

# **Green Mountain Book Award**

## **Handbook**

### **2006-2007**

**Compiled by  
the Green Mountain Book Award Committee**

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# INTRODUCTION

## **What is the Green Mountain Book Award?**

The Green Mountain Book Award is the student-selected award for Vermonters in grades 9-12. Last year it joined the other two Vermont child-selected book awards, The Red Clover Award, a picture book award for children in Kindergarten-grade 4, and the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award, a book award for students in grades 4-8.

## **How did the award start?**

Librarians have been talking about the possibility of such an award for several years, but it was Marsha Middleton, the librarian at North Country Union High School in Newport, Vermont and Sybil McShane, the Vermont State Librarian, who made it a reality. Marsha had both the desire to start a young adult award and the knowledge of high school kids and their reading, and Sybil had strong interest in having the Department of Libraries better serve the teenagers of Vermont. Both librarians are passionate about young adult literature and bringing the best to kids, so it was a natural partnership.

The Department of Libraries agreed to fund a two to three year pilot project, and a group of excited volunteers formed a committee in 2004. The Vermont Educational Media Association contributed funding, and CAYAL, the Children's and Young Adult section of the Vermont Library Association, pledged support and recruited volunteers. The first committee set ground rules, established criteria, and selected the first masterlist. This year's committee consists of: Connie Harr, Brownell Library, Essex Junction; Philip Charles Crawford, Library Director, Essex High School; Mary Neville Hood, Retired School Librarian; Kathy Johnson, freelance writer and editor, Cambridge; Dollinda Lund, Librarian, Lyndon Institute; Hannah Peacock, Youth Services Librarian, Burnham Memorial Library, Colchester; Suzy Shedd, Groton Public Librarian; Sharon Richards Weaver, Charlotte; Beth Wright, Youth Services Librarian, Fletcher Free Library, Burlington; Marsha Middleton, Librarian, North Country Union High School, Chair; Grace Greene, Children's Services Consultant, Department of Libraries, Liaison to Committee.

## **Mission statement**

The goal of the award is to select a list of books of good literary quality that:

- Engages high school students.
- Represents a variety of genres, formats and viewpoints.
- May include books written both for young people and adults.
- Reflects the interests of high school students.

## **Criteria for choosing books**

To be eligible for the Green Mountain Book Award list, a book must:

- Be available in paperback
- Have been published in the last 5 years (2001-2005 for the 2006-2007 list)

- Have received two favorable reviews in professionally recognized review sources (if possible)

In addition, there may be only one book by an author on any given list.

### **Timetable**

To coincide with the calendars of the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award and the Red Clover Award, voting for the winner of the Green Mountain Book Award is held in April. The committee recommends that in order to be eligible to vote, a student should read at least three books on the masterlist. The new list will be selected in March, and will be made available to all school and public libraries at that time.

### **Book Sets**

The Department of Libraries has bought multiple copies of each book on the masterlist, and will house them at the two regional libraries, Midstate in Berlin and Northeast in St. Johnsbury.

### **Materials available**

The poster we produced last year featuring Jon Fishman, the drummer for the former band, Phish, is still available, and there are new bookmarks that list the nominees for the 2006-2007 award. If you would like some of these materials, please call or email Grace Greene at the Department of Libraries: 828-6954; email: [grace.greene@dol.state.vt.us](mailto:grace.greene@dol.state.vt.us)

**Website:** There is not a separate website for the Green Mountain Book Award, but materials are on both the Web Junction-Vermont site ([www.webjunction.org](http://www.webjunction.org)) and the Department of Libraries website: [http://dol.state.vt.us/GOPHER\\_ROOT5/LIBRARIES/gmba/gmba.htm](http://dol.state.vt.us/GOPHER_ROOT5/LIBRARIES/gmba/gmba.htm)

**Logo:** The Green Mountain Book Award needs a logo, and plans are underway to conduct a contest for students to design one for the program. The contest will be held in the 2006-2007 school year, and plans will be announced in the fall of 2006.

## Green Mountain Book Award Master List 2006-2007

- Busiek, Kurt and Alex Ross. *Marvels*. Marvel Enterprises, 2003. \$19.95. ISBN 0785100490 (pap.).  
An "every man" witnesses the first appearance of superheroes into his ordinary, everyday world. This trade paperback edition collects *Marvels* #1-4 and #0. Supplemental material includes an afterword by Scott McCloud, a guide to the original source material, and a photo essay about Alex Ross's artistic technique.
- Chambers, Aidan. *Postcards from No Man's Land*. Puffin, 2004. \$7.99. ISBN 0142401455 (pap.); Dutton, 2002. \$19.99. ISBN 0-525-46863-3 (Tr.).  
Alternates between two stories - contemporarily, seventeen-year-old Jacob visits a daunting Amsterdam at the request of his English grandmother - and historically, nineteen-year-old Geertrui relates her experience of British soldiers' attempts to liberate Holland from its German occupation.
- Cox, Lynn and Martha Kaplan. *Swimming to Antarctica*. Harvest Books, 2005. \$14.00. ISBN 0-156-0313-02 (pap.); Knopf, 2004. \$24.95. ISBN 0-375-4150-76.  
The world's most extraordinary distance swimmer writes about her emotional and spiritual need to swim and about the almost mystical act of swimming itself.
- Freymann-Weyr, Garret. *My Heartbeat*. Houghton, 2003. \$7.99. ISBN 0-142-40066-1 (pap.); 2002. \$15.00. ISBN 0-618-14181-2 (Tr.).  
As she tries to understand the closeness between her older brother and his best friend, fourteen-year-old Ellen finds her relationship with each of them changing.
- Gantos, Jack. *Hole in My Life*. FSG, 2004. \$8.00. ISBN 0374430896 (pap.); 2002. \$16.00. ISBN 0374399883 (Tr.).  
The author of the Joey Pigza books relates how, as a young adult, he became a drug user and smuggler, was arrested, did time in prison, and eventually got out and went to college, all the while hoping to become a writer.
- Halpin, Brendan. *Donorboy*. Random, 2004. \$12.95. ISBN 1400062772 (pap.).  
Fourteen-year-old Rosalind finds herself adjusting to a new life that seems both hateful and surreal - she's an orphan with a new father, surrounded by friends she is beginning to despise and well-meaning adults who succeed only in annoying her.

Hautman, Pete. *Godless*. S&S, 2005. \$7.99. ISBN 1-416-90816-1 (pap.); 2004. \$15.95. ISBN 0-689-86278-4 (PLB).

When sixteen-year-old Jason Bock and his friends create their own religion to worship the town's water tower, what started out as a joke begins to take on a power of its own.

Maynard, Joyce. *The Usual Rules*. St. Martin's, 2004. \$13.95. ISBN 0-312-28369-5 (pap.).

Through the eyes of thirteen-year-old Wendy, we gain entrance to the world rarely shown by those who documented the events of September 11: a family's slow and terrible realization that Wendy's mother has died, and their struggle to go on with their lives in the face of such a crushing loss.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Shooter*. Amistad, 2005. \$6.99. ISBN 0-06-447290-6 (pap.); 2004. \$16.89. ISBN 0-06-029520-1 (PLB); \$15.99. ISBN 0-06-029519-8 (Tr.).

Written in the form of interviews, reports, and journal entries, the story of three troubled teenagers ends in a tragic school shooting.

Peters, Julie Anne. *Luna*. Megan Tingley, 2006. \$7.99. ISBN 0316011274 (pap.); Little, Brown, 2004. \$16.95. ISBN 0316733695 (Tr.).

For years, Liam has transformed himself into the beautiful girl he longs to be with help from his sister's clothes and makeup in the secrecy of their basement bedrooms, but now, everything is about to change - Luna is preparing to emerge from her cocoon.

Picoult, Jodi. *My Sister's Keeper*. S&S, 2005. \$14.00. ISBN 0743454537 (pap.); 2004. \$25.00. ISBN 0743454529 (Tr.).

Conceived as a genetic match for her terminally ill sister, Anna is tired of being used as "spare parts," and sues her parents to take control of her own life.

Ralston, Aron. *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. S&S, 2005. \$14.00. ISBN 074349282X (pap.).

One of the most extraordinary survival stories ever told - Aron Ralston's searing account of his six days trapped in one of the most remote spots in America, and how one inspired act of bravery brought him home.

Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*. Top Shelf, 2003. \$29.95. ISBN 1891830430 (pap.).

Wrapped in the landscape of a blustery Wisconsin winter, *Blankets* explores the sibling rivalry of two brothers growing up in the isolated country, and the budding romance of two coming-of-age lovers.

Trudeau, G.B. *The Long Road Home*. Andrews McMeel, 2005. \$9.95. ISBN 0740753851 (pap.).

Deprived not only of his leg but also his ubiquitous trademark helmet, B.D. survives first-response Baghdad triage, evacuation to Landstuhl's surgeon-rich environment, and visits by innumerable morale-boosting celebs.

Werlin, Nancy. *Double Helix*. Puffin, 2005. \$6.99. ISBN 014240327X (pap.); 2004. \$15.99. ISBN 0-8037-2606-6 (Tr.).

Eighteen-year-old Eli discovers a shocking secret about his life and his family while working for a Nobel Prize-winning scientist whose specialty is genetic engineering.

**Green Mountain Book Award Committee Chair:**

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## How to Apply for the Committee

The Green Mountain Book Award Committee consists of 10 volunteers and the Children's Services Consultant from the Vermont Department of Libraries. There is currently one three-year opening on the committee, so we are recruiting for that position. We are looking for people who work with high school students and are passionate about books. School librarians, public librarians, teachers and community members are all urged to apply. The chosen candidate will begin work immediately on the next list (2007-2008).

If you are interested in applying, please send a letter of interest, a resume and two reviews, one positive and one negative of any books of your choice to:

Grace Greene  
Children's Services Consultant  
Vermont Dept. of Libraries  
109 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05609  
[grace.greene@dol.state.vt.us](mailto:grace.greene@dol.state.vt.us)

**Deadline is June 30, 2006.** Decisions will be made in the middle of July.

### Guidelines for writing reviews

1. Book reviews should be between 200 and 1,000 words in length.
2. Each review should include a brief descriptive summary and an assessment of appeal to high school students.
3. Reviews should touch on the quality of the following features:

#### **For Nonfiction:**

- Authority and responsibility of the author
- Organization
- Writing style
- Illustrations
- Design
- Documentation of sources

#### **For Fiction:**

- Plot
- Integration of background material
- Pacing

#### **Fiction Cont.:**

- Mood
- Characterization
- Point of view
- Setting
- Writing style
- Theme

#### **For Poetry:**

- Sound (rhyme, meter)
- Imagery
- Ideas

## Book Suggestion for the Green Mountain Book Award

Snail mail or email by October 2, 2006 to:

Grace Greene  
Children's Services Consultant  
Vermont Department of Libraries  
109 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05609

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade (if a student) \_\_\_\_\_

School or library \_\_\_\_\_

Title of Book \_\_\_\_\_

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher & Date of Publication \_\_\_\_\_

—

*To be eligible for consideration by the Green Mountain Book Award Committee for the 2007-2008 masterlist, the book must have been first published in 2002-2006, and must be of interest to students in grades 9-12. Both adult and young adult books are eligible, and the authors can be of any nationality. The only other stipulation is that the book MUST currently be available in paperback in the US.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Please do not include plot summaries, but feel free to tell the committee why you think this book belongs on the GMBA list. Use as much space as you need.

**This book should be on the list because:**

# MARVELS

## by Kurt Busiek

**Illustration:** Alex Ross

**Genre:** YA superhero adventure (graphic novel)

**Themes:** Battle between good and evil, relationship between the individual and society, heroism, the role of the press.

**Author information:** Kurt Busiek was born in Boston, Massachusetts and began working on comic books with Scott McCloud in high school. He has worked on a number of different series and won several comic book awards, as well as many more nominations. He currently works for DC Comics.

**Plot summary:** A man-on-the-street report of the origins of the Marvel superheroes and some of their more famous exploits.

**Booktalk:** In their search for news stories, with poverty and despair all around them, reporter Phil Sheldon and his colleagues witness the arrival of an arch-villain who threatens to topple civilization completely. Out of nowhere, at the very last instant, a superhero appears to do battle on behalf of humanity. After each foe is vanquished, humanity relaxes, thinking that all will be well, but a new era brings a new villain and new superhero. Will humanity ever be safe? Find out how and when everyone from the Human Torch to the Fantastic Four arrived in the Marvel universe. The color art is strong, the illustrations active and worthy of discussion. Attention is paid to period detail and language throughout.

### Curriculum tie-ins:

#### *Science*

Discuss how scientific advances may be perceived as threatening and why.

#### *Language arts/civics/social studies*

Discuss the role of the press in shaping events. Points to consider: the news as commodity, objective reporting, how a reporter's interests may influence what and how they report.

Discuss the relationship between history and popular culture.

#### *Art*

Discuss the different effects black and white and color achieve. Compare *Marvels* with some of the current Marvel Comics that use the same superheroes.

*Discussion questions:*

- What qualities does it take to be a hero? A superhero?
- Given the current situation in the world, what sort of superhero and arch villain could you see being created today?
- When work and family come into conflict, where do a person's priorities lie?
- Most superhero stories are told in the third-person, by an omniscient narrator. How does telling the story from Phil's specific point-of-view change the story?
- The first superheroes were men. When did the first female superhero appear? How does her role relate to the role of women in society at the time? Consider the same question in regard to race.

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Jemas, Bill. *Ultimate Spider-Man: Power and Responsibility*. Marvel Comics, 2002.

Miller, Frank. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*. DC Comics, 2002.

Moore, Alan and J.H. Williams. *Promethea: Book One*. Turtleback, 2001.

Moore, Alan and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen*. DC Comics, 1995.

Seagle, Steven T. *It's a Bird*. Vertigo, 2004.

**Other books by this author:**

*Astro City Vol. 1: Life in the Big City*. Wildstorm, 1999.

*Avengers: Clear & Present Dangers*. Written with George Perez. Marvel, 2001.

*Conan Volume 1: The Frost Giant's Daughter and Other Stories*. Dark Horse, 2005.

*Superman: Secret Identity*. DC Comics, 2005.

**Additional resources:**

McLoud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*. DC Comics, 2000.

# POSTCARDS FROM NO MAN'S LAND

## by Aidan Chambers

**Genre:** Contemporary/historical fiction

**Themes:** Coming of age, family relationships, discovering self in a foreign culture, connections between the present and the past, death and dying, different kinds of love.

**Author information:** The British author of many children's books, including The Dance sequence, of which *Postcards* is a part, won a Carnegie Medal in 1999, the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2002, and a Printz Award in 2003. *Postcards* has been translated into thirteen foreign languages, including Dutch. Biographical information is available at <http://www.aidanchambers.co.uk/index.htm>.

**Plot summary:** Parallel stories of boy-girl relationships, one set in World War II Holland after the fight over the bridge at Remagen, the other contemporary, illuminate the links between past and present.

**Booktalk:** Seventeen-year-old Jacob Todd uses a visit to an old friend of the family, who lives in Holland, as an excuse to spend some time away from his own family. While in Amsterdam, he meets people of different ages, who are all more complicated than they seem to be on the surface. As he makes friends, he explores the mysteries of love and sex and must confront the subject of euthanasia, which is legal in Holland. Well-researched historic detail and a sense of the freedom available in liberal Holland make this an interesting exploration of contemporary issues.

### Curriculum tie-ins:

#### *Science/ethics*

Discuss the issues around euthanasia.

#### *Language arts/creative writing*

Discuss the advantages and pitfalls of writing two parallel story lines.

Discuss the limitations posed by historical fiction.

Find a historical event that interests you and write a short story with a contemporary tie-in.

#### *Social Studies*

Discuss how Holland's culture differs from your own.

Discuss how a particular historical event continues to influence the world you know.

*Discussion questions:*

- Have you ever traveled alone in a foreign culture? What did it feel like? Do you think it changed you? If so, how?
- Love and attraction can be tricky things. How do you decipher the signals?
- Why do you think the author made Anne Frank's diary important, given that the main character is male?

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Chotjewitz, David. *Daniel Half-Human and the Good Nazi*. Jackson/Atheneum, 2004.

Hughes, Dean. *Soldier Boys*. Atheneum, 2001.

Yolen, Jane. *Briar Rose*. Tor, 1992.

**Other books by this author:**

*Breaktime*. HarperCollins, 1979.

*Dance on My Grave*. HarperCollins, 1986.

*Now I Know*. HarperCollins, 1988.

*The Toll Bridge*. Laura Geringer, 1995.

*This is All - The Pillow Book of Cordelia Kenn*. Bodley Head, 2005.

**Additional resources:**

"A Bridge Too Far." Film (1977).

Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. Bantam, 1993.

Powell, Geoffrey. *Devil's Birthday: The Bridges to Arnhem, 1944*. Franklin Watts, 1985.

Rittner, Carol, ed. and Sondra Meyers. *Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust*. New York University Press, 1989. Several profiles deal with rescuers in Holland.

Ryan, Cornelius. *Bridge Too Far*. S&S, 1975.

# SWIMMING TO ANTARCTICA: TALES OF A LONG-DISTANCE SWIMMER

by Lynne Cox

**Genre:** Autobiography

**Themes:** Importance of setting goals; the strength of the human spirit; holding onto one's dreams.

**Author information:** Lynne Cox began her swimming career in Manchester, New Hampshire. When she was nine, the mother of another swim team member predicted she would one day swim the English Channel. At fifteen, she did swim the Channel, breaking the existing record. In 2000, she was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame, and the University of California, Santa Barbara, honored her with a lifetime achievement award. *Sports Illustrated* named *Swimming to Antarctica* one of the top ten books for 2004. Lynne works as an author, motivational lecturer, and teaches swimming technique both in the pool and open water.

**Plot summary:** As a child, Cox set a goal of swimming the English Channel. After accomplishing that goal in her teens, she set lots of other goals, eventually focusing on cold water (icy cold) swimming. She swam between islands in Alaska, around the Cape of Good Hope, across the Bering Strait from the United States to Russia, around the world (swimming in various countries) in 80 days, and in 2002, she became the first person to complete a 1.2 mile swim in Antarctica.

**Booktalk:** What is your goal in life? Do you believe that it is achievable? Will you continue to strive to achieve it in spite of any roadblocks others might put in your way? Throughout her life, Lynne Cox has continued to set new goals to achieve and has continued to strive to meet those goals until she does. From the age of nine, she was determined to swim the English Channel, and she did so at the age of 15. Her next major goal was to swim from Alaska to Siberia during the Cold War to promote friendship and understanding between America and Russia. Again, she achieved the goal. In addition to promoting friendship between countries, she has furthered our understanding of the working of the human body. She participated in medical tests under the supervision of doctors and scientists to study the effects of cold on the human body. Not only is Cox a dedicated athlete, she is also an eloquent writer, so we the readers can share in her adventures.

## Curriculum tie-ins:

*English/creative writing/leadership*

Write an essay about your number one goal and how you plan to achieve it.

### Science

Study the effects of the cold (cold air or cold water) on the human body.

### **If you loved this, you'll like:**

Armstrong, Lance. *Every Second Counts*. Broadway, 2004.

Dessen, Sarah. *Keeping the Moon*. Puffin, 2004.

Duder, Tessa. *In Lane Three, Alex Archer*. Starfire, 1991.

Gormly, Robert A. *Combat Swimmer: Memoir of a Navy SEAL*. Onyx, 1999.

Ralston, Aron. *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. Atria, 2005.

Rottman, S.L. *Head Above Water*. Freestone, 2003.

Schwager, Tina. *Gutsy Girls: Young Women Who Dare*. Free Spirit Publishing, 1999.

### **Other books by this author:**

The author has a new book *Grayson* (Knopf, 2006) to be released in August, 2006.

### **Additional resources:**

Interview with Lynne Cox:

[http://www.harcourtbooks.com/authorinterviews/bookinterview\\_Cox.asp](http://www.harcourtbooks.com/authorinterviews/bookinterview_Cox.asp)

CBS news story:

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/02/12/60II/main540357.shtml>

Lynne Cox's own web page:

<http://www.lynnecox.org/aboutlynn.htm>

# MY HEARTBEAT

## by Garret Freymann-Weyr

**Genre:** Realistic fiction

**Themes:** Adolescence, siblings, family, sexual orientation, giftedness, urban life, private schools.

**Author information:** (from the Houghton Mifflin website) Garret Freymann-Weyr grew up in New York City and now lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland with her husband. She is the author of two other critically acclaimed novels for young adults, *When I Was Older* and *The Kings Are Already Here*. See this website for more information: <http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/catalog/authordetail.cfm?authorID=5055>

**Plot summary:** Ellen, a high school freshman, comes to terms with the possibility of her older brother's homosexuality, the possibility that she and his best friend, James, are falling in love, the strains that giftedness and her father's expectations are placing on their family, and the understanding of society's "unwritten rules." The urban, private day school setting should be of interest to rural readers.

**Booktalk:** Ellen adores her older brother, Link, and his best friend, James. Her entry into high school coincides with other students viewing James and Link as a couple. Are they? If they are, how does that affect her relationship to both boys and the way their family works? And in this context, how do she and James deal with their growing feelings for each other? How will she and her parents deal with the "unwritten rules" of society? What does it mean to be gifted, and what do people with gifts "owe" their families, society and themselves?

### Curriculum tie-Ins:

*Psych-Soc/Art/Music/Math: Issues around "giftedness."*

*Psych-Soc/Health: Sexual orientation in adolescence.*

*Psych-Soc/Health: Family dynamics.*

### Editions available:

Paperback, hardcover, school and library binding, audio CD, audio cassette.

### If you loved this, you'll like:

Hartinger, Brent. *Geography Club*. HarperTempest, 2003.

Levithan, David. *Boy Meets Boy*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2005.

**Other books by this author:**

*The Kings Are Already Here.* Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

*Stay With Me.* Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

*When I Was Older.* Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

# HOLE IN MY LIFE

## by Jack Gantos

**Genre:** Autobiography

**Themes:** Personal growth; crime and punishment; developing a life as a writer.

**Author information:** Many teen readers know Jack Gantos as the author of the middle grade *Joey Pigza* books, the semi-autobiographical middle grade novel *Jack on the Tracks* and its sequels, and the *Rotten Ralph* picture books and easy readers. He is a two-time National Book Award finalist and the winner of a Newbery Honor award. He lives in Boston.

**Plot summary:** Twenty-year-old Jack Gantos is caught smuggling illegal drugs, serves a prison sentence, and begins his life as a writer.

**Booktalk:** A lot of you probably know who Jack Gantos is. He's the author of *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* and the other funny books about Joey, the kid who can't sit still in class (or anywhere else). You might know the books Jack Gantos wrote based on his own childhood, *Jack on the Tracks* and its companions. You might even remember his picture books about Rotten Ralph, the world's reddest, grumpiest cat. Jack Gantos is a funny guy and a really well respected writer; he's won a Newbery Honor award and he's been a National Book Award finalist -- twice. What you might not know about Jack Gantos is that he was once a drug smuggler. When he was 20 years old, he helped sail a boat loaded with illegal drugs from the Virgin Islands to New York City, got caught, and went to federal prison. In this book Jack Gantos writes the absolute truth about the worst time of his life, how he survived it, and how it shaped his life as a writer.

### Curriculum tie-ins:

(Suggested by the free Farrar, Straus, and Giroux teachers' guide at:  
<http://www.fsgkidsbooks.com/teachersguides/holeinmylife.htm>

or

[http://www.fsgkidsbooks.com/teachersguides/holeinmylife\\_guide.htm](http://www.fsgkidsbooks.com/teachersguides/holeinmylife_guide.htm) )

#### *Language arts*

Autobiographical writing; survival stories; use of flashbacks.

#### *Social Studies*

Map skills; current events such as prisons, prison life, drugs, drug abuse, drug smuggling.

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Anonymous. *Go Ask Alice*. Simon Pulse reprint edition, 2005.  
Tullson, Diane. *Red Sea*. Orca, 2005.

**Other books by this author:**

Jack Gantos has written over 30 books. His other books for teenagers are:

*Desire Lines*. FSG, 1997.  
*The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs*. FSG, 2006.

**Additional resources:**

Listening Library recorded both abridged and unabridged cassette versions of *Hole in My Life* (both 2003).

**Website:**

Jack Gantos' web site is: [www.jackgantos.com/](http://www.jackgantos.com/)

# DONORBOY

## by Brendan Halpin

**Genre:** Realistic fiction

**Themes:** Family and loss, daughters and fathers, self identity and self discovery, the power of humor and love.

**Author information:** Brendan Halpin is the author of the acclaimed memoirs *It Takes a Worried Man* (Villard, 2001) and *Losing My Faculties* (Random, 2003). He lives in Boston, Massachusetts, with his wife Kirsten and their daughter Rowen, and is a high-school English teacher. He won an American Library Association Alex Award for *Donorboy* in 2005.

**Plot summary:** When her lesbian mothers are killed in an accident, 14-year-old Rosalind meets and moves in with her sperm-donor father. With humor and empathy, the author tells an unusual story of strangers creating a family.

**Booktalk:** *“Dear My First Grief Journal: Still not talking to Sean. Sean is my dad. Sean is the donor. Sean is some dork who lives in this house. I guess it’s my house now. I hate that.”*

Rosalind finds herself motherless after a freak car accident when a truck carrying Turduckens overturns and kills both of her lesbian mothers. Life spins wildly out of control for Rosalind when she finds that the only suitable relative to live with is her sperm donor “father” who has, up until now, remained an unknown and unwanted mystery to her.

Sean, “the dork” is a single “loser” in Rosalind’s eyes, who has a perpetually empty refrigerator, a low paying lawyer “wannabe” job, and no girlfriend. She moves in with Sean, begins grief counseling with her shrink Denise, and proceeds to get through her days in a sarcastic funk. Once a straight A student, Rosalind flounders at her new high school, gets in with a rough crowd, visits the principal’s office more than once, and drives her father into his first experiences of parental anxieties and mania.

Slowly, Sean and Rosalind work out their relationship through their on going sarcastic, humor-filled email and IM exchanges, and with the help of newfound friends and once estranged family members. But a relapse into grief threatens Rosalind’s newly formed happy life and family with the coming of Christmas. She confides in her friend in an IM: “XMAS, DEAD MOMS, SAME OLD SAME OLD. I MISS THEM REALLY BAD AND EVERYTHING XMAS REMINDS ME, CAN’T STAND IT. XMAS SEEMS WRONG WITHOUT THEM. I JUST WISH I COULD RUN AWAY NOT DO XMAS. I’M AFRAID I’M GOING TO GET SAD AGAIN 4EVER.”

What happens next will either make or break her new life, her father's heart, and their future. What is family anyway? Can you find yourself and start life over again with people you never knew before? How strong is love anyway? It's up to each person to decide.

### **Curriculum tie-ins:**

#### *Legal custody research*

Look in to the laws surrounding donor parenting and child custody. Hold a debate to discuss the two sides of the issue; the parent's rights and the child's rights.

#### *Creative writing/technology*

Write a short story in either journal entry format or IMing missives.

### **If you loved this, you'll like:**

Maynard, Joyce. *The Usual Rules*. St. Martin's, 2004. (on this year's GMBA Masterlist)

Picoult, Jodi. *My Sister's Keeper*. S&S, 2005. (on this year's GMBA Masterlist)

### **Other books by this author:**

*It Takes a Worried Man*. Villard, 2002.

*Long Way Back*. Villard, 2006.

*Losing My Faculties*. Random, 2004.

*Two of Us* Gardners Books, 2004.

### **Additional resources:**

American Library Association Book List: <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists/alex>

Brendan Halpin: <http://www.fantasticfiction.co.uk/h/brendan-halpin/>

Child Custody Resource Library:

<http://www.childcustodyresourcelibrary.org/>

# **GODLESS**

## **by Pete Hautman**

**Genre:** Realistic fiction

**Themes:** Coming of age, exploration of religion, the power of ideas, friendship.

**Author information:** Pete Hautman has written several novels for adults and teens. Awards and recognitions for these books have included the National Book Award, the Minnesota Book Award, an ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers, an ALA Notable Book, and a New York Times Notable Book. Hautman was born in Berkeley, California, was raised in Minnesota, and now lives in Golden Valley, Minnesota, and Stockholm, Wisconsin, with mystery writer Mary Logue.

**Plot summary:** 15-year-old Jason Bock has great difficulty dealing with the religion of his parents and, after a life-changing experience, creates his own religion.

**Booktalk:** Jason Bock is a geeky, overweight 15-year-old who is best friends with Shin Schinner, a skinny kid whose passion is collecting snails. The two of them are under the town water tower one night hunting for snails when Henry Stagg, veteran bully, comes along with a couple of his buddies. Shin retreats into his shell and Jason is flattened when Henry, egged on by his friends, punches him in the face. As Jason lies on the ground looking up, he can see the water tower behind Henry, and it occurs to him how important water and the tower are to his town. In fact, he thinks, this water tower could be God. Since Jason is already questioning his Christian faith and resents having to take part in his church youth group and, in fact, considers himself an “agnostic-leaning-toward-atheism,” his thoughts give birth to a new religion, the worship of the Ten-legged One, the water tower. Jason and Shin fashion this new religion to suit themselves and call it Chutengodianism. Within a short time they acquire a small group of followers including the unpredictable Henry Stagg, the “cute as a button” Magna Price, and “ordinary” friend Dan Grant. When they climb the tower and meet for their first Midnight Mass, the members experience a feeling of power when they look down on the town. Jason soon realizes that his followers are beginning to take this religion a little too seriously and that this lark may be getting out of control. *Godless* is not only a story of religion, but of growing up and sorting out one’s own ideas and trying to come to terms with one’s faith.

### **Curriculum tie-ins:**

#### *Social Studies*

Study and comparison of world religions: Choose two/three major religions and research their origins. Create a chart comparing these religions including dates, origins, beliefs, leadership, and geographical information.

Create a religion of your own. Include creation, commandments or rules, a bible, leadership, and responsibilities.

*English*

Write a story or poem about creation using the beliefs of a mainstream religion or of one that you have created.

**Other books by this author:**

*Hole in the Sky.* Simon Pulse, 2005.

*Invisible.* S&S, 2005. (on this year's DCF Masterlist)

*Sweetblood.* S&S, 2003.

**Website:**

[www.petehautman.com](http://www.petehautman.com)

# THE USUAL RULES

## by Joyce Maynard

**Genre:** Realistic fiction

**Themes:** Grief, guilt, loss and healing, imperfect family relationships, coming-of-age, resilience of the human spirit - all set against the tragedy of September 11, 2001.

**Author information:** Joyce Maynard has been a journalist and fiction writer for many years. She was in New York City visiting her older son on the day of the Trade Center attack. She felt she had to write this book to “address the concerns of that particular moment - namely, crushing loss and despair, and the question of where, in the aftermath of so much of those things, we might retrieve a sense of hopefulness.” She currently divides her time between Northern California and Guatemala.

**Plot summary:** Set in Brooklyn and the small town of Davis, California, this novel relates, through the eyes of thirteen-year-old Wendy, the events and consequences of that terrible day when the planes crashed into the World Trade Center – her mother’s building. When Wendy’s real father, who has been absent for years, shows up and takes her back to California, she leaves behind in Brooklyn her grieving stepfather Josh and precocious 4 year-old half-brother Louie. In California, that winter and spring, Wendy comes face to face with a world where “the usual rules” no longer apply. However, her deep connection with her little brother finally brings her back to New York and helps her find the courage to reconnect with the world.

**Booktalk:** Wendy would think back on that morning, trying to remember every single thing. If only she could rewind it, get her mother back. It is September 11, 2001 and thirteen year old Wendy is upset with her mother. Her stepfather Josh urges “Why don’t you stick your head into the bedroom and say goodbye to your mom.” “I’m late already,” she tells him flippantly, running out the door. Her mother worked in one of the World Trade Center towers. She never came home again. Wendy, her loving stepfather Josh and her 4 year old half-brother Louie hold on to the hope she may have survived. Perhaps she was late for work or she went to vote first. They made up fliers with her photograph and put them up with duct tape. It is only Louie that finally acknowledges the truth by asking, “Does God know about this?”

### Curriculum tie-ins:

*Professional resources for discussion leaders and/or teachers:*

*Author interview*

Kornbluth, Jesse and Carol Fitzgerald. Bookreporter.com – “Author Profile: Joyce Maynard”, February 6, 2004.

<http://www.bookreporter.com/authors/au-maynard-joyce.asp>

An excellent interview with Joyce Maynard (7 pages) with many personal insights into the development of her novel *The Usual Rules*.

#### *Teachers' guide*

Includes questions that can be used as writing prompts or for general discussion.

<http://www.joycemaynard.com/books-jmaynard/usual-rules-young-writers-guide.shtml>

#### *Reading group guide*

The Reading Group Guide below includes a very good synopsis of the book as well as discussion questions.

[http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides3/usual\\_rules1.asp](http://www.readinggroupguides.com/guides3/usual_rules1.asp)

#### *Creative writing*

##### *Writing prompts or discussion questions:*

- The author omits quotation marks when the characters speak to each other. What kind of effect does this have on the flow of the novel?
- Choose a passage that details one of Wendy's memories about her mother. What emotion(s) of Wendy's does the author illustrate through this memory?
- Compare and contrast Garrett and Josh's approaches to parenting. In what specific ways did they run their homes differently? How do you think living with Garrett changed Wendy's perception of Josh?
- Have students read some of the responses from other young people from the "9/11 As History" web page below. Ask students to write down their own answers to these same questions and share and discuss with the class.

<http://www.familiesandwork.org/911ah/studentwriting.html>

#### *Social Studies*

Recall the events of 9/11 by looking at the website and books below or by looking at other similar visual resources. Find some pictures and/or stories of people searching for their loved ones. Do you have any stories to share about people you know? Discuss how these images make you feel.

#### **Website:**

<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/nationchallenged/sub6/index.html>

Includes: Articles that appeared in The Times on September 12, 2001 along with a Timeline of 9/11 and Video, Audio and Graphics showing the attack in New York.

#### **Books:**

The books below, and many similar titles with **visual images of 9/11**, are available in many school and public libraries in Vermont.

*A Nation Challenged: A Visual History of 9/11 and Its Aftermath.* New York Times, 2002.

*New York September 11.* By Magnum photographers; introduction by David Halberstam, New York: PowerHouse Books, 2001.

*Portraits: 9/11/01: The Collected "Portraits of Grief" from The New York Times.* Time Books, 2002.

*September 11, 2001: A Record of Tragedy, Heroism, and Hope.* Abrams, 2001.

### **Book for young adults to help deal with the grief of 911:**

Cart, Michael, ed. *911: The Book of Help.* Open Court, 2002.

A collection of essays, poems, short fiction, and drawings created in response to the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, by authors and illustrators of books for young adults.

### **Audio:**

<http://www.sonicmemorial.org/sonic/public/educators.html>

NPR's Sonic Memorial Project is a cross-media documentary of first-person accounts chronicling the life and history of the World Trade Center and its neighborhood, before, during and after September 11, 2001.

### **Video:**

9-11: Looking Back...Moving Forward. Videocassette. Library Video, 2001.

This 30 minute video features New York teens speaking out about how they are coping with the September 11, 2001 events. Received CINE Golden Eagle Award and 2002 Selected DVD's and Videos for Young Adults. Recommended by both Video Librarian and Booklist (3/15/2002).

### **Other novels about coping with the death of a mother:**

Halpin, Brendan. *Donorboy.* Villard, 2004. (on this year's GMBA Masterlist)

Powell, Randy. *Tribute to Another Dead Rock Star.* FSG, 1999.

Sones, Sonya. *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies.* S&S, 2004.

### **Novel about 9/11 death of a father (9 year-old autistic child):**

Foer, Jonathan. *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.* Harcourt, 2005.

# SHOOTER

## by Walter Dean Myers

**Genre:** Realistic fiction

**Themes:** School violence; friendship.

**Author information:** Walter Dean Myers has won the Printz award for excellence in writing for teenagers, as well as a Newbery Honor, a Coretta Scott King Honor, and a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor. He has twice been honored as a National Book Award finalist. He is a contributor to the Langston Hughes Children's Literature Festival, and he also appears with the NBA's "Read to Achieve" program. He lives outside of New York City.

**Plot summary:** Police reports, interviews, newspaper articles, and diary entries present different facets of a school shooting.

**Booktalk:** Cameron Porter SAID he didn't know his friend Len was bringing guns to school that morning. He SAID he only agreed to help Len paint "Stop the Violence" on the school walls, but when he got there Len had rifles in his duffle bag. And he SAID he only picked up one of the rifles so he could get away from Len and think. At least that's what Cameron told the sheriff, the government psychologist, and the FBI when they interviewed him. But what really happened between Cameron, Len, and their friend Carla Evans? Who was really responsible for what happened at the school that morning? And does anyone really want to know the truth anyway? If you want to know the answers, you can read interviews with Cameron and Carla; you can read newspaper articles and police reports; you can read the medical examiner's reports; and you can read Len's diary. And then, once you've looked at all the evidence, you can decide.

### Curriculum tie-ins:

#### *Language arts*

Readers' theater. This title is a natural for reading aloud with different students or teachers taking the parts of the interviewers and subjects.

#### *Current events*

School violence, cults.

### If you loved this, you'll like:

Atkin, S. Beth. *Gunstories: Life-Changing Experiences with Guns*.

HarperCollins, 2006.

Strasser, Todd. *Give a Boy a Gun*. S&S, 2000.

Walter, Virginia. *Making Up Mega Boy*. DK Ink., 1998.

**Other books by this author:**

Walter Dean Myers has written over 60 books. His other books for teenagers include:

*Autobiography of My Dead Brother.* Amistad, 2005.  
*Bad Boy: A Memoir.* (autobiography) Amistad, 2001.  
*The Beast.* Scholastic, 2003.  
*The Glory Field.* Scholastic, 1994.  
*Here in Harlem: Poems in Many Voices.* Holiday House, 2004.  
*The Journal of Scott Pendleton Collins: A World War II Soldier.* Scholastic, 1999.  
*Monster.* Amistad, 1999.  
*145th Street: Stories.* Delacorte, 2000.  
*Scorpions.* HarperCollins, 1988.  
*Slam.* Scholastic, 1996.  
*Somewhere in the Darkness.* Scholastic, 1992.  
*A Time to Love: Stories from the Old Testament.* Scholastic, 2003.

**Additional resources:**

*Shooter* is available from HarperChildrensAudio as an excellent unabridged audiobook on CD (2004), with a cast of actors and actresses reading the parts of the adult interviewers and the teens being interviewed. The different voices bring the characters to life and add additional layers to the many questions of truth and responsibility raised by the written text.

A free reading guide for *Shooter*, including discussion questions, is available from HarperCollins under the title *Shooter* at:  
<http://www.harpercollinschildrens.com/HarperChildrens/Teachers/TeachingResources.aspx>

**Website:**

Walter Dean Myers' website: [www.WalterDeanMyersBooks.com](http://www.WalterDeanMyersBooks.com)

# LUNA

## by Julie Anne Peters

**Genre:** Realistic fiction

**Themes:** Gender identity, transsexualism, self-acceptance, family relationships, siblings.

**Author information:** Julie Anne Peters was born in Jamestown, New York on January 16, 1952 but moved to Colorado as a child, where she and her partner still reside today. Her first college degree was a B.A. in Elementary Education with a minor in French. She was a fifth grade teacher for one year and then returned to school to earn a B.S. degree in Computer and Management Science. During the next ten years she worked as a research analyst, computer programmer, and systems engineer. She also earned a Masters Degree in Business and Computer Science. Realizing that this was not the career for her either, she began to write and has done so ever since.

All of her young adult fiction has received numerous awards and accolades from critics and teens alike. *Luna* is no exception. Some of its awards include: 2004 National Book Award Finalist in Young People's Literature, a 2005 Stonewall Honor Book, awarded by the GLBTQ Round Table of the American Library Association, an American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults in 2005 and the New York Public Library Books for the Teen-Age List in 2005.

**Plot summary:** 15 year old Regan's older brother Liam is a transsexual. Regan is a supportive sister who wants to do the right thing and support her big brother, but she also has her own life to live. Liam just seems to forget too often about his sister's feelings and commitments. The story is told from Regan's point of view and therefore allows the reader to see how having a transsexual sibling can affect a family member, especially when it has to be kept a secret.

**Booktalk:** Your brother Liam wants to be called Luna, as she is actually a girl trapped inside a boy's body. She borrows your clothes, make-up and bedroom to transform herself into Luna, her true self, at night. You are struggling with your own coming of age issues, but Liam puts her issues front and center, with no regard for your own worries about boyfriends, being accepted, your relationship with your parents and your dropping grades.

Coming out as gay, bisexual, or transgender is a huge step in a young person's life, but should it happen to the detriment of one's siblings? What would you do? Would you support your brother or sister, no matter what?

Liam and Regan negotiate it in their own way, and *Luna* is in part the tale of their relationship. It is also the tale of a good-looking, bright young man who wants nothing more than to transition into the woman she feels is her true self.

## Curriculum tie-ins:

### *Creative writing exercise*

Imagine that you wake up one day to discover that you are in the body of a member of the opposite sex. How would that make you feel different? How do you think others would now look at you? What would you do about it?

### *Social Studies*

Some questions for discussion:

- What is gender? How does it differ from one's sex?
- How would you feel if your brother or sister was gay, transsexual or bisexual?
- What resources does your school provide to support students who are questioning their own gender identities?
- What can you do to help?

### **If you loved this, you'll like:**

Anders, Charlie. *Choir Boy*. Soft Skull Press, 2005.  
Bohjalian, Christopher A. *Trans-sister Radio*. Harmony Books, 2000.  
Boylan, Jennifer Finney. *She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders*. Broadway Books, 2003.  
Brevard, Aleshia. *The Woman I Was Not Born to Be: A Transsexual Journey*. Temple University Press, 2001.  
McCloskey, Deirdre N. *Crossing: A Memoir*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.

### **Other books by this author:**

*Between Mom and Jo*. Megan Tingley, 2006.  
*Define "Normal"*. Megan Tingley, 2000.  
*Far from Xanadu*. Megan Tingley, 2005.  
*Keeping You a Secret*. Megan Tingley, 2003.

### **Additional resources:**

OutRight Vermont website: <http://www.outrightvt.org/>  
Their links pages: <http://www.outrightvt.org/links.shtml>

<http://www.uvm.edu/~lgbtqa/transally.pdf>

A fact sheet on being an ally to transgender people produced by The University of Vermont's LGBTQA Office (includes list of resources and recommended readings).

Goodrum, Alexander John. *Gender Identity 101: A Transgender Primer*.  
Southern Arizona Gender Alliance, copyright 1998-2002. Available at:  
[http://sagatucson.org/saga/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=42&Itemid=94](http://sagatucson.org/saga/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=42&Itemid=94)

Also available in condensed pdf version at:  
<http://sagatucson.org/downloads/GI101.pdf>

**Website:**

Julie Anne Peters' official website: <http://julieannepeters.homestead.com/>

# MY SISTER'S KEEPER

## by Jodi Picoult

**Genre:** Realistic fiction

**Themes:** The importance of supportive families; the dilemmas that come with advanced technologies; coming of age; the stress a serious illness places on a family.

**Author information:** Jodi Picoult, who lives in Hanover, New Hampshire with her husband and three children, is a best-selling author of thirteen novels. Her novels typically center on family, relationships, and love. She was inspired to write this novel after her own son underwent ten surgeries in three years.

**Plot summary:** Anna exists because her sister had leukemia, and her parents conceived a new baby so they could use the umbilical cord fluids to treat their daughter. Anna is now a teenager and has supplied tissue over and over to help her sister. Now her sister's kidneys have failed, she is growing weaker on dialysis, and they are coming for one of Anna's kidneys. Anna begins to question her moral obligations in light of the countless medical procedures and ultimately decides to fight for the right to make decisions about her own body.

**Booktalk:** Suppose the only reason you are here on earth is that your parents and brother were not a genetic match for your seriously ill sister, so you were conceived to save your sister's life. Your genetic makeup determines everything about your life. You must stay around home and stay healthy because your sister might at any time need your tissue or body fluids. You can't go away to summer camp or take up skydiving or do anything that would make you unavailable if her body needs you. As you enter your teen years, her kidneys begin failing, and "they" talk about taking one of your kidneys to replace hers. No one has asked your opinion about this. It is just assumed that you will cooperate. How would you feel? What would you do? Anna, the teenager who finds herself in that situation, consults a lawyer. She intends to sue her parents for the rights to her own body. We live in a world of increasingly advancing medical technology. *My Sister's Keeper* explores the legal, ethical, and personal quandaries arising from this technology.

### Curriculum tie-ins:

#### *Language arts*

Write an alternative ending for the novel. The following are some possibilities:

1. Anna lives and decides to give her kidney to her sister.
2. Anna lives and decides not to give her kidney to her sister.
3. Kate dies before the court case ends.

After reading the novel, reread the page in italics which comes between the

prologue and the poem by Sandburg on the page labeled “Monday.” It is Kate who is speaking. Write a response to this page.

*Biology/health*

Broad research topics which can be more narrowly focused, leading to class presentation such as debate, research paper, PowerPoint, poster:

- Dialysis
- Use of stem cells
- Bone marrow transplants
- Gene therapy
- Leukemia
- Epilepsy
- Bilateral cholesteatomas (condition the author’s son had which led to book)
- Medical ethics
- Bioethics
- “Designer” babies
- Pyromania and other mental disorders
- Oncology
- Leukocytes

*Sociology/psychology*

Topics to investigate:

- Living with cancer, epilepsy, or another serious disease and its impact on the whole family
- Use of guide dogs to aid persons with a variety of disabilities
- Causes of pyromania and other mental disorders
- Legal rights of teenagers
- Medical ethics
- Bioethics
- “Designer” babies
- Eugenics

**If you loved this, you’ll like:**

Bohjalian, Chris. *Midwives*. Vintage, 1998.  
Bombeck, Erma. *I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise: Children Surviving Cancer*. Random House, 1992.  
Grisham, John. *The Runaway Jury*. Delta, 2006.  
Krementz, Jill. *How It Feels to Fight for Your Life*. Fireside, 1991.  
Meltzer, Brad. *The Tenth Justice*. Warner Vision, 1998.  
Myers, Edward. *Ice*. Montemayor Press, 2004.  
Wiggs, Susan. *A Summer Affair*. Mira, 2003.

Wilhelm, Kate. *Desperate Measures*. Mira, 2002.

**Additional resources:**

*My Sister's Keeper* is available on both audio cassette (Recorded Books, 2004) and audio CD (Recorded Books, 2005).

Abramovitz, Melissa. *Leukemia*. Lucent Books, 2003.

Gallagher, Nancy L. *Breeding Better Vermonters: The Eugenics Project in the Green Mountain State*. University Press of New England, 1999.

Hains, Bryan. *Brain Disorders*. Chelsea House, 2005.

Panno, Joseph. *Cancer: the Role of Genes, Lifestyle, and Environment*. Facts on File, 2004.

Panno, Joseph. *Gene Therapy: Treating Disease by Repairing Genes*. Facts on File, 2005.

Panno, Joseph. *Stem Cell Research: Medical Applications and Ethical Controversy*. Facts on File, 2005.

Information on Seizure-Alert Dogs:

[http://www.epilepsy.com/articles/ar\\_1084289240.html](http://www.epilepsy.com/articles/ar_1084289240.html)

**Other books by this author:**

*Mercy*. Washington Square Press, 2001.

*Tenth Circle*. Atria, 2006.

*Vanishing Acts*. Washington Square Press, 2005.

And many more.

# **BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE**

## **by Aron Ralston**

**Genres:** Autobiography, adventure stories, survival stories

**Themes:** Overcoming odds, self-awareness, survival instinct, family, friendship and love.

**Author information:** Aron Ralston was born on October 27, 1975 in Indiana and was terrified when his parents decided to move the family to Colorado when he was 12. The mountains seemed far too daunting for a young Midwestern boy. Ralston had no idea how adventures on the mountains would become his true passion.

Ralston received a B.S. from Carnegie Mellon University with a double major in French and mechanical engineering and a minor in piano performance. He graduated top of his class and accepted a great job at Intel Corporation in Arizona. He retired from this corporate job 5 years later, at the age of 26. He then moved to Aspen, Colorado and soon took a sales job at the Ute Mountaineer.

He is now a public speaker and, with his newfangled prosthetic arm, still climbs mountains as often as possible.

**Plot summary:** Carrying only the bare minimum needed for a day's hike in Utah's Canyonlands National Park, Aron Ralston gets his right arm trapped under a boulder. Always cocky, he has told none of his friends or family exactly where he is - an oversight that costs him dearly. This autobiography not only tells the story of Ralston's 6 harrowing days but it also switches between tales of his other extreme outdoor adventures and the progress of his would-be rescuers. Ralston beautifully describes the land he loves while sharing what must have been some very painful insights into selfish choices he made during his many trips, including during this life-changing Utah hike.

**Booktalk:** Your body is dehydrated; you are weak, tired, hungry, thirsty, sad, full of remorse and are starting to hallucinate. You have all but given up on the possibility of shifting the position of the unmovable rock. You have already recorded your video farewells. What would you do? Would you cut off your own arm to save your life? Most readers of Aron Ralston's book already know the choice he makes, but the reasons behind how he gets to that point in his life are what make this a story worth hearing. He's an adventurer, a risk-taker, a son, a brother, a good friend, a nice guy who made some really bad decisions in his life.

### **Curriculum tie-ins:**

#### *Social Studies*

Ask students to put themselves in Ralston's shoes and discuss these questions:

What would you have done? Would you have had his strength and courage? Was Ralston selfish? What else could he have done? If you were to meet Ralston, what would you like to ask or tell him?

*Writing*

Students write down reactions to the book, and then describe a time when they were caught between a rock and a hard place.

*Science*

Discuss the effects of dehydration, exposure to sun, and lack of food on the brain and body.

*Geography*

Ralston's book is rich with descriptions of the places he has visited. Map out Ralston's trips, including the trip he made that day in Utah. Study Colorado's fifty-nine fourteeners. Map them and put them in order of height and in the order Ralston climbed them.

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Armstrong, Lance and Sally Jenkins. *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life*. Berkley Publishing Group, 2001.

Krakauer, Jon. *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mt. Everest Disaster*. Villard Books, 1997.

Nielsen, Jerri and Maryanne Vollers. *Ice Bound: A Doctor's Incredible Battle for Survival at the South Pole*. Hyperion Books, 2001.

Simpson, Joe. *Touching the Void: The True Story of One Man's Miraculous Survival*. HarperCollins, 2004.

**Editions available:**

Hardcover: Atria Books, 2004.

Paperback: Atria Books, 2005.

Audio Cassette & Compact Disc: Abridged. S&S, 2004.

**Additional resources:**

NBC News Presents *Survivor: The Aron Ralston Story*. DVD. Genius Entertainment: 2006.

**Website:**

Aron Ralston's official website: <http://www.aralston.com/>

# BLANKETS

## by Craig Thompson

**Genre:** Graphic novel

**Themes:** Coming-of-age; first love; teen sexuality; religion; family; brothers; sibling rivalry.

**Author information:** Craig Thompson was born in Traverse City, Michigan in 1975 and raised in a farming community in central Wisconsin. In addition to working as a professional artist, Thompson has also driven tractors, baled hay, and worked at McDonald's. His graphic novels include the highly acclaimed, *Good-Bye, Chunky Rice* and *Carnet de Voyage*. Four years in the making, *Blankets* was named *Time* magazine's "Best Comic of 2003" and selected as one of YALSA's "Best Books for Young Adults." He is currently at work on a new graphic novel, *Habibi*, which explores Islamic mythology.

**Plot summary:** *Blankets* explores the sibling rivalry of two brothers, Craig and Phil, who grow up in a deeply religious family. Set in rural Wisconsin, this graphic novel explores Craig's budding romance with Raina, his first love, and the emotional tensions that exist between himself and his family.

**Booktalk:** How does a teenage boy raised in a deeply religious family learn to reconcile his faith with his burgeoning sexual awakening? In the graphic novel, *Blankets*, Craig Thompson addresses these questions and more. In a narrative that alternates between the present and the past, Thompson pieces together the story of Craig and his relationship with his parents, his younger brother, Phil, and his first girl friend, Raina. To complement the multilayered narrative text Thompson uses a variety of structured panels and free-form pages to enhance the rich and multilayered narrative text. The result is an engrossing coming-of-age story that older teens will find richly satisfying.

### Curriculum tie-ins:

*Blankets* may be used in a variety of ways to address Vermont standards. Reading and discussing *Blankets* is a useful tool for helping students in English and art courses gain a critical understanding of the past, artistic and literary forms, genre, and the influence of social and cultural influences on American art and literature.

## Vermont Arts, Language, and Literature Standards:

### Critical Response

#### **Eras and Styles**

5.1 Students demonstrate understanding of the historical eras, styles, and evolving technologies that have helped define forms and structures in the arts, language, and literature.

#### *Social Studies*

There have been huge advances in technology during the last thirty years.

*Blankets* characters watch television sets with “rabbit-ear” antennas, compose on typewriters, and use pay phones. They wear brand name fashion by “Jordache” and listen to 1980s bands like The Violent Femmes and The Pixies. Have students chart the changes in everyday technology, fashion, and musical styles from the early 1980’s to the present.

#### **Times and Cultures**

5.2 Students demonstrate how literature, philosophy, and works in the arts influence and reflect their time and their local and regional culture.

#### *English*

Discuss and analyze the setting of *Blankets* to determine how it reflects the social and cultural values of the Midwest. Analyze how Thompson portrays institutions such as family, church and school in *Blankets*. What are the literary and artistic traits that make this book a product of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How is the narrative style in *Blankets* similar, or different from graphic novels produced during the 1980’s such as Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, or Frank Miller’s *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*?

#### **Aesthetic Judgment**

5.4 Students form aesthetic judgment, using appropriate vocabulary and background knowledge to critique their own work and the work of others, and to support their perception of work in the arts, language, and literature.

#### *Art*

Provide students with background information to fully appreciate the aesthetic values of graphic novels. Concepts such as panel layout and design; perspective and camera angle; shadowing; sound effects; and word balloons should be introduced.

Note: Educators may find the following resources useful for understanding how to evaluate graphic novels:

Gravett, Paul. *Graphic Novels: Everything You Need to Know*. Collins Design, 2005.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*. Harper Paperbacks, 1994.

### **Types of Literature**

5.8 Students read a variety of types of literature, fiction and nonfiction (e.g., poetry, drama, essays, folklore and mythology, fantasy and science fiction, and public documents, such as newspapers and periodicals).

#### *English*

Discuss and analyze *Blankets* in relationship to other coming-of-novels such as J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*, or Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*. How is the text narrative of *Blankets* similar, or different from other literary works concerned with adolescence and growing-up? Has the depiction of "teenagers" changed over time?

### **American Literature**

5.9 Students interpret contemporary and enduring works of American literature, and understand how important themes of American experience have developed through time.

#### *English*

Discuss and analyze how the narrative techniques in *Blankets* reflect the contemporary American novel. Explore how Thompson uses such narrative techniques as flash back and first person narrative. Are Thompson's examination of first love, teen sexuality, family, and sibling rivalry similar, or different from earlier classics of American literature such as Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*? Do Craig's parents' religious views bear any resemblance to those found in American literature about the Puritan era such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*?

### **If you loved this, you'll like:**

Banks, Russell. *Rule of the Bone*. Harper Perennial, 1996.

Barry, Lynda. *One Hundred Demons*. Sasquatch Books, 2005.

Dreschler, Debbie. *Summer of Love*. Drawn and Quarterly, 2003.

Gaiman, Neil and Dave McKean. *The Tragical Comedy, or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch*. DC Comics/Vertigo, 1995.

Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye*. Little, Brown, 1991.

### **Other books by this author:**

*Carnet de Voyage*. Top Shelf Productions, 2004.

*Good-Bye, Chunky Rice*. Pantheon, 2006. (*Winner of the Harvey Award*).

**Additional resources:**

Craig Thompson's official website: <http://www.dootdootgarden.com/>

Pantheon Books: <http://www.randomhouse.com/pantheon/graphicnovels/>

Top Shelf Productions: <http://www.topshelfcomix.com/>

# THE LONG ROAD HOME

## by Gary Trudeau

**Genre:** Political cartoon/graphic novel.

**Themes:** Disability, amputation, war, soldiers, War in Iraq, rehabilitation, humor.

**Author information:** G. B. Trudeau launched *Doonesbury* in 1970 and five years later became the first comic strip artist to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning. Now tracking its seventh presidential administration, *Doonesbury* appears in more than 1,400 daily and Sunday newspapers around the globe. Trudeau lives in New York City. See these websites, too:

[www.doonesbury.com](http://www.doonesbury.com)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garry\\_Trudeau](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garry_Trudeau)

**Plot summary:** BD, the tough guy football hero, coach and multi-tour, multi-war soldier, loses a leg in Iraq. This collection of comic strips deals with his and his family's adjustments to his physical treatment and healing. (Later strips have dealt and are dealing with his trauma, drinking and emotional responses. These can be read online, and will probably be collected at a later date.)

**Booktalk:** Whenever someone we know and care about goes to war, we force ourselves to deal with the idea that they may never return. Even more confusing, in some ways, is the idea that they may return wounded or permanently disabled. What will their lives be like? What will our lives be like with them? Read G.B. Trudeau's accurate, touching, and yes – funny - take on the life and leg-shattering effects of the War in Iraq on his character, BD.

### Curriculum tie-ins:

#### *Art/Social Studies*

History of Political Cartooning (try these web sites):

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/PUCK/part1.html>  
<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/politicaldrseuss/political.html>

#### *Social Studies/current events*

What is "fair" comment? What is OK to put in a comic strip? (some related web sites):

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny\\_Hart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny_Hart)  
<http://www.asne.org/index.cfm?ID=773>

*English/Social Studies: History & Development of Graphic Novels*

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

[www.doonesbury.com/](http://www.doonesbury.com/) History of the strip, FAQ's, daily strips in color - all things Doonesbury.

**Other books by this author:**

*Got War?: A Doonesbury Book.* Adams McNeel, 2003.

*Talk to the Hand: A Doonesbury Collection.* Adams McNeel, 2004.

# DOUBLE HELIX

## by Nancy Werlin

**Genre:** Science fiction; mystery; suspense thriller

**Themes:** Genetic engineering; ethics; secrets; family relationships; trust; illness.

**Author information:** Nancy Werlin was born in Massachusetts, where she still lives. She received her bachelor's degree in English from Yale. Along with writing fiction, she has worked for many high tech computer software and internet companies as a technical writer and editor, an experience which informs much of her writing. She has received numerous awards, including the Edgar Allen Poe Award in 1999 for Best YA Mystery for *The Killer's Cousin*.

**Plot summary:** After high school graduation, Eli is offered a job at Wyatt Transgenics by the company's founder, the prestigious Dr. Quincy Wyatt. Eli can't understand why his father should be so vehemently against such a great opportunity. Accepting the job, he ultimately uncovers a disconcerting connection between Dr. Wyatt and his parents, and unsettling information about himself.

**Booktalk:** Why doesn't my dad want me to work at Wyatt Transgenics? It's the opportunity of a lifetime, a chance to work for Nobel Prize winning biologist Quincy Wyatt, who seems to have taken a special interest in me. Could it have something to do with Dr. Wyatt's connection to my mother, now suffering from Huntington's Disease and in a fulltime care facility? My girlfriend, Viv, is supportive, but I started questioning my feelings when I met Kayla, the beautiful girl at Dr. Wyatt's house, who happens to look just like my mother when she was young. It all seemed like just a coincidence until I discovered the elevator to the underground floor at Wyatt Transgenics...

### Curriculum tie-ins:

#### *Science*

Discuss genetic engineering and the related biological and ethical issues impacting society. Is this book science fiction or are these the choices that this current generation will be facing in their lifetimes?

To what degree is the development of transgenic animals more ethical than that of transgenic humans? Research how far genetic manipulation in animals has gone thus far.

#### *Language arts/ creative writing*

The epilogue of this book takes place the following fall when Eli is a freshman at MIT. He is involved in conversation with Dr. Rosemary Fukuyama, a bioethics professor, who recounts a life changing experience she had at a national

conference on biogenetics. Reread the epilogue and write about whether you believe we have the right to use gene therapy exclusively for the treatment of existing medical conditions or whether we should use our knowledge of genes in deciding who has a right to life.

**If you loved this, you'll like:**

Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*. Random House, 2004.  
Card, Orson Scott. *Ender's Game*. Tor, 1985.  
Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. HarperCollins, 2006 (originally published 1931).  
Patterson, James. *When the Wind Blows*. Warner, 1999.

**Additional resources:**

BLOODLINES: TECHNOLOGY HITS HOME (2003). A one-hour documentary from PBS that reveals how new life technologies are raising ethical, legal and social dilemmas as cutting-edge science intersects with the law. BLOODLINES explores the dilemmas created by new biotechnologies firsthand. See: <http://www.pbs.org/bloodlines/>

Glenn, Linda MacDonald. *Ethical Issues in Genetic Engineering and Transgenics*. ActionBioscience.org, 2004.  
<http://www.actionbioscience.org/biotech/glenn.html>

Human Genome Project, U.S. Dept. of Energy.  
[http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human\\_Genome/home.shtml](http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/home.shtml)

**Other books by this author:**

*Are You Alone on Purpose?* Houghton Mifflin, 1994.  
*Black Mirror*. Dial, 2001.  
*The Killer's Cousin*. Delacorte, 1998.  
*Locked Inside*. Delacorte, 2000.  
*The Rules of Survival*. Dial, 2006.

**Website:**

Nancy Werlin's website: <http://www.nancywerlin.com>

# *Green Mountain Book Award*

## *Checklist, 2006-2007*

- Busiek, Kurt and Alex Ross. *Marvels*.
  - Chambers, Aidan. *Postcards from No Man's Land*.
  - Cox, Lynn and Martha Kaplan. *Swimming to Antarctica*.
  - Freymann-Weyr, Garret. *My Heartbeat*.
  - Gantos, Jack. *Hole in My Life*.
  - Halpin, Brendan. *Donorboy*.
  - Hautman, Pete. *Godless*.
  - Maynard, Joyce. *The Usual Rules*.
  - Myers, Walter Dean. *Shooter*.
  - Peters, Julie Anne. *Luna*.
  - Picoult, Jodi. *My Sister's Keeper*.
  - Ralston, Aron. *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*.
  - Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*.
  - Trudeau, G.B. *The Long Road Home*.
  - Werlin, Nancy. *Double Helix*.
- ***CHECK*** the boxes as you read the books. ***You MUST read at least three books to vote.***