The 2002 Young Adults’ Choices list is the 16th that U.S. teenagers (grades 7–12) have helped create. This project began in 1986, funded by a special grant given to the International Reading Association (IRA) and supervised by the Association’s Literature for Young Adults Committee.

The goals of the project are to encourage young people to read; to make teens, teachers, librarians, and parents aware of new literature for young adults; and to provide middle and secondary school students with an opportunity to voice their opinions about books being written for them.

The 30 books on this year’s list are the result of voting by students in five different regions of the United States. Trade books (books other than textbooks) published in 2000 were submitted by more than 50 publishers. Each book had to have at least two positive reviews from recognized sources such as The Horn Book, School Library Journal, Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, Booklist, Language Arts, or Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA). Submitted books were read by students in grades 7–12 between September 2001 and February 2002 in selected school districts throughout the U.S. More than 11,000 ballots were counted for the books submitted for this year’s project. Students marked, “I liked the book,” “It was okay,” or “I didn’t like the book.” The results were announced in May at the 2002 Annual Convention of the International Reading Association in San Francisco, California, USA.

Publishers sent the books to the five team leaders in different regions in the U.S. The team leaders’ responsibilities included selecting the school districts and schools in which the project would take place, making sure the books were distributed to the schools, and working with the teachers, librarians, supervisors, and principals to implement the program. They were also responsible for collecting the ballots and mailing them to the International Reading Association headquarters for the final tally.
The following schools participated in the 2002 project:

Team 1: Gretchen Freeman (team leader): Medford, Oregon; two high schools and two middle schools; suburban/rural.

Team 2: Alice Siegel (team leader): Mt. Vernon, New York; two high schools and two middle schools; suburban.

Team 3: Cathy L. Denman (team leader): Brevard County, Florida; four middle schools, one junior/senior high school, and two high schools; suburban/rural.

Team 4: Sharon Hoge (team leader): Columbia, Missouri; three high schools, three junior high schools, and three middle schools; urban.

Team 5: Marlene J. Darwin and Gail V. Schwarz (team leaders): Springfield, Virginia; Mercer County, West Virginia; one high school and one middle school; suburban.

The participating schools represented various types of students, economic levels, cultural groups, and geographic regions. The team leaders were enthusiastic and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this worthwhile and exciting project.

The committee wishes to thank Alida von Krogh Cutts and Mary Cash of the International Reading Association staff for helping to coordinate the project. Thanks are also extended to Natalie Babbitt for her logo design and to the International Reading Association for its continued support of the project. Gratitude and appreciation go to all of the students, teachers, librarians, school district administrators, and team leaders who participated in the project and made it a success.

The members of the Literature for Young Adults Committee, chaired by Eva McGuire, and the team leaders have written annotations for each title. Their initials indicate annotations written by individual committee members. Reviewers include Marlene J. Darwin, Cathy L. Denman, Beth Eller, Gretchen H. Freeman, Joy Frerichs, Sharon Hoge, Eva McGuire, Denise Parker, Gail Schwarz, Alice Siegel, Dale Vande Haar, and Deborah Young.

Bibliographic data are supplied for each title including ISBN (International Standard Book Number), number of pages, and price. If a publisher has both a library and trade edition, the ISBN for the library edition is included. Publishers furnished information in May 2002, but prices are subject to change.

The annotated 2002 Young Adults’ Choices list is downloadable from the International Reading Association website http://www.reading.org. Single copies of offprints are available for US$1.00 for postage and handling and a self-addressed 9” × 12” envelope from the International Reading Association, Department EG, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA, Attention YA Choices. To order bulk copies by phone with a credit card, call (in the United States and Canada only) 1-800-336-READ, ext. 266, or send order to Order Department, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 6021, Newark, DE 19714-6021, USA.

By special arrangement, books named on the Choices lists can be purchased at a significant discount (32% off regular retail prices) from Schoolwide, Inc. A portion of the purchase price benefits the International Reading Association. Download the Schoolwide order form on the Association website http://www.reading.org. (Books are shipped from Schoolwide’s New York state location. For information on shipping charges to destinations outside the United States, contact Schoolwide directly at the phone or fax numbers provided on the order form.)

Amazing Gracie: A Dog’s Tale. Dan Dye, Mark Beckloff

The biography of Gracie, a deaf, partially blind Great Dane, is both sensitive and comical. Due to her delicate constitution, Dan, her owner, teaches himself to cook dog delectables and eventually launches the Three Dog Bakery, a real enterprise. GHF
Anastasia: The Last Grand Duchess, Russia, 1914 (The Royal Diaries series). Carolyn Meyer

Another of the popular The Royal Diaries series, this book was written as the diary of Anastasia, the youngest daughter of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. Beginning in 1914 and ending in 1918, the diary gives insight on the life of a carefree, privileged young girl as she struggles with adolescence while her family’s wealth and power dissolve. Photos and historical notes included in the book provide additional background. CLD

Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging: Confessions of Georgia Nicolson. Louise Rennison

From embarrassing parents and unfashionable school uniforms to Angus the mad cat, kissing lessons, and overzealous eyebrow plucking, 14-year-old Georgia records all her trials and tribulations—of which there are plenty—in this hilarious diary. This book is laugh-out-loud funny and packed with Briticisms. Teenagers on both sides of the Atlantic will have no trouble relating to Georgia’s adolescent woes. BE

Because of Winn-Dixie. Kate DiCamillo

Ten-year-old India Opal Buloni makes several friends while exploring her new town with Winn-Dixie, the smiling, churchgoing mutt she rescued from the pound. Their acceptance begins filling her heart, which was left empty by the mother who abandoned her seven years earlier. Armed with her new friends and her father’s and Winn-Dixie’s love, Opal courageously accepts the inevitable: Her mother is never coming back. DY

Daughter of the Forest. Juliet Marillier

The first of a trilogy, Daughter of the Forest is the story of young, strong, determined Sorcha who embarks on a journey to save her family from a spell only she can lift. As a historical fantasy, it is rich with magic and early Celtic legends. GHF

Demon in My View. Amelia Atwater-Rhodes

This suspenseful novel was written by 13-year-old Amelia Atwater-Rhodes. Jessica, the main character in the book, is a published author but is always treated as an outsider at her high school. Her vampire novel Tiger, Tiger dramatically changes her life. For all who enjoy the world
of vampires and witches, this is a must read. AS

The Devil and His Boy. Anthony Horowitz
Set in Elizabethan England in 1593, Horowitz’s book provides the reader with an action-packed story of young Tom Falconer and his dangerous adventures in London with a band of thieves posing as actors. Tom soon realizes the troupe will perform before the queen, and that the actors are really rebels. Will the queen stay on the throne? DVH

Esperanza Rising. Pam Muñoz Ryan
Esperanza, a daughter of privilege in Mexico, finds herself escaping to the fields of California in the United States during the Great Depression. Fighting poverty and discrimination, Esperanza is determined to make a better life for herself. She witnesses some heroic struggles and comes to understand her grandmother’s belief that life is a series of mountains and valleys. This book would be a welcome addition to multicultural studies. JF

Facing the Dark. Michael Harrison
A boy is devastated after his father is arrested for killing a taxi driver. As a result, young Simon is tormented by his peers and decides he must take charge of the situation. The book has many interesting turns, which make this a compelling story. AS

Gathering Blue. Lois Lowry
After her mother dies suddenly, Kira, a physically flawed girl, must struggle to survive. The Council of Guardians, however, recognizes her extraordinary skill, and Kira is given the great honor of restoring and creating the next section of the robe of the Singer, which depicts the history of her world. Kira gains knowledge of a wider world and the truth beyond her realm. This thought-provoking, dramatic story inspires class discussion about the value of every member of society. EM

The Girls. Amy Goldman Koss
Maya is devastated when she is ostracized by her school clique, and she tries to understand the reason for being cast out. The other girls continue to please Candace, the leader of the clique but soon become uneasy when they realize how easily Candace manipulates her “friends.” Young readers will reflect on how belonging to a clique often requires relinquishing their individuality and how membership does not necessarily foster true friendship. DY
Give a Boy a Gun. Todd Strasser

This story places the reader inside a fictional high school and the minds of selected students, parents, and teachers who were friends and acquaintances of boys involved in a shooting spree reminiscent of Columbine High School in the United States. Using fictional interviews and writings, Strasser creates a chronological view of the development of resentment, anger, alienation, and violence as the boys discuss their mistreatment at school. Strasser includes facts on real school shootings and other resources related to school violence. GS

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire. J.K. Rowling

This book about Harry’s fourth year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry has all the characters and magical ingredients that readers have come to know and love. As the Dark Lord gains strength and power, Harry experiences his first love. Excitement builds as the year at Hogwarts culminates in a clash between new friends and old enemies at a centuries-old event, The Triwizard Tournament. CLD

Hope Was Here. Joan Bauer

Abandoned as an infant, 16-year-old Hope Yancy has a gift for waitressing. She travels with her Aunt Addie to Wisconsin where Addie will manage and cook at the Welcome Stairways diner. Hope quickly adapts to small-town life and her new friends. This novel is full of humor, has interesting characters, and it makes the strong heroine’s desire to waitress understandable and praiseworthy. EM

Jade Green: A Ghost Story. Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

All the elements of a well-crafted ghost story are contained in this book—an old house, bloodstains, noises in the attic, and a severed hand that walks. When 15-year-old Judith moves into her uncle’s house off the coast of South Carolina she is immediately confronted with a sinister cousin and gossip about another girl who died in the house. Through courage, friendship, and trust, Judith discovers the truth in this gothic-like romance. JF
Learning to Swim: A Memoir. Ann Turner

With the intensity of poetry and the subject of sexual abuse, this small book is anything but a quick read. Images of a summer home and summer memories are crafted with vividness—as are the images of a child’s fear and desperation. This is not an emotionally easy book but surely a life-changing view of sexual abuse. SH


In this 12th book of the Redwall epic, Martin the Warrior leaves Redwall Abbey to journey to his birthplace. There he learns the legend of the first of the Redwall warriors, his father Luke. Fantasy fans, as well as Redwall fans, will appreciate the background author Brian Jacques provides for the Redwall series. DP


Love and Other Four-Letter Words. Carolyn Mackler

When Sammie’s parents announce a “trial separation,” Sammie and her mother move to an apartment in New York City. As her mother slips further into depression, Sammie is forced to accept new responsibilities. Her relationship with her best friend Kitty is changing also, as Kitty becomes sexually active and Sammie wrestles with her own sexuality. Mature readers. CLD


Marie Antoinette: Princess of Versailles, Austria-France, 1769 (The Royal Diaries series). Kathryn Lasky

Thirteen-year-old Marie Antoinette chronicles her journey from young Archduchess to Queen of France and wife of Louis XVI. This book is written in an easily read diary format that spans Marie’s life from 1769 to 1771. Historical notes, pictures, and a family tree are all included. DP

The Moonlight Man. Betty Ren Wright

From the beginning, this ghost story entices readers and keeps them turning pages. Jenny and her family move to Crescent Lane where apparitions appear, strange noises occur, and some horrifying events happen. Jenny becomes engrossed in the history of the five houses in the lane. With persistence, she unravels a 50-year-old event that still has ramifications in the present. JF


Night Hoops. Carl Deuker

Basketball helps form a bond between two teenage boys struggling to find their place at home and at school. Vivid descriptions of fast-paced game play form the backdrop for clashes and the subsequent friendship of Trent, an angry young man, and his neighbor, Nick. MJD


Perfect Family. Jerrie Oughton

Being an unwed teenage mother is never an easy situation, but in a small town in North Carolina in 1955 the predicament is even more difficult. Fifteen-year-old Welcome Marie O’Neal finds herself pregnant, confused, and heartbroken with no one to talk to. After she is shipped off to live with her aunt and uncle in Virginia, Welcome has to deal with consequences and decisions that will change her life forever. EM


The Princess Diaries. Meg Cabot

This book is written as the diary of Mia Thermopolis, a shy, somewhat awkward, adolescent girl living in Greenwich Village, New York, with her artist mother. As if failing algebra, discovering her mother is dating one of her teachers, and dealing with a crush on the “hottest” guy in school aren’t enough problems for one teenager, Mia learns she is a princess. With wit and humor, Mia deals with both new and old problems, including princess lessons from her grandmother. CLD


The Road to Home. Mary Jane Auch

Thirteen-year-old Remembrance “Mem” Nye displays great courage and strength as she struggles to hold her family together on their journey back to Connecticut from New York. The historical backdrop of the construction of the Erie Canal provides a content connection to history. MJD


Silent to the Bone. E.L. Konigsburg

Thirteen-year-old Branwell Zamborska is struck dumb on the day that his baby sister slips
into a coma. Accused by the nanny of being the cause, Branwell is taken to a juvenile behavioral center. This story is told by Bran’s best friend, Connor, who devises a way to communicate with Bran and eventually learns the truth. Konigsburg’s cleverly written mystery is a moving story of family, friendship, and seduction. EM


Split Image: A Story in Poems. Mel Glenn

Split Image reveals the moving story of Laura Li, a 17-year-old Asian girl struggling to hide the reality of her troubled life under the “perfect” image she presents to the world. Glenn’s compelling poems speak in the multiethnic voices of Laura Li, her family, classmates, and teachers. Because Laura Li’s turmoil ends in suicide, this is a read for mature teens. GS


Stargirl. Jerry Spinelli

Spinelli portrays an elegant and lifelike microcosm of high school life and the conflict between conformity and individuality. Susan nicknames herself “Stargirl” and at first dazzles her new friends and classmates, but then she enrages them with her offbeat antics. Leo, the narrator, is both in love with and disgusted with Stargirl. Spinelli’s newest novel can be called a humorous tragedy and a unique love story. DVH


The Wings of Merlin. T.A. Barron

In this fifth and final volume of the Merlin saga, the wizard faces his most daunting challenge—to unite the disparate creatures of Fincayra to battle Rhita Gawr’s evil spirit-world army. With mesmerizing prose, Barron deftly reveals Merlin’s hidden gifts and brings the epic to a satisfying close. GS


The Wish. Gail Carson Levine

Once upon a time Wilma wished to be the most popular girl at school, and unexpectedly her wish is granted with only three weeks left until the end of the school year. Secret admirers, dates for the graduation dance, and invitations to sleepovers and parties—will it all last once she graduates? This thought-provoking fairy tale ends happily, and Wilma learns how to appreciate good fortune and how to be a true friend. BE