Texas State University)
William C. Morris Award (ALA)
YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults (ALA)
Young Adults’ Choices (International Reading Association)

Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults

Audiobooks are increasing in popularity with young adults. The titles that follow are a selection from recent award lists of YALSA’s Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults.


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