# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Librarian’s message</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Festival</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flash Fiction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Contest</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Mic Night</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roaring 20s Night</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo Contest</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIY Clocks</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top Ten Picks</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Reviews</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Clubs</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banned Books</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen Advisory Board</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Welcome readers:

This is our very first Teen Zine! Everything featured in this issue was either selected or created by our library teens, or it is in celebration of teens, teen literature, or teen services at Pasadena Public Library. All art and writing in this issue was written, created, or prompted by one of our teen programs. The Teen Advisory Board has made many contributions to this zine including book selections, artwork, writing, and the very layout itself. I am thankful for the multitude of very talented and supportive individuals who helped make this happen!

Jane Gov, Youth Services Librarian
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Cool Sites for Teens

Available 24/7!

Free resources for homework, college, career, web editing, creating online content, art, creative writing, games, self help, book lists, and more!

Visit http://cityofpasadena.libguides.com/webteen
On April 26, nearly 150 guests gathered at Central Library to meet, get books signed, and hear 20 YA and middle grade authors speak at the 2014 Pasadena Teen Book Festival. Teens and Bridge to Books volunteers managed registration, setup, and book signing lines as guests poured through the auditorium, Great Hall, West Patio, and Story Room. All attendees received tote bags (designed by Alethea Allarey, co-founder of Bridge to Books). Vroman’s Bookstore handled book sales.
**Untitled**

**Flash fiction**

*by Celeste Rivera, age 12*

Have you ever had your friend ask you one of those questions that go along the lines of, “If me or your mom were about to die who would you save?”

I’m Lauren and my friend Cassandra had started asking me those questions a lot recently. They were fine at first, but then I got sick and tired of them. The last day I saw Cassandra, she asked questions similar to the one I stated earlier. I was just completely fed up with them that I screamed at her, “I’D SAVE SAM (my boyfriend) SO I’D NEVER HAVE TO HEAR THESE STUPID QUESTIONS AGAIN.”

Cassandra was never one to cry. She had forgotten how to at an early age, so she just plucked up her stuff and left. I didn’t hear from her the rest of the day. When I got home, I tripped over a package at my doorstep and I muttered some few choice words under my breath. The note was from Cassandra the note read, “Sorry Lauren. I didn’t mean to make you mad. Here’s some food I made especially for you.” I opened the box. In it was some meat and lots of it. Cassie always knew I loved meat. I giggled with glee.

I grabbed the box and spilled out its contents on my kitchen table and began to prepare the meat. It took forever, but it was worth it.

It was the greatest meal I’d had in my entire life. I was trying to savor the taste until I felt something that wasn’t right. I pulled it out and it was an earring. To be exact: Cassie’s favorite. I shrugged it off. Cassie wasn’t the greatest cook. Just as soon as I had finished my meal, I got a call from Cassie’s parents. They had not seen her all day since she came home crying. I winced knowing it was my fault.

Three months later, no one had seen Cassandra. I told people about the meat and the earring and everyone began to get suspicious. They blamed me and now I’m writing this journal entry in a mental hospital, because I have now been charged with the murder of Cassie Romano.
The Mystery

flash fiction

by Ysabel Torres, age 12

I have been watching them quarrel through the window. Most of the time on my way home, I say hello to Sadie, pretend to walk towards my house, then sit there watching her argue with her mom over something. I can only see their faces though the window, no physical contact; just emotions. Normally, one turns out nice or tries to start fresh again, but the other says something to tick each other off.

Of course, I would ask Sadie what’s going on with her and her mom, but I don’t want to seem nosy or let her know I’ve been watching her. It’s not weird right? I mean, I love her like my sister and I should care. I shouldn’t walk away and let her be disappointed nearly every day. I could watch her from my window since we live across the street from each other, but I’m afraid that at a glance, she might catch me watching. That’s it! I’ve had enough. Whatever they’re arguing about I must find out! It’s been affecting her at school and her attitude with people!

While we were walking home from school, I say “Sadie, what’s going on? Are you okay?” She replies, “yea, I’m fine.”

With Sadie, I know I’ll have a hard time getting it out of her ‘cause she isn’t the type who tells right away.

I realize that I better give up, but hold out for hope.

---

Untitled

flash fiction by Angel Gomez, age 16

15th of May

Hot day. Water was scarce and yet they still poured gallons of it to plants that were dead already. It had started last month. We were given a government issued warning through the radio. Everyone was in the chaos and it was practically impossible to leave, even weeks after the immediate panic. Except them. Them who came back with full bags of groceries under their coats, and them who had enough batteries to blast music through their portable tv-radio. I had been watching them quarrel through the window, and I knew right then, it was time to go.

This is the last entry that I’ll write.
The Pasadena Public Library and Art Center College of Design presents...

Unlocking the Secret

Teen artists were challenged to depict a scene inspired by Mr. Penumbra’s 24-Hour Bookstore, our 2014 One City, One Story selection. The first place winner received free tuition for a Saturday High class at Art Center (valued up to $400)!

First place

“Lost in the Shadows of the Shelves”
by Kelly Ficarra (age 15)
gouche, pen, marker

“Help Wanted”
by Levon Arakelyoun
(Age 17)
Honorable Mention 2014
ink, acrylic
“Mixed Technology”  
by Julia See (age 15)  
Honorable Mention 2014  
pencil

“Penumbra”  
by Victoria Le (age 15)  
Honorable Mention 2014  
acrylic
It was an exciting night filled with poems, art, music, and performances.

Students in grades 6-8 from PUSD LEARNS after school program share their own self-written poems on stage. As part of a writing class called “The Spoken Word,” students worked on writing original poetry. Some incorporated dance and movement, while others coordinated group performances.

Family and friends enjoyed the pleasure of watching their young poets take the stage—some for the very first time.

Reading poems aloud increases listening, language, cognitive, and emotional development. It also boosts confidence and freedom of expression.
How to Survive a Freestyle Rap Battle

*a poem by Sofia Priego (age 15)*

Rapping is something that can come naturally.
Or it’s something you just enjoy doing happily.
It’s an outlet to express yourself and all your emotions,
when you have feelings locked
up inside going through the motions
But when you know how to free-style;
that’s quite a sight
because you have learned how to
rap with your heart and your might.
And when you have found someone
to test your skills with,
your words become a free-style rap battle,
not a fight.
So, it is hard to explain the ways
you can “survive”
because as long as you say what you mean,
you are alive.

Teens rapping their self-written poems at the Student Open Mic Poetry Night, April 17, 2014. Photo by Jane Gov
Found Poetry

Two friendships and relationships are tested
when she and her young son
are caught in the crossfire of stickup gone bad
their friendship form by heart breaking
Feuding murder case begins with
The fact of unresolved love anguish
Draws people together and collectively
Pushes them apart. Realistic war
overshadowed by many flaws is
Bruising.

Found Poetry

A dark autumn passing alone through a view of the House with a gloom spirit with insufferable feeling of a sentiment mind scenes of images desolate upon the mere house upon vacant eye-like windows upon a few rank bleak walls, with an utter depression I can compare to no earthly sensation no goading of the imagination
I paused to think
Blackout Poetry
a poem by Johanna H. (age 16)
Original text from Under the Never Sky

Every breath felt closed
while, he could only cough and pace until the pain
leaving a streak of blood rested against the wall
His gut told him that he wasn’t sure
her temper showed every small emotion
this was the only way warm blood decaying scent.

He inhaled again, curious, but her mind was deep in the unconscious
He thought about
behind him
the crumbling dark
forcing him to crawl over broken cement and warped metal, pushing
luck in his world
Alarms broke the silence around him, so loud he felt the sound thrum in his chest
He led his head fall again smoke
It smelled like chemicals that burned hotter than fire but it was nothing compared to sin
It was bad enough alone he’d killed at least one of them
How to Smile

*a poem by Frissiel Juscamaita (age 15)*

One teaspoon of friends
For laughs and support
Two teaspoons of best friends
To call to when you need someone to talk to
Three teaspoons of junk food
To clear up your stomach when sad
Four teaspoons of family members
To always have by your side
Most importantly
One entire cup of self-appreciation
To always remind yourself that
You’re awesome.
Smile..

When the Light Shows

*a poem by Kendra W. (age 14)*

As the night grows darker
my soul grows darker.
My light never shows,
you brought the light back,
the fog is gone and the sun is up,
I can see what’s right in front of me,
you saw the scars,
you saw the pain within me,
you still stayed.
How to Ignore People

a poem by Lara M. (age 16)

It sounds easy, but it’s hard to do.

How can one ignore a person that takes life from you.

They talk behind your back, you pretend you don’t know.

You talk to them with a smile, bringing your confidence down low.

You think in a way that they’re human, they breathe.

You can’t just ignore them, turn your back and leave.

They did it to you, but you can’t do the same.

It’s hard to ignore one, without dropping your name.
In Roaring 20’s fashion, teens shared their self-written poems under the spotlight. The performers were teens from all over our community—some from our own writing workshops and many from our local high schools. With the help of many of our teen volunteers, we made room decorations and some accessories. Everyone was invited to watch the performances; all performers were entered into a prize drawing of an embellished Great Gatsby journal and gift card.

Hats, beads, glitter!

Shde B. reading her poem titled “I Like to Be Called Handsome.”

Teens Catherine P. and Claudia F. reading their poems “Where I’m From.” Photo by Alfonso Huerta

Layout by Sarah M. (TAB)
Winning entry
by Rachel Erickson,
age 16

2nd Place
Entry by Julia See, age 15

3rd Place
Entry by Ella Miller, age 13
Clock-making was a popular program held at Central Library during which teens created working clocks using recycled books. The clocks were great for gifts as well as personal use!

Materials used: discarded/damaged books, acrylics, stickers, modge podge, metallic Sharpies, clock kits

Tools: paint brushes, water, Martha Stewart Screw Punch, scissors
Top Ten Picks

By Kara E. (Teen Advisory Board)

As all readers know, there are books that leave you emotionally raw and wholly in love with them and then there are books that make you want to bang your head against a wall and question why you even bothered picking them up. As an avid reader myself, I am no exception. I’ve read my fair share of bad books, but then again, I’ve read more than my fair share of amazing and wonderful books as well. Here’s a list of books that I’ve categorized as my favorite from the past year to help you find your share of good books. (These books aren’t ranked in any particular order).

1. *Ink* by Amanda Sun

Katie Green has just moved to Japan. Her mother is dead and her grandparents can’t take care of her. She’s been forced to move to a country where she doesn’t speak the language and struggles with the culture. Then she meets Tomohiro, who has ties to the supernatural that no one quite understands. Together they try and figure out how to control Tomohiro’s magical and dangerous abilities.

It’s a book that has Japanese mythology in it, something that isn’t very common in American Young Adult books, so it’s a nice little change from other young adult books (but still has ties with supernatural themes and an American protagonist). It focuses on the relationships the protagonist has and not just on the powers that are coming to light. What I liked about it is its ability to show the beauty and the danger of Tomohiro’s powers and the quiet development of Katie and Tomohiro’s relationship. Overall, I suggest it for anyone who’s looking for something that isn’t like other young adult supernatural books and wants lovable characters and gorgeous setting.

2. *Nameless* by Lili St. Crow

Cami was abandoned in the snow when she was six. Then she was found and adopted by one of the most powerful men in her city. She’s struggled to fit in because of her scars, mental and physical. Even though it’s been ten years since she was rescued in the snow, she doesn’t know that her past and destiny has never stopped looking for her.

I absolutely loved the dark and modern twists to the timeless “Snow White” fairy tale. It did the original story justice but added its own changes, keeping you on edge and intrigued. I loved how the book took place in a post-apocalyptic world that had magic. It gave it a timeless feel, that worked flawlessly with the whole darker fairy tale theme. It’s a great read for anyone looking for a fairy tale rework, or anyone who just wants a book that has a darker edge.
3. *The Raven Boys* by Maggie Stiefvater

Blue Sargent is the only one in her entire family that isn’t a psychic. She also grew up in a town that hosts the infamous Aglionby Academy (notorious for its rich prep boys). Blue doesn’t particularly like these boys. Gansey is one of these boys and has been obsessed with finding the old Welsh King Glendower for years. Tagging along with him are Ronan, Noah, and Adam. Each has their own issues and complexities. Each has their own prejudices and preferences. This book’s focus isn’t just on the hunt for Glendower, but also the characters themselves.

Unlike most books about the supernatural, this book doesn’t try to explain what shouldn’t be explained. It doesn’t cheapen it’s world with explanations that dampen the magic, but it intrigues with its vagueness. My favorite part about it was its characters. Their individual personalities, their struggles, their growth, their complexities. All were stunning and by the end of the book, I loved all of them. Read it if you want a book that has mystery woven throughout and absolutely amazing characters.

4. *The Unbecoming of Mara Dyer* by Michelle Hodkin

Mara Dyer was in a tragic accident that killed her best friend, her boyfriend, and her boyfriend’s sister. Now suffering from PTSD, her family has moved to Florida for a fresh start. Only, her PTSD doesn’t seem to be that simple. Then supernatural things starts to happen and it seems like Mara isn’t just suffering from PTSD.

One of my favorite books. Not only does it have that edge of darkness that is interwoven throughout the story that I so enjoy, but it also has characters that are just beautiful, amazing, and fantastic. By the end of the book, you won’t be able to get over your sadness that they aren’t real. It’s a page turner that’ll leave you demanding the sequel before you even finish the first book.

5. *Just One Day* by Gayle Forman

Allyson’s tour through Europe is alright. I mean it’s a tour through Europe so it has to be exciting right? But Allyson’s trip is controlled, orderly, and altogether boring. Then again, so is most of her life. But on one of her last days in Europe, she meets Willem, and together they spend a philosophical, magical, and wonderful day together in Paris.

I know, I know, it sounds really cheesy. Although the premise is pretty banal, the author wrote this book in a way that somehow still strikes a chord. The characters are beautifully written. The character development (although slow at first) is believable and leaves you rooting for its characters and heartbroken when things don’t go how they want them to. The only fault I have with this novel is its unsatisfying ending, which can be easily remedied by the sequel and novella. It’s a book that’ll leave you crying and laughing with its protagonist.
6. *Poison Princess* by Kresley Cole

Evie spent her summer in a psychiatric ward, not debutante boot camp. What for? Nothing much, just crazy visions of the apocalypse. Oh yeah, on top of surviving the apocalypse and her visions, Evie also has to figure out a way to survive an ancient competition to the death that pits her against other teens with powers.

I absolutely loved the premise for this book. People personifying tarot cards? Yes. Those people pitted against each other in a fight to the death? Yes. All while trying to survive in a dystopian world? Yes. As you’ve probably already figured out, I enjoy books that have darker supernatural twists, and quite clearly, this book is one of those books. The author has come up with a concept that is completely captivating and absolutely enthralling. Not only is the premise super cool, but the plot is magnificent. I love the characters and the different approaches they have to the challenge of survival and the challenge of figuring out their powers. This book is for anyone who, like me, enjoys darker supernatural books or just dystopian in general.

7. *Unspoken* by Sarah Rees Brennan

Kami lives in a sleepy town in England. I mean sleepy now that all the human sacrifices have stopped. The family of witches, the Lynburns, who used to control and rule the town were gone for a generation, but now they’re returning. Kami never lived through the oppression and fear that her parents went through. Kami, unaware of why the name “Lynburn” strikes so much fear in her neighbors, tries to figure out what’s up with the mysterious and all powerful Lynburns and investigates the possibility of the return of the darker witchcraft practices.

It wasn’t the story that made me love this book (although that was very good), it was the writing. I absolutely loved the humor and the dry wit. The characters were witty and had beautifully entertaining banter that made me fall in love with all of them. Everyone should read this book because of its brilliance and ability to tell a very dark story in a light manner.

8. *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green

Hazel Grace Lancaster has been living with stage four thyroid cancer for a while now. She resents going to the cancer meetings her mother forces her to, but one day she meets Augustus Waters at one of these meetings. This is the story of their love and journey.

It sounds cheesy. It is not. It is beautiful and will leave you emotionally unstable for a while. You can’t put it down until you’ve finished it because the writing is beautiful, the wit is fantastic, the characters are lovable, and the plot is hypnotic. One of my favorite aspects of this book is (excluding the amazing characters) the dry wit and humor that leave you laughing and crying at the same time. Anyone who reads it will understand why so many people have raved, cried, and obsessed over it, so go read it.
9. Enclave by Ann Aguirre

In a post-apocalyptic world that has been ravaged by zombie-like creatures and an incurable disease, most of the memories and technologies from the time before are lost. Deuce's society moved underground long ago. They've developed their entire societal structure to survive, living an unforgiving life in an unyielding world. Essentially this is Deuce’s story of survival and growth in a world that was built on the shell of a culture that has been lost.

I loved it. Somehow the author manages to make the reader care about the happenings of a society that can be compared to Sparta. Their way of life is both alien and eerily familiar to us, having returned to cutthroat survival mode. It's one of the best dystopian novels I've read because it paints a realistic picture of how the world might change if we were to be hit by the apocalypse. It isn't placed in the days right after doomsday, but in the centuries and generations that follow the fall. Not only does it have a thrilling setting, but it also keeps you on your toes with its great plot. Between the intriguing culture and society and the entrancing plot, you won’t be bored with this one.

10. Daughter of Smoke and Bone by Laini Taylor

Even though I didn’t read this one in the past year, I just finished the series this year so I’m including it anyways because it is fantastic, delightful, and scary all at the same time.

What would you do for a wish? Well in this world, you can trade teeth (animal or human) for wishes, and Karou is the liaison between the buyer and sellers in these transactions. She's been doing this for years and was raised by the buyer. Why was she necessary to be the go between? Well because the buyers are demons. But why do the demons need teeth? Well because the demons have been at war with angels for a very long time and teeth are their greatest weapons.

I love this series. Each book is written with a trancelike feel. It intrigues and haunts, but still makes you laugh. The overall story puts a darker edge to everything we know about angels and demons, but it is an incredible premise that Laini Taylor has woven into a beautiful story that makes you question the idea of “good guys” and “bad guys.” Within all of the fighting between the angels and “demons,” are two star-crossed lovers. Read it if you want a story that makes Romeo and Juliet’s struggle seem like a piece of cake and a story whose magic sets it apart from the rest of the fantasy genre.

For more of my reviews, go check out the Teen Blog.
**Dorothy Must Die**
by Danielle Paige

Amy, a girl who is neglected by her mother and abandoned by her father, has a sucky life. Not only has she been ostracized because she lives in a trailer park, but, after ignoring Al Roker’s weather warnings, is swept up in a tornado and finds herself in Oz. This Oz is not like the happy, bright, and musical Oz that we see in the 1939 The Wizard of Oz, but rather, it is an Oz that has been taken over by a dictator, and that dictator has a proclivity for blue and white gingham. Well the title is on point. But overall the book was long and drawn out. The book is divided into three major parts (and because I don’t want to spoil it, I will not elaborate on what these parts are), but it would do better with only two. It can be argued that three parts made sense and is important for the development of the plot, but for each part, the author takes a while to get to the main point. Once things do start to happen, they happen rapidly, an abrupt and somewhat confusing change from the slowness.

Along with an awkward plot pace, the characters are unbelievable. This might be a result of the author trying to emphasize Oz’s bizarreness, but it left me, as a reader, annoyed and frustrated by some of the character’s choices. I just couldn’t see much depth to the protagonist and her relationships with others.

But even though the character’s and pace are a little off, the entire world of Oz is pretty amazing. The author clearly put a lot of effort in creating a believable Oz that has ties to the original books/movie with some parallels to the real world and it shows. The plot stays true to original tale of Dorothy and her entourage, not altering but elaborating in a believable way. Overall it is a good idea/concept, but it is written in a way that kind of made me frustrated that there is going to be a sequel. I would suggest people with a lower tolerance for protagonists they cannot emphasize with stay away, but people who are interested in the plot to read it, because I haven’t seen one that has quite the same idea as this one.

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**The House of Hades**
by Rick Riordan

*The House of Hades* is the fourth installment of the Heroes of Olympus series by Rick Riordan. And while Mr. Riordan certainly hasn’t lost his appeal, he has developed some quirks that come with having written nine books (following the original Percy Jackson series) on basically the same subject. So as you can imagine, the *House of Hades* follows Percy and Annabeth’s journey through Tartarus and the rest of the demigods as they travel to the Doors of Death. Be prepared for two things: surprises and a LOT of fillers. Sure there were some really epic battles, such as the climax in the *House of Hades*, but there were also a lot of voids in the story, places that really could’ve been omitted and still the story would’ve been pretty awesome. But Riordan masterfully links all of those fillers to the overall story, especially love stories. Also, a lot of old characters, good and evil will be coming back, so read up on the previous books. Like ALL the previous books. And even the extra books that came out such as *The Demigod Files*. All in all though, it really primes you up for the ultimate battle coming next year in the fifth installation.—Joseph K., age 14
**The Iceman Cometh**
by Eugene O’Neill

The bleak setting, the common yet complex characters, the prolonged scenes of inebriated barroom chatter, the characters ranging from the raving drunkard, to the down-on-their-luck prostitutes of New York, all meld together to form a multi-layered exploration of humanity. Externally, this play appears to be simplistic. Not only is the setting stagnant, but it seldom brings in any new characters. Even the dialogue is simple, but it’s used in a way to more accurately portray the characters. The play could best be described as a “multiple character-study”, as it examines the lives, thought-processes, and most heavily, on the dreams of each regular of character’s Harry Hope’s Bar. Each character undergoes an extensive analysis of their own life, some doing so without any knowledge of what is occurring at the moment. For some, this changes their whole view of life; for others they realize they squandered their time and chance, and for others it leaves them indifferent and content to continue to erase it by means of Harry Hope’s Bar. The reader, similarly, will experience a renewed outlook on life; luckily however, we have time to act upon it. Highly Recommended. – Josh B., age 17

**The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian**
by Sherman Alexie

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian follows Junior, a boy living on an Indian reservation, through times of loss, disappointment, success, and most importantly, hope. Junior’s character is easy to relate to as he is a high school student struggling with friendship problems, fitting in, and succeeding in school. There are multiple reoccurring themes throughout the book, including poverty, alcoholism, friendship, and family relationships. Junior realizes that his peers and family members have been stuck in a cycle of poverty and difficult lives. Junior wants a better future, so he takes the opportunity to go to a better school called Reardon off the reservation. This is a brave move since nobody else has ever left the reservation for this reason. Junior risks losing his best friend and struggles to fit in at Reardon, but his determination is inspiring. Junior also uses cartoons to express his feelings, and this aspect of the book is very entertaining. – Julia K., age 15
**Between Shades of Gray**

by Ruta Sepetys

Lina and her family are taken during the middle of the night by the NKVD, who are known today as the KGB. Lina and her family are deported from their home country of Lithuania and charged under Soviet Penal Code for counterrevolutionary actions against the USSR. This novel follows Lina and her family’s struggle as they are forced into labor camps.

This is one of those sad books. This author had a pretty tricky situation in that she had to write a story that could reach readers enough to make them sad but still have convey that the character’s struggle is (usually) beyond anything the reader has experienced, but Ruta Sepetys did it. She wrote a story that revealed the struggle so many had to go through but so little know about.

The characters were amazing. They showed how different people coped with having their rights taken away. But this book also showed the comfort people take in each other’s solidarity. While the NKVD was working to make their lives unbearable, their fellow prisoners were working to keep each other alive, which showed how people who seem so different can come together to help each other.

Overall I really recommend it. It’s a novel that shows the other side to the USSR. While they were the hope for Hitler’s concentration camps for liberation, they were also imprisoning conquered people who were “criminals” and forcing them into labor camps. I recommend this for anyone who wants to know more about what went down behind the iron curtain (USSR), but not for anyone who doesn’t want to cry because this is a pretty sad story. —Kara E., age 15

**Shatter Me**

by Tahereh Mafi

*Shatter Me* is a book about a girl that has a curse that everyone is afraid of… a love story of two people that can’t get enough of each other… and the power that she has can hurt the people she touches. Juliette has always felt that she was alone in the world. Until she meets Adam.

I love this book, it’s a romance with twists that you don’t see coming. It keeps you interested; I developed a love for some of the characters, and hatred for others. The romance between Juliette and Adam—the things they must do to survive and keep their love strong is heartwarming. I couldn’t put the book down! —Stacia S., age 15

**The Sweetest Spell**

by Suzanne Selfors

*The Sweetest Spell* is a story about an unwanted girl that was supposed to be cast aside at birth (but is found and got sent back to her family), a boy about the same age that comes from a totally different background, and the troubles that come with finding each other. I love it because it shows both sides of this wonderful love story. I usually don’t like books that follow more than one character, but this kept me interested through to the end! The story has a lot of twists that makes the reader keep guessing how it is going to end… And what saves them both is the gift of chocolate. —Stacia S., age 15
This is probably old news, but since its publication in 2012, *The Fault in Our Stars* has been getting some serious hype. John Green gains status as a household name, and our title request list continues to climb—at one point, at the height of “to-read” popularity, pushing over 100 requests! (And that’s with dozens of copies already in circulation.) There’s even tfios accessories—and yes, for those not versed in Twitter lingo,#tfios is a recognizable hashtag. Its current popularity is also the reason why it was chosen for our first YA Book Group discussion.

*So what’s this book about?*

In a nutshell: it’s a love story.

A bittersweet, beautiful love story of friendship, family, and loss, about two teens… who both just happen to have a terminal illness. Whether this book is really about cancer is up for debate, including a slew of many other issues tfios touches upon.

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**Divergent**

*by Veronica Roth*

During February’s YA Book Group meeting, we discussed the *Divergent* series by Veronica Roth and got an opportunity to watch an advance screening of the movie!

In a future Chicago, sixteen-year-old Beatrice Prior must choose among five predetermined factions to define her identity for the rest of her life, a decision made more difficult when she discovers that she is an anomaly who does not fit into any one group, and that the society she lives in is not perfect after all.

*Divergent* is the first in the series; *Insurgent* is book 2; *Allegiant* is book 3

The movie stars Shailene Woodley and will be released in theaters March 21, 2014 (USA)

The group’s average rating is 3.5. With the multitude of dystopian novels released after *The Hunger Games*, *most* of us agree that this is one of the better ones… Although, we also thought the main character, Tris, was somewhat annoying, though it did not deter us from finishing the book.

We thought the movie was worth watching in theaters. There were just a few minor details that disappointed, but it was generally well done. Definitely much better than many other YA book adaptations the last couple of years. —Jane Gov (librarian)
I’ve noticed that boys do not seem to connect with this book as well as girls do. Why do you think that is?

I asked the question not because I felt that Legend was aiming to be gender-specific, but from those that I have successfully convinced to read the book, the males overwhelmingly found it not as engaging, even if they’re avid readers.

A teen’s immediate answer: “…because the boys in this book are too perfect.”

Without context, this answer seems overly simplistic or doubtful, but in discussing more, it’s a rather bright observation.

We’ve noticed a pattern. Many female protagonists in YA novels look very similar—almost to the point that it has become a stereotype of the strong female lead. And it seems that many readers have noticed as well. In a recent article in The Atlantic titled “Must Every YA Action Heroine Be Petite?”, Julianne Ross comments, “Today’s strong female protagonists are overwhelmingly described as “small,” “skinny,” and “slender” (2014). It’s a generalization of course, and I’m sure many heavy YA novel readers can point out instances where this is not the case, but the book versions of Katniss (The Hunger Games), Tris (Divergent), and June (Legend) do fit this description.

We feel that this description—this petite-ness of character—connects with many female readers. Otherwise, if not for size, at least the feeling of smallness and powerlessness is felt by the readers in this discussion, and thus, why we feel connected to the characters.

But, even if some find this similarity bothersome, our male readers have their own concerns: no one seems to be complaining about how all the male leads in these books are “perfect.” They’re all tall, dark, smart, and handsome—and that seems to alienate male readers. (Yes, the argument could be made that no one is perfect, not even in books; they just happen to be perfect in the eyes of their female counterparts, and therefore, perfect to the reader who’s experiencing the moment vicariously.) But, this could explain why boys seem to be more connected to books like Percy Jackson, where the male protag is a delinquent, trouble maker, less than perfect underdog in the world… who still gets the girl.

Do you think this sort of fractured society could actually happen in the future? In some ways, is this society more or less believable than those in other dystopians?

Some of us think that we’re already living a form of Legend’s society. There’s already a large divide between the rich and the poor, and this divide is becoming deeper and deeper; the opportunity gap continues to increase.

In America, though entrance exams are important, failing one does not necessarily mean destitution; however, in other parts of the world (like East Asia), students who fail may face huge socio-economical consequences. The stakes are much higher.

Most of us found it more believable than Divergent, though this certainly did not deter enjoyment.

Half of us found Legend more enjoyable than Divergent, but Hunger Games still came out on top. As for comparing the entire series of all three, we agreed that Legend had the most rewarding end. Rating: 3.88 (out of 5)—Jane Gov (librarian)
Shadow and Bone author Leigh Bardugo brightened up our meeting by joining us via Skype! Each attendee asked multiple questions about the book, her ideas, and career. We also discussed her book at length afterwards. Overall, Shadow and Bone received glowing reviews from the group... an average of 4.5 stars!!

Danielle is asking Leigh for makeup tips. In addition to being a successful author, Leigh is also a professional makeup artist. (Photo by David Yenoki)

Aaron is asking Leigh about the start of her writing career. (Photo by Alethea Allarey)
Who: The national book reading community (including you)
Where: Bookstores, libraries, or just anywhere people read
When: (Usually) the last week of September
What: A national event where the freedom to read is celebrated
Why: It was started to oppose the large number of books that were being challenged or banned in 1982. Since then, more than 11,300 books have been challenged in America.

Examples:

Looking for Alaska by John Green
Published: 2005

Miles Halter, a high school junior fascinated with last words, chooses to attend Culver Creek boarding school to search for a “Great Perhaps.” He meets Alaska Young, a beautiful, intelligent, and witty girl who really throws him into his Great Perhaps.

Looking for Alaska was the seventh most challenged book of 2012, according to the American Library Association. It has been frequently banned because of offensive language.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
Published: 1999

Charlie is a freshman in high school who writes letters to an anonymous friend. He is labeled as a shy, awkward, and unpopular kid, but eventually makes friends with Patrick and Sam. Charlie grows as a person and comes to terms with this past throughout the novel.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower was the sixth most challenged book of 2012, according to the American Library Association. It has been banned because of drug use, offensive language, and mentions of suicide.
The Hunger Games (series) by Suzanne Collins  
Published: 2008  
Katniss Everdeen participates in the Hunger Games, a tool to control the people of post-apocalyptic Panem. The central government in The Capitol exercises near complete control over the twelve districts of Panem. She and Peeta Mellark fight together in the Games to ensure their survival.

The series was the fifth most challenged of 2010, according to the American Library Association. It has been banned because of violence and offensive language.

Harry Potter (series) by J.K. Rowling  
First Published: 1997  
Harry Potter discovers that he is a wizard and the truth about his parents’ death. He enters into the magical world and realizes what he has missed while living with his relatives, the Dursleys. With his friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, Harry fights against the Dark Lord Voldemort’s rise to power.

The Harry Potter books were the most challenged in 2002, according to the American Library Association. It was banned frequently because it supposedly was anti-family and encouraged Satanism.

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee  
Published: 1960  
Scout Finch lives with her brother, Jem, and her father, Atticus, in Maycomb, Alabama. She and her brother are fascinated by the mysterious and recluse Boo Radley, who makes small connections with the children, though never in person. Meanwhile, Atticus is appointed as a defense lawyer of Tom Robinson, a black man who was charged with the rape of a young white woman. He does his best to prevent Robinson’s conviction.

To Kill a Mockingbird is the 4th most challenge book, according to the American Library Association. It is frequently banned for its discussion of rape, racism, and social injustice.

—Elizabeth Chyn, teen; layout by Kara E. (TAB)

To view more, check out the Teen Blog.
The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) is the library’s premier teen leadership team. Since its formation in February 2014, the TAB has been involved with selecting materials, building book lists (which have been published on our website), planning special programs, assisting in promotions, writing book reviews, training other teens, assembling the Teen Zine, contributing to the Teens Blog, and lots, lots more.

Membership is constantly fluctuating, but the current TAB consists of nine teens (in grades 7-12). The members are:

Benjamin Su
Chris Gonzales
Haneen Eltaib
Jamie Kim
Jerry Tan
Julia See
Kara Eng
Sarah Marshall
Shelby Mumford

All members have been selected over a period of time after demonstrating their dedication, skills, good behavior, excellent communication skills, enthusiasm, and responsibility.

For more information regarding the Pasadena Public Library’s Teen Advisory Board, contact Librarian Jane Gov at jgov@cityofpasadena.net or visit PasadenaPublicLibrary.net/teens/volunteering
Stay tuned for this year’s Teen Read Week starting October 12. Book swaps, giveaways, activities!

Photo credit clockwise from upper left: Katie Ferguson, Alfonso Huerta, Alethea Allarey, and Katie Ferguson

Collage by Haneen E. (TAB)

Discover event photos, teen writing, book reviews, contest winners, and lots more on our Teens Blog

www.pasadena-library.net/teens/
For teen events, volunteer opportunities, articles, resources, and book suggestions, visit:
PasadenaPublicLibrary.net/teens

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